

# African American Voices Lesson Plans

**Lesson Title:** African Drums  
**Subject:** Social Studies/Art/Music  
**Grade:** First



**NGSSS:** SS.1.A.2.1. - Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places.  
V.A.B.1.1.3 – Demonstrate self-direction and creativity in one’s own art work.  
M.U.A.1.1.2 – Participate in musical activities, including playing instruments

**Description/  
Abstract of Lesson:** Students will understand the importance of drumming in African culture by creating a Djembe drum.

**Objective(s):** Students will be able to understand how African drumming is a part of African culture.

**Materials:**

- Empty coffee cans with plastic lids
- Construction paper, glue & scissors
- Paint or markers
- Paintbrushes & water
- Dowels or sticks from trees in the park
- String, leather, feathers, beads, glitter, paper

**Lesson Lead In/  
Opening:** Introduce the lesson by playing a drum to get the student’s attention (Either borrow one from a music teacher or pre-make a can drum like the ones the students will make). Ask students what they know about drums in the African culture.

**Activity Outline:**

1. Inform the students about the history of the Djembe drum (Use the information in “African Drum History” as a reference). Discuss as a class.
2. Play an instructional video on how to play the Djembe drum. Videos can be found on the following website:

[http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe\\_dvd\\_video](http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe_dvd_video)

3. After the video, ask the students what they thought about the drumming experience.

4. Inform the students that they are going to make their own Djembe drums.
5. Pass out coffee cans, construction paper, glue, scissors, paint, markers, paint brushes, water, dowels, sticks, string, leather, feathers, beads, glitter and paper to the students.
6. Have the students cover the coffee cans with construction paper. Leave the plastic lids on the coffee can (this will be your drum head).
7. Have the students paint or draw designs and creatures on the coffee can. (Try covering the can with aluminum foil for neatness).
8. After the paint is dry, have the students glue all sorts of wonderful things to the drums.
9. Using wooden dowels or wooden sticks (or even just with their hands) have the students drum away on their new coffee can drums.

**Assessment:**

- Student participation
- Teacher observation
- Assess how well students follow directions

**Web resources:**

[www.kinderart.com/multic/cofdrum.shtml](http://www.kinderart.com/multic/cofdrum.shtml)

[http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe\\_dvd\\_video](http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe_dvd_video)

<http://www.preschoolrainbow.org/black-history.htm> (Idea for the lesson came from this site)

**Recommended Books, CDs and DVDs on Djembe drumming found on the following website:**

[http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe\\_books](http://www.iritones.com/category/djembe_books)



## **African Drum History**



**The Djembe has a great cultural heritage in Africa. Although similar in cultural use and significant to many countries and people on the African continent, it has little significant differences among them.**

**The Djembe is the drum of the Mandinka people, and its origins date back to the great Mai Empire of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Djembe has become extremely sought after in the Western world and is regarded as the most popular type of drum. This drum has inspired master drum makers all over the world.**

**The drum rhythm or Diansa is performed in the event for spring, summer and winter harvesting time, weddings, baptism, honoring of mothers, immediately after Ramadaan or other celebrations. Dancing is the most popular form of entertainment and various rhythms and beats are played on the djembe. Similar type celebrations and cultural rhythms and beats are played on the djembe. Similar type celebrations and cultural rhythms are applicable to Senegal as well as other regions of West Africa.**

**African goatskins from Mali are the most suitable for covering the playing surface of a djembe, due to central Africa having the perfect climatic and grazing conditions for goats. Goat skins provide the very best sound.**