

## **The Immense Legacy of Africa in the Latin American Literature and Music**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The history and culture of global people is a topic that brings together activities I love to do: to learn, to read different genres of literature, and to teach. The seminar with Professor Kairn Klieman, *African History: Ancient Times to the Atlantic Slave Trade Era*, provided me with an opportunity to fulfill my passion for teaching poems, tales, drama and music by learning about Africa, a continent that in the past five years has become very close to me.

I am a Third Grade Bilingual teacher at Bonham Elementary in the Houston Independent School District West Region. As a bilingual teacher, I teach language arts, math, science, and social studies to Hispanic students in Spanish and English. My class is composed of Spanish-speaking students only. For the past five years, besides being in the classroom, I also have served as the soccer coach at my school because soccer is one of my many other passions. However, the main reason I coach is that I feel that I am giving an opportunity to every player on my team to develop athletically, socially, and academically.

This new phase of my life as the soccer coach gave me the possibility to be in constant contact with not only the Hispanic children in my classroom that are 50% of our school population, but also with the rest of the student body. The remaining 50% of our student population consists of 35 % African-American, 13% immigrants or refugees from Africa, and 2% Asians and Caucasians. On my soccer team 80% of the players are Hispanic. The remaining 20% of players are students not only new to my school but also new to the country. They come from different African countries such as Somalia, Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and The Democratic Republic of the Congo. Daily interaction during soccer practices has given me the opportunity to develop a close relationship with all my players, especially the Africans, and I am astonished by their strength and power of will to survive and adapt to a new country. In addition, I feel that we share many things in common, because when I was a little girl I came to the United States from Mexico as an immigrant, and just like my African players, my whole life changed. I went through the difficult stages of adaptation to a new language and culture. I was placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes just like they are. I completely understand the struggles they have to confront as they become accustomed to a new language and culture. I want to make this process easier for them, and that is one of the reasons why I took this seminar and decided to create a unit on the African Diaspora in the Latin American world.

At school we received training about the suffering the refugees had to tolerate before and during their stays in the refugees' camps, where they lived until they were sent to the United States. During the training we observed videos about the refugees' camps. The films showed the living conditions of the camps, which did not appear to provide healthy living conditions for the families and children. After I learned about their background and everything they had endured, I admired them for being willing to start a new life in this country and for maintaining their culture. The parents of my students still wear clothes representative of their communities in Africa and continue to use their languages and customs in the new communities they have formed in

Houston, especially in the Southwest area where most of the African refugees live. Also, they have a passion for soccer, their most popular sport.

This passion for soccer has motivated the African students to be part of the soccer team. As members of the soccer team, they are in constant contact with the Hispanic players. However, the main problem I have noticed between the two groups of soccer players is that they do not interact very often. In the cafeteria or recess time, the Hispanic students make their own group to talk and play, and the African students do the same. In my opinion the reasons for this distance are a lack of respect and attitudes of superiority among the groups. The one exception to these problems is on the soccer field. After school in the practices, they talk among each other and play together. Soccer has served as a unifying force among my Hispanic and African players. During practice I realized that all the players have one thing in common: they care very deeply about soccer and love to play it.

Another similarity is that they like to dance to music that requires a lot of body movement and is derived from the African communities that formed during the Diaspora. Some examples of this music are salsa, merengue, and, the most popular and contemporary, hip-hop. After the soccer games, I drive my Hispanic and African players to their homes, and I put Latin music in the radio. It is amazing to see how all of them identify with the rhythms and can dance and sing to the songs. I also realized during their interactions that most of the students of Latin American descent do not know about Africa and the influence that African cultures have had on our own music, literature, food, and traditions. Because of this, I decided to work on building our similarities by teaching about the African Diaspora in Latin America. I believe it will help promote a friendly and respectful environment at my school among the members of my soccer team, and hopefully one day with the rest of the student population. My goal with this unit is to get the soccer players to better interact outside the soccer field. I feel that a better communication among the students will help the refugees integrated into the United States society.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The curriculum unit's purpose is to help teachers and students learn about the continent of Africa and the effects of the Diaspora in Latin America. In order to accomplish these objectives during the implementation of the unit there will be lessons on literature, history, geography, culture, and music. During the lessons we will read folktales from Cuba that are influenced by African folktales brought during and after slavery. In addition, we will read, listen to music, and watch a movie that explains how the Africans created the rhythms of very popular Latin music in our present era, including salsa, jazz, merengue, and hip-hop. I want my students to understand and make a connection with the African culture using rhythms and movement that they are familiar with. As the students learn about the different subjects, they will have an opportunity to compare and contrast their culture and the African cultures. In addition, the unit will meet a number of the TEKS objectives required for a third grade bilingual classroom for language arts, social studies, and music.

