



# Study Guide



**Rhode Island Black Storytellers**, aka RIBS presents Folk Tales from Black Traditions as part of our 28th Anniversary FUNDA FEST: A Celebration of Black Storytelling.

Experience the power of story and song as renowned storytellers Len Cabral and Valerie Tutson, co-founding members of Rhode Island Black Storytellers (RIBS), are joined by fellow musical and storytelling artists. Together, they bring to life a rich tapestry of traditional tales and music from across the African diaspora.

**Journey through:**

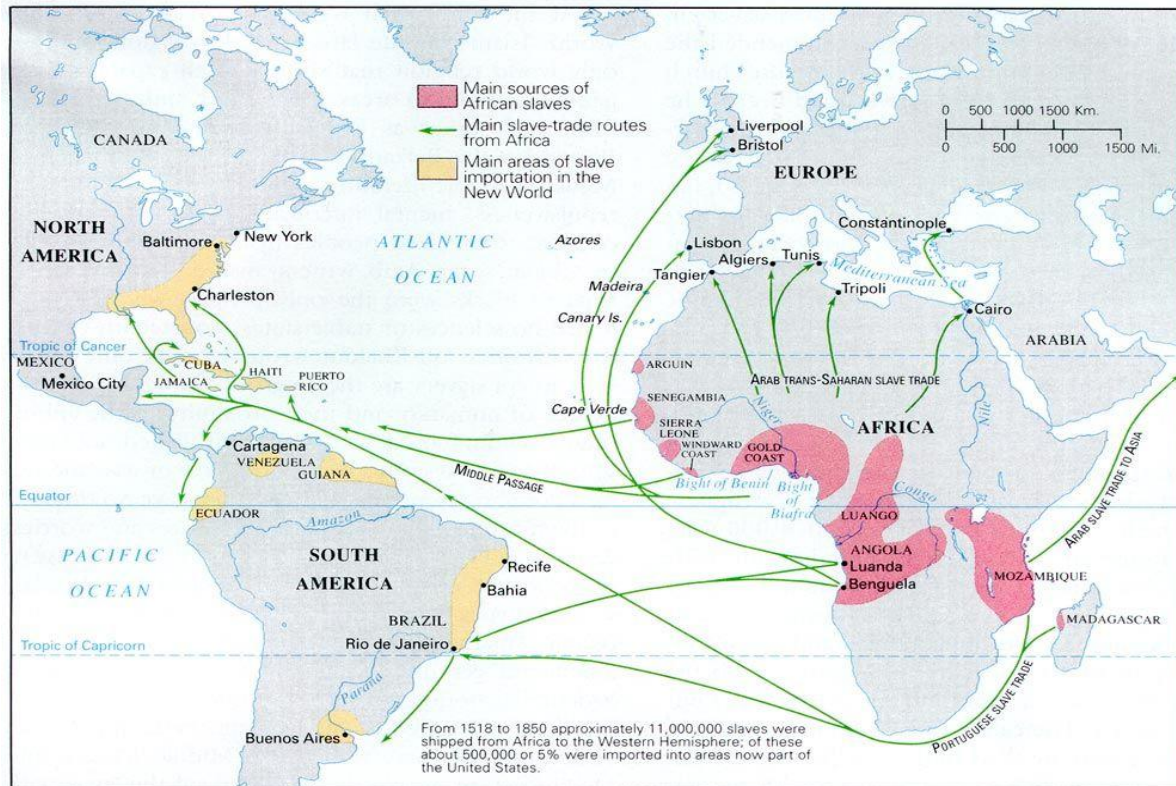
- **Folk and wisdom tales** from Africa, Cape Verde, and the Americas
- The **literary brilliance** of Paul Laurence Dunbar
- **True stories of African Americans in New England** at the founding of our nation in *The Right to Liberty*

This engaging and educational program is perfect for **elementary and middle school audiences**, blending cultural heritage, history, and performance into an unforgettable experience.

***What is the African Diaspora?***

(From Wikipedia)

The **African diaspora** is the worldwide collection of communities descended from native [Africans](#) or [people from Africa](#), predominantly in the [Americas](#).<sup>[35]</sup> The term most commonly refers to the descendants of the [West](#) and [Central Africans](#) who were [enslaved](#) and shipped to the Americas via the [Atlantic slave trade](#) between the 16th and 19th centuries, with their largest populations in the [United States](#), [Brazil](#) and [Haiti](#).<sup>[36][37]</sup> However, the term can also be used to refer to the descendants of [North Africans](#) who immigrated to other parts of the world. The phrase *African diaspora* gradually entered common usage at the turn of the 21st century.<sup>[39]</sup> The term *diaspora* originates from the Greek [διασπορά](#) (*diaspora*, literally "scattering").



While this map has “slaves” on it, we prefer to use the words “enslaved” or “captives.” Slavery was a condition that was placed upon people; it was not who they were as human beings.

*(What difference does it make in your mind if we say, “African People Trade?”)*

The stories, the rhythms, the poetic tradition came across the waters with the Africans and is a part of African storytelling, music and spoken word traditions, even today.

