



Louisiana Musical Legends

Bringing Louisiana Musicians into the Classroom

a project of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and 64 Parishes presented in partnership with First Lady Donna Edwards and the Louisiana Regional Arts Councils

Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000

Instructional Plan

Lesson Plan Author: Diana Turner
Target Grade Level: 2nd Grade
Regional Arts Council Partner: Arts Council New Orleans

Notes from Lesson Plan Author:

As I started my investigation, I realized that [Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000](#) are more than a musical legend—they are a musical legacy. Luther Gray is a musician and historian who communicates the essential story of how jazz and other American music forms were built from the rhythms of African and African-descended people in Congo Square. Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 continue to inspire the music, rhythms, and dancing of Congo Square.

To learn about Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000, students should first understand the historical context of Congo Square, which is located in New Orleans’s Louis Armstrong Park. During a recent afternoon jog through Louis Armstrong Park, as I studied Adewale S. Adenle’s [sculpture](#) of enslaved Africans dancing and drumming, I felt peace knowing that Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 are telling the story of Congo Square to a new generation. I thought about the challenges of exploring this history with second graders and wondered how students could understand the connections between Congo Square, jazz, and hip hop. I similarly contemplated how to help my students understand not only who Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 are in context, but also the role students can play in carrying on the legacy of their ancestors.

Resources

As I prepared this instructional plan, the following resources helped broaden my own understanding of the history of Congo Square and music of Bamboula 2000:

- 64 Parishes’ articles [“Congo Square”](#) by Freddi Williams Evans and [“5 Things You Didn’t Know About Congo Square”](#) by Bronwyn Olstein
- Offbeat magazine’s article [“Bamboula 2000: Cultural Warriors”](#) by Gene Scaramuzzo
- Educator [resources](#) on Congo Square from Music Rising at Tulane
- Bamboula 2000 tracks on Spotify and YouTube

