

# African Drums

Students will connect with the characters and events in a story through music. Students will build hand drums and then design rhythms to be associated with key characters, events or emotions in the story.

## Standards

This craft project aligns with the following national standards, as outlined by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

[www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

- Music Standard 3
- Language Arts Standards 6 and 9
- Working with Others Standard 1

## Cultural Influence

In many parts of the world, drums are used only as musical entertainment.

However, drums play a key role in Africa's rich culture and history.

Historically, drums were used as a form of communication between villages and served an important role in wedding ceremonies and naming ceremonies. Drums are thought to connect to the people who hear them on a spiritual level.

Many types of drums have evolved in Africa, and they are played in a variety of ways. Some are meant to be hand drums, while others are played with either wooden drum sticks or a baton.



## Time

One to two class periods

## Materials and Directions for an Easy Drum

### Materials

- Empty coffee can with lid
- Construction paper – cut to fit around the can
- Markers, glitter glue, stickers for decoration
- Tape

### Directions

- Have students decorate paper
- Wrap decorated paper around coffee can and secure with tape

## African Drums

### Materials and Directions for a *Djembe Drum*

#### Materials

- Two large Styrofoam, plastic or paper cups per drum
- Glue
- Masking tape
- Paint
- Paper towels for clean-up
- Newspaper in short strips
- Paper-mache paste – one part flour to two parts water

#### Directions

- Glue the bottom of two cups together (this step can be done in advance).
- Once glue is dry, have students cover both ends securely with masking tape – it can be helpful to overlap the tape and place it in multiple directions.
- Put a thin layer of newspaper in paper-mache paste over the sides of the cups.
- Once dry, rub a thin coat of heavily watered-down brown paint over the sides of the drum.
- When the brown paint is dry, the drum can be decorated.

Note: There are numerous other African-inspired instruments that can easily be made in classrooms, including rainsticks and rattles.

### Teacher Preparation

- Select a book from **We Give Books** ([www.wegivebooks.org](http://www.wegivebooks.org)).
- Select a drum to make, and collect all materials.
- If making the *djembe drum*, create one in advance as an example.

### Classroom Instruction

- Direct your web browser to the **We Give Books** website at [www.wegivebooks.org](http://www.wegivebooks.org).
- Log in to your account and select a campaign to support.
- Choose a book to read and click the orange “Read Online” button to open it.
- Read your selected book to the students.



## African Drums

- After reading the book to students, ask them what sounds and rhythms they feel would represent key characters or events. Which characters or events would be loud? Which ones would be fast rhythms? What would be slow and quiet? This is a great time for students to get up and act out these rhythms.
- Read the Cultural Influence section above to students and explain that they will be building drums and using them to represent parts of the story.
- Demonstrate how to build the drum.
- Once students are finished building their drums, reread the story and let students add the drums as accompaniment.

### Ideas for Display

- Have students share their drums and the story with other classes.
- Create a short write-up about how drums are used in Africa to include with a display.