Our storytelling festival is called FUNDA FEST. FUNDA means “to teach” and “to learn” in Zulu and Kiswahili. **Zulu** is one of the 11 official languages spoken in South Africa. **Kiswahili** is spoken by an estimated 80 million people in East and Central Africa. It is the official language in Tanzania and Kenya, and is also used in Uganda, Somalia, Mozambique, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, and Congo

We invite you to enjoy this experience of African stories and music, from the Motherland to the Americas.

<http://www.ribsfest.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/RIBlackStorytellers>

Join our FUNDA FEST FAMILY Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2724414864478222>

## Black Storytellers have special names in different parts of the world

A **griot**, jali or djeli is a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet and/or musician. The **griot** is a repository of oral tradition and is also often seen as something of a societal leader due to his traditional position as an adviser to royal personages.

Often the stories are accompanied by music. Often drums are played. Traditionally the drums were played by men, while the hand instruments, such as the shekere, were played by women.



Shekere & Kесеke

The Djembe Drum: A **djembe** or **jembe** ([/ˈdʒɛmbeɪ/ JEM-bay](#); from [Malinke jembe](#) [\[dʲěbe\]](#)<sup>[1]</sup>) is a rope-tuned skin-covered [goblet drum](#) played with bare hands, originally from [West Africa](#). According to the [Bambara people](#) in [Mali](#), the name of the djembe comes from the saying "Anke djé, anke bé" which translates to "everyone gather together in peace" and defines the drum's purpose. In the [Bambara language](#), "djé" is the verb for "gather" and "bé" translates as "peace."<sup>[2]</sup>



**The Dun Dun:** Dunun (Malinké: [ˈdu.nun]; plural dunun) (also spelled **dun dun** or doundoun) is the generic name for a family of West African **drums** that have developed alongside the djembe in the Mande **drum** ensemble. A dunun is a rope-tuned cylindrical **drum** with a rawhide skin at both ends, most commonly cow or goat.



## **Storytelling: A Bridge To Cultural, Language and Literacy Development**

### **How Storytelling Connects to Literacy Standards**

**Developed by the Rhode Island Black Storytellers  
For FUNDA FEST: A Celebration of Black Storytelling**

*(Funda means to teach and to learn in the African languages  
Zulu and Kiswahili)*

**Language is critical for literacy development and storytelling** creates an interactive bridge. Music, repeated phrases, and actions provide connections and invite participation by children when they become part of the storytelling event.

A good story challenges a student's auditory, visual, and kinesthetic skills along with a phonemic awareness.

**Storytelling addresses reading readiness** components such as repetition, retelling, rhyming and sequencing. Children develop their oral language skills by learning to tell and retell stories. They learn about their world, other cultures, visual imagery, moral and social issues and they increase listening skills.

#### **Literacy standards connections to look for in storytelling:**

- Phonological Awareness
- Understanding Stories
- Book Awareness
- Comprehension
- Word Awareness
- Story Enjoyment

**Organizational information** is available for review and it can be mind boggling. Check out these organizations for documentation of literacy standards and review for connections to storytelling:

- International Reading Association - [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)
- National Council of Teachers of English - [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children - [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

## For GRADES K-8

### Make storytelling a part of your daily curriculum!

You can use storytelling to motivate and engage all readers and writers.

Mini-lessons at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels help weave storytelling into the fabric of today's standards-based classroom and construct skillful literacy lessons. Reluctant and striving readers and writers, English language learners, and even more advanced storytellers will love the confidence they gain as they move from developing to delivering a variety of stories for a variety of audiences. Enjoy the many benefits of "performance literacy," or teaching children how to write and perform stories in order to:

- Develop literacy skills—language, vocabulary, comprehension, writing process, speaking, and listening—along with performance skills and self-expression.
- Easily integrate learning across the content areas.
- Deepen the connection between home, school, and community.
- Promote students' creativity and activate their prior knowledge.
- Encourage respect and self-improvement as students learn to critique each other's stories and performances in a non-threatening manner.

### Pre-Performance Activities

- **Look** at a map of Africa and the African Diaspora to get a sense of where the stories come from.
- **Discuss** what storytelling is and what a storyteller does. How is it different from what writing is and what an author does?
- **Discuss** the different types of stories, i.e.: folk and fairy tales, myths, legends, tall tales, historical tales, ghost stories, how and why stories.
- **Discuss** the characters in folk tales and trickster tales. What do animal stories teach us about how people behave? Why would storytellers use animals instead of people in their stories?
- **Discuss** who are the people they know who tell stories? What stories do they remember? Where do the stories come from?
- **Discuss** the elements of the story: characters, plot, setting, beginning, middle, end, etc.
- **Discuss** Paul Lawrence Dunbar and his writing post enslavement. Look at the story as an African American oral art form that has been celebrated through the ages.
- Take some time to **explore** the stories of African Americans in New England who fought during the time of the American Revolution: Who is freedom for? How do the documents our country is founded on inspired notions of freedom for all now (and then)?

## Post-Performance Activities

- Have students recall and retell one of the stories they heard, in as much detail as possible.
- Have students look on a map or globe to find the place of origin of the story or the teller.
- Discuss what the storyteller did to engage the listener: use of voice, body, expression, etc.
- Discuss similarities or differences with other stories they may know from other cultures.