

FANA SORO

Greetings from Africa!

Teacher's Study Guide

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Master musician and cultural ambassador Fana Soro brings West Africa to schools across Canada. Fana Soro is Senoufo from Solognougou, a village close to the borders of Mali and Burkina Faso, in northern Côte d'Ivoire. Fana's father, Zié Soro, was the village chief and also "Balafola", a master xylophone player. At the age of seven, Fana began following in the footsteps of his father and began studying the balafon under the instruction of renowned balafola Nabeh Coulibaly. By age 11, Fana was performing as a soloist at community gatherings, festivals and ceremonies. At 17, he entered the Ballet National de la Côte d'Ivoire and began his formal career as a professional artist. He spent nine years touring internationally with the ballet before taking his talents to Norway. Fana toured extensively throughout Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and the Farøe Islands where many of his performances were in schools. He was the Artist in Residence for 7 years with the Norwegian International Museum for Children's Art. In 1997, he immigrated to Canada and is thrilled to share his culture with North Americans.



ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Fana Soro's performance features music, dance, and storytelling from the Côte d'Ivoire in the Senoufo tradition. The music features the Balafon, a traditional West African xylophone, and the djembe (hand drum) and various other traditional instruments. Audience participation is encouraged throughout the performance in the form of call-and-response. Student volunteers will be selected to assist with the storytelling. Especially featured will be the **Boloyé** an initiation dance for young men in which the dancers represent leopards to show their strength, cunning, and agility.

The Meaning of Masabo

"Masa" is the Djoula word for king or wise man of the village. "Bo" is the word for the house where the wise man lives. "Masabo" is the place where villagers would come to receive advice.

ABOUT THE RÉPUBLIQUE DE CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Political

Date of Independence: August 7, 1960

Capital: Yamoussoukro

Main Cities: Abidjan, Bouaké, Daloa, Korhogo, Yamoussoukro, San-Pédro

Population: 23.7 Million

Economic

Currency: African Financial Community FRANC

Main exports: cocoa, coffee, tropical woods, cotton, bananas, petroleum, pineapples, palm oil

Main imports: food, consumer goods, capital good, fuel, transportation equipment.

Geographic

Land Area: 322, 460 square km

Coastline: 515 km

Main Rivers: Cassandra, Bandama, Komoé

Climate: Tropical coast, semiarid in the north

Highest Point: Point Nimba (1752 m)

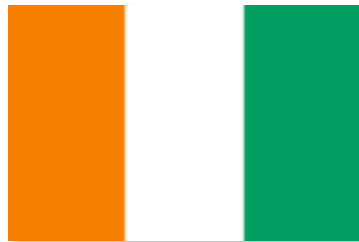
Cultural

Major languages: French, Djoula, Senoufo, Agni, Baulé, Dan, Yacouba

Number of Languages: 63-65

Major ethnic groups: Akan, Volatiques, Mandé, Krous, Senoufo, Baulé

Major Religions: Islam and Christianity (35-40%), traditional religions (25%).



Official flag



Main cities



FRANC



Plantains



Cacao



Cotton field



City of Abidjan

ABOUT THE SENOUFO PEOPLE

The Senoufo live in small villages of circular huts in the northern savanna. Considered the oldest ethnic group in Cote D'ivoire, they settled in this place around the 1600. Famous for their woodcarving, masks, hand-painted **Korhogo** fabrics, pottery, dance and music, the Senoufo are predominantly an agricultural people, cultivating rice, yams, cashews, and millet.

The closer relationship between the Senoufo farmer and his land can be seen in their religious observances. Each village has a mythical ancestor in the form of an animal. This animal or totem is special to the Senoufo and is a symbol of unity. The head of the family is the main authority figure who intercedes with gods on behalf of his family to ensure good harvests. The Senoufo consider everyone in the village to be part of an extended family. Everyone in a village will eat and farm together. Food is stored collectively and each family contributes to the village. The Senoufo have secret associations - the **Poro** cult for boys and the **Sakrobundi** cult for girls. These cults help prepare the children for adulthood. The goal is to preserve the group's folklore, teach tribal customs, and install self-control through rigorous tests. The children's education is divided into three seven-year periods, ending with an initiation ceremony.



