

Senegalese Children's Songs, Lullabies & Hand Clapping Games

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Overview

Children all around the world sing and play. In this unit of study, you will discuss how different cultures have their own children's songs, lullabies, and singing games. Students will learn to perform a song or game from the West African country of Senegal and make comparisons to songs and games that they already know and grew up with.

Grades Kindergarten-5th grade (Note: a general elementary music teacher can adapt any of the activities in this unit to fit the needs of their students. The standards listed below are for grade 3, but these lessons can be adjusted up or down)

Intended Content Area General Music

STEM & Language Arts Connection

Literacy with song lyrics

STEM connection with use of Chromebooks or iPads to play on

<https://playxylo.com/>

Essential Questions

How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?

Standard Alignment with NC Standards

(while the standards listed below are for grade 3, you may adapt as needed for other grades)

Performance Based Objective- Students will be able to perform a children's song or game from a culture that may be different from their own and compare it to songs and games with which they are familiar

MU:Cn11.0.3a

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

MU:Pr4.1.3a

Demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest, knowledge, purpose, and context.

MU:Re7.2.4a

Demonstrate and explain how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social and cultural).

Materials

- [Google Slides](#) Presentation
- Song lyrics and translations (found in Google Slides Presentation)
- Recordings of songs for listening sample (Google Slides)
- Student individual chromebooks or iPads (optional)- <https://playxylo.com/>

Duration


This unit consists of multiple songs. This collection of songs can be learned as a unit or separately. Each song may take 1-3 days to learn (approximately 50 minute lessons each day). As such, this unit can take place over several days, according to class and teachers' needs.

Procedure

- Teacher leads class discussion on how children from around the world all have their own way of expressing themselves through music and play. (Slide 2)
- Tell students that this unit focuses on the songs and games of Senegal. (Slides 2-4)
- Tell students that they will learn what children's songs or games do children play in Senegal and how they compare to our songs and games in the United states

Lesson 1


Slides 8-11

- Ayo Nene (lullaby)
 - Teacher leads classroom discussion on lullabies. See a few talking points below:
 - What is a lullaby? What is its purpose?
 - Who usually sings or performs a lullaby?
 - Who is the lullaby sung to?
 - What lullabies do you know?
 - What might lullabies have in common?
 - Teacher has students listen to  ayo nene
 - Read the translation of the lyrics
 - Can you follow along with the lyrics while listening to the song again? Are there words in the song that you can try to sing along with?
 - Add a C'-G-C' bordune on bass xylophones to accompany the song.
 - **Brainstorm:** what different types of instruments can be added to the accompaniment?
 - Maracas or egg shakers to represent the baby's rattle toy.

- Rainstick to represent the soothing sounds of a rain and incorporate how it can be related to the African wet season in the summer months / climate.
 - What other soothing sounds can we use to calm a baby?
- In small groups, create movements to perform with the song and share ideas with the class

Lesson 2


Slides 12-19

- Fatou Yo (children's song)
 - **Please note:** many people attribute this song to Senegal but it may not have originated from there. The song is not in Wolof and is believed to be a song known in the larger West African region. However, the song was popularized by a Senegalese band Toure Kunda and therefore many people in Senegal (especially the older generations) are familiar with the song.
 - Teacher has students listen to “  Fatou Yo ” by Touré Kunda
 - Students list the types of instruments they hear and make comparisons to prior knowledge
 - Allow students to compare another example of the song Fatou Yo being performed (refer to youth choir video)
 - Display lyrics of the song in original language and English translation
 - Discuss the songs meaning and how Fatou is a popular girl's name in that part of the world
 - Listen to the song again. How many different sections are there? (3 distinct patterns)
 - Break down the lyrics of the song practicing them by speaking rhythmically so students can echo
 - Learn each section of the song individually with the lyrics and melody (students still echo teacher until they are comfortable with singing the song)
 - Sing through the whole song with recording
 - Add suggested accompanying body percussion parts (practice each one individually and then try layering them as you sing the song with and without the recording)
 - Pat legs, pat chest, snap fingers- (ta ta ta shh)
 - Stomp, stomp, pat legs (alternating hands)- (ta ta ti-ti ta)
 - Stomp, clap, clap (alternating directions of the clap)- (ta ti-ti ta ti-ti)
 - Allow students to make suggestions for how to perform the body percussion parts on classroom instruments and allow them time to practice
 - Perform the song with instruments and singing
 - This can be done another day after students have a firm grasp on the melody and rhythm of the piece.

- ****Alternative accompaniment:**
 - Divide class into groups (one group for each section of the song)
 - Part 1- Shakers: keep steady beat throughout the song (eighth note rhythm)
 - Part 2- Drums: play on the name Fatou
 - Part 3- Xylophones: play the rhythm of the “boutoumbélé” (click the steady beat on mallets when not playing the xylophone)
- ****Challenge:** Using their Chromebooks or other digital devices, have students try to play along with the melody of the song using the numbers on the keyboard: <https://playxylo.com/>
 - If you don't have access to computers or iPads, this can easily be transferred to classroom xylophones.

Lesson 3

Slides 20-24

- Tajabone (Holiday Song)
 - Teacher plays an example of  TAJABONE. (Lyrics) song for students
 - Teacher asks students to listen to the song with intention
 - What instruments do you hear in the song? Is there singing?
 - What is the song's tempo? Is it fast or slow?
 - What about the song's dynamics? Is it loud or quiet?
 - What is the feeling or mood of the song?
 - When or where do you think this song would be performed based on how it sounds?
 - What do you think the purpose of the song is?
 - Teacher explains what Tajabone is to the students and leads a class discussion comparing the traditions of Tajabone to similar traditions that children participate in in the U.S.
 - Tajabone is a Senegalese tradition that takes place in the night before the Muslim holiday, Tamkharit.
 - Tajabone is a traditional song in which children go from house to house entertaining the adults with singing and dancing and are rewarded with money or snacks (much like how American children go door to door on Halloween). And just like how the trick-or-treat tradition is considered a pagan tradition not necessarily related to the Catholic celebration of All Saints Day, the Tajabone tradition is a tradition that is practiced around the Muslim holiday of Tamkharit.
 - In the Senegalese tradition, boys dress like girls and girls dress like boys. Some children carry drums and other small instruments as they go door to door (like a small carnival of celebration). This is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation.

