



www.theatertrips.org – etaarts@gmail.com

STUDY GUIDE

AFRICAN AMERICAN CELEBRATION: Dance, Music & Folklore in Pop Culture

Show Overview:

This exciting live performance features high-energy traditional African dance and music, along with African-American styles such as Hip Hop, Swing, and the Charleston. The show also explores how African culture shaped the sounds, rhythms, and moves of American pop culture. Audience participation is always included!

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this program, students will:

- Recognize key elements of traditional African music and dance.
 - Understand the roots of African-American music and its cultural importance.
 - Identify ways African traditions influenced American pop culture, including Hip Hop, Jazz, and dance styles.
 - Celebrate cultural diversity through shared stories, rhythm, and movement.
-

Background: African Cultural Roots

- African dance is deeply connected to storytelling, community, and celebration.
- Instruments like the **djembe drum**, **kora**, and **shekere** are central to traditional rhythms.
- Folktales often teach lessons, honor ancestors, or explain natural events.

Did you know? Call-and-response singing is a tradition from West Africa that continues in gospel and Hip Hop today!

African-American Influences on Pop Culture

African Tradition	American Pop Culture Example
Polyrhythmic Drumming	Jazz, Funk, Hip Hop beats
Storytelling Through Dance	Breakdancing, Step Dance
Oral Folklore	Spoken Word Poetry, Rap
Community Celebrations	Block Parties, Parades

Discussion Questions:

1. What sounds or rhythms stood out to you during the performance?
 2. How did the dances make you feel? What movements did you recognize?
 3. Can you think of a song or dance today that might have roots in African traditions?
 4. Why is it important to honor and learn about different cultural traditions?
-

Activity Ideas:

- **Rhythm Circle:** Use hand drums, clapping, or classroom items to create layered rhythms.
 - **Movement Match-Up:** Learn a traditional dance move and connect it to a modern dance (e.g., Charleston to shuffle steps).
 - **Folktale Retelling:** Read an African or African-American folktale and act it out in small groups.
 - **Design a Cultural Collage:** Include instruments, clothing, symbols, and dance styles from African and African-American heritage.
-

Vocabulary:

Word	Definition
Folklore	Traditional stories, music, and customs passed down through generations
Rhythm	A pattern of sounds and beats in music or movement
Call-and-Response	A style where a leader sings or plays a phrase and the group answers
Diaspora	The spread of African cultures and people across the world
Heritage	Traditions, values, and customs passed from one generation to the next

WORKSHEET 1: Match the Culture

Directions: Draw a line from each African tradition to its influence in American pop culture.

African Traditions

Djembe Drum

Call and Response Singing

Traditional Folktales

Circle Dances

Body Percussion & Clapping

American Influence


A. Breakdancing

B. Hip Hop Beats

C. Gospel & Rap Music

D. Spoken Word Poetry

E. Step Dancing

 **WORKSHEET 2: Reflect & Respond**

1. What is one new thing you learned from the show?

2. Describe one dance move or rhythm you saw that you liked.

3. What instrument did you see or hear? Describe its sound.

4. How do you think African culture has shaped music today?

CLASS ACTIVITY: Story & Rhythm Drama

Materials: A short African folktale, simple percussion instruments or clapping hands.

Instructions:

1. Read a short African folktale as a class.
 2. Assign students roles (narrator, animals, natural elements).
 3. Add rhythm: drum or clap on key phrases or emotional beats.
 4. Perform for another class or record a classroom video.
-

VOCABULARY MINI-QUIZ

Fill in the blank with the right word:

1. A _____ is a traditional story passed down through generations.
2. _____ is a pattern of sounds that we hear or feel in music.
3. The _____ drum is one of the most important West African instruments.
4. African dance often includes _____ and clapping.
5. _____ means the history and culture we inherit from our ancestors.

(Word Bank: Folklore, Rhythm, Djembe, Body Percussion, Heritage)

