



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## Listen to the Rhythm

Curriculum Unit 06.02.08  
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### Introduction

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*Bata. Djembe. Dun dun. Dunno. Conga* . In all its shapes and varieties, the African drum is an extraordinary utilitarian instrument that serves as more than just a musical tool. For centuries, throughout the African continent (particularly West Africa), the drum has been used as a source of communication. Made of natural resources and materials found in the surroundings, the drum has been used at ceremonies to pay homage to the Creator and the ancestors, to herald the homegoing of a loved one, to spark courtships, to announce marriages and births, to accompany religious rites and initiation rituals, to herald political and social events, the onset of war, the triumph of battle, to announce emergency gatherings, and more.

Today, we find the captivating rhythm of the African drum resounding throughout the world. Of particular interest is the presence of the drum and specific African rhythms in the Caribbean (in places like Cuba and Puerto Rico) and among African-Americans and Latino groups in the United States. How did those rhythms find their way to these places? Is their presence an indication that there is a connection between African and Latino cultures? **Listen to the Rhythm** is a curriculum resource that supports the contention "Yes! There is!"

**Listen to the Rhythm** serves as an ethno-musicological adventure, taking young learners on an up-close, historical look at the interconnectedness of West African, Cuban, and Puerto Rican cultures by way of the rhythm of the drum. Targeted at students in grades two and three (and indubitably modifiable to all grade levels) it will help students comprehend that the drum and its various rhythms serve(d) as a source of communication, a "telephone" used to convey cultural mores, societal views, and the history of a people. Students will take a look at transcontinental slavery as imposed by European slave traders to understand the trek of African people and the journey of the drum. The unit reinforces that despite the dehumanizing institution of chattel slavery, the drumming tradition brought to Caribbean shores via the Middle Passage, is reflective of survival coupled with a rich heritage of diverse people. The unit heralds one of many common threads that exist between African and Hispanic cultures, with an emphasis on Cuba and Puerto Rico.

### The Need Is Clear

I made a conscious decision to develop this unit based on two dramatic teaching experiences I encountered during the course of my career. (These episodes have resurfaced from time to time in ensuing years.)

In 2001, while teaching a summer school Geography/Literature course at a LEAP Program in the Fair Haven section of New Haven (a predominantly Latino community), I worked with a small group of African-American and Puerto Rican third and fourth graders. I had developed an eight-week curriculum on Ghanaian culture; I share it with my students, advising that through the use of photos, literary resources, and hands-on artifacts, we would be learning about this West African country as it relates to the Caribbean and the Americas.

"Why do I got to learn about Africa!" one disgruntled student grumbled. "I'm Puerto Rican! Me and Africa ain't got nothin' to do with one another." Her classmates chimed in.

In yet another instance, a second grader, Giovanni, made a connection while our class read Jane Yolen's extraordinary historical fiction work, *Encounter*, a tale that highlights Columbus' voyage from a Taíno child's perspective. She noticed the skin tone of the child depicted in the illustration.

"Mrs. Mullins," she commented, raising her hand. "The boy in that picture is reddish brown, the same color as my *papi*. My mother is dark brown like chocolate, and my sister is light like milk. My mom told me that's because people mixed with each other long, long ago." Giovanni added that her family came from Cuba. "My mommy says we are a musical rainbow!"

Giovanni's classmates were puzzled. "How can a rainbow be musical?" another student questioned.

Giovanni proudly responded, "Because that rainbow of people plays drums that tell our story!"

Wow! Through engaging dialogue, literature, and hands on interaction, my students became engaged. They began to embrace one another across cultures: they were fascinated to learn that the rich heritage of Latino and African culture is often intertwined, that many customs and aspects of day-to-day living among specific ethnic groups can be traced to cultures unexpected of which we are in some way very often a part.

**Listen to the Rhythm** thus has been created to serve as a catalyst for young learners to embrace various aspects of a culture (with emphasis on the African, Cuban, and Puerto Rican culture) on a deep and meaningful basis. Students are encouraged to question why and how various cultures came to be and what we may very well have in common. They too soon discover that our experiences and history are more united than we realize: music--particularly the drum--is but one aspect of the common thread between African and Hispanic cultures, a concept that can be expanded into all facets of social studies.

Created for implementation during any time throughout the school year, for a 6 through 8 week duration, this curriculum unit can be used to accentuate culturally specific holiday celebrations or thematic unit studies (e.g., Hispanic American Heritage Month, Puerto Rican Heritage Month, and/or Black History Month).

Information contained herein aligns with New Haven Public School Curriculum Unit Standards, i.e., Language Arts/Writing Content Standard 2.0; SSCPS (students will demonstrate their understanding through written, verbal, visual, musical and/or technological formats and will pre-edit, draft, revise, edit and publish/showcase one or more final literary products); and SSCS 3.0 (using maps, globes, and related resources, students will identify different parts of the world and examine the traditions found therein.)

