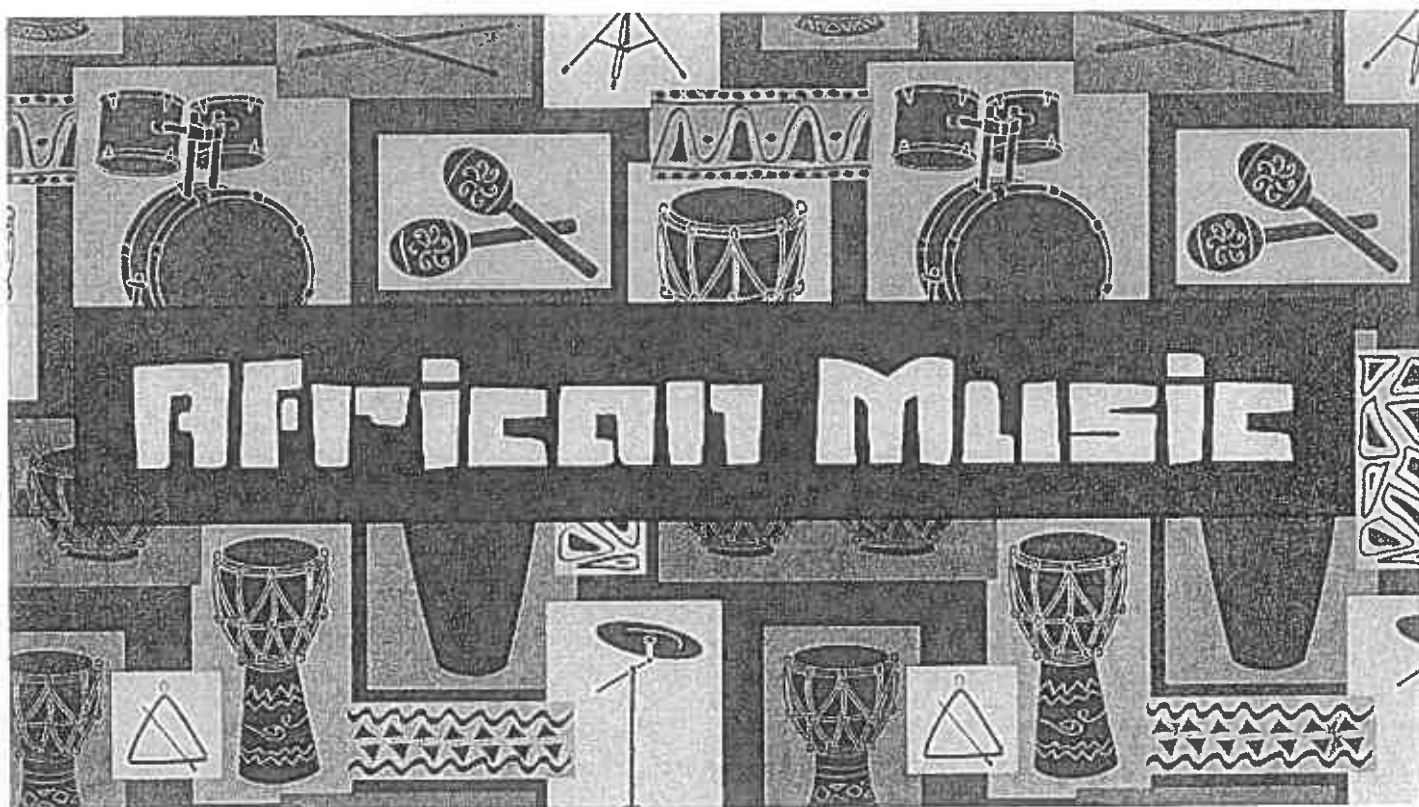


NAME:.....



AFRICAN MUSIC

The Sub-Saharan region of Africa covers all countries south of the Sahara Desert and includes Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique and Angola. The environment and cultures of these peoples are quite diverse. They have different religions, social customs and ways of life. Although many of these civilisations are undergoing industrialisation and change, some people still adopt traditional ways taught by their ancestors. Most live in villages and survive by farming crops and raising cattle.

