



**Arts Education for Young People**

**MAGBANA DRUM & DANCE NYC**

**TEACHER GUIDE**

**Kupferberg Center Performances**

The Teacher Guide provides background information, Learning Standards, and pre- and post-concert activities that coordinate with the Student Guide to encourage learning across the curriculum.

For your convenience, this guide is also available as a .pdf on our website. Visit [KupferbergCenter.org/revelations](http://KupferbergCenter.org/revelations) and click on "Teacher Zone" to access

### **About the Company**

Magbana Drum & Dance NYC is a group of talented multi-racial percussionists and dancers whose repertoire includes West African pieces and martial arts, modern dance and world percussion. Their energetic performance features tight musical arrangements, innovative choreography and original costumes. Artistic director Michael Markus formed Magbana in 1979. His vision is to educate people from all cultural backgrounds and ages about the power of the drum and the movement it inspires. Magbana believes music and dance transcend the boundaries of race and class and promote diversity.

### **Curriculum Focus: Social Studies**

Activity: Research the culture and geography of Africa with mini-lessons using the *Five Themes of Geography*

NYC Social Studies Standard: 3

Grades: 5-8

Coordinate with Student Guide, "Where in the World is Guinea?"

#### **Mini-lesson 1: Location**

Demonstrate the use of a compass rose to determine North, South, East and West on a world map.

Whole Group: Students use map and compass rose to describe location. Absolute location: Locate Africa, America and Europe on a world map. Relative location: Where is Africa in relation to America? To Europe?

Small Groups: Locate specific places using topographical maps of Guinea. It would be helpful to find photographs that depict the following locations and assign each group one location to pinpoint on their map. After the areas are found, share findings with the whole group.

- a. Low Guinea: Stretches along the Atlantic Ocean shoreline and the mountains of Fouta Djallon.
- b. Central Guinea: Large mountains and high plateaus. Called the "Switzerland of Africa."
- c. Forestry of Guinea: Subequatorial zone. Dense forests.
- d. Source of the Niger: Located 562 km from Conakry at Rubiko in Faranah.
- e. Loos Islands: Located near Conakry is an archipelago, the key islands being Kassa, Room and Fotoba. There is also Tortoise Island (where giant tortoises are protected), Snake and Kid Islands.
- f. Beach at Bel Air: 225km from Conakry in the Boffa area, 7km of white and silver sand.
- g. Slave Road: Located along the coast (Conakry, Forecariah, Dubreka, Boffa and Boke), this road is a grim reminder of the Slave Trade.
- h. Nimba Road: 1040km from Conakry and 17km from Kola. At 1752 altitude is a forested area with rare wildlife (buffalo frogs and chimpanzee families) at Bossou.

- i. Alcatraz Island: A rocky island, Northwest of Boke and 300km from Conakry, it contains one of the greatest concentrations of sea birds in West Africa.
- j. High Niger National Park: This area has many varieties of wild animals and is located in Guinea East, covering a 4000km area in the Prefectures of Faranah, Dabola, and Kouroussa.

### **Mini-lesson 2: Place**

Research the natural resources, physical features, vegetation and animals of Guinea.

Whole Group: Demonstrate how students can use resources in the library and search engines on the Internet to find the information they require.

Small Groups: Students will use the location they pinpointed on their maps as their research location. A follow-up mini-lesson will demonstrate how to present the information in report form.

### **Mini-lesson 3: Movement**

Using the research techniques learned, students research the cultural traditions of the African tribes of Guinea located in the area they pinpointed, including dance, music, art, theatre and religion. Students researching the area of the Slave Road might also branch off into research on the slave trade and the African Diaspora.

### **Mini-lesson 4: Human-Environment Interaction**

After sharing their research through presentations, discuss and compare the similarities and differences between the tribes and how the environment in which they live contributes to the development of their culture.

### **Mini-lesson 5: Region**

Explain how the physical features of the land -- its coastline and its proximity to European nations -- influenced the location of the West African slave route.

#### **Social Studies Research Guide**

[www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gn.html](http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gn.html) - maps and facts about Guinea

[www.brooklynexpedition.org/](http://www.brooklynexpedition.org/) - Click on "For Teachers," then "Discovering Africa in Brooklyn."

## **Curriculum Focus: Visual Arts**

Activity: Make a Banda Mask

NYC Arts Standards: 1,4

Benchmarks for Arts Learning: Art Making,  
Making Connections Through Visual Arts  
Grades 1-8

Background: Spiritual celebrations in Guinea often include mask dances. Each mask represents a spiritual figure, such as a deity, a medicine man or an animal. One dancer, who keeps his identity a secret, performs the dance. The dancer acts out the part of the character his mask represents through movement. The small Nalu tribe of Guinea is known for its Banda masks.

