Introduction
Students have read about the cultural importance of African arts and crafts. In many places in Africa south of the Sahara, craftspeople continue to practice traditional crafts for local use, for the tourist trade, and for export. In this lesson students will learn about West African strip weaving and the making of Kente cloth. They will read several articles and study many drawings and photographs to gain in-depth knowledge about the production of this popular textile form.

Lesson Description
In this lesson students will read several articles about West African strip weaving of Kente cloth. They will learn about the cultural context in which strip weaving occurs. They will be able to study many photographs covering both the weaving process and the finished results. They will also read about a master weaver from Ghana and view a book that he has co-authored. They will answer four questions about their reading and then will compose an informative magazine article about strip weaving and Kente cloth.

Instructional Objectives
1. Students will be able to discuss the importance of cloth weaving in West Africa.
2. Students will be able to apply what they have learned to write an informative magazine article about strip weaving and Kente cloth.

Applied Content Standards
Standard 6: The geographically informed person knows and understands how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.
Standard 10: The geographically informed person knows and understands the characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Introduction
Traditional African arts and crafts have influenced art throughout the world. Contemporary African textiles, such as Kente cloth, and African motifs often show up on city streets in North America. West Africans use small strip looms to weave narrow strips of fabric which they sew together to make large pieces of cloth. In this activity you will learn more about the weavers, the cloth, and the traditional patterns. You will also be able to study many photographs that will help you learn about West African textiles.

Destination Title: West African Kente Cloth

Directions
Start at the African Crafts Online Web site: http://www.africancraft.com/
Using the information you gathered while browsing the site, answer the following questions.

1. How does Ashanti folk hero Anansi figure in the history of strip-weaving? Who normally uses strip weaving looms in West Africa?
2. List products made by strip weavers. Why do people often prefer these products to goods made using imported cloth?
3. What do the butterfly and the parrot symbolize when they are used in Kente cloth?
4. How has Gilbert “Bobbo” Ahiagble spread knowledge about Kente cloth outside of Ghana?

A master weaver from Ghana will visit your community in several weeks. He will visit schools and speak to local groups, demonstrating the weaving of Kente cloth using a strip loom. Write an article on Kente cloth and strip weaving for your local newspaper's Sunday magazine. Your article should answer the following questions: What is Kente cloth? What is strip weaving? Where is it done? Who does the weaving? How do the weavers make the cloth? Why do people still make cloth this way? Your article should contain at least five paragraphs and may include graphics or photographs.

**Student Web Activity Answers**

1. The spider Anansi taught the art of weaving to two brothers who had discovered his web while on a hunting trip. Anansi also taught them how to spin and dye the threads. Since then the Ashanti have used the strip looms Anansi taught them to build. Men traditionally do the strip weaving in West Africa.
2. Products made by strip weavers include blankets, bags, sheets, rugs, tent dividers, pillows, umbrellas, shawls, head cloths, trousers, and robes. Strip-woven fabric is stronger and more durable than most imported cloth. It is also more traditional.
3. The butterfly symbolizes punctuality and hard work. The parrot symbolizes the rejuvenating power of nature.
4. In 1975 Ahiagble served as Artist-in Residence at the Museum of African Art in the United States. He often works abroad in Europe and North America, teaching about the symbolism of Kente cloth and its manufacture. He also has co-authored a children's book titled *Master Weaver from Ghana* about his home town, its people, and strip weaving.
5. Students' articles should reflect all the information gathered while browsing the Web site and should describe the weaving process in some detail. Students should also discuss the benefits of this textile, its beauty, durability, and meanings.
Gilbert "Bobbo" Ahiagble, of the Ewe ethnic group is a Master Kente Cloth Weaver from the Volta Region of Ghana.

He began assisting his father by winding bobbins at the age of three and moved onto the West African loom as soon as his legs could reach the treadles, at around the age of nine. He obtained a solid formal education also and his academic abilities opened doors for him and he soon received a diploma as a secondary school teacher, which obliged him to make a choice at the age of 21, to become a teacher or to remain a weaver. Influenced by words he heard from his Peace Corps math teacher, he combined the two and became a teacher of Kente cloth weaving.

Bobbo was first invited to the USA in 1975 as an Artist-In-Residence at the Museum of African Art, then a small, private museum which became part of the Smithsonian Institution several years later. His skills as a communicator soon gave him the title of "Cultural Ambassador of Kente Cloth" and continuous invitations to work abroad came from Switzerland, Canada and the USA. Most recently he taught American fiber artists the fine art of Kente weaving in a workshop held in Atlanta at the prestigious conference of the Handweavers Guild of America, "Convergence".

Bobbo has had a major influence on traditional West African strip cloth weavers beyond the borders of Ghana. He serves as a spokesperson for the power in the language of Kente cloth, filled with symbolic proverbs present to enrich the lives of everyone ready to listen and learn.

Just recently he has co-authored a children's book, titled Master Weaver from Ghana, with Louise S. Meyer, with outstanding photographs of his home town taken by Nestor Hernandez, a Washington, DC based documentary photographer. And he has built a school and dormitory in Denu, called the Craft Institute of Kente Weaving, where student groups can stay and learn traditional Kente cloth weaving.