

PERFECT
FOR PRE-K
TO 2ND GRADE
but fun for everyone!



Read *Chicken in the Kitchen* by Nigerian-American author Nnedi Okorafor or [click here](#) to watch the video of award-winning writer Tiphonie Yanique reading it in the Carlos Museum's galleries of African Art. Afterwards, talk about the story and about the sights, sounds, and purpose of masquerades in West Africa. Look closely at the Carlos Egungun and the image of the chicken masquerade at the end of the book. What similarities do you notice? What differences? Then, make chicken stick puppets together for your own masquerade!

**This project
is great for:**



**Learning how to
make a stick puppet**



**Practicing cutting
with scissors**



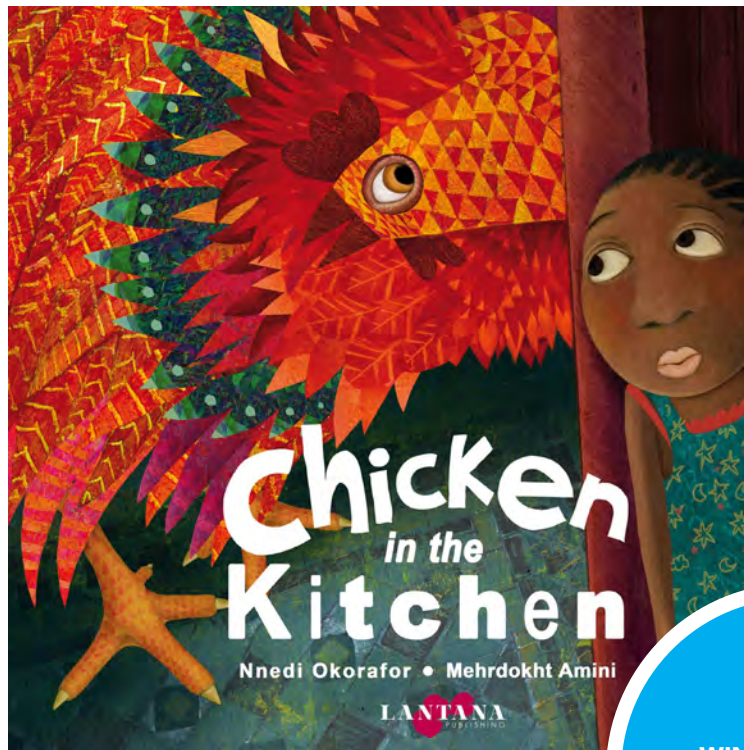
**Practicing gluing
and layering paper**



**Learning the parts
of a chicken**



**Learning about
West African
masquerades**



Chicken in the Kitchen

Written by Nnedi Okorafor
Illustrated by Mehrodokht Amini

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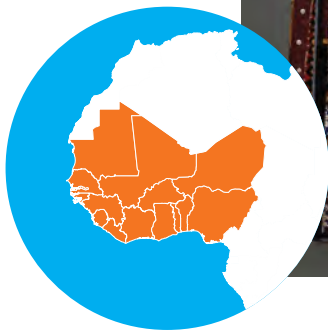
**What would you do if you woke up one night
to find the shadow of a giant chicken passing
your bedroom door?** Go and investigate, of course!

When Anyaugo follows a giant chicken into her kitchen one warm night in Nigeria, she embarks on a fun-filled adventure where nothing is quite as it seems. Is the mischievous giant chicken a friend or a foe? More importantly, will Anyaugo be able to save the food for the New Yam Festival the next day?

artful
stories



**WINNER OF THE
CHILDREN'S AFRICANA
BOOK AWARD FOR
BEST BOOK FOR
YOUNG READERS**



Many West African cultures, like the Igbo and the Yoruba, have masquerade traditions like the one featured in this story. In West Africa, the term **masquerade** refers to a dance or other performance, but also to the mask and costume worn by the performer.

The chicken featured in the story is actually an Igbo masquerade who appears during the New Yam Festival. We often think of masks as a way to conceal identity, but in West African traditions, the masquerade can provide a way to reveal the spirits of ancestors to the living. The Yoruba have a masquerade tradition called **Egungun**. The Carlos Museum has several Egunguns, like the one shown above. Masquerades rely heavily on movement, music, and performance to bring them to life.