Music is a part of the daily life of African people. It is used for entertainment, religious ceremonies, festive seasons, magic rites and to accompany dances. Music is spontaneous and enjoyed by all; in the street, in villages or in courtyards. There is a song for almost every event and activity. Music is closely linked with language. Most African languages are **tone languages** in which the meaning of a word is related to the relative pitch or level of sound at which it is spoken. Depending on the pitch, words may have several meanings. An extension of this is the use of **talking drums** (capable of two or more different pitches) to send messages over plains, valleys and mountains.

Perhaps the most fundamental and recognisable feature of African music is its rhythm, which forms the closest link between dance and music. When played together, African rhythms are complex, with much syncopation and anticipation. Simple rhythmic patterns (called **ostinatos**) are repeated over and over with constantly changing accents. Each member of the ensemble will play a different rhythmic pattern; when sounded together, **polyrhythms** are created. Dancers select any one of these rhythmic patterns to dance to. For example, one may dance to the rhythm of a drum and another to the rhythm of a rattle.

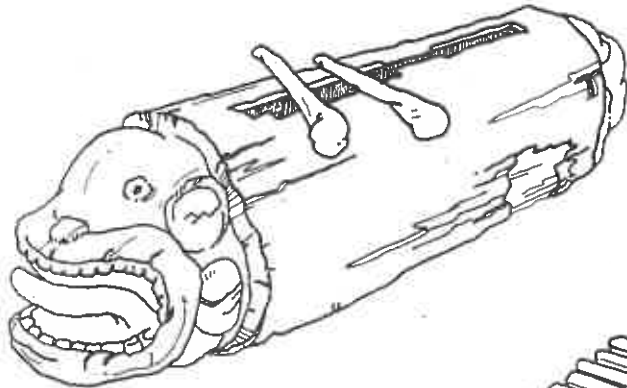
The overall layering of sound—or **texture**—in African music can vary. Songs may begin with a light texture and gradually thicken as more layers of voices and instruments are added to produce a complex **polyphonic texture**.

Melodies are not usually written down, but rather learnt as part of an oral tradition. They are freely improvised and sung through the method of **call and response**. The **chanter** may improvise the **call** (words and rhythm), but the **chorus** will present a set **response**. The melodies are structured around short phrases repeated over and over again using different words.

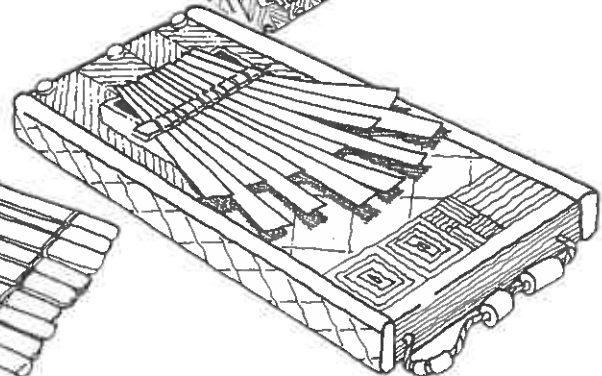
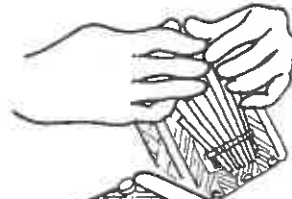
Like so many countries throughout the world, the pentatonic scale is often employed in African folk melodies. The xylophones are usually tuned to the five pentatonic scale notes. They provide a suitable accompaniment based on combinations of notes within this scale. The negro spiritual 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' is an example of a melody written in the pentatonic scale.

