



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

# Center for Middle Eastern Studies



## Unit: The Culture & Arts of Morocco and the Berbers

<b>Lesson 1: Morocco and the Berbers</b>		<b>Educator: Lorna Holmes</b>
Length of Unit: 7 – 10 days		
<b>Art 1 – 2</b> <b>Grades 7-12</b> (can be adapted for Elem.)	<b>Time Frame: Unit – 1 week</b> <b>Lessons: 5</b> <b>Sem: 2<sup>nd</sup> Term: 3 or 4 Week:</b>	<b>Concepts: Multicultural Art History, Symbols, Design &amp; Color</b>
<b>National &amp; Arizona State Visual Arts Standards:</b>	<p><b>Strand 1: CREATE</b> Students will create artworks to communicate ideas, meanings and/or purposes.</p> <p><b>Concept 1: Creative Process</b> The student will develop, revise and reflect on ideas for expression in his or her own artwork. PO 401. Develop and revise plans, (e.g., sketches, models, and notes) for his or her own artwork and select the best option.</p> <p><b>Concept 2: Materials, Tools and Techniques</b> The students will use materials, tools and techniques in his or her own artwork. PO 001 Identify and experiment with different materials, tools and ways to make things in his or her own artwork.</p> <p><b>Concept 3: Elements &amp; Principles</b> The student will use elements of art and principles of design in his/her own artwork.</p> <p><b>Concept 4: Meanings or Purposes</b> PO 101. Select and use subject matter and/or symbols in his or her own artwork .</p> <p><b>Concept 5: Quality</b> PO 102. Use criterion to assess an aspect of his or her own artwork .</p> <p><b>Strand 2: RELATE:</b></p> <p><b>Concept 4: Meanings or Purposes</b> PO 101. Interpret meanings and/or purposes of an artwork using subject matter and symbols.</p> <p><b>Concept 5: Quality:</b> PO 303. Compare the characteristics of artworks valued by diverse cultures.</p>	
<b>Connections to prior knowledge / Anticipatory set:</b>	KWL about prior knowledge of Morocco, Berbers, Symbols, and Cultural identity.	
<b>Visuals / Resources:</b>	Power point presentation. Packet of handouts to be filled in and used during lessons (eg. Vocab definitions, places on North Africa map, sketch & notetaking paper). Pencils, black construction paper, colored pencils & markers for black paper. Black fabric, colored embroidery thread (including fluorescent), embroidery needles. Henna kits. Thin metal sheets, wire, fimo or sculpey, fake jewels, natural materials (shells, stones), necklace rope, & other materials for jewelry/amulets. Model-making supplies: wood, fabric, plastic etc. Moroccan artifacts and books (below). Tuareg jewelry slideshow with music, DVD-Beat of Distant Hearts, Internet sites (below).	

<p><b>Objectives:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will be introduced to Morocco's culture &amp; geography.</li> <li>2. Students will be introduced to the arts and culture of the Berbers / Tuaregs.</li> <li>3. Students will choose and create a personal piece of art "in the style of" Berber art.</li> <li>4. Students will complete a packet of handouts including a GRA , self-eval etc. and turn in.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Key Vocabulary:</b></p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Berbers: Amazigh / Imazighn: Tuaregs: Hamsa / Khamsa: Group &amp; Cultural identity: Nomad: Baraka: Evil Eye:</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Symbol: Amulets or Talismán:  Motif: Body adornment: Henna: Symmetry:</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Berbers: Amazigh / Imazighn: Tuaregs: Hamsa / Khamsa: Group &amp; Cultural identity: Nomad: Baraka: Evil Eye:</p>	<p>Symbol: Amulets or Talismán:  Motif: Body adornment: Henna: Symmetry:</p>
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<p><b>Activities:</b> - study guide packet includes KWL, Berber symbols, vocab, map, directions, GRA on each</p>	<p><b>Motivation:</b> Students will be introduced to the four subjects of Berber /Tuareg jewelry, and body adornment with henna designs, embroidered textiles, and nomadic dwellings through a power point, visual displays, study guide packet, and Moroccan artifacts to inspire their ideas. Four stations will already be setup in the classroom and introduced with the subjects.</p>		