### ***Language Arts***

During the unit my students will be required to listen and speak to gain knowledge of their own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures (TEKS 110.5 B2). As they learn about the cultures they will make a Venn diagram on which they are going to write sentences to compare and contrast the Hispanic and African cultures. Also, the students will read from a variety of oral tradition genres, such as folktales (TEKS 110.5 B7B). The students need to identify the elements of a folktale, and the general characteristics of this genre. Then the students will respond to the stories, music, videos, and folktales by writing, performing, and using movement (TEKS 110.5 B10A). I am going to organize my students to perform the folktales in

the class and in front of other third grade classes. Also, they will perform a musical focused on Latin America that has African rhythms. This will be a presentation for the whole school.

### ***Social Studies***

The other objectives that this unit will cover are mapping skills. For a third grade class, the students are expected to understand the concepts of location, distance, and direction on maps and globes (TEKS 113.5 B5). In addition they should be able to draw maps of places and regions that contain map elements including a title, compass rose, legend, scale, and grid system (TEKS 113.5 B5D). My students will learn these concepts by identifying the continent of Africa and its geographical characteristics. For example, we will study the rivers, lakes, and oceans in some countries of Africa, such as Somalia and The Democratic Republic of the Congo.

They are going to learn the names of some of the countries that make up the continent. In addition they will be taught the most important events in the African history and will be required to make a time line of these events, including those that had a great impact on the rest of the world, such as the Diaspora. The students will understand the concepts of time and chronology (TEKS 113.5 B3). In addition they use vocabulary related to chronology, including ancient and modern times and past, present, and future times (TEKS 113.5 B3A). My lessons about the history of Africa and the Diaspora will cover all these objectives.

### ***Music***

The curriculum unit will also cover some TEKS objectives for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade music. The students are expected to relate music to history, to society, and to culture (TEKS 117.12 B5). During the lesson about the influence of African rhythms in some of the most popular genres in the present era in Latin American music, the students will learn to relate the history of the music and culture. In addition they are going to perform songs and musical games from diverse cultures (TEKS 117.12 B5 B). I want my students to make connections with their music and the music the African slaves performed in the slavery camps to distinguish the similarities and differences.

### **RATIONALE**

As a teacher in a school where two cultures interact daily, I feel that it is my responsibility to promote cross-cultural understanding in order to build a stronger relationship among the students and families. I want the students to respect each other's beliefs and customs. Also, I would like my Hispanic students to welcome the African refugees and help make their lives easier as they adjust to living in a new culture. However, this is not possible because Hispanic students do not have knowledge of the role of Africans in shaping their culture. I want to work towards putting an end to this lack of understanding by teaching about the powerful contributions the enslaved Africans made to the many nations in Latin America. I believe this goal can be attained if the Hispanic students realize that the African culture has influenced their culture for many years and that they share many similarities. However, I have observed that many Hispanic students lack this knowledge and thus do not have the motivation to become closer to their African schoolmates.

The aim of this unit is to diminish this lack of knowledge about the African cultures' influence on Latin cultures with both Hispanic and African students. Through it I want my students to become closer in order to reduce the stress the Africans refugees experience when they arrived in the United States and help the Hispanic students become more acquainted with the Africans and respect them. I plan to teach them how their differences can be an asset to one another because of the cultural connections that exist. It is important to promote understanding, respect, and pride by pointing out how close the two cultures are due to historical events. This will be a two-way process that will include the Africans and Hispanic students because if they become closer, it will have a tremendous impact not only at my school but also on the

communities that surround it as well. In the neighborhoods that our students live, Africans and Hispanics often live in the same apartment complex; however, they tend to keep their distance from each other. My unit will help the students and families become closer as they realized that they share many things in common, such as music and literature.

In addition I want the students to understand that even though Africa seems to be a strange continent that is big and far away from the United States, it is closer than they realize. This is true not only in the present time due to the recent population of refugees in our school, but also for prior centuries because of the era of African slavery in Latin America and the United States. The Africans have been present in the Hispanic and American cultures for many years and have had a great influence on them.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

