

ACTIVITIES FOR “MY B-A-N-J-O”

THEME: *Though often thought of as an American instrument, the banjo originally came from Africa's Gold Coast. Tom Chapin was inspired by Pete Seeger, and learned how to play from his instruction book.*

HISTORY: The first banjos were made in Africa in the 17th century. The stringed instrument was adapted from drums made out of dried hollowed gourds or turtle shells, over which animal skins were stretched. Anywhere from 3 to 9 horsehair strings were strung alongside the drum. They were called banzas, banjars, banias and bangoes. To play it, you would pick with one hand and press down the strings with the other hand. By placing the fingers of your hand in different places on the neck of the banjo, you play different notes. Modern day banjos have either 4 or 5 strings. The 5th string is shorter than the others, and is called a “drone” string because of its low pitch.



LANGUAGE ARTS: Listen to Tom Chapin’s song “My B-A-N-J-O.” Tom wrote about the Banjo because it is one of his favorite instruments. What is your favorite instrument? Spell it out and write a story about it. How do you play it? Do you blow into it? Strum it? Strike it?

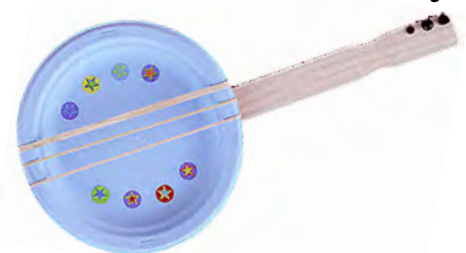
ARTS AND CRAFTS: Make your own banjo from 2 thick paper plates, 4 strong rubber bands, and a paint stirring stick. Decorate and strum away!

RELATED LITERATURE:

Bingo the Banjo Picking Bear / Jay Miller

Banjo Granny / Sarah Martin Busse and
Jacqueline Briggs Martin

How To Play The 5-String Banjo / Pete Seeger



ACTIVITIES FOR "MY B-A-N-J-O" (continued)

WORD SEARCH: Find and circle the hidden words. How do each of these words relate to the banjo?

My B-A-N-J-O

V L E D U P M J A A E M S O Q
R X R S L O O U F P I R S D S
H U T C G M F T H N T R A T T
M E L N T G R D S J W T R F Y
R E G E E S E T E P A I G I E
T W R W M M R V E O N H E N O
H J W I D E U I B G U R U G O
U Y Q R L L L R S E C W L E J
M O U S A N E O T T L I B R N
B O H F Z V T Q D S R T X S A
G O A C I R F A Z I N U R B B
W W O R K G A N G Z E I M U I
U V P U O T E R F H Y S Z S T
U A L I H V E X N M R L V T I
O W A R W W K N U Y D R O N E

AFRICA
BANJO
BLUEGRASS
DRONE
DRUM
FINGERS
FRET
GOURD
INSTRUMENT
MELODIES
MINSTRELSHOW
PETESEEGER
RIVERBOAT
STRINGS
STRUM
THUMB
TURTLE
WORKGANG