PERFORMING MEDIA

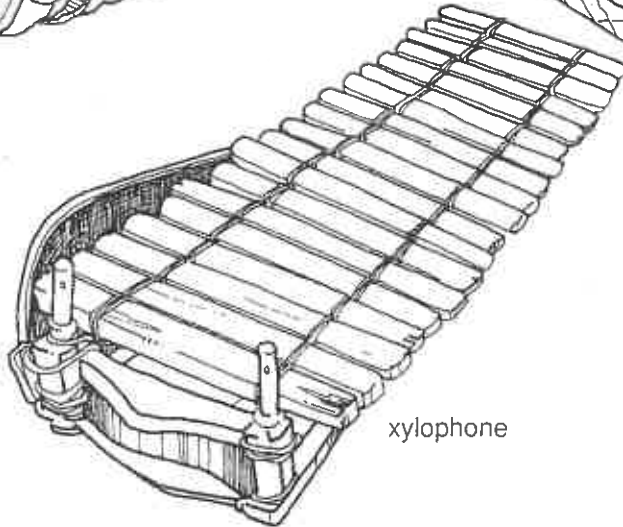
Idiophones are most common in African music. They include: rattles, gongs, bells, the slit-log drum (a hollow log with a slit along the top), the xylophone and the thumb piano. The thumb piano is a tuned instrument. It is also known as the **m'bira**, **kalimba** or **sansa**, and has a number of metal or bamboo strips attached to a resonating box. These strips are plucked with the thumbs and fingers.



slit-log drum

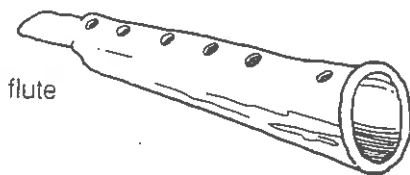


thumb piano



xylophone

Aerophones in African music include horns, whistles and bamboo or wooden flutes.



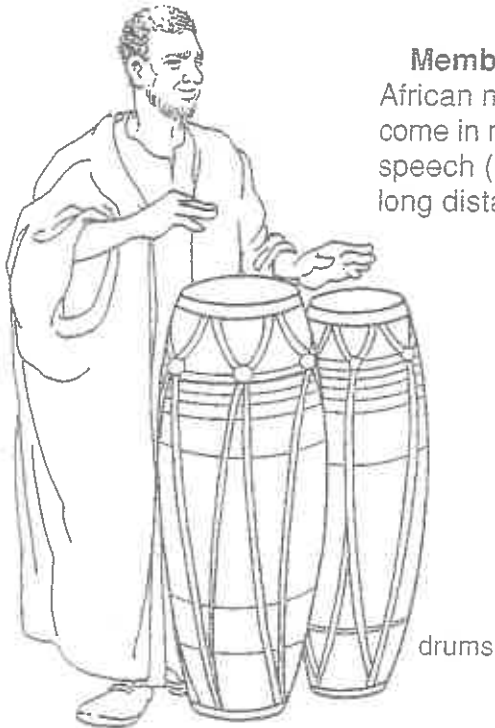
flute



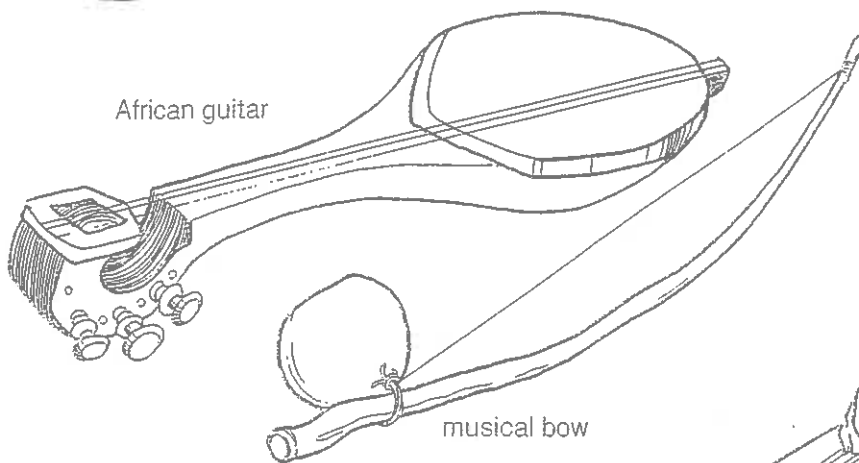
horn

African Music

Membranophones are perhaps the most important instruments in African music. They are played with either hands or sticks. These drums come in many sizes. Some are tuned to imitate the pitch patterns of speech (known as **talking drums**) and can relay messages over long distances.