SSCS 5.0 Students will read, view, and listen to multiple sources concerning history, and they will use information obtained through stories to identify problems, suggest solutions, and predict outcomes. A hands-on drum-making activity and complementary drumming/interactive storytelling activities make the unit both interdisciplinary and engaging for students with diverse learning styles.

## Before We Begin (Week 1)

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Introduce students to the world map, having them familiarize themselves with and subsequently identify geographic land masses that include continents, countries, islands, oceans... Make world map hand-outs. Laminate these geography tools for interactive use. As you discuss specific countries of study, have students highlight them, tracing them with wipe-off markers.

(Post the introduction of geographic terms coupled with background information contained herein, have students chart and trace navigational routes taken by specific cultures to reach each locale. Additionally, consider collaborating with your school's Art Instructor to have your students create a full-scale map reflective of the journey. Made of clay mounted on a poster board backing, the map serves as a 3-D representation for each targeted country. The map 3-D map creation can also serve as an in-class project.)

## Background Info: The Africa - Puerto Rico - Cuba Connection (Unit Study: Week 2)

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Long before the arrival of Spanish explorers, Boriken (the original name of Puerto Rico by its aboriginal inhabitants) was densely populated by Taínos, the original indigenous peoples of the island. Upon the arrival of Spaniards to Puerto Rico's shore during the early 15th century, it was believed that gold was abundant on the island; Taínos were enslaved to accommodate the mining need. The Taíno population slowly declined, attributed heavily on the spread of contagious disease coupled in part by displacement and massacres wreaked by European newcomers. Because of the reduced numbers in the Taíno population, an alternative workforce was needed.

During that time frame, the cruel institution of chattel slavery as experienced by blacks had reared its dehumanizing head. Used for economic gain on behalf of the colonizer, slave trade routes spanned the globe. Spain was among those European countries involved in this lucrative business. Gold mining in the Caribbean isles--among them Puerto Rico-- was top on the agenda.

African's were commercially transported from Central and West Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean. Indigenous inhabitants from regions today known as Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, and South Africa were brought to La Isla, where they were initially forced to mine gold. In time, scant findings resulted in the use of blacks to harvest sugar cane and tobacco on designated plantations.

From the beginning of the 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century, Boriken began to become densely populated by Africans. (According to the 1845 census, approximately 226,000 members of the population were of African ancestry.) A new community took shape--a miscegenated Taíno-Spanish-African population. The African population settled in such places today known as Santurce, Carolina, Loiza, Canovanas, Fajardo, Culebra, and Vieques to such an extent that from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century, the island of Puerto Rico was labeled "negrito" and/or "mulatto."

Like its Puerto Rican counterpart, Taínos originally populated the island of Cuba. Again overcome by disease

and overpowered and/or often displaced by well-armed Spaniards, the Taíno population once again declined. As too held true in Puerto Rico, the African slave trade also impacted this neighboring country. The transport of blacks from West African shores to Cuba increased significantly between 1762 through the 1800s. Rather than gold, slave labor was used to promote sugar, coffee, and tobacco plantations--with *azucar* (sugar) being the most lucrative of the three industries.

By the early 1800s, Cuba had become the world's leading producer of sugar. The demand for African slave labor continued to increase: nearly 370,000 slaves were involved in the country's sugar production. Here again, blacks were transported from Central and West African regions today known as Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone (with which the New Haven, CT community is deeply connected by way of the Amistad and its captors), Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin and surrounding areas. By the early 1800s, approximately 70% of Cuba was populated by people of African descent. They lived throughout the island, particularly along the coastal regions.

With the forced importation of African peoples to Puerto Rican and Cuban shores, however, came a fusion of culture, customs, and traditions--among them the music and storytelling tradition accompanied by the playing of the drum.

## **The Powerful Drum (Unit Study: Weeks 3 and 4)**

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As in many African traditions, the African drum served as a source of communication throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. The djembe (pronounced jim-bay) was well known in regions such as Mali, Guinea, Senegal and surrounding areas; the dundun and dunno--known as talking drums--were prevalent Nigeria, Ghana and surrounding regions. The bata and conga originated in such areas as Nigeria and central regions such as Republic of Congo. These percussion instruments were carried over to Puerto Rican and Cuban shores. Despite differing physical attributes and name variations based on their place of origin, each of these utilitarian instruments was used to relay messages of hope, warning, emergency, war, and celebration--even on Puerto Rican and Cuban shores.

Slaveholders recognized the drum's use and powerful symbolism. Many slave traders and "hacendados" (plantation owners) banned the use of these rhythmic tools among transported blacks, fearing that those shackled by slavery's tenacious grasp would one day internalize the message and rebel. The rhythms, however, remained in the soul and spirit of those enslaved. Where drum use was minimized, body percussions such as the slapping of the chest, the tapping of ones thighs, knees, and arms, or the clapping of hands were often used as rhythmic accompaniments. Communication continued! Where the use of drums was suppressed, make-shift instruments were developed. In time, the use of the drum reemerged. As diverse groups of people transformed into new Caribbean cultures, new blended rhythms emerged.

