

# TEACHER GUIDE

## SANKOFA: Storytelling Through Music







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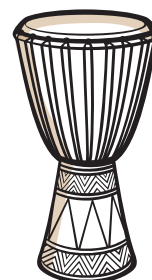
In addition to creating joyous sounds, instruments can also be a form of communication and a tool for resistance. In the film **SANKOFA**, the sacred drummer uses his drum to jog the ancestral memory of the main character, Shola [Mona]. In the film, the divine drummer's role was to connect and to communicate; we learn that a rhythm can communicate just like spoken language.

Whether played by an individual or in an ensemble, the djembe conveys a message to the hearers and calls them to do something. For some, the message is to dance to the djembe's intricate rhythms and for others it's a call to civic action. Whether the djembe is played for entertainment or direct communication, its sound resonates with people of color across the diaspora, reconnecting them with their roots.

**In this workshop for beginning drummers, learners will explore the history of drumming in West Africa, learn the basics of the djembe drum and how to play three basic strikes.**

**Also a survivor of transatlantic slave trade, the djembe embodies culture as an instrument of memory and communication.**

**By the end of this activity, you will know the composition of a djembe, the three main strikes and a generic polyrhythm that can be played on any surface—either alone or in an ensemble. After this lesson, you are encouraged to keep playing; you can be creative with polyrhythms or attend a local West African dance class.**



**Lesson By:**  
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**The Ron Clark Academy (RCA)** is a highly-acclaimed, nonprofit middle school located in Southeast Atlanta known for creating a loving, dynamic learning environment that promotes academic excellence and fosters leadership.