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French folktales teacher and viewer guide

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French Folktales

Teacher and Viewer Guide



FRENCH FOLKTALES

Designed by:

Dr. Christopher Lee, Director
Logan Lepard West African Drum and Dance Ensemble

Produced and Distributed by:

ITV
South Carolina ETV

User guide developed by:

A. Dawn Samples, Lexington School District Two
Dianne L. Gregory, ITV
Rhonda N. Raven, ITV

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About This Guide

Culture is a primary focus in foreign language education. Each culture has traditions, beliefs, stories, and practices that are unique to that culture. These programs will focus on traditional, cultural stories or aspects of storytelling from the target culture.

The featured segment is very unique. This drum and dance ensemble from Logan Elementary School in Columbia, South Carolina show how the tales of daily life, stories of weddings, celebrations, and births in French West Africa are expressed in their culture through dance, song and music.

This series has for a target audience beginner and intermediate language learners. It is not specific to a grade level but rather to the language level of the learner.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Modern Language Curriculum Standards

Communication

Standard 1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

1.2.2. The learner will demonstrate understanding of age-appropriate culturally rooted materials, e.g., rhymes, songs, folk tales. (Beginning)

Cultures

Standard 2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and the perspectives of the cultures studied.

2.1.1. The learner will identify similarities and differences among the cultural practices and perspectives of each country studied by:

- Identifying cultural customs and celebrations. (Beginning)

Standard 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and the perspectives of the cultures studied.

2.2.2. The learner will identify and participate in the expressive forms of the culture, e.g., children's songs, selections from children's literature, other types of artworks. (Beginning)

Connections

Standard 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

3.1.1. The learner will identify and use in the target language previously acquired concepts from other subject areas, such as:

- Social studies (geography)
- Visual and performing arts (authentic songs and dances) (Beginning)

Comparisons

Standard 4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons between the cultures studied and their own.

4.2.3. The learner will demonstrate familiarity with forms of artistic expression, e.g., folk tales, rhymes, songs. (Beginning)

Dance Information

Yankedi

Yankedi is a noble Susu social dance meaning the "Sweet Place." Also danced by the Malinke, it originated in lower Guinea near Boke, Guinea. *Yankedi* is performed at baby naming ceremonies, weddings and rites of passage ceremonies for men.

Soli

Soli is a rite of passage celebration for girls. The dance, *Soli*, is the second dance of the celebration. Originated in Upper Guinea, *Soli* is danced all over the Mande people's region.

Kakilambe

Kakilambe is a masked dance from the Baga People located in Lower Guinea. Only seen by the initiated dancer, the *Kakilambe* gives information about the well-being of the village and forest.

Kuku

A celebration dance of the Susu people, *Kuku* is performed for weddings, baby naming ceremonies and other celebrations or ceremonies. The tempo is usually very fast.

Background

The rhythms of West Africa are as diverse and interesting as the people living in the region. According to Royal Hartigan:

"Traditional drumming, dancing and music in general are deeply integrated into African Society and play a vital role in people's daily lives."¹ Hartigan continues, ". . . a dance/drum ensemble performs as a way of marking an important event in the life of the community. Births, puberty, marriages, funerals, the planting and harvesting of crops, hunting, religious and state occasions, and social or recreational activities are all honored with particular types of music and dance."

The Mande people, including the great Malian Empire, initially lived in the middle Niger region.² Eventually the members of the tribe migrated west towards the Atlantic Ocean, east to the Savannah and south to the coastal forest regions. Presently, the Mande live in Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, the Gambia, and Sierra Leone.³

The comprehensive West African Mande percussion ensemble outlined in this document is solely based on music from the Guinean Mande. Consequently, it is important to note that the country of Guinea can be conveniently divided into four regions: Lower (Base), Middle (East), Upper (Haute), and the Forest. Each region is divided into tribes with their own language, music and culture. The Susu and Baga people live in Lower Guinea; the Fula and Koniega in the Middle; the Mandingo and Malinke in the Upper region; and the Toma, Kissi, Gerzze, and Kounianki people in the Forest region.⁴

Integrating a West African Mande percussion ensemble curriculum into a percussion program can be beneficial for the students, school and community. Students will have the opportunity to participate in a multi-cultural experience. Musically, they will learn new techniques such as basic jembe and dundun sound production, hand and stick patterns and ten Mande rhythms. West African drumming ensembles have proven to be immensely popular in many communities. Concerts draw large crowds that help gain visibility, as well as provide the school with non-Western music course offerings. Furthermore, such an ensemble can be used for community outreach events including concerts and educational performances at schools throughout the community.

As the founder and director of the University of South Carolina West African Drumming & Dance Ensemble, Dr. Christopher Lee began researching the drumming of the Mande people in 1997 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Jembe & Dance Institute (JDI) hosted by Dr. Eric Charry. Subsequently, he has studied in Guinea, West Africa with artists such as Sekouba Camara (Les Ballets Africains, artistic director), Barbara Bangoura (Ballet Djolibal) and Fodé Bangoura (Percussions de Guinea). In the United States, he has participated in master classes with master drummers "Papa" Ladi Camara (Les Ballets Africains), Mohamed "Joh" Camara (Mali), Abdoul Doumbia (Mali), Djimo Kouyate (Guinea), Koumgbanan Conde (Percussions de Guinea), Madou Dembele (Le Ballets National de Côte d'Ivoire), and studied privately with Mohamed DaCosta (National Ballets of the Gambia and the Ivory Coast) among others. He is an artist and clinician for Pearl Drums, Avedis Zildjian Company, Innovative Percussion and on the Approved Artist List for the South Carolina Arts Commission.

Studying in Guinea, West Africa he's gained a new understanding of the music and became aware of the lack of readily available Mande drumming literature in the United States.

¹Royal Hartigan, Abraham Adzenyah, and Freeman Donkar. West African Rhythms for Drumset. Pp. 8.

²Eric Charry. Mande Music. Pp. 29.

³Eric Charry. Lecture notes. Jembe & Dance Institute 1997.

⁴Guinea National Museum of History exhibit.