### **African and Latino Drums: An Up-Close Look**

*( Note: Audio-visual resources serve as a wonderful complement to this section. See "Soundbites" and make use of the wealth of information contained therein. Pictures of various drums in the African and Latino tradition can be downloaded and enlarged for classroom informational and/or word-wall display . Audio-visual displays at <http://www.bongocentral.com/drums.htm>, <http://www.songtrellis.com/rhythmPage> and*

[http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/archives\\_03.aspx](http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/archives_03.aspx) are highly recommended for music and dance demonstrations. Babatunde Olatunji's *Drums of Passion*, *Top Drums: Djembe* by Dioum African Arts also serve as outstanding auditory accompaniments. )

African drums--particularly from West Africa and the Congo regions--and their enticing, communicative rhythms survived the transatlantic slave trade. Used as an important part of everyday life and ceremony in African culture, the drum with its many purposes continued to be similarly embraced on Puerto Rican and Cuban shores.

World renowned master drummer Babatunde Olatunji concurs, explaining that African drumming and music overall has impacted the world both past and present. That impact has had far reaching affects, encompassing even the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico:

As you move from North America to South America, the retention of African tradition even becomes more powerful... the continents were not really separated... so if you go to Trinidad, you can listen to people who are chanting the same songs to the God of Thunder as they do in Nigeria. If you go to the oriental province of Cuba, where Mongo Santamaria came from, they have the same way of life and the same way of talking [that] is practically the same as the Guinea tribe... It's all over. That's how the contribution of African culture, development of world culture, has been very tremendous. (Babatunde Olatunji)

Although African drums have taken on new names depending on the places of origin and use, they continue to be used as communication tools in their "distant homelands". Below is a listing of African drums that have influenced Cuban and Puerto Rican culture and today are used widely throughout Africa and the world.

### **Conga**

Referred to as the "tumbadora" in Cuba, the conga drum is played throughout central and western Africa (primarily in the Congo region). It is a single headed drum usually made from hollowed logs. Its head is covered with stretched and tightened goat skin. In the African tradition, the conga was used as a principal instrument in religious ceremonies. It is played while the drummer is in a seated position. In Puerto Rican and Cuban culture, this drum comes in three sizes: quinta, conga, and tumbadora. They range in drum head size from small to large.

The varied sizes contribute to their distinct tones. "Congeros" (conga players) use five basic strokes to create energized percussion rhythms: the open tone (producing a resonating, distinct pitch tone), muffled tone (a muffled version of the open tone), base tone (producing a deep, low, and muted sound), slap (producing a popping sound), and touch (similar to a drumroll). Use of the conga drum is popular throughout the world today. In Cuba, it is used as an accompaniment to sensual rumba dancing. It too is used to accompany Santeria, orisha worship services embraced in many Caribbean and South American cultures, including Cuba and Puerto Rico.

### **Djembe**

The djembe (pronounced jim-bay), said to have originated in Mali, is a goblet-shaped musical instrument whose crafting is said to have been inspired by the shape of the mortar and pestle. Its name was derived from

the Djem, the Malian tree from which the drum's base is made. Used throughout West Africa in such countries as Guinea, Senegal, and surrounding areas, it produces a wide range of tones based on the slapping hand movements of its "djembefola" (djembe drum player). In West African culture, its drumhead is usually made of goatskin, although the hide of zebras, antelope, deer, and calves has also been used. The skin is stretched on top of the drum base secured by a rope-tightening process. The djembe is usually harnessed to the djembefola and is played in a standing position. Legs are used to balance and control the instrument while playing. Long, long ago, the djembe was used as a source of communication to send messages long distances from one West African community to another. Today, this instrument is played throughout the African continent and abroad.

Long ago, djembe drums were traditionally played at ceremonious occasions, e.g., weddings, baptisms, and birth celebrations. The playing of the djembe is always accompanied by dance. Today, in West African and Puerto Rican cultures, and various cultures throughout the world, djembe rhythms are used as an entertaining dance accompaniment at festive occasions.

### **Dun Dun and Dunno**

The dun dun and dunno, commonly referred to as talking drums, are rooted in Nigerian and Ghanaian culture. These drums produce three primary tones--bass, tone, and slap--produced by the positioning of the fingers on the animal skin drum surface. Striking the rim near its outer edge produces a high, sharp tone. Positioning the fingers in that vicinity using a relaxed motion produces a slap. Positioning one's fingers near the drum's center produces a powerful bass tone. Together, the syncopated rhythms are enticing, making it impossible not to sway with the beat. The dun dun and dunno are played during religious ceremonies and is also used during festive occasions in both previously-noted countries, and can be traced to Cuban and Puerto Rican shores.