Instructional Outline	
Grades:	2nd Grade
Focus:	Sharing Histories in Community Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 play music that carries on the traditions of enslaved Africans at Congo Square. Luther Gray is a teacher who tells the history of our city. Students will leave this unit as investigators of their own communities.
Content Areas:	Reading and Writing / English Language Arts Social Studies
Overview:	Students will complete the following activities over two weeks as a short unit in reading intervention. While learning about Congo Square and Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000, students will become investigative reporters in their communities.
Objectives:	At the end of this exploration, students will understand that they can be teachers of history, and they will share their learning in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Freedom in Congo Square to a younger student or family member. ● Share what they learned and felt by writing and recording a “radio show” that will be used to educate others in their community. ● Identify themselves as investigators who ask questions and seek out new information about their community.
Curricular Alignment	Student learning will address the following reading and writing standards: Common Core Literacy Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section. <p>Social Studies Standards – Louisiana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2.1.2 Compare and contrast the present-day community to that of the past using primary sources. ● 2.1.3 Describe people and events associated with national symbols, landmarks, and essential documents. ● 2.1.4 Explain reasons for local, state, and national celebrations, cultural events, and traditions and their significance. ● 2.1.5 Describe how the achievements of famous Americans, of the past and present, changed society. ● 2.1.6 Identify historical turning points and describe their impact on students’ lives using maps, documents, visuals, and technology.
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<p>Activity 1: Freedom at Congo Square Duration: 30 minutes</p> <p>Unit Introduction: Teacher says: <i>For the next two weeks, we will become investigative reporters. We will learn about Congo Square and Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 and discuss how history is a part of the fabric of our community. You all are amazing storytellers, so as you learn, you will keep these notebooks so you remember all the information you can share later with others. Let’s get started, investigators!</i></p> <p>Introduce Freedom at Congo Square: Possible questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What do you already know about Congo Square?</i> ● <i>Has anyone been to Congo Square?</i> ● <i>What did you see there?</i> <p>Students read <i>Freedom in Congo Square</i> by Carol Boston Weatherford and R. Gregory Christie in partners and record what they learned in their notebooks.</p> <p>Students gather at the end for a discussion. Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What did you learn?</i> ● <i>What questions do you have that we should research together?</i> 	<p>Materials & Resources:</p> <p>Small notebooks</p> <p><i>Freedom in Congo Square</i> books</p> <p>Partner chart</p> <p>Image of Adewale S. Adenle’s <u>Spirit of Congo Square</u> sculpture</p>
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<p>Closing: Show an image of Adewale S. Adenle’s Spirit of Congo Square sculpture.</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you see here?</i> • <i>What does this sculpture teach us?</i> <p>Students take turns taking the book home and reading it to someone in their family, or they could be assigned a younger student to read it to as an audience.</p>	
<p>Activity 2: Drum Circle Duration: 30 minutes</p> <p>Introduce Drum Circles: In collaboration with the music teacher, students will watch “Luther Gray: History of Congo Square + New Generation Jam” on YouTube.</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For enslaved Africans and African Americans, how was life in Louisiana different than it was in other American colonies and states?</i> • <i>Why was this difference important for music?</i> <p>Activity: Teach and explain the habanera rhythm, exploring how it was played in Congo Square and its role in jazz. Teach that the bamboula is an African beat and give students an opportunity to drum and to dance.</p> <p>Close: Students take notes in their historian notebooks about what they learned and how they felt drumming and dancing.</p>	<p>Materials & Resources:</p> <p>Link to Luther Gray: “History of Congo Square + New Generation Jam” on YouTube</p> <p>Drums</p>
<p>Activity 3: Who Are Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000? Duration: 20 minutes</p> <p>Show “Luther Gray/History of Congo Square” video.</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does Luther Gray do?</i> • <i>What did you learn from him?</i> <p>Students read about Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that Luther Gray started Bamboula 2000 to play the beats and drums that came from Africa. • Luther Gray has worked hard to make Congo Square an important part of our community. • Luther Gray started the Congo Square Preservation Society, which started more people drumming and honoring Congo Square. <p>Possible Questions to Close:</p>	<p>Materials & Resources:</p> <p>“Luther Gray/History of Congo Square” YouTube video</p> <p>Teacher-provided paragraph about Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Why do you think Luther Gray wants Congo Square to be preserved and honored?</i> ● <i>How could we help Luther Gray as investigators of Congo Square?</i> 	
<p>Activity 4: Close Reading of “Congo Square,” a Song by Bamboula 2000 Duration: 20 minutes</p> <p>Introduction to “Congo Square”: Explain that the students are going to listen carefully to a song Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 wrote about Congo Square. Tell the students to pay close attention to the song and how it expresses how Congo Square influenced other musicians.</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What do you notice about the rhythms in this song?</i> ● <i>Why did Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 talk about so many other musicians?</i> ● <i>Which lines in the song stand out to you?</i> <p>Reread these lines and questions: “Sunday we looked to the new horizon I see the light at the end of the tunnel Jazz and blues born of the slave gospel”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What do these lines mean?</i> <p>“Sisters have always been so resilient.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Who are they talking about here?</i> ● <i>What does “resilient” mean?</i> <p>Close: Share the song to your class website and remind students to share it with someone in their life at home.</p>	<p>Materials & Resources:</p> <p>Printed lyrics for “Congo Square” by Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000</p> <p>Device to play “Congo Square” audio recording or music video</p>
<p>Activity 5: Investigators Share Their Learning Duration: 1 hour</p> <p>Congratulate students on their work learning about Congo Square and Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000. Explain that investigators often write books, blog posts, articles, and tweets after they research a topic. They share their learning with the community.</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Why is it important to share this learning?</i> ● <i>Why is knowing this information important to the New Orleans</i> 	<p>Materials & Resources:</p> <p>Historian notebooks</p> <p>Microphone and computer for recording blank scripts</p>

<p><i>community?</i></p> <p>Students listen to an example radio show made by the teacher. They review how to write and record using GarageBand (Apple operating systems) or Audiotool (Windows operating systems).</p> <p>Students write shows and give each other feedback.</p> <p>Close: Students listen to students’ shows. (Note: If audio recording is not an option in your classroom, have students participate in the writing and peer feedback process and simply act out the radio show as skits.)</p> <p>Possible Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Did we forget any information we really want our community to know?</i> • <i>What music should we put on our show to get the feeling right?</i> 	<p>GarageBand or Audiotool music studio software</p>
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About the Louisiana Musical Legends Project

The **Louisiana Musical Legends** project is the first in a series of “Aunt Dorothy’s Teacher Toolkits” developed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to showcase new and engaging tools for teaching core curriculum concepts through the lens of Louisiana’s culture. Made possible through the generous support of retired music teacher Dorothy Hanna in partnership with First Lady of Louisiana Donna Edwards and the nine regional Louisiana arts councils, each Louisiana Musical Legends unit includes a brief musician biography, an educator-created lesson plan, and an original musician-focused video—all designed for classroom use. Featured musicians hail from across the state and include Luther Gray and Bamboula 2000 (Greater New Orleans), Nellie Lutcher (Southwest Louisiana), Tony Joe White (Northeast Louisiana), Amanda Shaw (Northshore), Susan Aysen (Bayou Parishes), Kenny Neal (Greater Baton Rouge), Little Walter (Central Louisiana), Leadbelly (Northwest Louisiana), and Nathan Williams Jr. (Acadiana).

