



A STUDY GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABOUT THE PERFORMERS
2. ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE
3. ABOUT THE REPUBLIQUE DE COTE D'IVOIRE
4. ABOUT THE SENOUFU PEOPLE
5. ABOUT THE MUSIC
6. ABOUT THE DANCE
7. ABOUT THE LANGUAGE, ORAL TRADITIONS AND STORYTELLING
8. ACTIVITIES



ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



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 king or wise man lives.

“Masabo” is the place where villagers would come to receive advice, counselling, or education.

Masabo consists of artists from various West African cultures led by renowned balafon virtuoso Fana Soro. Fana Soro is a Senoufo from Solognougou, a village close to the borders of Mali and Burkina Faso, in northern Cote d'Ivoire. Fana's father, Zié Soro, was the village chief and also “balafola” a master balafon player. At the age of seven, Fana began following the footsteps of his father and began studying the balafon under the instruction of the region's master balafola, Nabeh Coullbaly. By age 11, Fana was performing as a soloist at community gatherings, festivals and funeral ceremonies.

At 17, Fana entered the Ballet National de Cote d'Ivoire and began his formal career as a professional artist. He spent 9 years touring internationally with the Ballet Company before taking his talents to Norway. Fana toured extensively throughout Scandinavia as well as Iceland and the Faroe Islands, where many of his performances were in public 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 continue to share his culture with North American audiences. Principal Performers include: Fana Soro, Kesseke Yeo, Jean Pierre Makosso, Mohamed Diarra. -> <http://www.childrensfestival.ca/calendar/featured-performers/masabo-celebrates-africa/#vimeo>

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The Masabo performance features music, dance, and storytelling. As Cote d'Ivoire is a country that represents over 60 ethnic groups and languages, a Masabo performance showcases several dances and rhythms from various Ivorian ethnic groups such as the Senoufo, the Bété, the Kro and the Djoula. The music features the balafon, a traditional West African xylophone and the djembé, the most popular African 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 Jean Pierre Makosso, master storyteller from the Congo. Especially featured will be the Boloyee, an initiation dance for young men in which the dancers represent leopards to show their strength, cunning and agility.

ABOUT THE REPUBLIQUE DE COTE D'IVOIRE



GEOGRAPHIC

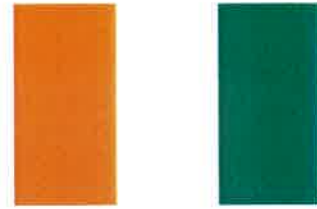
Land area: 322.460 km

Coastlines: 515 km

Main rivers: Sassandra, Bandama, Komoé

Climate: Tropical along the coast, semiarid in the north

Highest Point: Mount Nimba (1752 m)



POLITICAL

Date of Independence: August 7th, 1960

Capital: Yamoussoukro

Main Cities: Abidjan, Korhogo, Bouaké,

Bondoukou, Man, San-Pédro

Population: 25.6 million (2015)



CULTURAL

Major Languages:

French, Djoula, Senoufo,

Agni, Baulé, Dan,

Yacouba

Major Ethnic Groups:

Baulé, Senoufo, Agni,

Bété

Major Religions:

Indigenous religions

(65%), Islam (23%),

Christianity (12%)



ECONOMICAL

Currency: African Financial Community Franc (CFA)

Main Exports: Cocoa, coffee, tropical woods, cotton, bananas, petroleum, pineapples, palm oil

Main Imports: Food, consumer goods, capital goods, fuel, transportation equipment



ABOUT THE SENOUFO PEOPLE

(MASSABO'S LEADER, FANA SORO'S ETHNIC GROUP)



The Senoufo live in small villages of circular huts in the northern savannah. Considered the oldest ethnic group in Cote d'Ivoire, they settled in this place around 1600. Famous for their woodcarving, masks, hand-painted Korhogo fabrics, pottery, dance and music, the Senoufo are predominantly agricultural people, who cultivate rice, yams, peanuts and millet.

The Senoufo farmer maintains close relationships between his land and his 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 the 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 groups help prepare the children for adulthood. The goal is to preserve the group's folklore, teach tribal customs and instill 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 a 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 djembé, are among the most popular instruments used in West African music. They come in a number of different shapes and are made of materials such as wood gourds and clay. Membranes are made from skins of reptiles, cattle, goats and antelopes.