### **Panderos**

These hand drums come in three sizes ranging from small to large. Played as an accompaniment to Plena music in Puerto Rico, panderos look like tambourines without the cymbals. They are comprised of a wooden frame covered with animal skin--primarily goatskin. Differing pitches result depending upon how the skin has been stretched across the top of the instrument's base. Except for their wooden base, they are similar in appearance to the Nigerian *atele*, *omele*, *sakara*, and *iya alu* --a set of four hand drums that too vary in size from tiny to extra large. These size variations also contribute to differing tones.

The major difference between the panderos and their Nigerian counterparts is that the base of the Nigerian version is made of clay covered with goatskin, tightened with protruding wood spokes. Additionally, panderos are usually played solely by hand; the *atele*, *omelet*, *sakara*, and *iya alu* are played both by hand and with slender wooden sticks. Panderos are used as an accompaniment to Plena.

### **Boleador and Subidor**

In Puerto Rico, these types of drums were traditionally made from transported rum, lard, or nail barrels. Today, these two drums are used as an accompaniment to Bomba dancing. Their upper rims, covered with goat skins, were attached by stretching and heating the hide on top of the drum. The drum tunes are adjusted by a tightening of screws or ropes around the drumhead, producing a full, rich sound. The subidor, a smaller version of the boleador, is created in the same fashion. It produces a high pitch sound and is used for improvisational purposes, accompanying the dancer's movements.

Bomba music is rooted in West African rhythms, particularly from Ghana, West Africa. This type of drumming can be heard today in the northeastern portion of Puerto Rico, particularly in the townships of Fajardo and Loiza.

## **Bata**

Also referred to as "talking drums," bata drums are said to have originated in Nigeria. They are cylindrical and tapered in form and are used in both Cuba and Puerto Rico. In Nigerian and other West African cultures, the tonal qualities of this percussion instrument literally talk, for their melodic rhythms are reflective of Yoruba, a tonal language widely spoken in Nigeria and surrounding areas. Today, bata rhythms continue to talk, serving as an underlying percussion sound in jazz and R&B.

The use of bata drums has been carried over into Puerto Rican and Cuban culture. In addition to being used for festive occasions, the bata has also conventionally been used to recite traditional prayers, religious poetry, greetings, announcements, praises for leaders, and even jokes and teasing. In Yoruba cultures, speakers use three basic tones or pitches to pronounce words. These tones resonate through the bata in both Puerto Rican and Cuban culture.

Long, long ago, in Nigerian culture, bata drums were used primarily for religious events and ceremonies. Today, bata drums come in three sizes and are identified as the "iya" or mother drum (the larger of the three), the "itotele" (the medium-sized drum) and the "okonkolo" (the baby of the trio). Their varying sizes produce varying tones and pitches.

In Cuba and Puerto Rico, some use bata drums in their religious practice of Santeria. (This religion is a spinoff of Christianity and deity worship practiced in Nigerian and other West African countries.) Bata drums are deemed sacred drums used during Santeria ceremonies.

## **Past Rhythms Resound Today (Week 5)**

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Bomba and Plena are two distinct types of musical styles prevalent in Puerto Rico today. These music forms, complemented by syncopated, rhythmic dance, are influenced by African culture. Of the two, however, Bomba is untainted in form, for it was brought to La Isla African slaves during the seventeenth century and has retained much of its African traditional flair.

African captives, forced to work on sugar plantations, were a creative lot. Despite having been stripped of their culture, they ingeniously used resources in the surroundings to create musical instruments similar to those found in their African homelands. Crude barrels, for example, were used as the base portion of the drum. The uncovered upper portion of the barrel was secured with tightly stretched animal skins. Masterful drummers rhythmically pounded their instruments, producing syncopated sounds reflective of home. Creativity continued: these enslaved captives created other drums, one larger, one smaller. The smaller ones were accompanied by the beating of thin sticks and gourd-type rattles. Sekeres (pronounced "shake-eh-rays")--used throughout Ghana and neighboring West African countries (also referred to as gourd rattles)--added to the enticing rhythms.

As holds true in music in the African tradition, in Puerto Rico past and present, Bomba rhythms serve as a form of communication between the drummer and the dancer. During the 17th century, Bomba lyrics conveyed a sense of ire and melancholy concerning the condition of African people as slaves. The songs often signified the desire and cue to rebel. Bomba was also used as a healing tool, a source of celebration and identity. The celebratory, spiritually empowering nature of the music lives on today, for bomba is prevalent in Puerto Rico's coastal regions, particularly in the township of Loiza.

Plena, another musical form embraced in Puerto Rico, is a stirring blend of Taíno, Spanish, and African rhythms. It is prevalent in the Ponce region. Although it seems to be most reflective of the Spanish tradition, African rhythms serve as an undergirding factor throughout. Plena is played with a wide variety of musical instruments. The guiro (pronounced whee-row) is attributed to raspy wooden musical instruments played by the Taínos. The panderos, similar in form to the Nigerian omele and sakara, are used for the rhythmic percussion section. It is said that today, as in the past, Plena music is used to herald the news and town events of the day and/or to satirize political issues and/or politicians themselves. Plena is commonly referred to as "el periódico cantado" (the sung newspaper).

