



Smithsonian Folkways

The Sounds of an Island: Jamaican Music for the Classroom A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

Designed by Nina Alden
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Summary: Students will be introduced to the music and history of Jamaican culture through performing various game songs and dances, as well as playing simple songs transcribed for the recorder.

Suggested Grade Levels: 3-5

Country: Jamaica

Region: Caribbean, The Americas

Culture Group: Jamaican

Genre: World

Instruments: Pencils, Recorders, Body Percussion

Language: English

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies, Dance

National Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Prerequisites: Basic recorder skills

Objectives:

- Locate Jamaica on a map
- Learn brief history of Jamaican people
- Learn/play a children's game song from Jamaica (*Rocky Road*)
- Identify the instruments and vocal parts in Jamaican Maroon music
- Learn about the history of the Maroon people, their music, and their drumming tradition
- Identify the call and response form of *Falla me* and sing the vocal response part along with the recording
- Learn about Jamaican versions of European dances, specifically the Quadrille
- Play a simplified transcription of the bamboo fife solo on the recorder
- Improvise embellishments and variations of the melody on the recorder
- Identify the similarities and differences between two versions of the song *Jane and Louisa*
- Sing Louise Bennett's version of *Jane and Louisa* and play the game

Materials:

- Recording of *Rocky Road* from "Children's Jamaican Songs and Games" by Louise Bennett

- <http://www.folkways.si.edu/louise-bennett/childrens-jamaican-songs-and-games/caribbean-world/music/album/smithsonian>
- Liner Notes
http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/folkways/FW07250.pdf
 - Map of the Caribbean
 - Map of Jamaica
 - Jekyll, Walter. “Jamaican Song and Story.” New York: Dover Publications, 1966.
 - Recording of *Falla me* from “Drums of Defiance: Maroon Music from the Earliest Free Black Communities of Jamaica”. Map of Maroon towns in Jamaica in PDF liner notes pg. 3.
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/drums-of-defiance-maroon-music-from-the-earliest-free-black-communities-of-jamaica/caribbean-world/album/smithsonian>
 - Liner Notes
http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/smithsonian_folkways/SFW40412.pdf
 - Picture of *Gumbe* drum
 - Picture of *Grandy* drum (picture on CD cover)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/drums-of-defiance-maroon-music-from-the-earliest-free-black-communities-of-jamaica/caribbean-world/album/smithsonian>
 - Recording of *Quadrille Band: Jane and Luisa* from “Bongo, Backra, & Coolie: Jamaican Roots, Vol. 2”
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/bongo-backra-coolie-jamaican-roots-vol-2/caribbean-world/music/album/smithsonian>
 - Recording of *Jane and Louisa* from “Children’s Jamaican Songs and Games” by Louise Bennett
 - <http://www.folkways.si.edu/louise-bennett/childrens-jamaican-songs-and-games/caribbean-world/music/album/smithsonian>
 - Liner Notes
http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/folkways/FW07250.pdf
 - (Soprano) Recorders

Lesson Segments:

1. **Jamaican Children’s Song and Game** (National Standards 1, 6, 8, 9)
2. **Traditional Music of the Jamaican Maroons** (National Standards 1, 2, 6, 9)
3. **Jamaican Dance Music and European Influence** (National Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

1. Jamaican Children's Song and Game

- a. Attentive Listening: Students will listen to a recording of *Rocky Road* (Time estimate: 1 min and 32 sec).
 - i. Where do you think this music is from?
 - ii. Can you understand all the words she is singing? Is it in English?
 - iii. What is the meaning of the lyrics?
 - iv. What instruments do you hear?
 - v. Do you think that kids or adults enjoy this song?
- b. Integrating World Music: Teacher shows maps of Caribbean and Jamaica.
- c. Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the history of the Jamaican people and Jamaican Creole. ("The Living Roots" Preface by Philip Sherlock in Jamaican Song and Story, by Walter Jekyll)
- d. Engaged Listening: Students will try and keep a steady beat with the recording (either clap, pat, tap, etc).
 - i. Ask them if they can figure out how many different verses there are (4)
 - ii. Students identify that there are two different verses, each one sung once by a woman and then repeated by a group of men
- e. Engaged Listening: Students learn song by rote and sing along with the recording (lyrics for the song can be found in the PDF liner notes).
- f. Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the cultural significance of Jamaican singing games for children, often called "Ring Plays" (PDF liner notes).
- g. Enactive Listening: Students play the game as follows, first with the recording while singing along, then singing and playing the game without the recording:
 - i. Two lines of children face each other, forming an arch with upraised hands
 - ii. A couple at one end drops hands and trots through the arch, becoming part of the arch when they reach the other end
 - iii. The other couples follow in succession.
 - iv. When the first couple is at the beginning of the arch again, the cycle repeats, this time with the couples traveling outside the arch (each on the outside of his or her line)

Extension: Integrating World Music: Read aloud an "Annancy" story from Jamaican Song and Story: Annancy Stories, Digging Sings, Ring Tunes, and Dancing Tunes (Jekyll, 1966). Suggested story: *Annancy and Brother Tiger*, pg. 7.

Assessment: Assess if the students can identify how many verses comprise the song. Assess pitch matching while singing the song without the recording, paying special attention to the girl and boy solos.

