





**Echoing across the Atlantic Ocean are the sounds of drum beats...**

**Can you hear them?**

The beat starts loud and energetic in West Africa, where the drum takes shape out of fragrant, dense wood. The rumble takes on a muted, somber tone as the drum is transported across the ocean to the United States, most likely on a slave transport ship. Almost silenced, the drum is collected, sold, and shipped to England. Now, it patiently waits to share its story through fast tempo, invigorating songs.

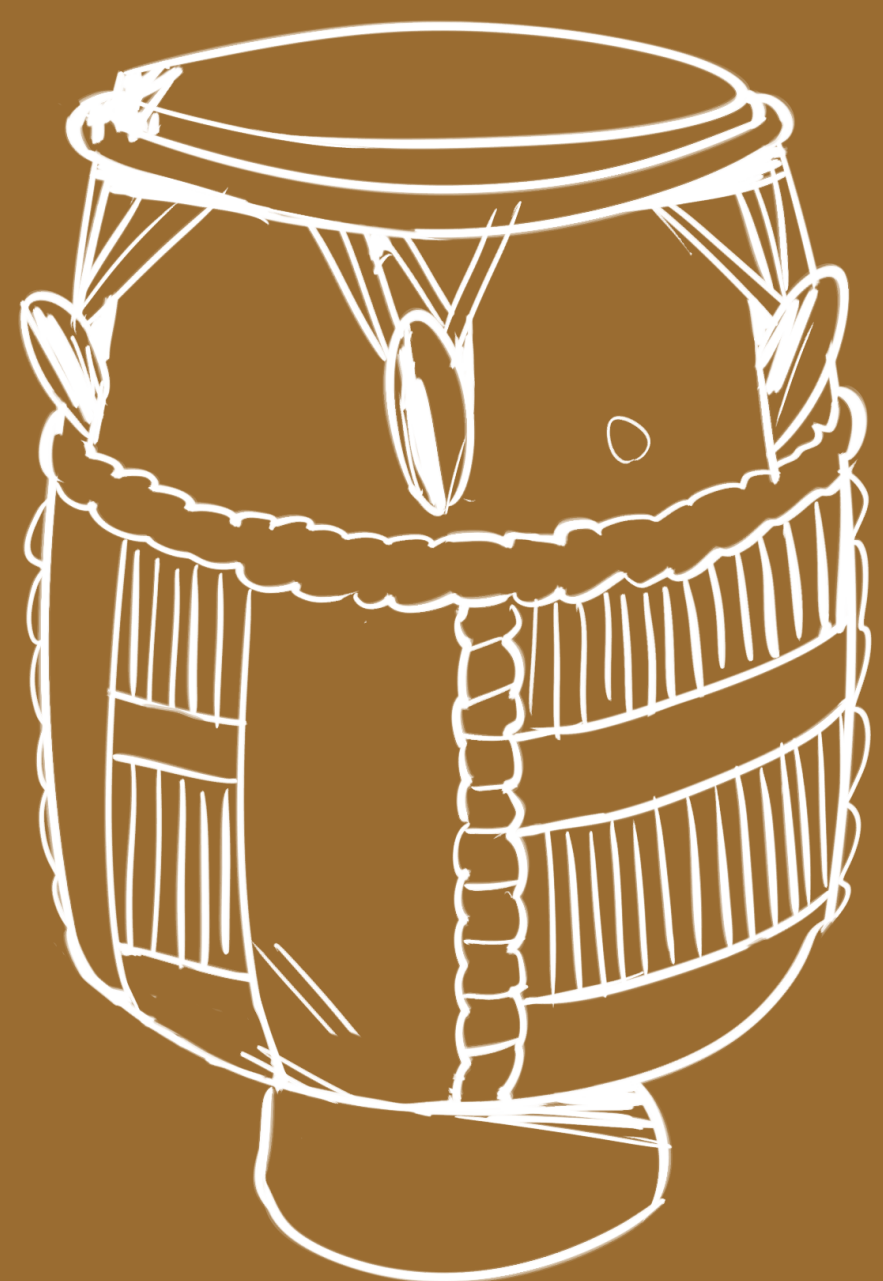
Collected in the British colony of Virginia around 1730, the Akan Drum stands as the earliest example of the African American diaspora in the collection. Originally sold to Sir Hans Sloane as an incorrectly labeled “Native American drum”, it became part of the founding collection of the British Museum in 1753.

Not much is known about the origin of the Akan Drum. Scientific testing done at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, identifies the wood used to construct the drum as Sudan teak wood, a tree native to West Africa and used extensively to craft musical instruments.

Likely from the country now known as Ghana, the drum might have been used in an ensemble, much like those still used today in Ashanti celebrations. But, aboard a slave ship, it would have served a much different purpose: to “dance the slaves”, forcing their movement to maintain their physical fitness.