Bomba and Plena remain the most popular forms of folk music on the island, and many cultural events highlight this music for entertainment.

Rumba and Son are two forms of Cuban music always accompanied by rhythmic dance. Rumba--with its sensually moving sound accompanied by drum rhythms--made its way to Cuban shores during the African slave trade. Son, whose origins are rooted in the eastern portion of Cuba, is a blend of African and European rhythms; its movement and rhythm is said to be the original foundation for what we today refer to as "Salsa." (For a sampling of the "original salsa," obtain a copy of *Estrellas de Arietos: Los Heroes* ; you and your students will be energized by the rhythms.)

The conga drum is a major instrument used in these forms of music. They too are accompanied by bongos, maracas, guitar, clave, and alternately a trumpet section.

### **Sensitive Sidebar**

In many African and Caribbean countries, the use of drums is an integral part of the traditional worship experience. Santería, a religious practice embraced widely throughout parts of South America and the Caribbean, is also embraced in portions of Cuba and in parts Puerto Rico. It is a blend of West African Yoruba religions and Catholicism: slaves in Cuba were forced to embrace the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Recognizing a distinct parallel between religious practices in Catholicism and Yoruba religions, these ingenious captives created a secret religion. They used Catholic saints and personages as fronts for their own gods (referred to as orishas). Conga drum rhythms accompanied by song are used to pay homage to Shango and other orishas.

Because of the ritualistic nature of this religious practice (and for many parents and educators, a controversial one)--mention of Santería and traditional religious can be briefly highlighted.

## Narrative Response: An Interactive Lesson (Unit Study: Weeks 6 through 8)

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Narrative writing is a major component of the Grade 2 and 3 curricula on a district and statewide level. It reinforces logical thinking and comprehension skills, empowering young learners to express themselves in both written and oral. In line with these requirements, **Listen to the Rhythm** includes a writing component.

The primary goal of this interactive writing component is to develop and strengthen narrative writing skills. The lesson duration for each writing activity is three, 50-minute sessions per week. Our primary focus is writing with emphasis on drafting, editing, and finalizing copy.

Through the use of provided background information and select non-fictional and folkloric tales, students have learned that the drum has served an important role in the lives of African, Cuban, and Puerto Rican peoples. They recognize that the drum often heralds various social, political, and religious aspects of everyday life. Based on this understanding, students will create an engaging short story incorporating the use of the drum as a major source of communication.

By implementing this activity, students will demonstrate their understanding of covered material through narrative writing and will recognize that non-fictional information often serves as a framework for fictional writing. Students will be encouraged to take care in creating, editing, and finalizing their written work. (They too are encouraged to remember the acronym, **COPS**: **C** apitalize, where needed, **O** rganize thoughts, using correct **P** unctuation, and be **S** ure that **S** entences syntactically make **S** ense.)

Recognizing that young learners--particularly at Grade 2--eagerly embrace kinesthetic and tactile learning activities, each student will participate in a drum-making activity. Their drum creations along with the written work will be placed on display for viewing by the entire school community.

### Before We Begin

Exposing young learners to diverse types of literature serves as a springboard to writing. To provide children to a sampling of how to incorporate our story theme (i.e., the use of the drum as it relates to aspects of everyday life in specific cultures) into their writing experience, begin with a read-aloud session, using Angela Shelf Mederaz's exciting literary work, *The Singing Man*. (This work is a retelling of a Nigerian folktale that explains how the "griot" [pronounced "gree-yo" meaning "storyteller"] came to use music and the oral tradition to pass down the history of a people from one generation to the next.)

To make the reading activity kinesthetically interactive, have the children handclap a rhythm while you turn select pages during the read-aloud activity. Drum-playing can also be used as an alternative interactive activity to be used at strategic points in the text where drum-rhythms are highlighted (see Drum-making Activity).

### Drumbeats: An Arts & Literacy Writing Assignment

Long, long, ago, throughout Africa, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, the drum was used to announce special events, to accompany specific ceremonies and rituals, and/or to explain things that happened in everyday life. Pretend you are a person who lived during this time. Envision an event that could have taken place (a wedding, the birth of a child, a warning to escape from the slave master's plantation...) Think of the characters included in and activities surrounding that event. Keeping the use and sounds of the drum included in your story, use

words to paint a visual picture of what happened. We want to feel, taste, see, and hear your story! Come on! You can do it!

**Objective: To create a descriptive fictional work that includes structure and organizational patterns.**

Requirements: Students will use their imagination to create their own narrative work. The story creation should include an engaging beginning, a well-defined setting, and characters consistent throughout, a well-described series of events/problems, an engaging conclusion/resolution, and an attention-grabbing closing statement.

