Title of book: In the Time of the Drums

Author's Name: Kim L. Siegelson

Publisher: Jump at the Sun- Hyperion Books for Children

Copyright Year: 1999

Reading Level: Lexile 570, Grades 3-4

Genre: Multi cultural fiction/ Folklore

Synopsis: The story is about a young slave boy, Mentu, who was born on the island that he lived. He was not born in Africa, but his grandmother, Twi, was. She told him stories and taught him songs, drums, and the language of home. She always told him to get ready for the time when he would need to be strong-strong. Being strong-strong is not forgetting who you are and where you come from, even when others try to make you forget. One day a slave ship came full of Ibo people, people like Twi. They would not come onto the island because they wanted to go home. Twi wants to go home too. She says the water will take them home. He cannot come because he was born here and the other slaves cannot come because they have forgotten the homeland. She ran to the ocean, and as she does this, she becomes young again. The Ibo on the slave ship follow her and they walk into the ocean until it covers their heads. Some believe they walked all the way back to Africa on the ocean floor. Their chains and songs will never leave the bay, and the water will always be salty like their tears. Mentu grew up and passed on the stories, drums, and songs of his grandmother to his children. They continued to teach the generations because it takes a mighty strength not to forget.

Standard: 2.5.3 Compare the ways people learn traditions in different cultures.

Activity: Read the story and discuss traditions of people and what that means. The students and teacher will create a list of American traditions on the chalkboard. Each student will be assigned a tradition to gather information on. They may interview parents, other teachers, or look up information in the library. Once the information is ready, each student will be a story teller to inform the class of
facts about each tradition and how the tradition has been passed down. The class will keep a chart of
different ways the traditions are passed and discuss how they are the same or different from the way
Mentu learned his traditions. After this, the students will create a mural on butcher paper to depict
their traditions and Mentu’s; as well as the way they are passed down.

Standard: 2.1.1 Listen to historical stories and compare daily life in the past and present.

Activity: Read the story, and then discuss the people on the island and why they are there. There is
no need to go too far into a discussion about slavery, but the way of life needs to be discussed. The
students will brainstorm and list the things that happened in the lives of the people in the book (leaving
out the mythological part at the end). For example: lived in slavery, sang to remember an old language,
picked cotton by hand, etc. The students will then be put into groups and given an example from the
book. They will act out the way life was in the book, then act out the way life is today (picking cotton
by hand, using a tractor, etc). They can create characters to be, costumes/masks, and dialogue if they
choose (could be enrichment) or simply act out without words and explain their actions when they are
finished.

(original ideas by Jessica Lange)