### **The African Legacy in Latin America**

My students' introduction to African culture will begin by reading the folktale "El Banquete de Anansi" from the third grade bilingual reading basal. This part of our reading program basal teaches the students different genres of literature, one of which is folktales. This story is about a popular character in African folklore, a spider called Anansi. The story begins with Anansi preparing a banquet while the other animals are starving because it has not rained for many months. Akye the turtle is in the river looking for food, and she smells the food coming from her friend Anansi's house. She asks Anansi for food but does not get any because Anansi tricks her a lot of times. She tells Akye that in her house is a custom to eat with the hands clean. Akye goes to the river to wash her hands, but every time she returns to eat, her hands are dirty because she is walking in the dirt, and there is less food on the table because Anansi eats it. At the end Akye realizes that Anansi has played a trick on her to eat all the food. The story continues, and as the time goes by, it starts to rain badly, making the fields full of water. Anansi the spider cannot find food anywhere. She looks for her friend Akye the turtle because she knows that Akye has a lot of food. Akye agrees to share her food and invites Anansi to a banquet in the bottom of the ocean. Anansi has a problem because she cannot stay inside the ocean due to her weight. She puts rocks in the pockets of her jacket to remain in the bottom. Akye tells Anansi that in her house it is a sign of good education to take off their jackets to eat. Akye takes off her jacket and goes flying to the top of the ocean. Anansi takes this opportunity to eat the food. At the end, the friends treat each other the same way. According to the Scott Foresman textbook we use, Africans introduced this character to North and South America, as well as the Caribbean, during the period of slavery. The story teaches a lesson on not doing to others what you do not want them do to you. In addition, it also teaches about how the weak could win if they were intelligent; intelligence could be used to overcome the obstacles imposed by the strong. This folktale not only will help me introduce the idea of African's influence in Latin American and the United States, but also will teach how Africans retained oral traditions and folktales as a way to maintain culture, and to help them deal with the injustices of their situation.

To further emphasize the importance of African folktales, we will read from Elvia Perez's collection of Cuban folktales entitled, *From the Winds of Manguito: Cuban Folktales in English and Spanish*. As Perez states, "Men, women, and children were taken by force from their native lands [in Africa] and brought to Cuba to work the fields. With them they brought their native rhythms, languages, and cultures. Their music, dance, and stories became an integral component of Cuban folklore" (3). However, before approaching these folktales, my students will need to be exposed to the more complex history of how Africans ended up in Cuba and the Americas in general.

While some of my students may have learned or heard about the discovery of the New World through Columbus' voyage of 1492, it is likely that few have had the opportunity to learn about

the tragic impact that his voyage had on the indigenous people of Latin America and the Africans as well. Columbus, other conquerors, and his old world soldiers brought with them diseases that spread rapidly among the indigenous population because their immune systems were not resistant. The impact of these new diseases was intensified by the brutal labor systems that the Spanish introduced, which were focused on the cultivation of sugar and mining of silver and gold. Because of these factors most of the indigenous population was killed off. The decreases in the indigenous population caused a decrease in the labor force.

Because the labor force was declining, the Spaniards needed more people to work in the mines and sugar plantations. In order to supply the demand for workers, they brought captives from Africa who were able to endure the tropical environments where sugar was grown. As Gomez further explains:

Within ten years of Columbus' 1492 voyage, enslaved Africans were in the New World, along with sugarcane and experienced planters from Portugal and the Canaries. Hispaniola (current day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Cuba, and the other Spanish-claimed territories were early destinations, and by the 1520s, Africans were replacing the indigenous Taino in servile capacities, including gold and silver mining. (Gomez 63)

Furthermore, according to Gomez, from 1521 to 1594 around 75,000 to 90,000 Africans were brought to Latin America, especially to Mexico, a territory held by the Spanish. The numbers of Africans that arrived to Mexico and Peru between 1521 and 1639 were around 110,525. Gomez further mentions that by the formal emancipation in 1827, some 200,000 Africans had labored only in Mexico. In some countries like Cuba and Hispaniola by 1560 the Africans outnumbered Europeans.

During the discussion of the major events in Africa history during the Transatlantic Trade, I will read to my students excerpts from an essay, "Aportes Culturales y Deculturación" by Manuel Moreno Fraginals to reinforce the major events of the Slavery period, and to review the numbers of Africans that arrived in many countries in Latin America. While it is too advanced for my students to read alone, I will highlight and discuss a number of excerpts from it. This article goes back to 1518 to show that as the date when Africans were transported to America from Africa for the first time. According to Fraginals, from 1518 to 1873 we had 355 years of commercial slavery from Africa to the American continent. This process of transferring humans from one place to another to become slaves led in America and Latin America to the importation of more than 9.5 million Africans. I will discuss with my students the estimated numbers presented in this essay in order for them to comprehend the tremendous amount of Africans in Latin American countries and how they are part of the culture of this place.

Thus many, many Africans were brought to Latin American, especially Mexico and Cuba, and in some places they comprised the majority. The Africans, of course, carried with them their culture, and one of the key elements of that culture is the folktale. By providing my students with a discussion of the history of slavery in Latin America, one which details the dates and numbers of Africans involved, my students will be able to realize the immense impact that Africans had on Latin American cultures.

After learning and discussing this history, my students will read from the section of Perez's book called, "Afro-Cuban Tales or 'Patakies.'" According to Pérez, these folktales derive from the religions brought by the Africans. The stories help the reader to have a better understanding of the many gods and goddesses of the African pantheons. The students will read, discuss, and write about the folktale in groups of four "Los Caminos de la Isla," "The Roads of the Island," which will highlight the presence of Yoruba people of Nigeria on the island. Then the students will work in groups to compare and contrast, "El Banquete de Anansi" and "Los Caminos de la Isla" to comprehend better how, as part of the African influence in our culture, we use fables and

folktales to teach lessons about survival, history, human behavior, the universe, and religion. The students will complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the folktales. My objective is that during this part of the unit my African and Hispanic students begin to understand the great survival of the Diaspora in the present literature of Cuba and other Latin American countries.

