

## Poetry in West African Music

### Students

Rationale:: Students will understand African poetry for the talking drum.(Dun Dun) Students will write a simple two line couplet. Students will find a simple form to write original music and be successful.

#### Objectives

##### State Standards:

2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

3. Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments

4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

5. Reading a notating music

6. Listening to, analyzing and describing music

7. Evaluating music and music performances

8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts and disciplines outside the arts

9. Understanding music in relationship to history and culture.

**Objectives:** Students will integrate learning how to write a simple rhyming couplet with writing African style poetry of the talking drum.

Students will enlarge their concept of how music (notes, rhythms timbre) can have specific meaning. Students will understand how music can be an integral part of the artistic expression of a culture. Students will continue to develop their understanding of how integral the drums and music are to the West African way of life. Students will

#### Materials:

Tubanos,  
Talking drums,  
rattles.

Examples of two line couplets to read to the class.

World Music Student Journals.  
Poster of the couplet and rhythm/pitch.

practice playing in ensemble and keeping a steady beat. Students will increase their knowledge and perceptions of pitch differences and how sounds can rhyme in pitch and rhythm. Students will practice their performance skills. Students will share a common performance experience. Students will self-evaluate and describe the experience of performing an original work of art. Students will listen and discriminate sounds, pitches and timbre.

**Procedure:** (African drum music playing when students enter the room)

1. Students take out their World music journals and grab a pencil. Students listen to an example of the talking drum playing poetry. No explanation yet.
2. Students describe in single words what musical things they heard.
3. I will read a simple two line couplet poem.

Here I stand in the heat,  
Don't I wish I had bare feet.

I'll repeat the couplet several times and then ask the kids to:

- a. count how many syllables the poem has in each line/ how many beats in the line
- b. listen to the inflexion of my voice as it goes up and down in pitch.
- c. draw in their journals two lines representing the pitch changes of my voice for each line of the couplet.

Here I stand in the heat,

Don't I wish I had bare feet.

4. Show my own example of how I think the pitch and rhythm sound and then play the talking drum to imitate the rhythm and the inflexion of my voice in the poem. Describe and discuss the African poetry of the talking drum, as well as the techniques in playing it.
5. The students will play a simple ostinato pattern in 5/4 time with body percussion. I will read my poem, I will play my poem on the drum.

6. Students will be asked to write their own simple two line rhyming couplet about something they wish for in their journal. They may have great freedom of topics and the subject may be serious or funny. I will spontaneously make up couplets for them as examples, using topics they suggest. Four to five minutes to finish, they may help each other or work alone. They must listen to themselves recite the poem and draw lines in their journal to describe the pitch and rhythm

7. Students will be broken into two groups and form two small circles, each group will get a talking drum to translate their poem into drumming. The drum will be passed around and each student will recite their poem for the class and then try to play it on the drum.

8. After every student has had a turn to practice, I will solicit several students to say and play their couplet for the whole class.

9 Students will form a large drum circle and learn a simple ostinato on the tubanos and rattles. We will alternate between playing the ostinato and students reading their poems with words and playing them on the drum. We will tape record our performance.

#### **Bibliography**

Africa West. Compact Disc, Track 9  
Silver Burdett, Music Connection  
Compact Disc, Grade 5 CD 12:38  
Music of Africa, Videotape, National  
Heritage Society

#### special notes

**Follow-up lessons.** We will revisit this topic in a nineteen minute video called Music of Africa, from the National Heritage Society. Students will get a chance to perform their poem at an evening performance of music later in the spring.

**Assessment:** Teacher observation of students poems and interpretation.

Class discussion of the pitch, rhythm and tempo of the poems in word and the poems in sound.

Students will listen to the recordings at the next class meeting and discuss how well their pitch and rhythm reflected the poem they wrote.

Students will commend other students on parts of the poem they understood on the drum.