- The song Tajabone asks if you have done anything good while here on earth. How good have you been in comparison to others? The song also asks how much have you eaten? If you haven't eaten well, the angel of death will come and sweep you away but if you have eaten well, you will be too heavy to be carried off with him.
- Tajabone is celebrated with a large feast (Senegalese millet couscous with meat and vegetables is a popular dish). Everyone shares a large bowl and eats until they are full. This is done to show that you don't know what tomorrow will bring and should enjoy the moment and in hopes that there will be plenty of food for the year.
- The day after Tajabone is a holiday known as Tamkharit and is when most prayers and rest take place. Tamkharit is Muslim New Year (also known as Achoura in other countries). Tamkharit is originally done in remembrance of Moses freeing the Hebrew slaves from Pharaoh. The holiday falls on a different day every year as it follows the lunar calendar. Tamkharit comes one month after Tabaski (Wolof term for the Muslim holiday also known as Eid al-Adha which is done in remembrance of God providing Abraham with a lamb in place of Isaac).
- Teacher asks students if they have any similar traditions that they practice with their families.

Lesson 4

Slides 25-28

- Aiye (Hand Clapping Game)
 - Students will watch the video clips of the students from Senegal performing Aiye found in the Google Slides
 - What do you notice about the video? What do you think? What do you wonder?
 - Hand Clapping is a language of friendship. Children around the world have their own hand clapping games.
 - Teacher explains how to play the game
 - Everyone claps their hands to a specific rhythm
 - The leader moves their legs at various moments and tries to trick other players facing them
 - The other players try to copy what the leader is doing
 - If a player is able to copy the leader exactly at the right time, they get to become the new leader and everyone shifts places

- The chant that is said during the game is in Wolof and are the directions to the game

Lesson 5

Slides 29-33

- Tank Loxo Nopp (Wolof Version of Head Shoulders Knees and Toes)
 - Listen to the two different versions of the song
 - [Tank loxo nopp](#)
 - [ATAMA - Tànk loxo nopp - Comptine wolof - Comptine seneg...](#)
 - Discuss the meaning of the lyrics. What song does it remind you of in English? Make a comparison between this song and “Head, Shoulders, Knees, & Toes”
 - [Head Shoulders Knees And Toes \(2019\) | Noodle & Pals | Super Si...](#)
 - [Head Shoulders Knees and Toes Afrobeat Mix - Bino and Fino Africa...](#)
 - Tank = legs
 - Loxo = hands
 - Nopp = ears
 - Bakkan = nose
 - Baat = neck
 - Bët = eyes
 - Gemmin = mouth
 - Try following along with the recording by identifying the body parts
 - Split the class into two groups
 - Half class accompany a steady beat on hand drums
 - Other half of class sings and performs movements to the song
 - Switch groups so every child gets to sing, dance, and play
 - Use the ATAMA version of the song as accompaniment
 - Extension:
 - Split the class into small groups of 2-4 students
 - Instruct the students to work together to create “people” made out of classroom instruments and label the body parts in English and Wolof
 - Example: use a hand drum as the head, two finger cymbals as eyes, a triangle for a nose, jingle bells for the mouth, tambourine for the body, rhythm sticks for the arms, and maracas for the legs

Lesson 6:

Slides 34-39

- Le Coq Chante (French School Song)
 - Listen to the song in French

- [Lamine M'Bengue - Le coq chante](#)
 - [ALL STARS\(Sen Ptit Galle\)- Les coqs chantent](#)
- Discuss the meaning of the lyrics
 - After the rooster crows, a brave woman begins grinding couscous to prepare food for her family
- Teacher breaks the song down in to sections to teach the song in French
- Add a stick passing game to reinforce the steady beat and to practice pattern recognition

****Note: This stick passing game may not necessarily be a Senegalese tradition practiced with this song.**

 - Students sit in a circle with two rhythm sticks
 - Hit the floor twice with the sticks then pass sticks to the person on the right and grab new sticks (quarter note beat- “floor, floor, pass”)
 - When the lyrics say “pilon pan pan,” hit the floor once and click sticks together twice (quarter note beat- “floor click click pass”)
 - During “pilon gaiement” lyrics, hit floor once, click sticks together once, the pass to the next person on the right (“floor click pass”)
 - Try the stick game with both recordings of the song.
- Compare the song to songs from other cultures so that students can see how there are similar songs and activities (Senegalese women, Ghanaian women, and Navajo Native American women working to prepare food for their families).

****Note: Be sure to show true examples of Native American grinding corn songs in addition to the Americanized version so that students recognize the authenticity of the real thing. Teachers may do more research on Navajo corn grinding songs to give background information for students.**

Extension:

In the Google Slides Presentation, you will see a few other songs and nursery rhymes from Senegal that you can explore with your students

- Thiep Bou Djene - Wolof nursery song about the national dish of Senegal (fish with rice)
- Galbi - Senegalese nursery rhyme in Wolof and French about the pirogue (canoe) and wanting to row to Dakar (capital city)
- Butur nale - a game of reflexes and concentration
- Sunu Askan “our people” - a rhythmic activity for gym