2. Traditional Music of the Jamaican Maroons

- a. Attentive Listening: Students will listen to a recording of *Falla me* (Time estimate: 30 sec).
 - i. What kind of instruments do you hear? (drums, bamboo stick, metal implement: pitchfork or machete typically)
 - ii. How many different vocal parts are there? (soloist and chorus)
 - iii. How do they work together? (call and response)
 - iv. Do the vocal timbres sound different from what you are used to hearing? Why?
- b. Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the history of the Maroon, the earliest free black communities of Jamaica. (“The Living Roots” Preface by Philip Sherlock in Jamaican Song and Story, by Walter Jekyll; also, PDF liner notes).
- c. Integrating World Music: Teacher shows a map of the presently existing Maroon towns in Jamaica.
 - i. Explain that this song is from the Charles Town Maroons (PDF liner notes pg. 3)
- d. Engaged Listening: Students try and play along with the “metal instrument” known as “adawa” by tapping their chair leg with their pencil.
 - i. Is it a consistent rhythm throughout? (no)
- e. Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the Maroon drumming style and why it doesn’t always sound consistent (PDF liner notes).
 - i. Teacher shows pictures of the *Grandy* and *Gumbe* drums
- f. Engaged Listening: Students sing the vocal response part “falla me” along with the recording.
- g. Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the story and meaning of the song.
 - i. *Falla me* is about going to collect *busu*, a type of edible freshwater snail that is considered a delicacy in rural Jamaica
 - ii. Much of Maroon music is used for religious or dance purposes, however this song is intended for recreational use

Assessment: Teacher observes students, noting which are able to identify the “metal instrument” in the percussion ensemble, and which are able to accurately perform the vocal response part along with the recording (singing at the appropriate time and matching pitch).

3. Jamaican Dance Music and European Influence

- a. Attentive Listening: Students will listen to a recording of *Quadrille Band: Jane and Luisa* (Time estimate: 53 sec).

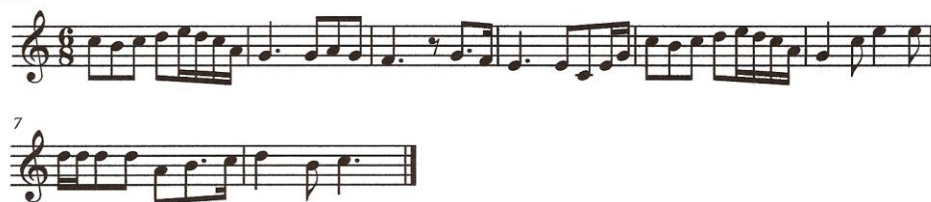
- i. What instruments do you hear? (bamboo fife, two guitars, four-string banjo)
 - ii. What might this music be for? (dancing the Quadrille)
 - iii. Is there a repeated melody?
 - iv. Does it always sound the same? (Same melody repeats the entire time, but with melodic embellishments and rhythmic variations)
- b.** Integrating World Music: Teacher explains the cultural significance and European influence in Jamaican dancing tunes, specifically the Quadrille dance (“Part IV. Dancing Tunes” in Jamaican Song and Story, by Walter Jekyll).
- c.** Engaged listening: Students stand and step from side to side while listening to the recording, feeling the ‘1-2-3’ pulse of the dance music.
- d.** Integrating World Music: Teacher shows a video of Jamaican students dancing the Quadrille (search ‘Jamaican Quadrille dance’ online).
- e.** Enactive Listening: Students play a simplified version of the bamboo fife melody on the recorder, referring back to the recording to try and capture stylistic elements of the performance.

The transcription has been transposed to C major for fingering purposes on the recorder—the recording is in F major

Quadrille Band: Jane and Luisa transcription for recorder

Nina Alden

Soprano Recorder



- f. Creating World Music: After hearing all the different embellishments and variations of the melody in the recording, students try and improvise their own embellishments while playing the melody on the recorder.
- g. Attentive Listening: Students will listen to a recording of *Jane and Luisa* from “Children’s Jamaican Songs and Games” by Louise Bennett (Time estimate: 1 min and 17 sec).

- i. Does this sound familiar? (Another version of *Jane and Luisa*)
 - ii. What are the similarities and differences between the two versions? (similarity: strong 1-2-3 pulse in the guitar accompaniment, difference: voice vs. bamboo fife)
 - iii. Does it still sound like dance music? (not for the Quadrille, but the pulse still makes you want to move/sway)
 - iv. Does this version sound like it is geared toward a different audience/age? (children's song)
- h.** Engaged Listening: Students learn song by rote and sing along with the recording (lyrics for the song can be found in the PDF liner notes).
- i.** Enactive Listening: Students play the game as follows, first with the recording while singing along, then singing and playing the game without the recording:
- i. Students form a circle
 - ii. As the song begins, one or two girls walk about outside the ring, entering on the last line
 - iii. Each girl chooses a partner with whom she “walks,” “wheels,” and “dances” according to the words of the song
 - iv. There are also more in depth directions for this game in the PDF liner notes

Assessment: Assess students' accuracy reading and playing the transcription for the recorder. Assess students' effort to improvise with the melody, adding their own embellishments in the style of what they've heard on the recording. Assess pitch matching and rhythm accuracy while singing the song and playing the game without the recording.