The balafon is a type of xylophone with wooden keys and there are many different balafons in Africa. The balafon that Fana Soro plays consists 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 tied leather strips. Spherical nonedible gourds, dried and opened at the top, act as resonators and are suspended beneath the keys. Small holes are drilled into each gourd and an egg sac of a particular spider is glued over each hole causing the gourds to produce a buzzing sound when the keys are struck.

Tuning 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 particular to each ethnic group or the scales of their songs and many variations can be found within each ethnic group. -> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eRAR3yOx8k>



ABOUT THE DANCE

Dance is as varied in style and function as music. Dance 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 formations as well as group dances that allow individuals to display their skills and solo dances, often performed by a professional or hereditary entertainer. Body postures in Ivorian dance are typically earth-oriented movements in which performers bend the knees and inclines the torso forward from the hip. -> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vgBTGhCJaU>



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 there are as many languages spoken in the country.

Although written traditions exist, Ivorians are primarily vocal people, as are most Africans. 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 written literature for each ethnic language. Thus, it is appropriate to convey African stories and folklore through an oral tradition.



Want to know
more?
↓

FURTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

Abouet, Margaret, Akissi, London: Flying Eye Books, c2014, Children's comic about a mischievous little girl in Cote d'Ivoire.

Fischer, Eberhard, Masks in Guro Culture, Ivory Coast, New York: Centre for African Art, c1986. A scholarly account of Ivoirian masks in the Guro culture.

Ivory Coast (Africa in Focus), Journal Films, Oakville, Ont.: Magic Lantern Communications, c1990, 20 mins, a video presentation of the history and culture of the Ivory Coast.

Kummer, Patricia K., Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) (Enchantment of the World), New York: Children's Press, c1996. A comprehensive introduction of the land and people. For intermediate readers.

Roddy, Patricia, Api and the Boy Stranger: A Village Creation Tale, New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, c1994.

Sheehan, Patricia, Cote d'Ivoire (Cultures of the World), New York: Marshall Cavendish, c2000. Excellent coverage of the history, geography, peoples and culture.

Tadjo, Veronique, Lord of the Dance: an African Retelling, London: A&C Black, c1998, apoeitic retelling of the origin of the Senoufo people. For young readers.

<http://africaclub.com/homeingl.htm>

<http://www.afromix.org/html/musique/>

<https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/peoples/show/senufo>

<https://www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/senufo.htm>

ACTIVITY IDEAS

HOW TO CREATE AN AFRICAN MASK



African masks have heavily influenced modern western and European artists. Take a look at cubism, fauvism and expressionism and you will see countless examples of African-influenced work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gw6F8JORJ4w>

In order to create an African mask watch the youtube video from the link above and follow the steps. This way you can design your own unique African paper mask.

What you need: colored carton paper, scissors, glue, a hole puncher, a marker (e.g. in silver or gold) and ribbon.

- What to do:
1. Cut the outline of your mask.
 2. Cut mouth, eyes, nose and other from a separate and different colored carton paper and glue them to the mask.
 3. Punch holes in the bottom and the top of the mask.
 4. Thread small parts of the ribbon through the holes.
 5. Paint patterns on your mask and design it the way you like it.
 6. Et voilà: your own African mask is finished!

LEARN AN AFRICAN DANCE

Dance is a way of life for African people and it is associated with everyday activities. Dances can be grouped into categories such as birth, death, puberty, war, recreation, initiation and ritual. Dance in Africa is always accompanied by music which ranges from handclapping and singing to massive orchestras of instrumentation. Dance is so vital in the everyday lives of people, that in Ghana if you are a chief and cannot dance the way of your people, you can be dethroned. Dance in Africa can be considered a source of communication and history re-enacted through movement.

And since dancing is such an important part of the Senoufo culture, why don't the students try some African dance moves themselves:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ewqg-3xJFdI>

The video from the link above is a dance tutorial and teaches simple basic steps of the African dance culture.



We wish to thank Britannia World Music, copyright 2002, for producing the pedagogical guide Yamo! Yamo! which inspired this study guide.