

Tandy Deal & Company presents...

The Venezuelan Music Project – Study Guide

Venezuelan Music Project

Featuring: Jackeline Rago,
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Flag of Venezuela

Venezuelan Music Project (VMP) performs a wide range of music—from folklore-driven songs played with traditional instruments, to more contemporary urban dance compositions that also include European instruments such as electric bass, flute, and saxophone.



VMP showcasing Venezuelan instruments at the park. Photo by Debra Zeller

Combining the Indigenous-Venezuelan, West African and Spanish-European influences, this project emerges as a dynamic ensemble full of vitality, energy and color.

Music and Culture

Venezuelan music and culture are the product of a diverse set of cultural traditions. A real melting pot, influenced by the meeting of three cultures: the 500-year-old musical traditions of the indigenous, native Venezuelans, the Arab-Andalusian songs and dances of the Spanish conquerors and the intricate patterns of the music from different West African countries. (Students: Can you find West Africa and Spain and draw the route people took to get to Venezuela? How do you think they traveled there?)



Instruments and Musical Styles

One of the most popular and traditional styles of music in Venezuela is the *Joropo*, our national dance, played with *harps*, *cuatros*, *bandolas*, mandolins, bass (of European origin) and *maracas* (of native, Venezuelan origin).



In the **central coast of the nation**, we can dance to numerous rhythmic variations played with **Afro-Venezuelan instruments** such as the *cumaco drum*, *clarines*, *palos*, *curbatas*, *pipas*, *culo 'e puya* drums, *quitiplas*, *taboras*, *taboritos* and *fulía* drums among many others (of West African origin). Most of the lyrics are in Spanish with a call-response singing format.



Jackeline Rago with the *cumaco*, *bumbac*, *maracas* and *quitiplas*.

Afro-Venezuelan Drumming

Among some of the most popular **Afro-Venezuelan drumming** we should mention the *sanguero* (a processional drumming to honor San Juan Bautista), the *quitiplas** (stomping bamboo ensemble) and the *golpe de tambor*** . The *golpe de tambor* is one of the most important representatives of the Afro-Venezuelan style of music. *Golpes de tambor* are played in a more sustained tempo to which an experienced drummer will improvised highly syncopated patterns.

***Musical Example of Tonadas de Quitiplás** (From the Central Coast) *Tonadas de Quitiplás* (By VMP)

http://www.venezuelanmusicproject.com/MP3s/Quitiplas_Web_version.mp3

****Musical Example of Golpe de Tambor** (From the Central Coast)

Noche Clara / El Campanazo by VMP

http://www.venezuelanmusicproject.com/MP3s/NocheClara_Web_Version.mp3



Jackie playing a *Tambor de San Millan*. Photo by David Yu

Other popular rhythms such as the *gaita*, *tamborera*, *parranda** and *calypso*** , show the **integration of the three cultures** by combining the **native Venezuelan instruments**, the **European Spanish language and string instruments** and the **West African rhythms** and dances.

Musical Example of *Parranda (From the Central Coast. Most popular during the Christmas Season) **Tambor (Parranda Central)**
http://www.venezuelanmusicproject.com/MP3s/Tambor_Web_version.mp3

****Musical Example of *Calypso del Callao*** (From the Southeastern region. Popular during Carnival Feb/March) **Woman Del Callao by VMP**
http://www.venezuelanmusicproject.com/MP3s/WomanDelCallao_Web_Version.mp3



VMP at Rhythmyx Cultural Works showcasing the Tambor Redondo.

Photo by Carolina Abolio

VMP brings to the stage an array of these musical forms. The band has a collection of authentic instruments from Venezuela, so the audience can experience the original sounds and feel of the music.

From: <http://www.venezuelanmusicproject.com/music.html>

Percussion Instruments of Venezuela / *Instrumentos de percusión Venezolanos*



Maracas - Percussion instrument made from gourd, wood and seeds



Tambora de Gaita - Single-headed membrane drum made of wood - used to play *Gaita*



Bumbac - Single-headed membrane drum used to play calypso



Cumaco - Single-headed membrane drum made from a split log that lays on its side - can be played with the hands or *palitos* (drum sticks)



*Tambores de San Juan:
furro, cumaco, palitos
(drum sticks), fulía*



Quitiplas —Different lengths of bamboo that are struck on the ground. The different sizes produce different tones.

Cuatro – small, Venezuelan Small guitar with 4 strings and a “percussion board” on the body. Originally from Spain, today the *Cuatro* is present in almost all styles of music in Venezuela.



Donna Viscuso playing flute, Jackie Rago playing cuatro and Sam Bevan on bass. Photo by Debra Zeller

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We've Got the World in our Classroom!

Lesson in Geography, History, Culture –

Where do each of us come from? Many of your families may have traveled many miles over long periods of time in order for you to be where you are today. Do you know how you got here? Or how your classmates got here? Let's find out where we all come from!

Discussion: Ask students if they know where their families came from (or if they moved from different areas themselves. Remember, they don't have to answer if it's a sensitive topic). Where did your parents travel from to get here? Grandparents? Do you have any thoughts about where *their* parents and grandparents might have come from?

Let the students list answers based on their own families - Mexico, South America, China, Taiwan, Europe, Africa, California, New York? Can the students get more country specific? You can take this opportunity to designate between Continents and Countries.

Classroom Activity: Get a World Map (Or draw the world on the chalkboard as you go!) and have students place a pin or a sticker where they, their parents and grandparents may have come from. You can color coordinate tiny stickers (any colors are fine):
Blue: Yourself (1 sticker per student)
Yellow: Parents (2 or more stickers per student)
Purple: Grandparents (1-4 stickers per student)
Green: Grandparents' Parents (1-4 stickers per student)

Discussion: Look at the map and ask the class: How many countries are in our class history? Do you know any of the languages, food, music or celebrations from the countries we listed? Have students identify any languages, food, music or celebrations that they know come from any of the countries on the Classroom History Map. *All of these languages, foods, music and customs are all part of your classroom's history.* I bet it's pretty rich!

Activity Extension: Have students draw a migration line from their Grandparents' Parents all the way to themselves. For homework, they can write a short story about where their ancestors came from and what it took to get them here. (See homework suggestion below)

Homework (can be modified to your needs) - Family Migration Story! - For homework, have each student plot out and draw their Family Migration History on a photocopied map. At each migration stop, have students research the food, language, music, and celebrations of that country. Have students write a short Family Migration story based on their Family Migration Map that includes where their ancestors lived, what languages they may have spoken, what foods they may have eaten, and what celebrations they may have practiced...All the way to their present day families.

Encourage students to do this activity with their parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.

Have students share their family migration stories with the class.

HOMEWORK EXTENSION – CLASSROOM HISTORY COLLAGE

Have your classroom make a story-board or collage of their Classroom History based on all their research. Fill it with pictures of food, music, dance, celebration, people, stories....anything that represents the cultures and customs of the places in your Classroom's Collective History. Students can contribute to their Classroom History Collage throughout the year.

Have your students speculate and discuss: What happens when people, languages, food and culture all come together in a new place?