



Kofi's African Village

February 21, 2025

Recommended for
ages 3 to 7

PreK to Grade 2

A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators

This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss *Kofi's African Village*. It contains background, discussion questions and activities appropriate for ages 3 to 7.

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ABOUT KOFI DENNIS

Kofi Dennis is a master drummer, performer, and educator. An ambassador of West African culture, Kofi preserves and promotes the traditions of his cultural heritage through stories, games, music, drumming, and dance. He brings a wealth of teaching and performing experience to his programs; he received training at Komenda Teaching College, University of Cape Coast, graduated from the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, and received a Diploma in Early Childhood and Adolescent Education from the University of Cape Coast before coming to the United States in 1993.

He is a Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist and the founder of Play for Concepts, Inc. Past local performance venues include The Kennedy Center, National Zoo, Taste of D.C., Baltimore's ARTScape, here at Discovery Theater, and hundreds of schools, libraries, and arts centers.



LET'S TALK ABOUT AFRICA!

Africa is the world's second largest continent, with 54 countries, and one billion people! Africa is home to the largest hot desert in the world- the **Sahara Desert**, which covers 3,600,000 square miles. **The Nile** is one of the world's longest rivers, and it is also located in Africa. It stretches over 4,000 miles, and runs through four different African countries. There are over 1,500 different **languages spoken in Africa**, including Swahili, Amharic, Hausa, and Oromo. Africa is the second most populous continent with about 16% of the world's population. Africa has the largest populations of lion, elephant, rhinoceros, cheetah, hyena, leopard, and hundreds of other species.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE DRUM

Beat—the regular rhythmic pattern of a piece of music or a dance

Rhythm—the pattern of regular or irregular pulses caused in music by the occurrence of strong and weak beats

Tempo—the speed at which the beat moves

Dynamics—volume levels of loudness and softness in music

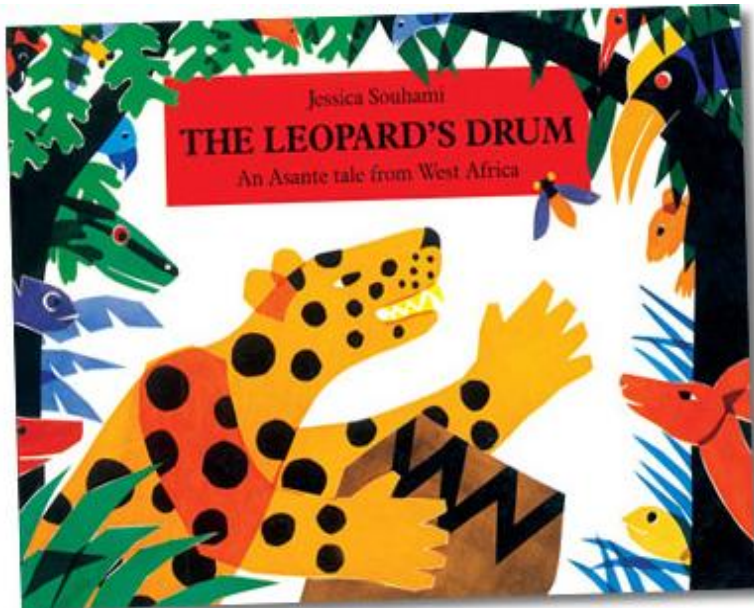
Timbre—the way a particular instrument sounds

Harmony—more than one note played at a time that result in a pleasing musical sound

Percussion Family—sound is produced by shaking, striking, tapping, scraping the instruments, such as drums, triangle, and piano.



READY TO READ!



The Leopard's Drum: An Asante Tale from West Africa

By Jessica Souhami

Osebo the leopard has a magnificent drum. All the animals desire Osebo's drum, but he won't let anyone else have it, not even Nyame, the Sky-God! So, Nyame offers a big reward to the animal that brings him the drum. This short, rhythmic story is perfect for reading aloud.

MAKE A KENTE CLOTH

Background

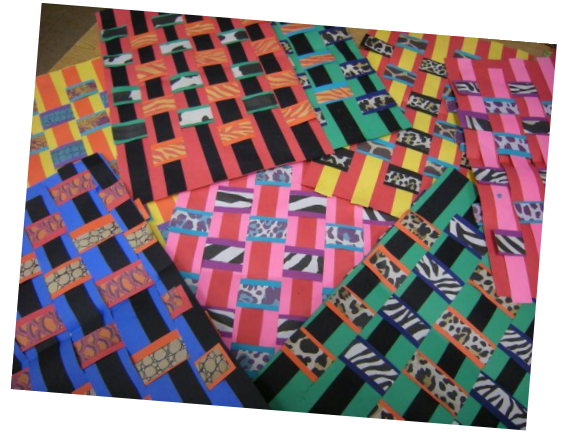
Kente cloth, is a type of silk and cotton fabric made of interwoven cloth strips, and is native to the Akan ethnic group of **South Ghana**. Kente cloth has its origin in the Ashanti kingdom, and was adopted by people in Ivory Coast and many other West African countries. At one time, Akan royal and sacred cloth was worn only in times of important times and was the cloth that kings wore. Over time, the use of Kente became more widespread.