Chordophones are stringed instruments which are used throughout southern Africa. One of the most widely used chordophones is the musical bow, which looks like a hunting bow. The strings are plucked or struck with a stick. Often such bows have a gourd or resonator attached to amplify the sound.



The **voice** is fundamental to African music, as it is to most other folk cultures, and is used with great effect. Features of vocal music include call and response, sliding from note to note and the imitation of animal cries. Different techniques are employed to achieve a variety of tone colours. They include whistling, shouting, yodelling, grunting and whispering. Singers are often accompanied by repeated rhythmic patterns (**ostinatos**) played by percussion instruments.

REVISION QUESTIONS

1 Which countries are included in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa?

2 What is meant by the term tone language?

3 Which instrument is used to transmit messages over plains and valleys?

4 Much syncopation is used in African music. What is meant by this term?

5 What are polyrhythms?

6 What term is used to describe the many layers of sound used at the same time?

7 What is meant by 'call and response'?

8 Which scale form is frequently used in African music?

9 Which instrument is tuned to this five-note scale form?

African Music

10 What is another name for the m'bira?

11 Define the term ostinato.

12 Describe the chordophone known as the 'musical bow'.

FOR YOUR INTEREST—AFRICAN FOLK SONG

Kum-Ba-Ya

Kum Ba Ya my Lord Kum Ba Ya

Kum Ba Ya my Lord Kum Ba Ya

Kum Ba Ya my Lord Kum Ba Ya

Oh Lo-rd Kum Ba Ya

AFRICA



Fast Facts

The three countries of western Africa covered in this unit are Ghana, Togo and Nigeria. The official language of Ghana and Nigeria is English, although *Ewe* (EH-way), a tribal language of western Africa, is common to both countries. The official language of Togo is French.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent. Only Asia is larger. The largest arid area in the world at nearly three million square miles, the Sahara Desert covers about 25% of Africa. A large part of central Africa is tropical rainforest.

The Instruments and Rhythms of Africa

If possible, have your students practice the following music examples with the CD using suitable percussion instruments (cowbell, conga drums, bongos, etc.) or by clapping.

Hemiola

Changing the natural accents of a time signature to make it sound like a different time signature.



Musical notation for Hemiola. The first staff shows a 3/4 time signature with three quarter notes per measure. The second staff shows a 3/4 time signature with three dotted quarter notes per measure, bracketed and labeled "Hemiola".

"Two against three" Two pulses per measure *and* three pulses per measure played at the same time.



Musical notation for "Two against three". The "Bell" staff has a 3/4 time signature with two quarter notes per measure. The "Drum" staff has a 3/4 time signature with three quarter notes per measure. Both have corresponding counts below them.

Bell
Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 3 &

Drum
Count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

AFRICA



Resultant Rhythm

The rhythm that emerges when two (or more) different rhythms are played together.



Bell

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 3 &

Drum

Count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

Resultant

Additive Rhythms

Combinations of two and three pulses grouped together.



Bell

Count: 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 3

Drum 1

Count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2

AFRICA



Polyrhythm

Several rhythms played at the same time.²



Count: 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 3

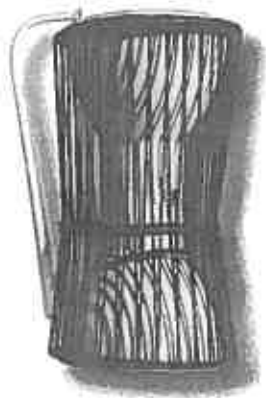


Count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2



Count: 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 3 1 2

Djembe (JAIM-bay) (Also spelled *jembe*) A cup-shaped wooden drum which is one of the main instruments used in African music. This drum is often used as a solo instrument to accompany traditional dances. Scholars believe the *djembe* originated in western Africa around 900 B.C.



Luna (LOONG - ah) (Also spelled *lunga*) An hourglass-shaped drum often referred to as a “talking drum” because the performer can change the pitch and sound of the drum by squeezing the leather cords as they are playing. There are often several sizes of *luna* in a group to help provide rhythmic support for a solo player. In parts of Africa this drum is called a *dun-dun* (doon-doon).