### **Where is Africa?**

After reading the folktales from Cuba, we will discuss the continent of Africa in greater detail. We will use a globe and maps to help my students identify Africa. During this lesson we are going to focus on its location and the fact that it is one of the seven continents. Then we will discuss general characteristics of that continent, its countries, rivers, lakes, mountains, as well the oceans that surround it.

In order for my students to learn mapping skills, I will give them a copy of a map of Africa that is found in the book, *Nelson's Mandela's Favorite African Folktales*. This map is very reader-friendly and shows all the countries in Africa as well as the oceans that surround it. After the discussion of the countries in Africa, I will make blank copies of the map and distribute them among my students, so that they can complete the maps together. They will be required to write and pronounce some of the names of the countries and the oceans that surround the continent. Then I am going to teach my students about important facts of some countries in Africa.

The countries I am going to teach my students about are the places where our soccer players come from. The objective of this lesson is to discuss important facts about those nations, such as the language, traditions, economy, and population. I am going to teach my students about Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, using the book *Africa: The World in Maps* by Martyn Bramwell and *Cultures Of The World: Somalia* by Susan M. Hassig. Liberia is a republic with an area of 43,000 square miles with a population of 2.9 million. The languages spoken are English and other local languages, and the currency used is the Liberian dollar. According to the information by Bramwell, Liberia was founded in 1816 by the American Colonization Society, and it was a settlement established for freed U.S. slaves who were sent back to Africa. The country gained its independence in 1847 and the population is made up of just 5% descendants of slaves. The rest of the population consists of the local African groups. Around 75% of the people work in agriculture growing rice, sugarcane, and fruit. The rest of people work in foreign-owned plantations of coffee and cacao beans. They also work as miners digging iron for export.

The other country that I am going to teach my students about is Sierra Leone. This country, according to Branwell, takes its name from Sierra Lyoa, or the Lion Mountains, the name the Portuguese gave it during the 15<sup>th</sup> century when they arrived in the region. The status of the country is a republic, with a population of 5.3 million and an area of 27, 699 square miles. The capital is Freetown, the currency is the Leone, and the languages spoken are English, French, Mende, Temne, and Krio. The economy of the country consists in coffee beans, cacao beans, peanuts, and ginger for export. However, 80% of the economy consists in mineral exports. "Sierra Leone is one of the world's leading diamond produces and exports bauxite and rutile-an important source of titanium. Recent civil conflict has hampered sustained economic activity in the country" (Branwell 26). During the past years in Sierra Leone, there has been a civil conflict that caused many people to leave their homeland and immigrate as refugees to other countries, such as the United States. In my school we have some refugees from Sierra Leone, and it is the reason why I want to teach my students about this nation. I want my students to understand where their classmates come from.

After I finish the discussion of Liberia, and Sierra Leone, my students are going to learn about Somalia. Somalia according Susan M. Hassig is a land of deserts, coastal plains, and mountains. It gained independence from colonials rule in 1960, but for more than twenty years it was ruled by Mohammed Siad Barre. For more than thirty years, Somalia has suffered from civil

wars that had caused many of its people to travel to foreign countries as refugees of war. The total land area of Somalia is 246,090 square miles, almost the same size of Texas. Somalia is an underdeveloped country, and its economy depends on agriculture, fishing, and livestock. According to Hassig over 82% of the population is employed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. “The farmers in the south grow crops such as corn, bananas, and other fruits. Those in the north cultivate wheat, barley, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cabbage, fruit, and coffee. Bananas are the main export crop and the country’s major money-earner, after livestock (Hassig 42). Many Somalis can speak up to five or more languages. Some Somalis speak French, Italian, or English because of the varying systems of education during colonial rule in Somalia. Also, all the Somalis that are Muslims understand Arabic because the *Koran* is written in that language. However, the official language is Somaali. It belongs to a linguistic group called lowland Eastern Cushitic and is related to languages in the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. All these fascinating facts about the countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia are going to be explained to my students during the lesson about the geography of Africa. I am going to give the facts of each country to my students and they need to discuss it with a partner. At the end of the social studies part of the unit, the students are going to work with a partner in doing a project about a country in Africa.

Another useful tool for carrying out this section about geography of the curriculum unit is the website called *Discovery Education Streaming*, [www.unitedstreaming.com](http://www.unitedstreaming.com). It has many videos about Africa, one of which is called “World Geography: Africa,” and it will show my students a virtual tour of every country in Africa. As the class watches the video, I will show the other countries where the soccer players come from, and at the end of the lesson I will write down some important facts about the food, traditions, and customs of the countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi on the board. As the students write and analyze the information, I want them to compare the traditions of their countries with the customs of the nations of Africa to understand the influence that Africa culture has on our own culture.

