



MUSICUNITESUS

Lesson Plan Overview: Ologundê 7th grade Social Studies

Context:

This is an overview of the 7th grade mini-unit that will precede and accompany the October 18th performance of Ologundê, an Afro-Brazilian music and dance ensemble. The unit is currently planned to utilize four days of Social Studies class (50 minutes per class), plus one day for the performance. There are several places where the unit can be shortened.

Objectives:

The goals for this mini-unit are multiple and overlapping. First, this unit will extend and augment the work already being done in the classroom per the Massachusetts Curricular Frameworks (specifics listed below) and the Waltham district Benchmarks. Second, in accord with the mission of MUUS, this unit will further the understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, in this case African and Brazilian, through music. In particular, students will investigate music and dance as types of literacy – ways of reading, writing, and creating identity and community. Specific objectives for each day of the mini-unit are listed below.

- **Day 1 Objective:** To give context to our week-long investigation, including the performance, by reviewing some history of the slave trade particular to Brazil and to familiarize ourselves with important terms and vocabulary, focusing especially on *community* and *identity*.
- **Day 2 Objective:** To investigate some specifics of 19th century Candomblé as an Afro-Brazilian religion and to decipher in particular how it could have acted to help displaced Africans (usually enslaved) formulate identities alternate to that of slaves, especially focusing on the positive associations with African traditions, practices, etc.
- **Day 3 Objective:** To continue this investigation by turning to music and dance and asking how these traditions functioned as types of literacy (the mostly illiterate slave population's way of reading and writing history and identity).
- **Day 4 Objective:** To use the week's learning in the context of the performance itself.
- **Day 5 Objective:** To debrief on the performance and to complete the summative assessment ("Fly with Axé").

Assessment

- Before/After reflections will help teachers and MUUS staff assess what students learned.
- Formative assessments built into each lesson.
- Summative Assessment: students will complete the "Fly with Axé" assignment, detailed below, in which they dissect the meaning of a Brazilian airline's advertisement and use their knowledge of Candomblé to reflect on the various meanings of "axé" across time, space, and culture.

Standards

This mini unit attends to the following Massachusetts Curricular Frameworks, focusing especially on the theme of movement (of people, goods, and ideas):

Africa

A.2 Use a map key to locate countries and major cities in Africa.

South America

SAM.2 Use a map key to locate countries and major cities in South America.

History and Geography:

7. Use the following demographic terms correctly: *ethnic group*, *religious group*, and *linguistic group*. (G)

Optional Topics for Study

- Describe major ethnic and religious groups in various countries in Africa/South America.

Waltham Benchmarks:

Students will be able to relate current world events to the geographic information studied.

Day 1: Context is Everything!

Objective:

To give context to our weeklong investigation, including the performance, by reviewing some history of the slave trade particular to Brazil and to familiarize ourselves with important terms and vocabulary, focusing especially on *community* and *identity*.

Note: In order to assess students' level of understanding as well as to generate enthusiasm for the performance, teachers are encouraged begin class by showing a brief clip of Ologundê, accessible on the MUUS website at <http://www.brandeis.edu/MusicUnitesUS/ologunde.html#More>. Before/After reflections are attached at the end of this document. (Students complete "Before" reflection now.)

Warm up Activity:

- In groups (using chart-paper or something similar) students brainstorm the many meanings and manifestations of "community." What is your community? How would you describe community? What are different types of communities? What are aspects of community that are always the same? Teacher compiles on class list of potential meanings of community.
- Students and teacher repeat activity with "identity."

Investigation:

- Students read "A Short History of Slavery in Brazil" out loud, teacher pausing to explain difficult vocabulary or concepts.
- In small groups, students go over their class definitions of community and identity and make a list (Double Entry Journal) of the ways that slave community and identity might have been affected during the period described in the article.

Assessment/Review

Students and teacher review the realities of slave life in Brazil and the likely effects of this harsh life on Black community and identity in the New World. What are some aspects of community that were made impossible by the slave trade (particular emphasis on family dislocation)? What are some possibilities for recreating community among diverse and unrelated slave groups in Brazil?

