Knowledge Organiser: Africa

Topic Background

A huge variety of music exists in Africa from classical to pop music, and the roots of all of our music is believed to have sprung from traditional African music. Unlike our own traditional music, traditional African music is celebrated widely.

Rhythm forms the foundations of African music. All movement creates rhythm and every aspect of life is therefore accompanied by music; from the gathering of crops, the pounding of flour, to the working of metals in the blacksmiths and the washing of clothes in the river. Music is an essential part of celebrations including weddings and funerals. Music also socially binds a village through dancing and the famous art of storytelling by the village Griot. Griots are travelling poets, musicians, and storytellers who still maintain a tradition of aural history in parts of West Africa.

Listening Pieces

- African Tribe, African Drums
- Sona Jobarteh, Jarabi, 2011

Traditional African instruments:
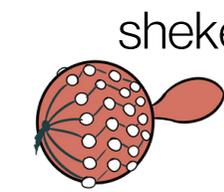
kora   shekere   kalimba   balafon   djembe
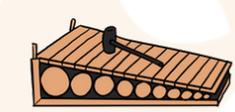
Musical Knowledge

Note Values	♩ 1 beat	♫ two 1/2 beat notes	♩. 1 and 1/2 beats
	♪ 1/2 beat	𝄾 1 beat rest	

Key features of traditional African music:

call and response — a leader calls and everyone else responds

mnemonics
The use of words to help remember and create rhythms.

dia - monds and gold (shh)

ostinato
Repetition of a musical pattern or rhythm.

dia - monds and gold (shh) dia - monds and gold (shh)

polyrhythm
Two or more rhythms played at the same time.

rhythm 1: dia-monds and gold (shh)

rhythm 2: run-ning to Zim-bab-we

Key Vocabulary

call and response: two phrases, the first phrase being the call and the second phrase is a response to the first
dynamics: how loud or quiet a sound is
improvise: creating music on the spot
melody: the tune of the music made up of high and low pitches
mnemonics: the use of words to help remember and create rhythms
ostinato: repetition of a musical pattern or rhythm
performance: an act of performing a song or piece of music
polyrhythm: two or more rhythms played at the same time
pulse: the heartbeat of the music
rhythm: patterns of sound consisting of shorter and longer notes
structure: how a piece is organised
texture: combining different layers of music to give an overall effect