Materials

- 11 x 17 Construction Paper
- Scissors
- Markers or patterned paper
- Glue stick

Directions

1. Fold a piece of construction paper hamburger style.
2. Cut two strips of paper, each 1-inch thick.
3. Hold the paper with the fold towards you, and starting 1 inch from the end, cut 7 straight lines about 1 inch apart, stopping with an inch left at the other end.
4. Weave the first strip of colored paper across the black paper, alternating over, under, over, under, all the way to the end.
5. Then weave the next strip of paper, reversing the over / under pattern, and push this strip up against the first one. Repeat two weaving steps until you use all your strips.
6. Glue down all the loose edges.
7. Finally, draw simple shapes and designs, or glue squares of patterned paper onto the cloth.



MAKE A DRUM

Materials

- Empty cartons or jars
- Plastic bags or fabric
- Rubber bands or string
- Paper
- Tape
- Stickers, paint, or markers for decorating

Directions

1. Cover the sides of your container with bright paper or paint.
2. Cut a plastic bag or fabric it in a circular shape to cover the top of the drum. Make sure you cut a large enough circle that the sides fold down over the lip of the drum.
3. Secure the circle of plastic/fabric with a rubber band. The tighter you pull the fabric the better sound you will achieve.



Smithsonian Connection: National Museum of African Art

After the show, take some time to visit the African Art Museum. It's right down the hall from our theater! We recommend visiting the [Visionary: Viewpoints in African Art](#) to explore a variety of art from all over Africa.

If you don't have time, be sure to check out the Classroom Resources page on their website.

<https://africa.si.edu/education/classroom-resources/>.

Check out the elementary classroom activities for the **Ntan Drum** of the Asante peoples of Ghana.

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/ntan.html>



Related Resources

Anasi and the Golden Pot by Taiye Selasi, illustrated by Tinuke Fagbourn, 2022. Recommended PreK-Grade 1.

Songs in the Shade of the Cashew and Coconut Trees: Lullabies and Nursery Rhymes from West Africa and the Caribbean by Nathalie Soussana, illustrated by Judith Gueyfier, 2019. Recommended Pre-K-Grade 1.

The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth by Margaret Musgrove, illustrated by Julia Cairns, 2001. Recommended Grades 1-4.

Our Story Starts in Africa by Patrice Lawrence, illustrated by Jeanetta Gonzales, 2022. Recommended Kindergarten to Grade 3.

[Baga Drum](#), from the National Museum of African Art. Take a close look at this object from the Museum's collection.

[Djembe Drum](#), learn about the Djembe drum from the BBC. Learn about the history and specifics about this kind of drum.

[First Book](#), is a non-profit that runs a marketplace for free- and reduced-priced educational resources. Visit their website to see eligibility requirements and titles available.

Check out the Smithsonian Learning Lab Collection for *Kofi's African Village* here:
<https://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/t4F2K1VfGXWMhguy>

Vocabulary

Call and response song: A musical form in which one phrase is followed by a second phrase, usually in the form of a question and an

Rhythm: The placement of sounds in time.

Music theory: The study of the practice and possibilities of music.

Measure: A measure is a term used in music theory. A measure is a space of time decided by the amount of beats in the time signature. If the time signature is $4/4$, then the bar would consist of 4 counts. Here is an example of a measure of music.

Bar: A bar is a term used in music theory. A bar is a measure of time decided by the amount of beats in the time signature. If the time signature is $4/4$, then the bar would consist of 4 counts. Here is an example of a bar of music.



answer.



Crescendos: The act of raising the volume of a beat for certain duration of time. Crescendos are used to build energy, and transition songs from one style to the next. Crescendos take a lot of control with your dynamics, something every drummer should be aware of.

Decrescendos: Bringing the volume of a song, beat or feel down in duration of time. These are the opposite of crescendos, and are great to bring down the energy level of a song. This takes control of dynamics, and is something every drummer should practice.

Note value: The duration of time you play a certain note for. The value of a note determines how long you play the specified note for. For example, quarter notes have a quarter note value, meaning you play for one quarter note. Drummers practice note value exercises to help develop control of their sticks.

Djembe drum: Hand drums that offer a distinct tone when played. These are African drums that are usually carved out of wood, and are topped with an animal skin. These are similar to bongos; however they can range from small sizes to very large sizes. Djembes are shaped like an hourglass.

Ghost notes: A note played on the drum that is felt more than it is heard. Ghost notes are quieter notes played in between the regular notes. These are played at lower volumes to be almost hidden behind the beat. These are used to spice up a boring pattern, and to add a new dynamic to the song.



Since 1979, Discovery Theater, the unique, DC-based museum theater has served as a gateway to Smithsonian exhibitions, collections, and themes. Through the joy of live stage performances, students from pre-K through 6th grade are immersed in global cultures, eco-science, living history, and traditional arts. Discovery Theater performances are created to complement students' classroom-based learning; to enrich audiences' knowledge of the arts, history, sciences, and cultures of the world; to foster a love of live theater; and to provide entertaining, educational museum-based interactive experiences.

Don't miss our other Discovery Plays...



Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Wed.-Fri., Apr. 23-25, 2025 at 10:15 and 11:30 a.m.

Recommended for Ages: 3 to 6 / PreK to Grade 1

Jojo's Backyard Safari

Wed.-Fri., May 28-30, 2025 at 10:15 and 11:30 a.m.

Recommended for Ages: 3 to 6 / PreK to Grade 1