Homework:

Students complete vocabulary worksheets (learning vocab unique to this unit and putting definitions into own words). *Candomblé, fundamentos, axé, maculêlê, orixás.*

Day 2: Creation and Candomblé

Day 2 Objective: To investigate some specifics of 19th century Candomblé as an Afro-Brazilian religion with special attention to displaced (often enslaved) African practitioners and to decipher how this religion could have acted to help slaves formulate identities alternate to that of slaves, especially focusing on the positive associations with African traditions, practices, etc.

Warm up:

Students and teacher review vocabulary hw and compile self-made definitions on which the class agrees for each of the five words on chart paper to be posted in the classroom for the week.

Investigation:

- Students brainstorm possible ways that slaves in Brazil might have re-constructed communities or identities even in captivity. What might they be able to keep secret? How could secrecy aid them?
- Students are given floor-plan map (with map key) of a two-room slave residence in 19th century Brazil. The front room is full of Euro-Catholic markers (icons of saints, etc) and the back room contains instead African objects. In pairs students first label each item on the map and then try to figure out why the two rooms are so different and what they could say about the identity of the people who reside there.
- Students share their conclusions.
- Conversation about secrecy. Why do we keep secrets? Can secrets help us create communities or identities contrary to the ones we are given by others?

Independent Practice:

Students read “Candomblé as a Secret,” a short article about the secret nature of early Candomblé as well as the persecution of practitioners by Brazilian authorities. Students compile Double Entry Journal comparing and contrasting the negative and positive associations that Brazilian authorities and the slave communities respectively made with African practices, traditions, etc. One side of the DEJ is titled “Identity given to people of African descent by others,” and the second side of the DEJ is titled “Identity developed by people of African descent for themselves.”

Review:

Quick discussion here on how slaves used secret practices to create for themselves communities and identities that were empowering even in the midst of terrible circumstance. Candomblé put into a positive light African traditions, etc, and also allowed practitioners to experience themselves as beautiful, noble, strong, capable, etc.

Homework:

Journal entry comparing the “back room” identity of slaves to our own “back room” identities. What do you put in the front room for people to see? Why? What do we save for the back room? Why? Which identity (the one that others give or perceive or the one that we keep to ourselves) is more real? Effective? Honest? Do you think anyone has the same items in her front room *and* back room identities?

Day 3: Adding Music and Dance to the Religious Mix

Day 3 Objective: To continue this investigation by turning to music and dance and asking how these traditions functioned as types of literacy (the mostly illiterate slave population's way of reading and writing history and identity).

Warm up:

Students define literacy as a class, post definition on board.

Activity:

- Students are given short writing assignment: they have to use literacy (strictly defined) to describe a dance or song that they know. Teacher should model this briefly and demonstrate high level of specificity.
- Teacher asks for volunteers in pairs. One student reads her description of dance/song while other student (or teacher, if feeling fun) acts out music/dance.
- Students reflect on quote: "It is nearly impossible, after all, to learn to dance from a book" (Johnson, 160). Agree or disagree. What is different about learning by reading/writing and learning by doing?

Reinforcing the Concept:

Students read the descriptions of each of the types of dance that Ologundê will perform and then watch the short videos of the performances.

Discussion Points:

- What are some alternative conceptions of literacy? How can we "read" or "write" through music or dance?
- How can this type of literacy be used to transmit cultural knowledge (*fundamentos*) from one generation to the next?
- What is the difference between "learning through" and experience versus "learning about" something through a text?
- How can music/dance contain secrets?
- How can music/dance create and develop community? Identity?
- What about the possibilities for joy, even in abject circumstances?
- What does it mean that Candomblé as a "religion of the hand" (a religion in which it is more important to *do* or to *experience* than it is to *believe*).

Homework:

Prepare for performance by writing down at least two questions that you might want to ask the Ologundê ensemble tomorrow.

Day 5: Fly with Axé

Objective: To debrief on the performance and to complete the summative assessment (“Fly with Axé”).

Warm-up:

Students complete “After” portion of the MUUS survey

Debrief:

Students respond to performance, ask questions, share insights.