² Two rhythms played at the same time is called a *bi-rhythm*.



Gungon (GOON-gong) A large tom-tom which may serve as the bass drum of an ensemble. A *gungon* performer uses a curved stick on the drum head. Rubbing their free hand along the edge of the drum can make it buzz. This buzzing is often more like a rattle than a drum.

Concepts

Africa is a continent divided into many individual countries. Each of these countries has their own traditions of language, art, music, and government. In this unit we will learn about the music of western Africa and three countries in particular: Ghana, Togo and Nigeria. Be sure to locate each of these countries on the map.

In most music from western Europe and the United States, the main focus is usually on harmony. Much of the music we study, sing and play may loosely be described as chords and melodies moving through time at a unified pace. In Africa, however, the main focus is almost always on rhythm instead of harmony. Over thousands of years the African culture has developed fascinating combinations of rhythms which are layered over one another to create interweaving *polyrhythms*.

It is important to note that even though all the music examples in this section are written using standard notation, the African musician does not learn or think about rhythms in this manner. From a very early age, children are given toy drums and rhythm sticks to imitate the rhythms they hear as part of their daily life. Active music making typically represents a much larger portion of time for people in Africa than in the United States, so children have many more opportunities to learn the traditional rhythms of their country by *rote* (memorizing) as they grow up.

In some kinds of African drumming, a bell (similar to a cowbell) will set the tempo of the piece and other drums will enter in turn. In other styles of African drumming, the *luna* will begin a piece followed by the other drums.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think African music relies so heavily on drums and rhythm?
2. A hundred years ago, do you think people in the Sahara Desert used the same kind of drums that people in Ghana, Nigeria and Togo used? Why or why not?
3. Do you think African music influenced the music of other cultures?
4. Would it be harder for you to learn the rhythmic ideas of Africa, or for a child from Africa to learn the Western system of music notation?
5. When you listen to music for fun, what part of the music do you listen for first? (i.e. melody, rhythm, orchestration, lyrics, etc.)
6. Why would countries in Africa use English as their official language? (Nigeria and Ghana used to be colonies of Great Britain.)

AFRICA

Colour in the countries that we have examined.



It's A Match!

Match the vocabulary word with the correct definition.



- 1. Hemiola**

The rhythm that emerges when two (or more) different rhythms are played together.

- 2. "Two against three"**

A large tom-tom which may serve as the bass drum of an ensemble.

- 3. Resultant rhythm**

Changing the natural accents of a time signature to make it sound like a different time signature.

- 4. Additive rhythms**

Combinations of two and three pulses that are grouped together.

- 5. Polyrhythm**

An hourglass-shaped drum often referred to as a "talking drum."

- 6. Djembe**

A cup-shaped wooden drum which is one of the main instruments used in African music.

- 7. Luna**

Three or more rhythms played at the same time.

- 8. Gungon**

Two pulses per measure *and* three pulses per measure played at the same time.

Rhythms of the World for 100—Africa

True/False (5 points each)



1. Changing the natural accents of a time signature is called *hemiola*.
2. *Additive rhythms* are combinations of two and three pulses within a specific time span.
3. African musicians learn how to read music in school.
4. The most important aspect of most African music is harmony.
5. The *resultant rhythm* is the rhythm that emerges when two rhythms are played at the same time.
6. All of Africa is in the southern hemisphere.
7. A *polyrhythm* is formed when rhythm is added to melody and harmony.
8. A *djembe* is a flute made from wood.
9. The *gungon* is often the lowest-pitched drum in an African ensemble.
10. Music is an important part of African culture.
11. African music was influenced by music from the United States.
12. Two or more rhythms played at once create a *polyrhythm*.
13. African drumming was first developed in the 1950s.
14. The *luna* drum is called a *dun-dun* in parts of Africa.
15. Africa is completely covered by tropical rainforests.
16. The *djembe* is a cup-shaped African drum.
17. The *luna* is often referred to as a “talking drum.”
18. The violin is often used in traditional African music.
19. Ghana is a country in western Africa.
20. All Africans listen to the same kind of music.
21. The official language of Nigeria is English.
22. *Ewe* is a tribal language of western Africa.
23. A trumpet is used at the end of many African songs.
24. Africa is divided into only a few countries.
25. African drums may be a variety of shapes and sizes.
26. Northeastern Africa is close to Iran and Iraq.
27. Melody is the focus of music from western Africa.
28. Ghana is in the Sahara Desert.
29. *Hemiola* alters the key signature of a composition.
30. Combinations of two and three pulses grouped together are called *resultant rhythms*.