Banda is a large headdress that combines different animal and human forms. It has the jaws of a



crocodile, the face of a human, a woman's elaborate hairstyle, the horns of an antelope, the body of a serpent, and the tail of a chameleon. Banda is danced at happy occasions for public entertainment. The effect of wearing such a mask is one of supernatural power, inspiring awe and wonder in the audience.

Whole Group: Help children plan their masks by completing a simple chart consisting of three columns: "Animal"/"Body Part"/"Power." List reasons why they think certain animals and their body parts will give their masks the effect of power. Each child will then select ONE animal for his or her mask. (Although Banda masks combines different parts of various animals with human features in order to create the effect of POWER, for the purpose of this activity have student select just one animal part.)

Materials: self-drying clay, Vaseline, newspaper cut in 1" wide strips of varying lengths, string or ribbon, paint and glue.

Making the Mask: Have each student find a picture of the animal they selected. Using the clay, recreate a major feature of the animal. Make holes in place of eyes. When the clay is dry, cover it with a thin layer of Vaseline. Dip the strips of newspaper in glue and cover the clay with the strips, leaving the eyeholes uncovered. Repeat for 3 or 4 layers. Two small holes can also be made on the sides for attaching string later. Let the newspaper strips dry. Paint the mask. Measure string to be sure there is enough to tie the ends together behind each child's head. Tie strings through holes or glue on.

*See Brenda Santos for Brooklyn Expedition.org/Discovering Africa. Lesson plan on masks.*

## Curriculum Focus: Music



Activity: Make and Play Doundoun Drum

NYC Arts Standards: 1,4

Benchmarks for Arts Learning: Music Making, Making Connections

Teaching Point: There must be at least two different rhythms being played at the same time.

Grades: K-8

Coordinate with Student Guide: "Take It Home: Make a Doundoun drum"

and "Polyrhythms."

Activity 1: Individual: Have students make drums at home and bring them to class.

Activity 2: Whole Group: Practice the polyrhythm in Student Guide.

Activity 3: Small Groups: Have students create their own polyrhythmic percussion pieces.

Teachers: Music Resource Guide

*Sound Designs: A Handbook of Instrument Building* by R. Banek & J. Scoville. Ten Speed Press, 1995.

<http://cnx.rice.edu/content/m11422/latest/> - K-3 intro to message drums, lesson plan and activities.

<http://www.rhythmweb.com/index.html> - Go to homemade percussion page, instruments pages.

<http://www.kinderart.com> - Type "Making instruments" in search box for directions on making instruments.

Recording on amazon.com: Air Mail Music: African Drums ~ Madou Djembe

Video Clips: [www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/AfricaBookmarksTx.html](http://www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/AfricaBookmarksTx.html)

Students: Music Resource

Hear the sound of the djembe: <http://www.rhythmweb.com/djembe/index.html>

## Curriculum Focus: Dance

Activity: Make a Dance

NYC Arts Standards: 1,4

Benchmarks for Arts Learning: Dance Making, Making Connections

Grades: K-8

Coordinate with Activities: "Make a Banda Mask" and "Take It Home: Make a Doundoun Drum."

Small Groups: Wearing masks, create movements that evoke your animal's image to the accompaniment of student's polyrhythm percussion piece. Perform for the class.

## Curriculum Focus: Language Arts

Activity 1: Write a Poem About Your Banda Mask Spirit

Teaching Point: Write from your animal spirit's point of view, choosing words that describe the power of your animal

and sensory images to make your poem vivid.

NYC English Language Arts Standards: 2c, 3c, 4a & b, 5a & b

Coordinate with Activities: "Make a Banda Mask" and "Take It Home: Make a Doundoun Drum."

This can be in free verse, and from the point of view of the animal spirit. Perform poem as a narration during the dance with the Banda mask. Revise, rewrite, illustrate and publish the original poems.

**Activity 2: Write a "snapshot" memoir**

**NYC English Language Arts Standards: 1b, 5b, 4a**

**Teaching Point: Use descriptive language and sensory images to make your memory come alive**

**for the reader.**

**Coordinate with Student Guide "A Memory of Rhythm"**

Mini-lesson: Introduce or review the concept of memoir.

Whole group: Read aloud "A Memory of Rhythm." Model activity by drawing, then writing about your own personal "memory of rhythm."

Turn and Talk: Students turn and tell their neighbor about their own memory of rhythm.

Individual work: Draw, and then write about that memory.

Share Session: Share your piece with your writing partner. Select several students to share their work with the whole class.

Follow-up: Students stretch out their memoir to make it into a longer story, with plenty of detail.

*Adapted from Unit 2 - Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing. Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project.*

Teachers: Language Arts Resource Guide

*A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You* by Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi. Heinemann, 2001.

Student Bookshelf

Grades K-3

*Monkey's Trick: Based on an African Folktale* by Patricia McKissack. Bt. Bound, 1999.

Grades 4-6

*West African Folktales* by Hugh Vernon Jackson and Patricia Wright. Dover, 2003.

Grades 6-8

*African Folktales* by Roger Abrahams. Pantheon, 1983.