Final Activity/Summative Assessment: Fly with Axé

Students review definition of axé and discuss the following two questions:

1. What did “axé” mean to Afro-Brazilian slaves in 19th century Brazil?
2. What does “axé” mean to the Ologundê performers, most of whom live in NYC?

Students are told that axé has become a popular concept in present day Brazil. It is now used as an everyday greeting among Brazilians (sometimes translated “good vibrations”) and as the name of various music and dance groups and festivals. It has even been used in international promotions for businesses, most famously Varig Airlines’ famous “Fly with Axé” promotion, which appeared on billboards and on posters around Brazil.

Students now discuss the following questions in preparation for making their own “Fly with Axé” posters.

1. Who do you think flies Varig? Only Candomblé practitioners, or other people as well? What does “axé” mean to the people who fly Varig? What does it mean to Varig airlines itself? *(Teachers should lead students here – Varig has a mostly white and upper-class client-base, so it is safe to assume that “axé” here has been transformed into a word that means a more general type of power and is no longer specifically tied to the Candomblé community. How do students feel about this?)*
2. What does “axé” mean **to you**, having seen the performance and studied Candomblé? What can “transforming power” or “good vibrations” mean to *your community*?

Students then use their answers to these questions to create their own “Fly with Axé” posters, which should include their own definitions of axé as well as how axé can relate to their own communities. Project may have connection/extension in the art classroom depending on teacher preference.

A Short History of Slavery in Brazil

Brazil today is the fifth largest country in the world by landmass and the sixth largest country in the world by population, with some 176 million inhabitants. Of these inhabitants, as many as 132 million are estimated to be of African descent. This astonishing number means that Brazil has one of the largest black populations of any country in the world, *including most countries in Africa*. Yet it is only because of the painful history of slavery in Brazil that this is the case today.

Ships first brought slaves to Brazil's shores in the mid-sixteenth century, beginning a period of more than three hundred years of legalized slavery in the country, over which time an estimated four million slaves arrived at Brazilian slave markets. These slaves came from many different regions and tribes of Africa, including Bantus from present-day Congo and Angola, Yorubas from present-day Benin and Nigeria, and even Hausas from present-day Sudan.

After they were captured by slave traders, slaves underwent the terrifying Middle Passage, the trip across the Atlantic in slave ships. Most of the slaves who survived the trip across the ocean did not live very long in Brazil. Slaves were expected to work twelve to fifteen hours per day. They were by custom not allowed to wear shoes. Their homes were usually cold and damp. Their diet consisted of beans, manioc flour, and occasionally salted beef, none of which provided proper nutrition. Slaves often fell sick due to parasites,

fevers or such diseases as tuberculosis and cholera. They were also often mistreated by their masters, who gave out punishments using whips and wooden paddles. Some slaves were even said to die of *o banzo*, a "fatal homesickness."

Because slaves were relatively inexpensive to purchase, many slave masters found that it was cheaper to literally work slaves to death (and to replace them) than to treat them properly and provide for them over the course of long lives. The average span of a slave's life after arrival in Brazil was reported in the 1800s to be only six years. Perhaps because of these terribly harsh conditions, slave masters were afraid that the slaves would eventually rebel and claim their freedom, so they acted to make sure that slaves were divided from their natural communities. At slave markets, families were forcibly separated, as were tribal and ethnic groups. New slaves often found themselves on plantations or in cities where they did not know anyone or even speak the same language as many of the other slaves.

Slavery was widely accepted and practiced across Brazil, from the sugar plantations to the cities; it was practiced by the rich a poor alike, since slaves were so inexpensive. Slavery was so central to Brazil's economic and social structure that there were even cases of slaves owning slaves.

Candomblé as a Secret

When Africans arrived in Brazil after the terrifying Middle Passage across the Atlantic, they were generally separated from their families and communities. They were then sold to masters who usually forced them to convert to Catholicism (the religion of the ruling class in Brazil) and to publicly deny that they believed in any African religious traditions. They were forced to undergo the basic rites of Catholicism (such as baptism and communion) and to learn the names of important saints.

