



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2006 Volume II: Latino Cultures and Communities

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## Listen to the Rhythm

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.02.08  
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The rhythm of the *dunno*, *tamale*, *sakara*, *omele*, and *djembe* reverberate on Ghanaian, Nigerian, Senegalese, and Congolese shores. Their drum rhythms past and present have traveled over the Atlantic reaching Caribbean shores, among them the nations of Cuba and Puerto Rico. *Timbales*. *Bongo*. *Conga*. Their syncopated pulse weaves a story of past and present, beckoning listeners to investigate the common rhythm that resounds across oceans blue, uniting people of diverse cultures.

This unit serves as an ethno-musicological adventure, taking young learners on an up-close, historical look at the interconnectedness of West African, Puerto Rican, and Cuban cultures by way of the rhythm of the drum. Targeted at students in grades two and three (and modifiable to all grade levels) students will perceive that the drum and its various rhythms serve(d) as a source of communication, a "telephone" used to convey cultural mores, societal views, and the history of a people. The unit reinforces that despite the dehumanizing institution of chattel slavery, the drumming tradition brought to Caribbean shores via the Middle Passage is reflective of survival coupled with a rich heritage of diverse people. The unit heralds one of many common threads that exist between African, Puerto Rican, and Cuban cultures.

Information contained herein aligns with New Haven Public School curriculum unit Standards, i.e., Language Arts/Writing Content Standard 2.0; SSCPS (students will demonstrate their understanding through written, verbal, visual, musical and/or technological formats and will pre-edit, draft, revise, edit and publish/showcase one or more final literary products); and SSCS 3.0 (using maps, globes, and related resources, students will identify different parts of the world and examine the traditions found therein).

(Recommended for Language Arts, Social Studies and Social Development, grades 2-3.)

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