A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators
This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss Under the Baobab Tree. It contains background, discussion questions and activities appropriate for ages 3 to 7.

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ABOUT THE SHOW AND ARTIST

Kuumba Kids™ is an innovative developer and provider of educational programs and materials for children. Kuumba Kids™ educates the whole child using a variety of outlets to promote creative learning and development. These include school assembly programs, Teaching Artist Residencies, Community Events, CD’s, videos, and books. Their programs and educational materials are research-based and aligned to Common Core Standards.

Kuumba™ was conceptualized in 2008 when educators Ms. Bashea and Dr. Kwaw Imana, identified that even with many efforts to close achievement gaps in America, there were still striking academic disparities among African-Americans. Moreover, Dr. and Mrs. Imana, parents of two toddlers were frustrated over the limited educational material that promoted the rich history and culture of Africa and African-Americans. As a result, they decided to create culturally rich educational materials that fostered a love for learning and promoted critical thinking, respect for the environment, character development and creativity. They named the organization Kuumba, a Swahili word which means creativity. They chose the word Kuumba to encourage children to see everything in the world as a creation and to identify themselves as little creators who use their brilliant minds to create a better world.

For the past 15 years, “Iya” Bashea Imana has been using the arts as a tool for education, empowerment, critical thinking, and creativity both in and outside of the classroom. She has worked in radio and television as a professional songwriter, vocalist, and producer. Currently, Imana serves as a Master Educator for DC Public Schools, where she defends the arts in education through supporting other teaching artists and using music to enhance core-curriculum subjects such as reading, mathematics, science and history.

The music used in this production of Under the Baobab Tree are original recordings from Bashea and are available to purchase through: https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/basheaimana12

For more information about Bashea and the Kuumba kids, please visit the artist’s website at: http://kuumbakids.com/
AN INTRODUCTION TO AFRICA

*Under the Baobab Tree* introduces children to Africa and African customs through music, dance, stories, and explanations of food. Africa is one of the seven continents and is home to 54 different countries, each with their own unique histories and cultures. An estimated 1,500 – 2,000 different languages are spoken on the continent. In Under the Baobab Tree, Iya Bashea teaches some words in Swahili. Some of the countries referenced in the show include *Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya*. Read more about each country on the following pages.

KENYAN CULTURE

Brief Overview

Music and Dance
Traditional Kenyan music originates from several sources. The music is mainly based on drumming, humming, singing and dance. On the coast, the growth of Swahili culture saw the growth of a unique style of music, called *Taarab*. Combining elements of African percussion with Arabic rhythms, *Taarab* has become a popular form of music that remains a coastal favorite today. Elsewhere, the use of drums became widespread and central to elaborate traditional dances. The word *Ngoma* (drum) is still used to describe most forms of traditional music and dance.

Food
The base of many meals at home is *sukuma wiki*, a stew that Kenyan cooks make of greens sautéed with garlic, diced tomatoes and broth. The name translates into "stretch the week," and the dish is designed to be served or mixed with other dishes to literally stretch kitchen resources. Two other dishes include *Irio* (made from corn, beans, potatoes and spinach) and *Mukimo* (made from corn and beans mashed into cooked bananas or potatoes).

Clothing
Many Kenyan women wear a colorful *kanga*, a large piece of cloth that can be wrapped around the body as a skirt or shawl and head scarves are also common. Women of the northern nomadic tribes wear *gorfa*, a sheepskin or goatskin dyed red or black and wrapped around the body, held in place with a leather cord and a rope belt. In urban areas, most people dress in Western-style clothing.
**NIGERIAN CULTURE**

**Brief Overview**

**Music and Dance**
Virtually all Nigerian cultures have their own traditions of music and dance, which are central to the way people remember their past and celebrate their present. Music and dance are traditionally viewed a method of storytelling and are classified by their purpose. For example, there are specific songs for sports, marriage and birth celebrations, funerals, festivals, etc.

**Food**
Soups and stews are an important part of most traditional Nigerian dishes. *Jolluf rice* (spiced with tomato, pepper, and onion), *Akara* (fried bean cakes), and *dodo* (fried plantains), are traditional side dishes that can be supplemented to become a main meal. Typical components of dishes include yams, plantains, rice, beans, *fufu*, cassava, amala, and *eba*.

**Clothing**
It is important to note that the way people dress is often reflective of their specific tribe and ethnic group. Many people, especially in the south, wear western attire as opposed to traditional clothing, but traditional clothing is reflective of cultural pride and heritage. An example of traditional Nigerian clothing is the *buba* worn by both men and women.