In spite of all of this, though, many slaves held on to their religious beliefs in secret. Slaves used dance and especially music (mostly drums) to re-tell their own stories and to pass their traditions along, gradually creating a new and unique religious system that incorporated the beliefs of many different African tribal groups. Catholic beliefs were also incorporated, but they were often used as the public face of more deeply held African beliefs. Catholic saints, for instance, became code names for African orixás. Catholic Saint Lazarus was matched with the African deity Obaluaiye, Saint Antonio with Ogum, and Saint Anne as Nana, just to name a few.

At first, the authorities in Brazil did not realize what was happening. They thought that Candomblé was only traditional African music and dance. When they did realize that something more profound was afoot, they tried to stop it. Police logs from the 19th century (the height of slavery in Brazil) show that gatherings of slaves where Candomblé was practiced were harassed and punished. (Even though Brazil's Constitution of 1891 was supposed to protect the privacy of religion, in practice Candomblé was not protected.) Authorities broke and burned any African ritual items they could find and imprisoned the Candomblé practitioners. They referred to African religious practices as “witchcraft” and “superstition.” Brazilian authorities even said that Candomblé was a public

health problem, arguing that its people were dirty and its practices led to disease.

None of this kept Candomblé from growing as a religion. People who practiced Candomblé often kept up the public face of Catholicism, decorating the front rooms of their homes with pictures of Catholic saints. Yet in the private rooms of their homes, they kept figurative representations of African gods, sacrificial offerings, ceremonial clothing, beads, herbs, and traditional African medicines. The leaders of most Candomblé communities were African themselves, and their communities gave extraordinary respect to African deities and rituals. Within these communities slaves created new families, referring to their leaders as “Mother” or “Father” and each other as “Sister” or “Brother.” They used their time together to help remember their lives before slavery by telling stories and practicing their old musical and dance traditions. Their religious rituals, usually completed in secret and in privacy, attempted to produce axé, a power that could transform their lives.

Maculêlê, the war-like dance that the slaves often practiced in the sugar cane fields, is particularly interesting because it allowed the slaves to remember (and relive) a time when they were powerful warriors rather than miserable slaves. In Candomblé, Africanness and Blackness were positive features instead of negative ones. Through Candomblé, slaves who had been called dirty, diseased, weak, and ugly by their masters could remake themselves as healthy, strong, beautiful, and noble. Slaves who were considered by their masters to be illiterate and uneducated could pass along age-old medical knowledge, family histories, and cherished stories, often without their masters even realizing it. And slaves who had been torn apart from their families, tribes, and language could recreate new families, relationships, and communities.

Important Vocabulary

Directions: Below are five vocabulary words that will be useful this week as we study Afro-Brazilian traditions in Brazil. Your homework has two parts.

1. First, read each definition and underline the **seven words** that you think are the most important. Your teacher may do the first definition with you to give you some tips on how to do this well.
2. Second, using those seven words as a base, write **your own definition** of each of these terms. Space has been provided on the back of this page. Each definition should be **only one sentence long**. Pack as much important information as you can into this one sentence!

Axé (n): power that transforms, or changes, the participant in a fundamental way. Religious participants gain this power by participating in various rituals, including the performances of sacred songs, dances, or music, as well as religious ceremonies.

Candomblé (n): an Afro-Brazilian religion that evolved during the time when most Brazilians of African descent were enslaved. Because of their slave status as well as the fact that they were usually required to convert to Catholicism (the religion of the slave masters), Candomblé began as a secret religion. Worshippers used music and dance especially as a means to communicate with each other and to remember their African orixás and traditions.

Maculêlê (n): a warrior dance closely associated with Candomblé, maculêlê is thought to have originated in Angola, but developed to its present form in the sugar cane fields of Brazil. There, slaves practiced these dances originally using machete (knives for cutting sugarcane).

Fundamentos (n): used in the plural form, *fundamentos* refers to serious knowledge about Candomblé, including the principles of the religion, myths about orixás, song texts, and other rituals (including music and dance) that are performed.

