

Study Guide

World Music in the Schools • Living Room Learning: World Music & Dance

Zimbabwe: Music & Storytelling

Teaching Artist: Garit Imhoff • [Garit's Artist Profile](#)

Video link: <https://video.link/w/9umkb>

Teaching Artist **Garit Imhoff** will introduce students to Zimbabwean music and culture. He performs with Zimbeat, a San Diego-based ensemble that performs the dynamic village music of Zimbabwe, Africa. The music is based on the Shona peoples' traditional instrument, the mbira dzavadzimu, an instrument consisting of 22 to 28 metal keys mounted on a hardwood soundboard, also known as the karimba. In this interactive assembly students will have the opportunity to learn vocabulary in the Shona language and participate in call and response singing and storytelling.

Learning Objectives: Students will . . .

- Recognize interlocking melodies from traditional karimba songs
- Understand and perform call and response singing
- Tell the story of Anansi the spider
- Explain the role of music and dance in Zimbabwean culture

Alignment with **California Arts Standards for Public Schools:**

- **Music:** .MU:Cn11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

Preliminary Activities

Geography:

- Show students a [map of Zimbabwe](#):
 - Identify urban centers (Harare and Bulawayo) and rural village areas (Bopoma Villages) on the map
- Pronounce “Shona,” the word for the people and language of Zimbabwe
- Pronounce “karimba,” the name of the instrument in this assembly
- Zimbabwe is home to the Great Zimbabwe monument (a ruin that was once the capital city of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe that dates from the 12th century), Victoria Falls (considered the largest waterfall in the world because of its combined height and length), famous game

preserves (Tshabalala Game Sanctuary) and parks (Hwange National Park), all major tourist destinations.

History:

- There are early artifacts of stone age and hunter-gatherer cultures from the great kingdoms of the 11th–17th centuries in Zimbabwe.
- European colonization took place in the 17th century, culminating in British rule. The country was named Rhodesia in 1895 after the military/political leader, Cecil Rhodes.
- From 1965 to 1979 it was an independent nation with white minority rule. There was a history of armed struggles throughout the colonial period, and a rebellion that finally led to the establishment of the independent state of Zimbabwe in 1979.
- Since then, the country has suffered from extreme poverty as a result of a 37-year-long dictatorship under one of the revolutionary leaders, Robert Mugabe. He was removed from power in 2017, and the country is still adjusting to the change in leadership.

Traditions:

- Music and dance are used to contact ancestral spirits in the Bira ceremony, an all-night ritual celebrated by Shona people from Zimbabwe in which members of an extended family call on ancestral spirits for guidance and intercession.
- Animism (from Latin anima, "breath, spirit, life") is the religious belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and perhaps even words—as animated and alive. These beliefs coexist with other religious beliefs such as Catholicism.

Culture:

- Native traditions of music and dance ceremonies were suppressed by colonial governments and religious missionaries.
- During the Chimurenga, or liberation war, music and songs by popular artists like Oliver Mtukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo were part of the struggle.
- Since political independence, there has been worldwide interest in these cultural traditions that has fostered a resurgence of performance and study by the younger generation.

Follow-Up Activities

Ask your students to . . .

- Share with someone at home one thing you learned or liked.
- Recall the name of the instrument they heard.
- Sing the song Chemutengure. What does its title mean?
- Locate Zimbabwe on the map.
- Recall the names of Anansi the spider's six sons and how they each helped their father.
- Tell a story using the call and response technique.
- Answer the question: what more would you like to learn about Zimbabwe?