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**GHANIAN CULTURE**

**Brief Overview**

**Music and Dance**
The traditional dances performed by culture groups are a form of story-telling, often documenting important historical events or recounting ancestral folk tales. Akans have a traditional song aimed to cure certain ailments as well as specific drums played to shame a thief while he is paraded through town with whatever he stole in his hands. War-dances such as Achagbeko, an Ewe dance, or rain dances such as Bamaya, from northern Ghana, connect today’s youth with their rich tribal and national heritage.

**Food**
The majority of meals consist of thick, well-seasoned stews, usually accompanied by such staple foods as *rice* or boiled *yams*. Certain foods that make up the Ghanaian diet vary according to which region of the country people live in. In the north, *millet* (a type of grain), *yams*, and *corn* are eaten most frequently, while the south and west enjoy *plantains* (similar to bananas), *cassava*, and *coco yams* (a root vegetable).

**Clothing**
The traditional cloth associated with Ghana is called the *Kente*. Kente is made by the Akan people. It is a mix of cotton and silk and is worn for special occasions. Many people in Ghana take pride in continuing to wear their traditional clothing, even with the influx of Western styles.
GEOGRAPHY
Find Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya on the map!

VOCABULARY
Jambo: Jambo! (jam-buh!) is a Swahili greeting or salutation with an exclamation mark. It is similar in meaning to the English word Hello!

Hakuna Matata: Hakuna matata" is a Swahili phrase; roughly translated, it means "no worries". It is formed by the words hakuna (there is not here) and matata (plural form of problem)

Anansi: Anansi (/əˈnɑːnsi/ o-NAHN-see) is an African folktale character. He often takes the shape of a spider and is considered to be the spirit of all knowledge of stories. He is also one of the most important characters of West African and Caribbean folklore.

Kuumba: a Swahili word meaning creativity

Fanga Alafia: a greeting song and dance throughout parts of West Africa. Alafia is a Hausa greeting and Aasheey means something equivalent to good health and peace be with you.

Yoruba (language): The language of the Yoruba people. It is an official language of Nigeria.

Yoruba (people): an African people of south-western Nigeria and Benin.

Swahili: Swahili is a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania, Burundi, Congo (Kinshasa) Kenya, Mayotte, Mozambique, Oman, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, UAE and the USA

Culture: The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.
TRY IT AT HOME

Build your own drum!

Materials:

- Drinking cups (Styrofoam, plastic or paper)
- Glue
- Masking tape
- Shoe polish
- Rags
- Permanent markers

Alternate idea:

Instead of using masking tape and shoe polish, you can paper Mache on some white tissue paper and, once dry, brush overtop with coffee or strong tea.

Instructions:

1) Glue two cups together, bottom to bottom and let dry
2) If doing the project with a large group of children, pre-do the first step using hot glue to make things flow a bit more smoothly during craft time (most "low temp" craft hot glue guns work on Styrofoam cups... carpentry ones will melt them though).
3) Have the children tear off 4 to 5 inch lengths of masking tape and completely cover the opening at the top and bottom of the cups.
4) Using 3 to 4 inch lengths of masking tape, completely cover the outside of the cups.
5) Brush shoe polish all over the masking tape covered cups and then wipe off with rags.
6) Draw geometric or other designs around the top, middle and bottom of the drums with permanent markers.

Gangan/ Dundun, also known as 'Talking drums' hold a special place in the tradition of the Yoruba people from South-West, Nigeria.

Very popular in traditional music from Ghana, the Fontomfrom Ensemble is used to communicate royal messages in Ashanti tribal settings.

The mukanda is a double-membrane drum, covered at both ends, used to accompany the acrobatic dance wathu wata mukanda or mbeni; danced by both boys and girls.
RESOURCES

Find Smithsonian classroom resources here:  
https://africa.si.edu/education/classroom-resources/

While you’re here, visit the current exhibitions at the African Art museum:  
https://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions

Find resources for teaching African geography to students here:  
http://www.ducksters.com/geography/africa.php

Smithsonian Connection

Explore African clothing styles online with this activity from The African Art Museum:  
https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/styles/fun4.html

Smithsonian Institution

OUR MISSION: “THE INCREASE AND DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE”

Smithsonian Associates advances the Institution’s mission through life-enriching educational and cultural experiences inspired by the Smithsonian’s research and collections for DC-region students, families, and adults, and for learning communities nationwide.

Discovery Theater has been presenting DC-area children with live educational performances for almost 40 years. With programs that enrich the Smithsonian experience for nearly 50,000 children annually, Discovery Theater is a gateway to the exhibits, collections, and themes contained in the museums and galleries on the National Mall and beyond. We explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, and musicians. Discovery Theater performances unite ideologies, enact themes that reflect the diversity of its audiences, open avenues of self-reflection, and offer an enjoyable means for parents and teachers to demonstrate life’s lessons. There’s so much to do and explore at the Smithsonian—and Discovery Theater is the ideal place to begin!