Orixás (n): great ancestors that have become divinities after many years of worship. Orixás first lived on earth as men or women, but are now considered gods. Tribes often have their own particular orixás as well as some that they share more broadly with other groups. Some well-known orixás are Ogun (the orixá of iron and war) and Oxalá (the orixá of sky and creation). In Brazil, where many slaves were forced to convert to Catholicism, the orixás are sometimes called *santos* or saints.

My Definitions

Axé (n): _____

_____.

Candomblé (n): _____

_____.

Maculêlê (n): _____

_____.

Fundamentos (n): _____

_____.

Orixás (n): _____

_____.

Day 1: Double Entry Journal

Directions: After reading the article “A Short History of Slavery in Brazil,” list below ways that *you think* slavery might have affected *community* and *identity* of people of African descent living in Brazil.

Ways that slavery in Brazil might have affected <i>the community</i> of Africans in Brazil:	Ways that slavery in Brazil might have affected <i>the identity</i> of Africans in Brazil:

Day 2: Double Entry Journal

Directions: The article “Candomblé as a Secret,” demonstrates that people of African descent (usually enslaved) were often viewed negatively by the authorities and other powerful people in 19th century Brazil. However, these people were able (through Candomblé, among other things) to develop their own identities in a much more positive light. List below in the first column the features of the black identity as *given by others* and in the second column the features of black identity as developed by people of African descent themselves.

Identity given to people of African descent by others:	Identity developed by people of African descent for themselves:

More Background Info

The New York-based Ologundê ensemble celebrates the rich Afro-Brazilian culture of Salvador, Bahia through a diverse repertoire of music, dance and martial arts. Comprised of Brazilians living in the United States and Brazil, includes former members of world-renowned music and dance troupes and is under the direction of noted percussionist Dendê from the famed Timbalada band. The ensemble has performed throughout the US since its formation in 2002 and toured Greece as part of the Cultural Olympiad, appearing at the Kalamata Dance Festival and at the Athens Festival at the Acropolis.

Ologundê, which ranges from 8-15 members, performs a diverse repertoire which includes the rituals associated with candomblé, a synthesis of the Yoruba and Catholic religions in which various orixás (gods) are invoked; the breathtaking capoeira martial arts dance; maculêlê, a warrior dance which utilizes sticks and machetes and was originally created in the sugar cane fields by slaves; and the exhilarating samba de roda, which can be traced back to the semba of Angola.

Important Terminology:

Candomblé: Candomblé is a syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion that evolved as a means by which the African slaves were able to disguise their religious traditions under the banner of Catholicism. As with Cuban lucumi and Haitian vodun, Africans transposed the names of their deities, known as orixás into those of Catholic saints. The ritual is performed by drummers who play the sacred atabaque drums with rhythms that invoke the orixás. The dancers dress in elaborate costumes that represent the various orixás who have possessed them.

Maculêlê: This dance originated in the sugar cane fields. Utilizing sticks and machetes (sharp, large knives), maculêlê imitates the movements of cutting cane. It is intricately choreographed to a specific dance rhythm. Today maculêlê is strictly used for entertainment, but during the Paraguayan war the discipline was used in battle.

Capoeira: Like maculêlê, capoeira is a warrior dance. This exciting martial arts dance, thought to have originated in Angola, is accompanied by the berimbau (a one-string bow with a small gourd attached) that is found in various guises throughout Central Africa. It is performed by two people at a time who use various strategies in order to trick their opponent. Capoeiristas employ acrobatic movements and extraordinary feats of strength and balance to further enhance their performance. In addition to the berimbau, various percussive instruments are used as well as call and response singing.

Samba de Roda: Samba de Roda is a spontaneous dance that is characteristic of the city of Bahia. The call and response singing recalls its African roots and it can be traced to the semba of Angola in which the dancers “bump” bellies. In Brazil, this belly-bumping is called umbigada. A dancer enters the roda (circle) to dance only when he/she received an umbigada from the previous dancer.



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Before Reflection

Directions: Now that you have seen a brief video clip of Ologundê, please answer the below questions.

1. What is your “first impression” of the performance? What did you like about it? What did you not like (if anything)? What would you like to know more about?
2. What stories do you think the performers might tell through their music and dance?
3. Why do you think that this group still performs these dances and this music?