<p>subject/project &amp; rubrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- note-taking</li> <li>- question &amp; answer</li> <li>- observation</li> <li>- door pass</li> <li>- self-evaluation</li> <li>- award certificates</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities: Teachers and/or students can <u>choose one</u> of the Berber art forms to teach or be their inspiration to make an original work. The choices are to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Create a design for a frameable piece of fabric art (within a 12" x 12" area on fabric size provided, in the style of the Berbers using their symbols. Create a patch design on a square of black paper. Make rough sketches first. After teacher approval and embroidery lesson sew a black fabric square. Squares will be stretched over cardboard and framed. (Extension: If a student makes more than one they can be sewn together, by hand or machine, and used for a scarf or the home.</li> <li>b. Create henna designs for your hands or/feet. Make rough sketches using Berber symbol and design motifs as well as your own ideas. Get teacher approval and watch demo before beginning.</li> <li>c. Create a personal amulet or piece of jewelry for a personal reason or special event using the jewelry materials provided in class or brought from home (eg. Pendant/necklace, headpiece, bracelet). Do rough sketches first and get teacher approval before producing your piece.</li> <li>d. Create a nomadic (moveable) structure model that you could envision yourself living in. Make rough sketches and experiment with your ideas and materials. Use the materials available or ones you bring from home. Minimum size of board: 24" x 24"</li> </ol>
<p><b>Assessment/Review:</b></p>	<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- complete assignments in packet – KWL, vocab definitions, rough sketches, map labeling, notetaking and turn in.</li> <li>- follow the rubric for their choice of project (4 will be available) and turn in with project</li> <li>- read a reference article about their subject and complete a GRA (guided reading form)</li> <li>- answer questions and discuss topics as a class</li> <li>- be informally assessed by teacher observation, checking, modeling</li> <li>- be critiqued and judged in class discussion at final artshow</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wrap-up / Closure</b></p>	<p><b>First lesson: Doorpass:</b> Students will write down 5 things they learned during class (and can't leave til they give the completed form to the teacher at the door).</p> <p><b>Last day of project:</b> All students will complete a self-evaluation about their work and the packet and turn it in. They will put their work on display for the next day's class art show, critique and awards – students judge the best work in various categories appropriate to the lesson. Class discussion.</p>

**Accomodations:**

Peer assistance with any of the activities. Individual teacher assistance.

**Extension Lesson:**

Optional extension for the class, or students who finish early: Show the dvd "The Beat of Distant Drums" by Danielle Smith. Class discussion about comparisons with the Sawrahi's situation and that of undocumented Mexican immigrants (98% of these students are Hispanic and very familiar with this subject from their experience).

**Bibliography:**

*Amazigh Arts in Morocco: Women Shaping Berber Identity* by Dr. Cynthia Becker  
*Musee Tiskiwin de Marrakech: L'Art de La Parure* by Bert Flint (in French)  
*African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender* by Labelle Prussin  
*Arts & Crafts of Morocco* by James Jereb (Thames & Hudson)  
*Living in Morocco: Design from Casablanca to Marrakech* by Landt Dennis  
*Body Adornment* by Andrea Sittel (haven't located this author or book yet)  
*Arts & Customs of the Maures* by Odette du Puigaudeau  
*Textiles of Daily Life* by Margaret Portnoy Cox  
 Lucien Viola gallery book on his collection of vintage Moroccan textiles

**Websites:**

www. ameltafsout.com – A fun site with arts & culture info + Berber symbols (attached)  
[www.kenzi.com](http://www.kenzi.com)  
 Wikipedia – The Berbers (lots of info) and Tuaregs  
 The Odyssey: Teacher Zone – [www.worldtrek.org](http://www.worldtrek.org)  
<http://blog.travel-exploration.com>  
[www.arabamericanmuseum.org](http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org) - amulet necklaces  
[www.amuletgifts.com](http://www.amuletgifts.com)  
[www.north-of-africa.com](http://www.north-of-africa.com)  
<http://laaff.org> – Los Angeles Amazigh Film Festival (Oc.t 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010)  
[www.tuaregjewelry.org](http://www.tuaregjewelry.org)  
<http://www.tazzla.org>

**Other Resources:** Teacher's Moroccan artifacts such as art object examples, maps, postcards, jewelry, fabrics, scrapbooks and books on the subjects of Nomadic & Vernacular building, Jewelry and Berber Textile Design will be available for reference in the class. **Music:** Rau, Gnawan, Mixed CD from Morocco

## BERBER SYMBOLS

(from [www.ameltafsout.com](http://www.ameltafsout.com))

The Berber people are the inhabitants of North Africa. Nowadays there are Berber groups from Mauritania to Egypt. They inhabit the mountain regions and parts of the Sahara Desert. Berbers refer themselves as the Imazighan meaning "The Free People". The Berber symbols, designs, motifs and tattoos originated from pre-Islamic beliefs influenced later by Islamic geometric patterns and ornamentation.