ABOUT THE MUSIC

The country's traditional music is characterized by series of melodies and rhythms occurring in harmony. Music is used for celebrating communal and personal events. Stages of a person's life are marked with music specific to adolescent initiation rites, weddings, ancestral ceremonies, and funerals. There are different kinds of music for women, men, young people and hunters. Drums such as the **djembe** (pictured at right), are among the most popular instruments used in West African music. They come in a number of shapes, and made of materials such as wood, gourds and clay. Membranes are made from the skins of reptiles, cattle, goats and antelopes.



The **balafon** (below) is a type of xylophone with wooden keys and there are many different balafons in Africa. The balafon that Fana Soro plays consist of wooden keys mounted on a frame formed by four uprights, to which are attached eight horizontal bars forming two rectangles one above the other, the whole thing being held together with leather thongs. Spherical gourds, open at the top, act as resonators and are suspended beneath the keys. The size of each of these resonators is adapted to the pitch of each note. Turning the frame balafons of West Africa may be to one of several different scales. The balafon Fana uses is tuned to the pentatonic scale. The tuning is related to the language that is peculiar to each ethnic group or to the scales of their songs, and many variations are found within each ethnic group.



ABOUT THE DANCE

Dance is as varied in style and function as music. Dancing is associated with both sacred and secular events, and it plays a crucial role in education, work, entertainment, politics, and religious rites. Common dance patterns include team dances using formation; group dances that allow individuals to display their skills; solo dances, often performed by a professional entertainer. Body postures in Ivorian dance are typically earth-oriented movements in which the performer bends the knees and inclines the torso forward from the hip.



ABOUT LANGUAGE, ORAL TRADITIONS, AND STORYTELLING

The official national language of Cote d'Ivoire is French, a legacy of the earlier colonial administration. Educated Ivorians are bilingual speaking French and their mother tongue, which is the language of their village and ethnic group. With 60 different ethnic groups, this means that there are as many languages spoken in the country.

Although writing traditions exist, Ivorians are primarily a vocal people, as are most Africans and throughout history they have regarded the oral language as a potent force. In a country where many ethnic languages coexist and a colonial language was imposed on everyone, it requires much effort to preserve a written literature for each ethnic language. Thus it is appropriate to convey African stories and folklore through an oral tradition.



Kodaltchiéné Mask



Kponyugo Mask



Korhogo Cloth

FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

Ehrenstale, Kristina. *The Fifth Corner*. London: Meuthen, c 1984. A twelve-year old Swedish girl living in the Ivory Coast conceals a secret garden from everyone but her friend Zigga, a pygmy. For young readers.

Fischer, Eberhard. **Masks in Euro Culture, Ivory Coast**. New York: Centre for African Art, c 1986. A schoolrly account of Ivorian masks in the Guro Culture.

Ivory Coast (Africa in Focus). Journal Films. Oakville, Ont.: Magic Lantern Communications, c 1990. 20 minutes. A video presentation of the history and culture of the Ivory Coast.

Kummer, Patricia K. **Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)** (Enchantment of the World). New York: Children's Press, c 1996. A comprehensive introduction to the land and people. For intermediate readers.

Roddy, Patricia. **Api and the boy Stanger: a Village Creation Tale**. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, c1994.

Sheehan, Patricia. **Côte d'Ivoire** (Cultures of the World). New York: Marshall Cavendish, c 2000. Excellent coverage of the history, geography, people and culture.

Tadjo, Veronique. **Lord of the Dance: an African Retelling**. London: A&C Black, c 1988. A poetic retelling of the origin of the Senoufo people. For younger readers.



Fana with Balafon

Websites:

www.afromix.org/disco/pays/cote_d_ivoire/index.en.html
www.africaclub.com
<http://www.our-africa.org/ivory-coast>
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/poro/hd_poro.htm
<https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.ca/2013/03/senufo-people-west-africas-ancient.html>

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