Watch an Egungun in motion [here](#).



Things to talk about:

- Who was the chicken and why was he in Anyaugo's family's kitchen?
- Anyaugo feels different emotions at different times during the story. She was worried and then a bit scared. How do you think she feels at the end?
- Who does Anyaugo find to help her?
- Somebody else is with Anyaugo the whole time, but never says a word. Who is Anyaugo's quiet friend?
- Compare the chicken masquerade in the story to the Egungun masquerades in the Carlos. How are they similar? Different?

Make it!



CHICKEN MASQUERADE PUPPETS

To build confidence and a sense of ownership in their art, it's important that children have autonomy. Lead by example by making your own chicken with them, but let them do as much on their own as they can; then you will have a flock of chickens!

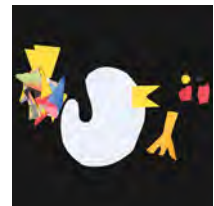
What you need:

- **Heavy paper**
Construction or card stock in white, red, yellow, and black
- **Colorful paper**
Papers printed with Kente designs and other West African patterns were used to make these examples but use whatever you have on hand. Magazines and catalogs are a great source for colorful patterns.
- **Glue**
- **Long dowel or a stick**
- **Hot glue gun or clear packing tape**

What to do: **body, face, feet**

Using the patterns included on pages 5 and 6 of this lesson plan, cut out all the chicken parts.

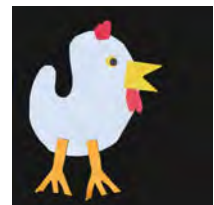
- Cut the chicken body from a sheet of heavy white paper.
- Use yellow paper to cut out 2 triangles for the beak and 2 yellow circles for the eyes.
- Cut 2 black paper circles to form the pupils.
- Cut the comb and the wattle out of red paper. The comb is the fleshy crest on top of the chicken's head and the wattle is the fleshy part that hangs down from the chicken's neck.
- Use any colored paper for the legs. Felt also works well, if you have any, and adds movement!



STEP 1

Now you're ready to assemble your chicken!

- Choose which way you want to orient your chicken (see the final photo on page 4 to see the options).
- Glue the two yellow triangles on one end of the chicken body to form the beak.
- Glue one or two yellow circles for eyes, depending on the orientation of your chicken.
- Glue a black circle on top of each yellow circle. Experiment with how the position of the black circle changes where your chicken is looking.
- Next glue the comb on top of the head and the wattle below the beak.
- Apply glue on the belly of the chicken and attach the feet, holding them in place until fully adhered.



STEP 2

(Continued)

CHICKEN MASQUERADE PUPPETS (Continued)

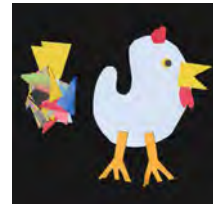
What to do: feathers and movement

Set your chicken aside to dry and get ready to make feathers!

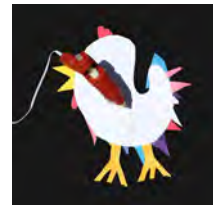
- Using the colorful and patterned paper you have collected, plus the leftover yellow, black, and red papers, cut out as many triangles as you like. The more, the better. They should be about the same size as the ones you cut for the beak.
- Once you have a pile of feathers, check your chicken's feet to be sure they're secure. All set? Now it's feather time!
- Glue the colorful triangles onto your chicken being sure to consistently reapply glue. Play with layering the triangles to see how "feathery" you can make it.
- When your chicken is all feathered out, use either a hot glue gun (adult supervision required) or clear packing tape to attach the stick to the back of the chicken.
- Once the stick is firmly adhered (and the glue has cooled to a safe temperature, if you used hot glue), the completed masquerade chicken is ready to dance!

