Lesson Plan:
TITLE OF ACTIVITY: The Ruins of an Early City in the Bronze Age: Great Zimbabwe

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School: Riverside Educational Academy Magnet School
Subject Area: French & Spanish 1
Grade Level(s): 9-12
Time Allotment: 2 classes of 43 minutes; additional class period of 43 minutes to watch videos and explore online sites further is optional.

Lesson Description:

Of the more than 8,000 stone ruins in South Africa, Great Zimbabwe stands out as the most majestic and often mysterious in its’ origin and complexity as well as its’ beauty. These ruins span a period of 300-400 years from the 11th century to their abandonment in the 15th century or during the Late Bronze Age.

Essential questions:

What gave rise to the city and ruins of Great Zimbabwe and where are they and how old are they?

How does the art of the many ethnic groups that built Great Zimbabwe reflect their culture?

How can artifacts and images thereof enhance our understanding of history?

Where did they get the materials for their art and artifacts and how did trade within and outside the region affect their growing city and lead to its eventual demise?

Objectives: (Students will…)
~explore various geographical websites and locate Zimbabwe in Southern Africa and the countries that surround it

~ demonstrate their understanding of when Great Zimbabwe likely originated and likely ended
~ examine images of artifacts found at Great Zimbabwe using the Artifact Analysis Worksheet attached to this plan and watch videos that show the ruins as they appear in recent times
~ take a matching quiz that matches various vocabulary and terms used in descriptions of Great Zimbabwe

**Directions for teachers:** (include how the teacher will prepare students for the activity-class discussion, PPT, homework assignment etc.)

- Students will be given a homework assignment and a map of Africa without the countries written in to fill in using the sites listed
- Students will look up the vocabulary on the matching quiz and later as an assessment match them correctly in a paired activity. Answer sheets will be available to those who need an aid
- Students will watch videos in class showing the ruins of Great Zimbabwe and write a brief paragraph about their impressions of them. Do they resemble anything that they have seen today?
- Class discussions will serve as assessments of student knowledge and preparation and include completion of the attached Artifact Analysis Worksheet on their chosen artifact(s). Some may include terms or vocabulary from the assessment match activity

**Resources and materials:**

[www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd_zimb.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd_zimb.htm)
[www.greatzimbabweruins.com/](http://www.greatzimbabweruins.com/)
[www.greatzimbabweruins.com/](http://www.greatzimbabweruins.com/)
[www.archive.archeology.org/9807/abstracts/Africa.html](http://www.archive.archeology.org/9807/abstracts/Africa.html)
https://www.britannica.com/place/Great-Zimbabwe

Youtube Videos:

Great Zimbabwe: Trade in the Shona Empire 1000-1500, Danielle Oatar
Lost Ancient Civilization of Great Zimbabwe (Documentary) Forbidden History
2016. Produced for the Discovery Channel in 2 parts. (20 minutes)

Great Zimbabwe National Monument (Unesco/NHK)

Great Zimbabwe: The ruins of the Citadel and Royal Enclosure

http://www.enchantedlearning.com  For location of Zimbabwe and other African
countries on the map
www.sheppardsoftware.com/
www.purposegames.com/game/  Enter Zimbabwe
www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0708/features2/map.html

Books:

Garlake, P.S. “Great Zimbabwe, New Aspects of Archeology,” Edited by Sir
Publishers, 7 East 48 Street, New York, N.Y. 10017

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Pier Summer Institute Lecture Notes by Raevin Jimenez, doctoral candidate in
History, Northwestern University. Article: “History before tribes (Partnership,
alliance, and power)”.

Conversations with Mark VanBaalen, Associate in Earth and Planetary Sciences,
Harvard University

Student directions handout (step by step instructions for the student)

Title of Activity: Homework or pre-matching quiz vocabulary to define
Type only the terms on the left and keep the answers for a class discussion prior to students completing the matching quiz. Teachers may print the quiz and cut in two, then cut the answers in strips and put each set into a ziploc bag. Students in pairs could match the answers with the terms.

Matching quiz and activity:

1. Great Enclosure  
   - one of 3 main areas of Great Zimbabwe

2. daga  
   - earthen and mud brick used in making the walls

3. natural granite boulders  
   - incorporated or included in the stone walls

4. bird figurines  
   - made of soapstone and found in the ruins

5. Botswana  
   - country that borders Zimbabwe

6. Bantu  
   - first people thought to inhabit Zimbabwe

7. Shona  
   - ancestors of the Bantu

8. Mwari  
   - name of the Shona people’s deity

9. Iron Age  
   - follows the Bronze Age that ended in 1100 B.C

10. Mapungubwe  
    - city and trading station that collapsed in 1290

11. Harare  
    - present capital of Zimbabwe

12. “dzimba dza mabwe”  
    - shona word translates “houses of stone”
Student directions handout (continued)

Object-Based Learning strategies
Adapted from materials by Jessica Sack, Yale Art Gallery, and Cyra Levenson, Yale Center for British Art

Begin by having students closely observe an object or work of art, 2-5 minutes depending on how much time you have and the complexity of the object or work of art. If you are using a museum exhibit, cover the label or encourage them not to look at it.

Proceed by asking questions about the object or work of art, in the following order:

1. **What do you see?**
   With this purely objective question, they are generating a list of words or statements, using only their eyes. This can be an inventory-like list if they are looking at a painting or a diorama, and more of a list of adjectives if looking at a single object. You can encourage them to toss out words as they come to mind.

2. **What do you notice?**
   This goes deeper, and is intended to walk the line between objective and subjective. You may remind them not to include their opinion if you want to keep this more objective. Here, they should begin to point out relationships. They may also discuss how it appears to have been made. If they have an object in front of them that they are allowed to touch, they can use other senses to learn more about it.

3. **What do you think about what you see? What are your interpretations of the evidence you observed?**
   Finally, you are asking here for their interpretation and opinion of a painting, what is going on in the piece, what is the narrative-if an artifact, why might it have been made, what might it have been used for?

4. **Follow answers to steps 2 and 3 with: What do you see that makes you say that?**
   This makes students accountable for their observations/interpretations by citing visual evidence, and you can also help keep students from heading off in the wrong direction or intentionally derailing the process.

5. **Finally, ask more guided questions,** especially if you have a specific area of focus that you are trying to bring to your student’s attention. You can also ask: “What questions do you have about it? “ and “How can you find answers to these questions?” Of in a museum, let them read the exhibit label at this point and ask them if that changes anything about their interpretation. If an artifact, you can now give more detail and history, and begin a more productive discussion about its cultural and chronological context.

Variation: There is a good opportunity to have students DRAW the object between steps 2 and 3, and then write a story about/featuring their object , which gets at the same interpretive thinking as step 3 but gives an opportunity for creative writing.
Usually, before you even have students start observing you would give them some context (specific artists, time periods, cultures) or the focus/objectives of the session-this helps steer their observations into a more narrow and manageable subset.