The final part of the history and geography lessons will be to show students just how long and difficult the journey from Africa to Latin America was for the prisoners. The journey began from the places of capture, some of them being Angola and Mozambique to the coast. Before they reached the coast they needed to walk long distances and during these trips half of them died. From the Upper Guinea Coast the slaves were sent across Atlantic to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Latin America. I am going to present in a map to my students these long journeys in order for them to understand the difficulties the Africans suffered before they got to their destiny. After this brief presentation I am going to talk about some of the countries the African slaves were taken to, such as Cuba, Mexico, and South America, in other for my students to realize that African cultures have been present in Latin America for many years.

### **Africa before the Atlantic Slave Trade**

Following the introduction section on folktales and geography, the students will become familiar with the earlier history of Africa. Drawing from the book *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* as well as information I learned in the seminar, I will highlight the historical achievement of the different African civilizations and their contributions to global history. I want to show my students that African has not always been an “underdeveloped” continent. First, I am going to teach my students about the African contributions to agriculture. During 9000 – 5500 BCE in West Africa started planting agriculture. “We can call this new and independent invention ‘West African planting agriculture,’ from the fact that the farmers reproduced their staple (most important) crops, the different types of West African yam, not by sowing seed, but by planting a part of the yam itself back in the ground” (Ehret 83). This important contribution to agriculture demonstrates that the African civilizations were very advanced and invented many things that we take for granted. I feel that this part of the history is going to catch my student’s attention

because their ancestors were farmers just like the African ancestors of the African refugees. This is another similarity between the two cultures that I want my students to notice. In addition, I am going to discuss the African domestication of animals. According to Ehret, the Afrasan civilization was the first to domesticate cattle. Their system of agriculture consisted of livestock raising, as well as wheat and barley cultivation that they borrowed from the Middle East. Other Africans along the middle Nile were the first to domesticate such crops as cotton, millet, black-eyed peas, and watermelon.

After teaching my students about the inventions of the earliest African civilizations in agriculture in the domestication of plants and animals, we are going to learn about the Commercial Revolution. Again I want my students to realize the advanced civilizations before the transatlantic era in Africa. My goal is for the students to understand the tremendous impact this event had in the whole world. The Commercial Revolution brought with it the growth of a new form of long distance trade that brought as a consequence for the first time in history a class of merchants according to Ehret. In addition this revolution allowed the planting of colonies in distant lands, and the movement of South Arabians across the Red Sea to establish settlements in the far northern Ethiopian Highlands (Ehret 164). My students understand this process because their families had immigrated to the United States and formed new communities.

Also, the Commercial Revolution had many social and political consequences. In this era it was possible to have a single commercial city. The city was very important because it was the place where all the commercial activities occurred. “Finally, because of the Commercial Revolution, long-distance lanes for the diffusion of ideas, practices, and things emerged... Crops, technology, and religion, as well as the valued commodities of the trade, might spread in a short span of time to new and distant areas” (Ehret 167). The contributions that the Commercial Revolution made to different societies in the world it is amazing. I feel that is very important for my students to see the greatest impact the African civilizations had on Latin America not only after the transatlantic period but long before.

To reinforce this history I will show my students a video from the *Discovery Education Streaming*, <http://www.unitedstreaming.com>, entitled “Africa: Shaped by the Past.” This video presents a time line of the historical events in Africa dating back to the dawn of humankind. The video is for sixth to eighth graders; however, I can adapt it to my classroom with some modifications. While my students are watching the video, I am going to take notes about the most important events that impacted the present of Africa. Then I am going to write the notes in the board. We are going to go over the notes and I will help them with pronunciation and correct spelling of people, places, and events. Then I want my students to make a connection explaining how these events made possible the presence of Africans in Latin American. As part of the lesson about history, I want my students to make their own simple timelines that shows the most important events in the history of Africa.

### **The Rhythms of African Present in Latin American Music**

The grand finale of my curriculum unit will consist of studying the influence of African culture in the contemporary Hispanic music such as hip-hop or salsa. There is an essay that discusses the Hip-Hop development in some Latin America countries because of the influence of the African concept of music development. According to Sujatha Fernandez and Jason Stayengek in their article, “Hip-Hop and Black Spheres in Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil,” the slaves during slavery created music to protest and rebel against the injustices of slavery. The music was a form of escaping from the suffering and pain of their situation. In the present time the musicians from Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil are making Hip-Hop a form of protesting against the injustices and discriminations for being descendents of the African slaves. “Afro-Cuban youth have used rap music as a means of contesting racial hierarchies and demanding social justice. Through their

texts, performances, and styles, Cuban rappers demand the inclusion of young Afro-Cubans into the polity and they appeal to the state to live up to its promises of egalitarianism” (207). This is another example of the influence of Africa on current Latin American music and the fact that African music is still alive in many Latin American countries, such as Cuba, because of the immense population of African descendants.