**Check out
the finished
chickens!**

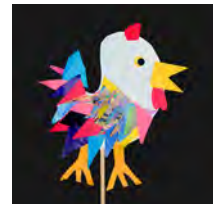
**You can try one
each way!**



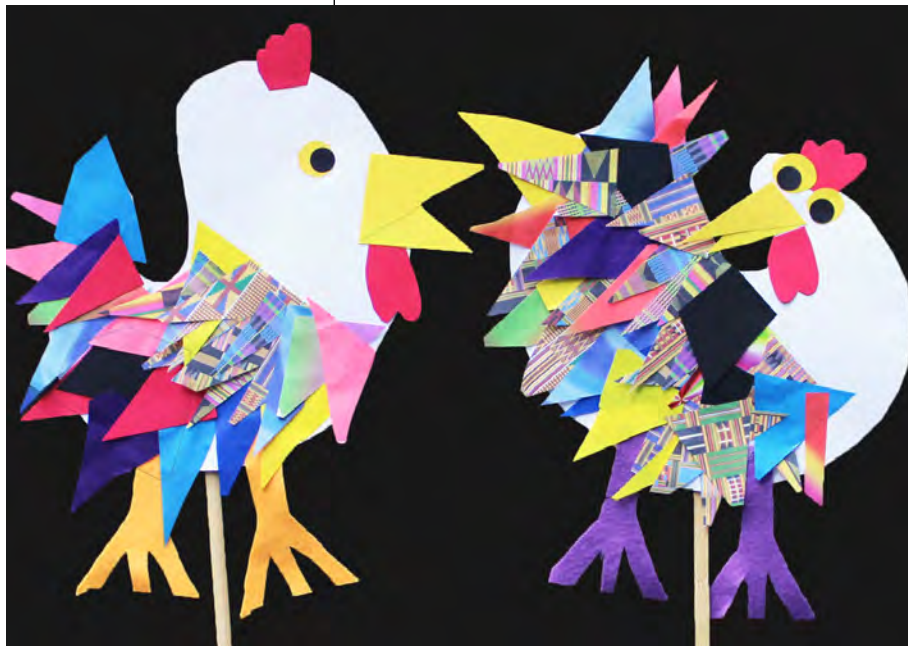
STEP 3



STEP 4

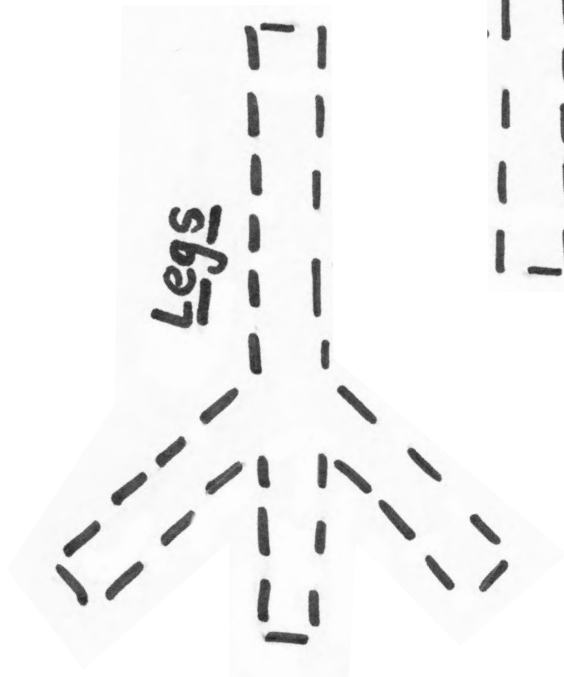
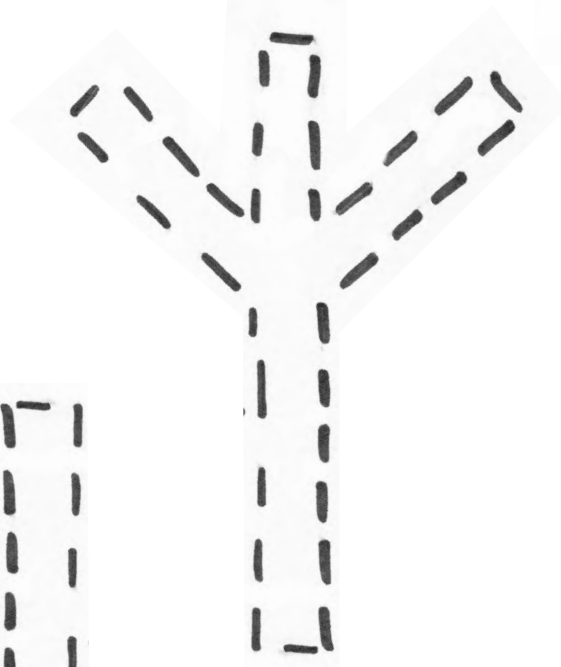
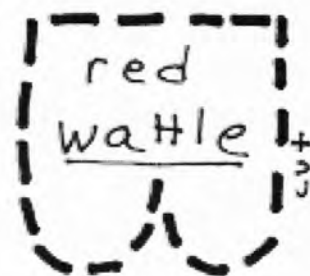
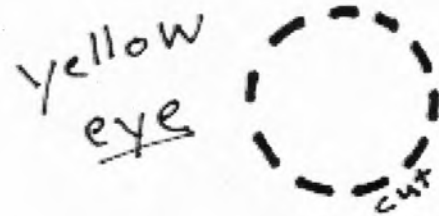
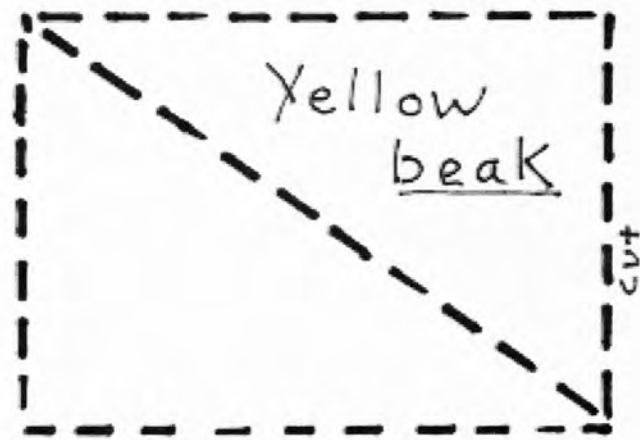