Rhythms of the World for 100—Africa

Multiple Choice (10 points each)



- The _____ is an hourglass-shaped drum often referred to as a “talking drum.”
A. *luna*
B. snare drum
C. *hemiola*
- Changing the natural accents in a time signature is called _____.
A. *hemiola*
B. *additive rhythm*
C. *polyrhythm*
- Northeastern Africa is close to _____.
A. India
B. Iraq
C. Cuba
- A _____ is created when several rhythms are played at the same time.
A. *gungon*
B. *Ewe*
C. *polyrhythm*
- _____ is most important in African drumming.
A. Harmony
B. Melody
C. Rhythm
- _____ are combinations of two and three pulses grouped together.
A. *Additive rhythms*
B. *Resultant rhythms*
C. *Djembe*
- Music is a _____ part of life for most people in Africa than it is for most people in the United States.
A. smaller
B. larger
C. louder
- The *djembe* is a cup-shaped drum that probably originated in western Africa around _____.
A. 900 B.C.
B. 900 A.D.
C. 1850
- A large tom-tom which may be used as the lowest drum in an African drum ensemble is called a _____.
A. bass drum
B. *luna*
C. *gungon*
- Ghana and Nigeria are countries in _____ Africa.
A. eastern
B. southern
C. western
- The official language of Ghana and Nigeria is _____.
A. Spanish
B. English
C. African
- Africa is the world’s _____ continent.
A. largest
B. second-largest
C. smallest

13. Children living in Africa usually begin learning _____ when they are very young.

- A. melodies
- B. harmonies
- C. rhythms

14. _____ is one of the tribal languages still spoken in western Africa.

- A. Togo
- B. *Ewe*
- C. Portuguese

15. The deserts of northern Africa are the world's _____ arid regions.

- A. largest
- B. rockiest
- C. highest

16. _____ is a country in western Africa.

- A. Kenya
- B. Togo
- C. Ethiopia

17. Africa is divided into _____ countries.

- A. two
- B. six
- C. many

18. Combinations of two and three pulses grouped together are called _____.

- A. clump rhythms
- B. African rhythms
- C. *additive rhythms*

19. *Hemiola* is associated with _____.

- A. chord structure
- B. rhythm
- C. lyrics

20. _____ is the official language of Togo.

- A. French
- B. Togoian
- C. English



Music Examples



8—Example A



9—Example B



10—Example C



11—Example D



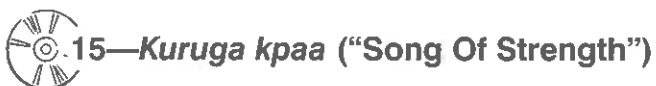
12—*Nakohi-Waa*



13—*Dakoli-N-nye Bia* (This is one of the first drumming patterns children learn.)



14—*Zuu-Waa* (“Dance of the First Born Son”)



15—*Kuruga kpa*a (“Song Of Strength”)

Tracks 8–11 are bell and drum patterns; Tracks 12–15 are *luna* examples.

PERFORMANCE

	①	2	3	4	②	2	3	4	③	2	3	4	④	2	3	4	⑤	2	3	4	⑥	2	3	4	
SHAKERS																									
TAMBOUR (DRUM)																									
CLAVE																									
TAMBOURINE																									
ALTO XYLOPHONE	C	G			C	G			C	G			C	G			C	G			C	G			G

In African music many simple rhythms are combined to create a polyrhythmic effect. The rhythms above are notated so they can be echo-clapped individually or combined to create a whole performance.

Create your own polyrhythmic music by combining many simple rhythms. Try to perform your composition with other people or by recording loops.