After I explain to my students the history of the popular hip-hop music in Latin America and how that music has influenced the hip-hop in the United States, my students are going to learn other important facts about the African presence in the music in Latin America. Isabel Aretz in her research about the African presence in Latin American music, first explains about all the different types of music in Africa. According to her Africa is composed of many cultures, and those cultures use music for different purposes. There is music for a ritual, music for fun, music for the king, and songs about work. The slaves that come to Latin America brought their music from their culture but adapted to the circumstances of their new land. This new music is known as “criolla,” a mix of African and European music. The reason for this process is, according to Aretz, the fact that the Africans were well known as good musicians and their masters had them play their European music. The Africans played the music but with the instruments of Africa creating new rhythms, such as “danza,” “danzón,” and “meringue.” These genres are still popular in Latin America, especially “meringue.” My students are very familiar with this kind of music, and I am going to teach them the history of this music based on the research of Aretz. I want them to see how Africans influenced the music they listen to.

One of the key concepts in understanding African music in the Atlantic Diaspora is provided by Olly Wilson. He notes that, “As a result of their collective cultural experiences, the sub-Saharan African peoples share a conceptual approach to music-making. One element in this multidimensional perspective is a belief in the affective power of music, a view of music as a force that is capable of making something happen” (10). The same approach to music making has been taken by the new generation of musicians in Latin America and the United States. This can be seen in the lyrics and songs of the young Afro-Cuban hip-hop artists that use their music as a way to protest against all the discriminations for being part of a minority and descendants of Africans. My students with my guidance will get to see how the Hip-Hop musicians used this method in the development of their music. Some examples of this type of music in Cuba come from the group Anónimo Consejo in their song, “A Veces” (At Times) where, according to Fernandez and Stanyek, the group makes a connection to the history of Cuban slaves with the situation of contemporary Afro-Cubans. Another example, is the song “Eres Bella” (You Are beautiful) by the group Las Krudas. These young Afro-Cuban women sing about machismo as a way of slavery. They argued that they have never been able to express their opinions and have a voice due to the fact that they are Afro-Cubans and women. These examples show that the young rappers continue the tradition of their African ancestors of using music as a force that is capable of making many things happen, such the end of racism and discrimination.

As part of reinforcing the lesson about music, I am going to show the film, *Roots of Rhythm: 1994* by Eugene Rosow. The movie is a historical survey of the African musical roots of Latin jazz, salsa, and other popular genres in the Latin American culture. It goes back to the era of slavery to address the development of the African music in the slave’s camps. The movie provides a timeline of how some of the most popular music in Latin American has grown out of African roots. I chose this movie because it will show my students how the music they love to listen to comes from the rhythms of the music the slaves brought to Cuba and other Hispanic countries. Also, it has interviews with artists such as Gloria Estefan, a very famous Latin pop singer that most of my students know. This will help them make a connection to the topic. I want my students to realize the impact African music has on the most popular music in our culture, both the Latin America and the American music.

## Conclusion

This unit will help both my African and Hispanic students develop a better understanding of the African legacy in the Americas, especially Latin America. While much of this came about as a result of the Atlantic Slave Trade, the modern day power of hip-hop music shows that African influences in music live on. It is my hope that the unit will help my students and their parents become closer as they realize that we share many similarities. My goal is for them to see similarities in their cultures, and thus enjoy, but not only that, and also to build better relations in the school and community. In addition I want to make the process of adaptation to the United States easier for the African refugees by showing them the immense impact that their ancestors had on Latin American literature and music.

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan 1: Folktales

**Objective:** The students are going to read a Cuban folktale to understand the influence of Africa in their culture. But, first I am going to do a PowerPoint presentation of the elements of cultures. After, the PowerPoint presentation and the folktale, the students are going to work in groups of 4 comparing and contrasting the African culture and their own culture.

TEKS: 110.5 B2 Listening/speaking/culture. The students listens and speaks to gain knowledge of hi/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures.

**Materials:** “The Roads of the Island,” Cuban folktale by Elvia Pérez, and Venn diagram.

#### **Proceedings:**

I am going to give each student a copy of the folktale. We are going to identify the setting, characters, and key vocabulary as a whole group discussion. Then I am going to explain about cultures with a PowerPoint presentation. I am going to explain to the students the importance of the folktale we are going to read because it comes from the African influence in the Cuban culture. I am going to assign the students to groups of four to read the folktale. After they read the folktale, we are going to discuss the elements of the African culture they found in the folktale. Then I am going to have a discussion about the elements of their own culture. The students are going to complete a Venn diagram comparing their own culture and the culture of African presented in the folktale.