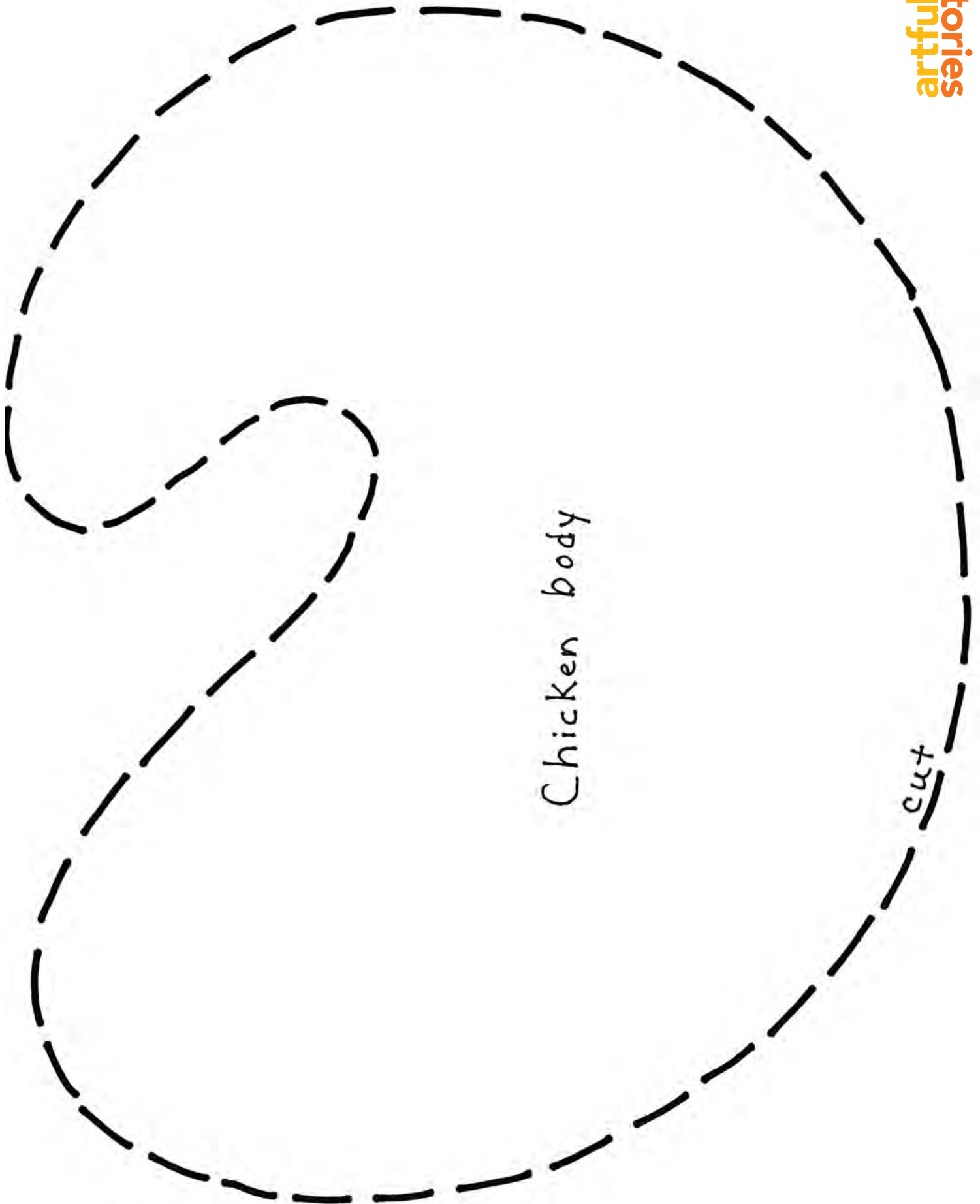
STEP 5



**Wiggle your
chicken and
watch as the
feet and feathers
move along
with it!**

CHICKEN MASQUERADE PUPPET PATTERN





Learn new words



← **Egungun** [Eh-GUN-gun]

Literally translated as “the powers concealed,” this Yoruba term refers to both the traditional costume used to perform masquerades and to the actual performance, or masquerade. Constructed from a variety of different fabrics, and often embellished with cowrie shells, sequins, and other materials, the egungun completely conceals the wearer. Activated through dance, egungun returns physical form to spirits and ancestors that are otherwise unseen. As the performer begins to move, he is transformed, incarnating the spirits. The ancestor, given form again on earth through the masquerade, can now act on behalf of the community.

Igbo [EE-boh] →

An ethnic group comprised of about 34 million people located in southern Nigeria. Although now mostly Christian, they still value traditional Igbo practices and beliefs, including masquerades and the New Yam Festival. Nnedi Okorafor is ethnically Igbo, although she was born in America.



← **Yoruba** [YORR-uh-buh]

An ethnic and religious group located in West Africa. About 44 million people are Yoruba, the majority of whom live in Nigeria, who practice masquerade as a part of their culture.

