

## Griots and Koras

*Lesson plan written by Kim Freeman and Diana Tursi*

**Overview** Griots are the gatekeepers of Senegalese culture, continuing the rich oral and historic traditions of the past. This unit will introduce the Griots' musical instrument, the kora.

**Grades** 2-5

**Suggested time period** 2-3, 45 minute lessons

### Essential Questions

How do musicians make music?

Why do musicians make music?

What is the relationship between a musician and their instrument(s)?

What does a country's musical traditions tell us about that culture?

### Standard Alignment with NC Standards

(while the standards listed below are for grade 2, they can be altered as needed for grades 3-5)

2.C.1.1 Explain how artistic expressions of diverse cultures contribute to the community (stories, art, music, food, etc.).

2.C.1.2 Recognize the key historical figures and events that are associated with various cultural traditions.

2.H.1.2 Identify contributions of historical figures (community, state, nation and world) through various genres.

2.C&G.1.2 Explain how governments establish order, provide security and create laws to manage conflict.

2.H.1.3 Compare various interpretations of the same time period using evidence such as photographs and interviews.

## Lesson 1: Griots and Koras

**Suggested time** 45 minutes

### Materials

1. [Google Slides](#) to display during the lesson.
2. Poster paper or large whiteboard, dry-erase markers.
3. Optional: 1 subject notebooks set for each student (for use throughout the units-- you may choose to use other media and technology to record the required information for each assignment)
4. KWL anchor chart (prepare prior to lesson or plan to display virtually). Model below:

# K-W-L Chart

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

whysospecial.com

## Procedures

- Revisit the previous lesson
  - Ask students what they remember about Griots and Senegal.
  - Allow students to share previous learning.
- Ask students if they noticed anything about the instrument the griot played in the videos. Tell them that today they will be learning more about that instrument.
- Display the KWL chart (slide 2) to the students and model how to duplicate it in their notebook (*please note: it may be easier to make a copy of the [template](#) and have the students put the template in their notebook*).
- The topic of the KWL chart should be labeled “Griots and Koras.”
- Ask the students to fill out the K part of the chart with what they already know about Griots and Koras.
- Tell the students that they will use the KWL chart to help guide their thinking about the video they will watch.
- View the video on slide 6 and ask students to focus on the instrument-- what do they notice?
- Ask students to fill out the W section of the chart- what they want to know.
- Watch the read aloud called *Fatou and the Kora* (slide 7).
- Have the students fill out the L section of the chart- what they learned.

- THINK|PAIR|SHARE Students share ideas with partners
  - Record notes on the large anchor chart to close the activity.

## Lesson 2: Make your own Kora

**Suggested time** 45 minutes

### Materials

1. [Google slides](#)
2. Empty cardboard boxes with one open side-- one for each student
3. Rubber bands of different widths-- at least 4 for each student

### Procedures

- Ask students to recall what they learned about griots and koras in the last lesson (they may use their KWL charts as guides)
- Remind students that griots use koras to tell the history of their country and pass down stories and wisdom
- Tell the students that today they will be making their own instruments so they, too, can tell stories through music
- Pass out the materials-- 1 box and at least 5 rubber bands to each student
- Instruct students to gently wrap their rubber bands around the opening of their box
  - Depending on the size of the box and rubber bands, some rubber bands may need to be cut and stapled to either side of the box
  - The result should be a simple harp that looks something like this:
- Once the students have their rubber bands placed, allow them to experiment with the different sounds they can make.
- During their experimentation, allow students to edit their instruments. Do they need to:
  - add more strings?
  - take some strings off?
  - change the spacing of their strings?
- Once students are happy with how their harp sounds, play the video on slide 8, and challenge the students to play their harp along with the griot and his kora
- EXIT TICKET:



Name:

*Imagine you are a griot. What story or historical event would you pass down using your voice and your instrument?*

Write 3 details about your story:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Optional Extensions**

1. Encourage students to decorate their harps with stickers, photos, and other materials that mean something to them. Encourage them to make their instrument to help tell their story.
2. Allow students to write songs about personal stories or historical events they think would be important to pass down. Students may perform their song with their harp.