**Assessment:** This group activity will be graded individually base on their responses in the Venn diagram.

#### **Key Vocabulary:**

language      customs      traditions      food      celebrations      beliefs

### Lesson Plan 2: History of Africa

**Objective:** I am going to teach my students important historical events of the continent of Africa.

TEKS: 113.5 B1 History. The student understands how individuals, events, and ideas have influence the history of various communities.

TEKS: 113.5 B3 History. The students understand the concepts of time and chronology.

**Materials:** “Africa: Shaped by the Past,” a video of <http://www.unitedstreaming.com>, and construction paper to make a timeline.

**Proceedings:** First, I am going to discuss the term “history” and explain to the students that individuals, events, and ideas are key elements in the history of a community. I am going to ask

them to watch a video about the history of Africa, and while they are doing it, they need to identify individuals, events, and ideas that have shaped Africa. At the end of the video, we are going to have a discussion of the things they learned from the video. I am going to write the most important events, ideas, and individuals that have had a tremendous impact in the historic of Africa. The students are going to work with a partner in creating a time line of these events.

**Assessment:** I am going to give a grade on their timeline based on the correct order of events and the proper writing of persons, and places.

**Key Vocabulary:** The following words and the students are going to write unfamiliar words as the watch the video for later discussion:

history          events          ideas          individuals          places

### **Lesson Plan 3: Geography**

**Objective:** The students are going to learn about the location of the continent of Africa and draw a map of the countries in Africa.

TEKS: 113.5 B5 Geography. The student understands the concepts of location, distance, and direction on maps and globes.

TEKS 113.5 B5D Geography. The student draws maps of places and regions that contain map elements including a title, compass rose, legend, scale, and grid system.

**Materials:** Marguerite Gordon. Ed. *Nelson's Mandela's Favorite African Folktales*. New York: W.M. Norton & Company, 2002. A map that comes in this book with the names of the countries in Africa and paper for the students to draw their own map. Map of the world.

**Proceedings:** I am going to distribute a copy of the map that comes on Gordon's book. We are going to have a discussion of the names of the countries and the common elements in a map. In addition we are going to look at a map of the world and identify the continent of Africa and the countries. I am going to write in the board the definition of the key vocabulary and discuss it with the students. Then I am going to distribute the paper and have the students do their own map, including a title, compass rose, legend, scale, and grid system.

**Assessment:** I am going to grade my students' maps base on the following criteria: 50 points for the names of the countries of Africa, 10 points for a title, 10 points for a compass rose, 10 points for the legend, 10 points for the scale, and 10 points for the grid system.

**Key Vocabulary:**

location          distance          direction          title          compass rose          legend  
scale          grid system

### **Lesson Plan 4: African Music in Latin America**

**Objective:** the students are going to learn to relate music to history as they learn how the African music is present in the most popular genres of Latin America.

TEKS 117.12 B5 Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates music to history, to society, and to culture.

**Materials:** Eugene Rosow. *Roots of Rhythm*. New York: New Video Group, 1997. A film that is a historical survey of the African musical roots of Latin Jazz, Salsa, Merengue, and other popular genres.

**Proceedings:** I am going to discuss with my students the historical presence of Africa in the Latin American music. Then the students are going to watch the video. After the video, I am

going to have the students discuss in groups of four the information they obtained from the movie. Then they are going to write about the contributions that the Africans made to the popular Latin America music and the names of famous singers.

**Assessment:** I am going to grade the writing activity base on being at least two paragraphs long.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

Aretz, Isabel. "Música y Danza (América Latina continental, excepto Brasil)." *Africa en America Latina*. Ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editors, sa, 1977: 238-303.

This essay contains information about the influence of African music in Latin America. I am going to use it to teach my students in what popular genres in Latin America the African music is present.

Bramwell, Martyn. *Africa: The World in Maps*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2000.

This book is essential for my unit because it contains the history of the countries where my African players come from. I am going to use the book because it contains important facts that are going to help my students learn about Africa.

Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002.

This volume is a vital resource for my unit because it provides the background history about the civilizations of Africa for my introduction of the continent. It has maps and important events that I will share with my students as part of their process of learning about Africa cultures.

Fernandez, Sujatha and Jason Stanyek. "Hip-Hop and Black Spheres in Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil." *Beyond Slavery: The Multilayered Legacy of Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Ed. Darién J. Davis. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.

I will use this essay to explain to my students the influence of African music in Hip-Hop and rap. I want them to see that during slavery Africans created music as a way to protest again slavery and oppression. The descendants of the slaves are also using the rhythms of Africa to create their own sounds as a way of protesting again discrimination, too.

Fraginals, Manuel Moreno. "Aportes Culturales y Deculturación". *África en América Latina*. Ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals. Mexico D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, sa, 1977: 13-33.

I am going to use this essay to teach my students about the numbers of African that arrived to Latin America especially Cuba and Mexico during the era of slavery.

Gomez, Michael A. *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

This book gives me specific dates and places where the Diaspora began. It also has valuable information about the wonderful contributions the Africans made to the Latin America countries.