Textiles and other objects are created as an act for worship and tribute to Allah. Many objects may contain a baraka. The baraka does not exist only in amulets or talismans but in any kind of objects in order to deal with darker forces and curing illnesses. In North Africa there is still some symbols to be found such as, magic squares and geometric figures (triangles, spirals, crosses, eight pointed stars, circles, diamonds).



1. **OLIVE TREE:** Strength because of its Berber name azemmur, diverted from the term tazmat (strength).



2. **WHEAT:** is associated with Life (because of its sheath) and Death (because of the seeds being in the ground).



3. **TREE:** is related to an easy life, happiness and fertility. It symbolises the centre of the world surrounded by Beings, objects and spirits. It also means Life (because of the roots) and knowledge (because of the leaves).



4. **SEEDS:** Male seeds and it is a symbol for Life and Fertility.



5. **HAMMER:** Power, natural forces and creative power. It is a very important instrument for the blacksmith because it enables him to change the iron into various shapes.



6. **ANCHOR:** Solidity, continuity, faithfulness, balance and lucidity.



7. **AXE:** A sharp instrument which represents anger and destruction, but as it does attack evil forces, it is a positive symbol. It is also associated with the lightning and rain therefore fertility.



8. **ARROW:** Cosmic projection. Associated with lightning and represents male energy and fertility.



9. **SUN:** Life, power. It is a source of Life, heat and light but could also be an evil force because it does drain the waters and can destroy the crops.



10. **MOON:** Associated with femininity and represents change, fertility and the perpetual cycle.



11. **WEAVING COMB:** It represents the movement of the world, balance, cohesion and tidiness.



12. **SHIP:** Associated with water and means strength, blessing, wisdom.



13. **CRESCENT:** Change, revival, Openness, birth, death and resurrection of the full moon.



14. **CROSS:** movement, space with different directions: up/down - North and South, left/right - East/West.



15. **SWASTIKA:** Symbol for a bird therefore the creative taking off of Life.



16. **CROSS WITH SIX BRANCHES:** Movement and space but also solidity, anchoring and grounding.



17. **DIAMOND:** Fertility womanhood and fertility. It is associated with the snake and represents the union of opposites.

AMEL TAFSOUT (01.10.2003) from website: [www.ameltafsout.com](http://www.ameltafsout.com)

### **PAN- AMAZIGH SYMBOL**



### **AZA OR ZED SYMBOL OF FREEDOM**

**The term "Amazigh" means "Free Human Being."**

**The plural "Imazighen" refers to the original Free Human Beings who are the aboriginal people of North Africa.**

**The symbol shown above is the Zed or Aza and is the symbol of Freedom and the Free People of Tamazgha, a territory which ranges from the Oasis of Siwa, Egypt, through Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, the Canary Islands, the Sahara Desert, and south of it, [in]to Niger, Mali and Burkina-Faso.**

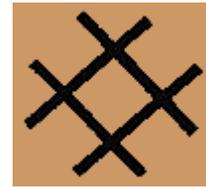
From: <http://tizzlit.blogspot.com>



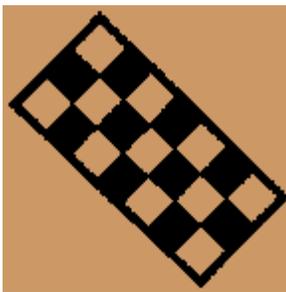
Nose  
(represents the crow's beak which is worn strung around a child's neck for protection)



Lion's paw  
(a symbol of strength; the claws are a symbol of protection)



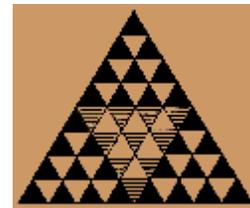
Finger  
(a protective symbol)



Barley  
(fertility symbol)



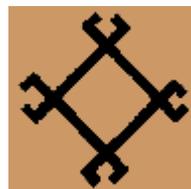
Partridge eyes  
(a symbol for beauty and women in general)