Masquerade Culture →

Masquerades are performed in West African culture for a variety of reasons: to embody ancestral spirits, to embody various deities, to appease ancestral or natural spirits, or even just to entertain. Sometimes the lines between recreation and spiritual celebration are blurred in these festivals. Even though the purpose of the masquerade may be spiritual, such events may shift to allow for the whole community to participate in the dance, allowing individuals to connect with each other in ways that differ from daily interactions.



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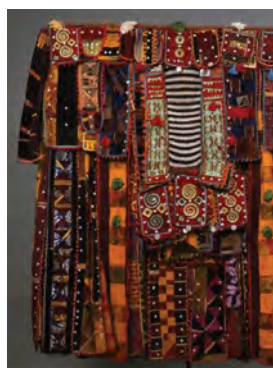


Egungun.

Late 19th-late 20th century. Oyo, Nigeria. Yoruba. Cloth, wood, cowrie shells, fiber, skin, encrustations. 1994.004.501



[Click here to learn more.](#)



Egungun Masquerade Costume.

20th century. Oyo or Ogbomoso, Nigeria. Yoruba. Fabric, plastic, glass, metal. 1994.004.505



[Click here to learn more.](#)



Fahamu Pecou.
Egungun Masquerade.
New World Egungun. 2016. Constructed by Grace Kisa. Fabric, bells, cowries. Anonymous gift.



[Click here to learn more.](#)



Egungun.

Late 20th century. Nigeria. Yoruba. Fabric, sequins, wood. Gift of Dr. Larry J. and Barbara Schulz in honor of David Edwards and Catherine Bean Kaylor. 2018.9.1A/C



[Click here to learn more.](#)