Gordon, Marguerite. Ed. *Nelson's Mandela's Favorite African Folktales*. New York: W.M. Norton & Company, 2002.

I will use this collection of folktales from Africa because to help my children discover the continent of Africa by looking at the map at the beginning of the book. Also, it will help my students make connections between the story read at the beginning of the unit, "El banquete de Anansi" and the characters in the folktales presented here.

Hassig, Susan M. *Cultures of The World: Somalia*. New York: Marshal Cavendish Corporation, 1997.

This book is going to be used in my classroom to teach my students about Somalia. The book contains facts about the customs, language, and economy of Somalia that I am going to use in my history and geography lessons.

- Molle, Tololwa M. "El banquete de Anansi". *¡Déjame ver! Lectura Scott Foresman*. New York: Scott Foresman, 2000.  
This folktale will be used to introduce the unit about the influence of African cultures in Latin America. The students will read the story and learn about the purpose of folktales in Africa and about a popular character in their culture, Anansi.
- Pérez, Elvia. *From the Winds of Manguito: Cuban Folktales in English and Spanish*. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2004.  
This book has the folktale I will use to introduce folktales in Latin American that show the presence of the African culture.
- Rosow, Eugene. *Roots of Rhythm*. New York: New Video Group, 1997.  
This three-part historical survey of the African roots of Latin Jazz, Salsa, and other popular genres such as Hip-Hop will be used to demonstrate to my students the evolution of Latin Music from African music.
- United Streaming*. 2008. <<http://www.unitedstreaming.com>>.  
I will use this website to introduce the continent of Africa to my students during the mapping skills lesson.
- Wilson, Olly. "The Association of Movement and Music as a Manifestation of a Black Conceptual Approach to Music-Making." *More than Drumming: Essays on African and Afro-Latin American Music and Musicians*. Ed. Irene V. Jackson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985. 9-23.  
This essay discusses research about African musical influenced on the music making in Latin American and the United States. I will gain information to teach my students where the popular music they listen to comes from.
- Supplemental Resources**
- Arnott, Kathleen. *African Myths and Legends*. Great Britain: The Chaucer Press, Ltd., 1962.  
I will use this book to read to my students a folktale from the Congo, "Why the Dog is the Friend of Man." My objective is to teach my students that in Africa, a way to teach a lesson about human behavior or explain past events is by telling a tale.
- Beier, Ulli and Bakare Gbadamosi Trans. *The Moon Cannot Fight: Yoruba Children's Poems*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari Publications, 1960.  
These poems are relevant to my unit because they are part of the literature of Africa. They can be a helpful resource if I want my students to see that Africans also used poems as part of their oral folklore.
- Champion, Tempil B. *Understanding Storytelling among African American Children: A Journey from Africa to America*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003.  
This book is a resource to teach my students about the tradition of storytelling. It will teach my students why storytelling is used among African-American children as part of their African culture.
- Cullinan, Bernice E., and Diane G. Persons, eds. *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. New York: Continuum, 2003.  
I can use this encyclopedia to get more information about the different types of children's literature available in the United States.
- Cumber Dance, Daryl, ed. *From My People: 400 Years of African American Folklore*. New York: Norton, 2002.  
This book discusses the history of African folklore in America. I can learn more about the different types of American literature to compare and contrast the folklore of African culture.
- Niane, D. T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Trans. G.D. Pickett. England: Pearson Education Limited, 2006.  
This epic tale will be use to teach about the history of the twelve kingdoms of Mali. It is part of the lesson about the countries that make up Africa.

Osono, Tess Onwueme. *Why the Elephant Has No Butt: Stories Mother Turkey Told Her Children*.

Adapted from the Africana-Igbo. San Francisco, Lagos: Africana Press, 2000.

This folktale is from Africa, and I can use in my unit to show my students the different characters use in the African cultures.

Taylor, Stephen. *Shaka's Children: A History of the Zulu People*. London: Harper, Collins, 1995.

This book represents the history of another country in Africa. It can help during my lesson about the different countries in the continent and their people.

African American Literature: An Overview African American literature dates back to African slaves' earliest arrival in the New World in 1639, when they forged a language and literature of their own. At the heart of this body of work lies the African American vernacular tradition. Source for information on African American Literature: An Overview: Gale Library of Daily Life: Slavery in America dictionary.Â The African American vernacular tradition informs African American literature of slavery and freedom. Major themes during this period are resistance to tyranny and dedication to human dignity. African American authors during this period questioned the institution of slavery as they became increasingly familiar with the teachings of the Holy Bible. Latin American literature consists of the oral and written literature of Latin America in several languages, particularly in Spanish, Portuguese, and the indigenous languages of the Americas as well as literature of the United States written in the Spanish language. It rose to particular prominence globally during the second half of the 20th century, largely due to the international success of the style known as magical realism. As such, the region's literature is often associated solely with this