It is tempting to focus our storytelling about the Akan Drum around the legacy of African music and its impact on modern American culture. However, we are called to reframe the narrative in new ways: using the drum to instead illustrate the path that kidnapped and enslaved African people were forced to travel; acknowledge the colonial legacies of transatlantic slavery embedded in the British Museum’s collection; and, most importantly, make way for contemporary voices of the African diaspora to tell their stories.

**Can you hear them?**



***Atumpan***

Akan Drum

The drum is silent today, but from afar, we can hear the Akan community from West Africa.

Bodies have memory. Singing and dancing makes us human!

This drum, which might have been used for dancing, resisting, or perhaps even subduing others, now asks you: what songs do you sing or listen to in order to feel good wherever you are?

How would you feel if someone told you that you could not sing or dance?

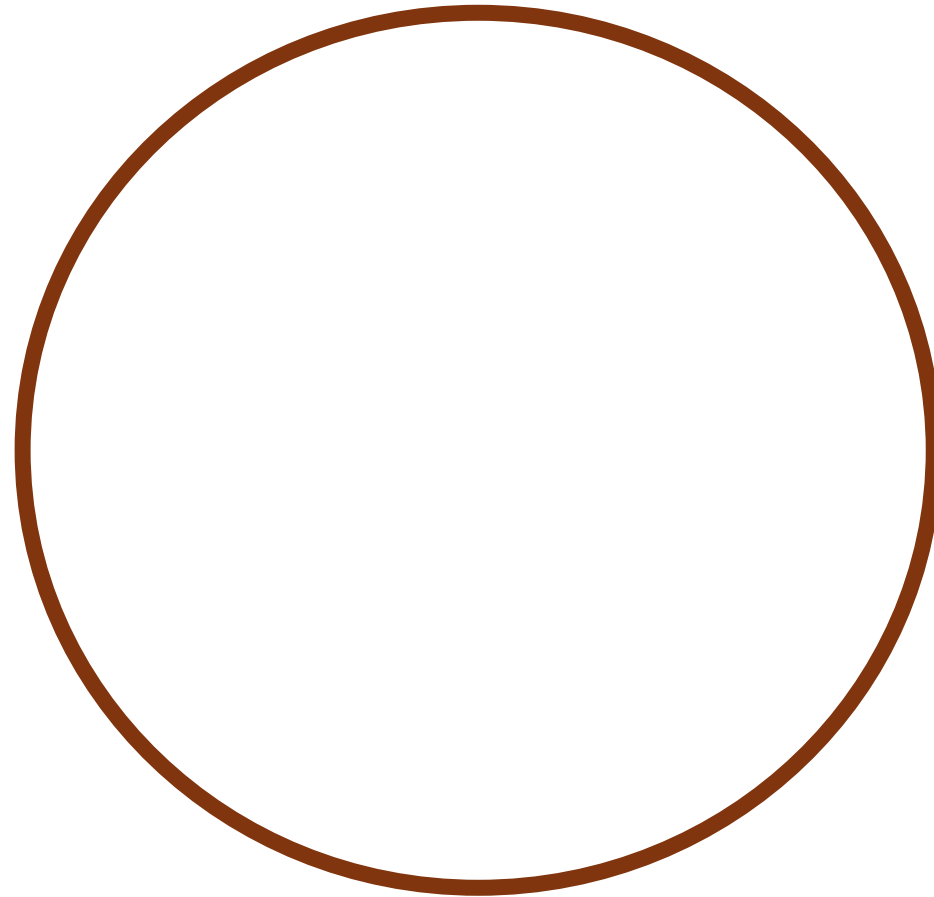


Audio description  
ESP/PT/ENG

Scan me



WHERE  
DOES  
THIS  
SOUND  
COME  
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Family surmanes

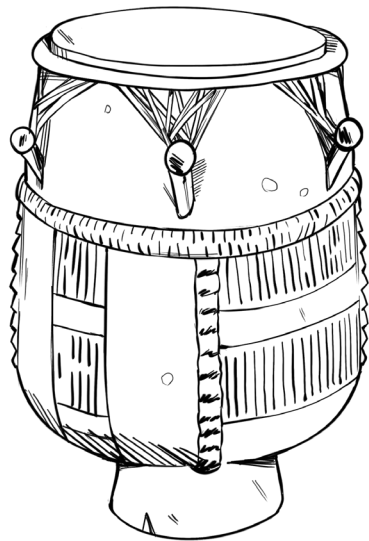


DRUM, DR.....M  
complete

Have you ever seen this drum before?

- It is a drum from West Africa, called the Akan Drum, because it comes from an area where the Akan people live.

Here is a blank drum for you to color. You can use your family's favorite colors.



## Drum for Virginia?

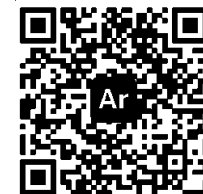
Sing a song together that all of your family members know.

Many of the songs or sounds that you have learned in your family speak of where you come from!

How do you think this drum sounds?

The Akan Drum last made sound more than 300 years ago.

Listen to its sound by scanning this QR code.



<https://www.britishmuseum.org/>

Objeto in Focus 2024

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