### **Scores/Rubric**

Scores of 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1 should be applied based on the following criteria:

6 = student has included an engaging beginning, sentences are well constructed, organization, elaboration, and fluency are well-developed; overall storyline is well defined\_\_

5 = student has included a somewhat engaging beginning; sentences are generally well constructed; organization, elaboration, and fluency are evident; overall storylines is well defined

4= student has included a descriptive beginning; sentences are somewhat descriptive but inconsistent throughout; organization, elaboration, and fluency are conveyed

3 = student has included a simple beginning, middle, and end; sentences are minimally descriptive but generally well constructed; organization and fluency are evident

2 = student has not included the beginning, middle, and/or end; sentences are minimally descriptive and are unorganized; fluency is minimally evident; storyline is vague

1 = no storyline is conveyed

### **Evaluation**

Confer with students to review writing results based on achieved rubric score. Where necessary, have student revisit the story, editing and revising where required. Final product can be formally typed and illustrated by student for display. Retain original writing samples in student folder for future student self-evaluation, and to generally monitor student progress.

## **Drum-making Activity**

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Drums are an important part of life and ceremony in many cultures. Here is a simple method for you and your students to create a fun-sounding percussion instrument to celebrate cultures of the world!

Needed Materials:

- a medium or large sized empty coffee can with a plastic lid (to be used as the drumhead)
- construction paper
- Elmer's rubber cement
- a ruler
- scissors
- construction paper
- permanent or water-base markers in an assortment of vibrant colors
- colored pencils and assorted crayons
- String, leather, feathers, beads, cowry shells, and/or available scrap materials
- Design pattern samples reflective of Nigerian, Ghanaian, Puerto Rican, and Cuban cultures

### Steps for Implementation

1. Measure the width and height of the can (without lid sealed thereon). Correspondingly measure and cut construction paper based on can measurement. This will be wrapped and adhered to the base of the drum using rubber cement.

2. Paint culturally-specific patterns and designs on the coffee can. (Make use of Mira Bartok's *Adinkra* or *Nigeria* stenciling resources [see Adult Bibliographic reference for additional details], pictorial images [see Web Resources], or actual drum samples for students to get a visual feel for drum patterns and designs.)

If student drum creations will be used to accompany their narrative creations, as an alternative, have students illustrate pictures thereon reflective of their stories.

3. Using Elmer's Rubber cement glue, firmly apply painted/designed construction paper to can. Clasp the plastic lid on its opened, upper end.

4. Use cowry shells and feathers to accentuate the percussion instrument along its sides and upper rim. We are ready to play those rhythms!

### Reading Comprehension & Writing Extras

For many young learners at the second and third grade level, additional support is frequently needed in the area of summarization. *The Singing Man* and other story selections such as Mayra L. Dole's realistic fiction work *Drum, Chavi, Drum!* (*Toca, Chavi, Toca* in the Spanish version) can be used for alternative writing activities to empower students in this area.

Written response questions to be used as summarization springboards can include a *Rename The Story* activity, using key information from the text to support the title change **or** a *Summarize This* exercise, requiring students to briefly discuss the main events of the story using details from the text to support the answer in the order in which they occur.

Scored student responses should be given a **"2"** if the student has included all of the outlined requirements in his/her written response; **"1"** if the student has generally included main characters, setting, one major problem/event supported by one major solution/outcome, sentences are well constructed, and basic understanding is conveyed; or **"0"**, where none of the criteria have been met.

As an evaluative follow-up, confer with students to review writing results based on achieved rubric score. Make recommendations where required. (Additionally, encourage students to self-monitor.) Have student edit work where necessary. Retain writing samples in student folder for future student self-evaluation, and to generally monitor student progress.

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Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620 - 1776* . New York: Atheneum, 1968 (first published in 1942). Provides eye-opening information on slavery in the New England region, dispelling the myth that slavery occurred primarily in the South.

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* . New York: Capricorn Books, (1966, first edition published in 1944). This work takes an up close look at slavery as it relates to the establishment of America's economic system, racism, societal injustice, and more.

## CHILDREN'S BOOK BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Dole, Mayra L. *Drum, Chavi, Drum! (Toca, Chavi, Toca)* Children's Book Press, California (August 2003). A contemporary realistic fiction tale written by a Cuban-born writer and Senegalese djembe drum player; djembes are often traditionally played by males throughout West African and Caribbean cultures. Dole's work sends a rhythmically empowering message to young girls everywhere to challenge that reality!

Foley, Erin. *Festivals of the World: Puerto Rico* . Gareth Stevens Publishing Company (1997). Examines several facets of cultural celebrations embraced in Puerto Rico.

Da Coll, Ivar. *Azucar! La Vida de Celia Cruz* . Lectorum Publications, New York (2005). Autobiography of renowned Cuban songstress, Celia Cruz, written in Spanish.