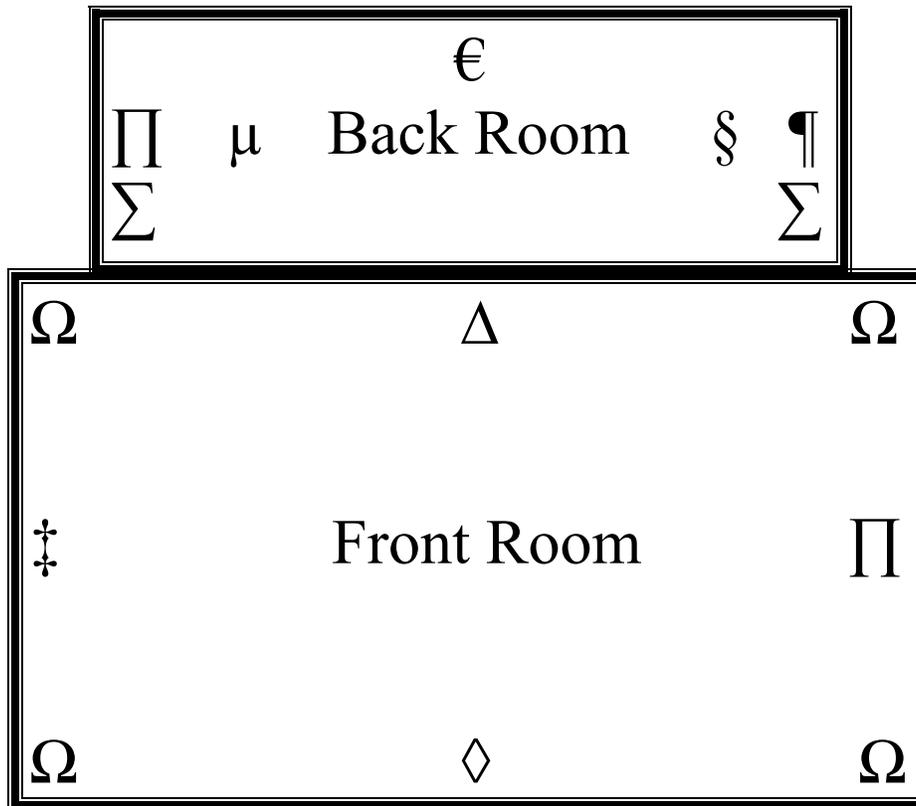
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After Reflection

Directions: Now that you have seen the actual performance of Ologundê, please answer the below questions.

1. What is your final impression of the performance? What did you like about it? What would you like to know more about? Would you want to see something like this again?
2. What stories did the performers tell through their music and dance?
3. Why do you think that this group still performs these dances and this music?

Map (Floor-plan) of 19th Century Slave Dwelling



Directions:

First, use the Map Key to label each item in the front and back room of the above slave dwelling.

Second, answer the below questions with a partner:

1. What is the major difference between the items in the front room of the slave dwelling and the items in the back room?
2. Why do you think the rooms are so different?
3. What might these rooms say about the *identity* of the people who lived in this home?

Note: this map is based upon general descriptions of 19th century Brazilian slave dwellings. It is *not* to scale.

Map Key

‡	= Catholic altar
€	= Candomble altar
Ω	= pictures of Catholic saints
Σ	= statues of orixas
Π	= traditional medicines
Π	= copy of the Bible
μ	= herbs and roots
§	= clothing for Candomble rituals
¶	= offerings for orixas
Δ	= outer door
◇	= inner door

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See Also

- Harding, Rachel Elizabeth. "Slavery Women and Embodied Knowledge in
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Knowledge, Power and Performance*, pp. 3-18.
- Van de Port, Mattjis. "Circling around the Really Real: Spirit Possession Ceremonies and the
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Web Resources

- <http://www.anthrosource.net/doi/abs/10.1525/an.2006.47.5.28>
- <http://www.anthrosource.net/doi/abs/10.1525/an.2006.47.5.27>