Chessboard  
(associated with dizzy spells and celestial experiences, perhaps symbolic of religious trances)



Frog  
(associated with fertility and also magical rites)



Spider  
(associated with fertility and also magical rites)



Seeds  
(fertility symbol)



Eye  
(a symbol for protection against the evil eye; the cross in the middle deflects evil in four directions)



Quarida (a kind of flower)  
(the diamond shape is a symbol of protection against the evil eye)

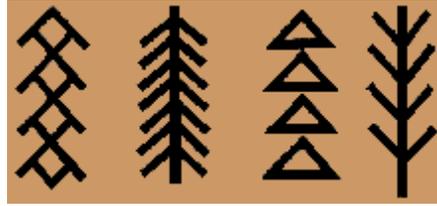


Scissors  
(a symbol of metalworkers, whose occupation is treated with fearful respect as metal keeps away)

*jnoun)*



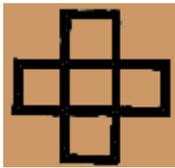
Sickle  
(a symbol of metalworkers, whose occupation is treated with fearful respect as metal keeps away *jnoun)*



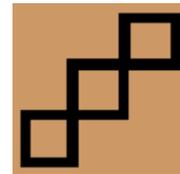
Snake and fish skeletons  
(the snake represents a holy person and also has many magical and medicinal properties)



Saw  
(a symbol of metalworkers, whose occupation is treated with fearful respect as metal keeps away *jnoun)*



Bird  
(positive motif which carries *baraka)*



Amulet



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# The Spiritual Dimension of Berber Design

## Henna and the Moroccan Aesthetic

It was in North Africa that the first henna plant appeared. The use of henna for decoration in Morocco goes back to the time when the Berbers first migrated to the area; they were long settled there when the Phoenicians and the Romans invaded North Africa. No one is certain of the Berber's origins, but it is generally believed that they came from either Yemen or what is now Syria. It wasn't until the 8th century that Arabs, spreading the word of Islam, invaded the Berber regions and added the Berber culture to their already rich mix.

In the cave paintings of prehistoric humans of North Africa, we can see the beginnings of designs that reflected their daily lives as hunters and gathers. Likewise, early Berber images reflect aspects of their rural lives, connected to nature and the agrarian cycle. Thus, planting, harvesting, reverence of the sun, moon, earth and the stars are all inherent in the symbolism of the Berber's early cultural traditions and are carried on even today. Such symbols are not only for decoration but also for protection from the evil eye and from the evil spirits believed to dwell in the surrounding trees and streams.

James Jereb, in his book The Arts and Crafts of Morocco, describes Berber designs as "a testimony not only to the meditative and aesthetic power that decoration holds for them, but a faith in supernatural power. Many pieces are valued not because of appearance alone--perhaps because of their form or the way in which they are decorated--but because they may contain a power known as *baraka*, a concept deeply embedded in Moroccan religious beliefs and crucial to the understanding of all artistic traditions in Morocco. *Baraka* has many meanings in Morocco, but it is principally the positive power of the saints and the Sufi brotherhoods. It is a source of inspiration among most Moroccan artisans...*Baraka* permeates all things to varying degrees; not only can it exist in jewelry, talismans and other manufactured objects, such as ceramics and textiles, it is also thought to suffuse plants, such as henna and oleander, and incenses, such as sandalwood and myrrh. This power is transferred to objects and textiles by the use of a particular artistic vocabulary of symbols, designs, motifs, colors and techniques that protect the object, creator and consumer." (p. 13)

*Baraka* is sought and used to deal with the darker forces of life, curing illnesses and protecting oneself against the evil *jnoun* (spirits--the source of the English word "genie") and the evil eye. Berber symbols are included in the design of everyday objects to protect the object as well as the person who uses or wears it. These motifs appear in all aspects of the Berber artisanal tradition, including pottery, leatherwork and textiles, not to mention all types of personal adornment. Berbers found many ways to adorn themselves with jewelry, tattoos and henna. It is mostly Berber women who are tattooed. Because tattoos are forbidden by Islam, many women have found other outlets for placing their protective motifs by including them in textiles they weave and in jewelry and henna. Thus, the designs that are drawn in henna on the hands and feet of a bride on the eve of her marriage are these same protective and nurturing symbols that have evolved throughout centuries of use.