Dworsky, Alan. *Conga Drumming: A Beginner's Guide to Playing with Time* (Book & CD Edition), Mel Bay Publishers (1996). Provides background info on Conga drums, along with practice guide on how to play the percussion instrument.

\_\_\_\_\_. *How To Play Djembe: West African Rhythms for the Beginner* . Dancing Hands Music - Book & CD Edition (July 2000). Provides background info on Djembe drums, along with practice guide on how to play the percussion instrument

Feelings, Tom. *Middle Passage - Introduction by Dr. John Henrik Clarke* . Dial Books, New York (1995). A pictorial essay of the Middle Passage beginning from European shores to the Americas. A handy visual resource to highlight the African holocaust.

Lester, Julius. *From Slavery To Freedom*. Puffin Books, New York (December 1999). Another artistic portrayal of the black man's journey to Western shores during the middle passage.

Medaris, Angela Shelf. *The Singing Man* . Holiday House, New York (1994). This Nigerian folkloric tale explains the trek of the griot (African storyteller who passes the history of his people from one generation to the next) and how music and storytelling came to be in Nigerian culture.

Souhami, Jessica. *The Leopard's Drum: An Asante Tale from West Africa* . Little, Brown & Company, New York (1995) A fun-filled Ghanaian that explains how--by what of a drum--the turtle got its shell.

Yolen, Jane. *Encounter*. Voyager Books, New York (1996). An intriguing historic fictional work retelling Columbus' voyage from a Taíno child's perspective

## WEB RESOURCES

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[http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/country/content.country/puerto\\_rico\\_12](http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/country/content.country/puerto_rico_12) National Geographic website on Puerto Rican music and its history

<http://africanmusic.org/glossary.html> Glossary for African styles of music

<http://www.rhythmweb.com/jorge/plena.htm> Article and background soundtrack re: plena music

[http://www.musicofpuertorico.com/en/genre\\_bomba.html](http://www.musicofpuertorico.com/en/genre_bomba.html) Audio snippet and brief article on the origins of bomba

[http://www.batadrums.com/understanding\\_rhythms/talk.htm](http://www.batadrums.com/understanding_rhythms/talk.htm) Background information re: how the bata drum talks and messages that are conveyed

<http://www.lafi.org/magazine/articles/batadrums.html> Background on the use of the bata drum in Cuban culture

<http://welcome.topuertorico.org/culture/music.shtml> Provides background info on the music of Puerto Rico, accentuating artists known for moving us with traditional, contemporary, and folkloric music well known throughout La Isla and abroad

<http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/carib/carib.htm> Provides an overview of percussion instruments influenced by African culture found throughout the Caribbean from the Historical Museum of Southern Florida

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_immigration\\_to\\_Puerto\\_Rico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_immigration_to_Puerto_Rico) Background information on the immigration of African people to the island of Puerto Rico

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/vidal/music.htm> Provides a bit of background information defining the music of Puerto Rico

<http://aris.ss.uci.edu/rgarfias/courses/latino/pr1.html> This site provides background info on the music of Puerto Rico, emphasizing African influence on Bomba, Plena, and other forms of musical expression

[http://www.gotopuertorico.com/newsletter/2004\\_spring/english/featured.htm](http://www.gotopuertorico.com/newsletter/2004_spring/english/featured.htm) A general information newsletter accentuating the origins of today's contemporary music heard throughout Puerto Rico

<http://www.batadrums.com/background/yoruba.htm> Origins of Bata drums

<http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/carib/carib.htm#Puerto%20Rico> Puerto Rican

percussion

<http://www.alovelyworld.com> A wonderful visual resource to help students get a sense of lifestyles, culture, and diversity within countries throughout the world.

<http://www.alovelyworld.com/webcuba/htmgb/lahavane.htm> A pictorial view of the island of Cuba; great geographic accompaniment to map study for this region.

<http://www.alovelyworld.com/webseneg/index2.html> A pictorial view of the country of Senegal; terrific geographic accompaniment to map study for this region.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_history\\_in\\_Puerto\\_Rico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_history_in_Puerto_Rico) background information re: slavery in Puerto Rico

<http://www.seeingblack.com/2004/x021304/puertorico.shtml> background information on African culture and its influence on Puerto Rico; provides additional resource info via "*El Museo de Nuestra Raiz Africana in San Juan, PR*"

<http://sparta.rice.edu/~maryc/Santeria> Provides an overview of Santeria and orishas (deities) as it is embraced by West African Yoruban, South American, and Caribbean cultures

## SOUNDBITES

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[http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/archives\\_03.aspx](http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/archives_03.aspx) A wonderful Smithsonian website displaying audio/visual samplings of Bomba and Plena. You'll get up and join in the rhythm and dance on this one!

