

Missionary Travels: Musical Instruments

An educational worksheet for children aged 9-13 published by
livingstoneonline.org

On Tuesday the 17th of January 1854 David Livingstone was invited to a celebration by a local leader called Shinte. Livingstone described the instruments played at the event in his book, *Missionary Travels...*

A party of musicians, consisting of three drummers and four performers on the piano, went round the kotla several times, regaling us with their music. Their drums are neatly carved from the trunk of a tree, and have a small hole in the side covered with a bit of spider's web: the ends are covered with the skin of an antelope pegged on; and when they wish to tighten it, they hold it to the fire to make it contract: the instruments are beaten with the hands.

The piano, named "marimba", consists of two bars of wood placed side by side, here quite straight, but, farther north, bent round so as to resemble half the tire of a carriage-wheel; across these are placed about fifteen wooden keys, each of which is two or three inches broad, and fifteen or eighteen inches long; their thickness is regulated according to the deepness of the note required.

David Livingstone

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Experiences and Outcomes:

Literacy and English

Students can practice deep reading and textual analysis to explore David Livingstone's writings.

Social Studies and Environments

Students can broaden their understanding of different cultures, peoples, and places.

Suggested Questions:

- 1) Using David's description can you draw a picture of the drums or the marimba he describes (Hint: the background image on the sheet is a drawing of the celebration from *Missionary Travels*)?
- 2) What do you notice about the materials used to make the instruments David describes?
- 3) Why do you think David has given such a detailed description of the instruments the musicians are playing? Do you think his Victorian readers would have heard these instruments before?
- 4) Why do you think Shinte invited David to this celebration?

Further Reading:

Find out more about the famous nineteenth-century explorer David Livingstone's Victorian best seller, *Missionary Travels*, at
livingstoneonline.org

This educational resource was developed by Kate Simpson and Justin Livingstone, who are staff of *Livingstone Online* (livingstoneonline.org). *Livingstone Online* is the leading site for learning more about the life and writings of David Livingstone. Visit our site to discover an array of images and texts that supplement the educational material found in this worksheet.