<http://hometown.aol.com/np4cc/music.htm> Background information on music heard throughout Puerto Rico accompanied by wonderful and enticing traditional music

<http://www.bongocentral.com/drums.htm> an informative advertisement website that provides photo images and sound bites of West African drums

<http://www.batadrums.com/background/yoruba.htm> Audio sampling of bata drums played in Nigeria and Cuba for various ceremonies and occasions (e.g., a woman's funeral, Yoruba prayers to Shango, orisha festival rhythms...)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_TZfVjncuA&eurl=](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_TZfVjncuA&eurl=) Audio/visual sampling of djembe drumming accompanied by dance movements

<http://spaces.msn.com/my-puerto-rico/> Audio sampling of African influence in Puerto Rican drumming

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$409](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$409) Audio sampling of Nigerian drum rhythms brought over to Cuba used for secret society and traditional religion ceremonies

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$224](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$224) Audio sampling of Liberian "dinner-will-be-served" rhythms

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$224](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$224) Audio sampling of Gahu rhythms from the Ewe people of Ghana

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$227](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$227) Audio sampling of Kpanlongo from the Ga people of Ghana

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$881](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$881) Senegalese Djembe players

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$425](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$425) Senegalese Djembe rhythms

[http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader\\$339](http://www.songtrellis.com/discuss/msgReader$339) Bomba and Plena rhythms of Puerto Rico and Cuba

[http://encarta.msn.com/media\\_461533026/Bomba\\_Music\\_of\\_Puerto\\_Rico.html](http://encarta.msn.com/media_461533026/Bomba_Music_of_Puerto_Rico.html) Sampling of traditional bomba music of Puerto Rico

<http://www.batadrums.com/background/bembe.htm> Sampling of Cuban drum rhythms with background information

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz/main.asp?lang=MCo3044101946vWhS> Musical selections by world renowned Cuban vocalist Celia Cruz; of particular note are *Ye Ye Oh Oh Guama* , a song dedicated to the Nigerian orisha (diety) Oshún, *A Papá* , a traditional Plena from Puerto Rico arranged in a salsa style

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz/> Azucar: an impressive on-line resource re: the life of world renowned Cuban vocalist Celia Cruz, presented by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Often accompanied by percussionists who like herself embraced the African connection, Celia used the word "Azucar!" whenever she made her intro on stage, heralding her rich connection with the spicy flare and flavor of her diverse ancestry, the Afro-Cuban rhythms, coupled with the subliminal historic connection that sugar was/an integral part of Cuba's economy, a product that propelled the slave trade in her homeland, yet the people survived.

## MUSIC RESOURCES

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The following recordings are perfect for introducing young learners to the sound of musical instruments played throughout Africa. Drums such as the djembe, bata, and conga are prevalent within each of these musical selections. Some cuts are traditional; others are contemporary. All give a flavor of African music past and present--and are worth adding to your collection.

When introducing these selections, be certain to highlight that many instruments, such as drums, gourd rattles, guitars, and finger pianos are rooted in African beginnings. Today, these instruments are familiar to many cultures throughout the world. Providing this background information serves as a springboard to embracing African influences as a global connector to diverse cultures.

### From Putomayo Records

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*Africa* (sampling of music throughout the African continent; of particular interest are Ya Mbemba, *African Odyssey* (sampling of African Music Continent-wide)

*Afro-Latin Party* (a rich blend of Afro-Cuban rhythms; Yoruba lyrics infused with Spanish with background drums are infused on several cuts.

*Congo to Cuba* (sampling of fused West African and Cuban vintage and contemporary rhythms)

*Mali to Memphis: Evolution of The Blues From West African Kingdoms to the*

*Mississippi Delta* (sampling of The Blues from An African Diaspora Perspective)

*Miriam Mkeba* (Central and South African selections)

*Afro Latin Party* (contemporary Puerto Rican and Cuban beats undergirded with African rhythms; a compilation of works by diverse Latino artists)

## Miscellaneous Selections Available on Cassette Tape or CD

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*Top Drums: Djembe* (sampling of Senegalese drumming extraordinaire) available via Dioum African Arts , POB 1692, Lincoln Station, NYC 10037

*The Path* by Ralph McDonald, Antisia Music, Inc. (beginning with Yoruba orisha chants, traces African rhythms from Nigerian shores to the Caribbean to the U.S.)

*Drums of Passion* by Babatunde Olatunji, Columbia Records (traditional West African drum rhythms beautifully presented by this Nigerian master drummer and his musical entourage)

*More Drums of Passion* by Babatunde Olatunji, Columbia Records (a continuation of traditional West African drum rhythms by this world-renowned Nigerian percussionist)

*Pop Music From Africa Parts 1 and 2* , LaserLight (Contemporary West African selections)

*Estrellas de Arietos: Los Heroes*, Nonesuch (Available through Amazon.com) Sampling of Cuban Son music; undergirding West African drum rhythms are readily identifiable throughout; cuts heard herein are considered the original foundation of "salsa"

*Albita: Son* Contemporary Cuban songstress Albita presents traditional songs in the son tradition; again, the African drum influence flows throughout.

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