



## Banjo



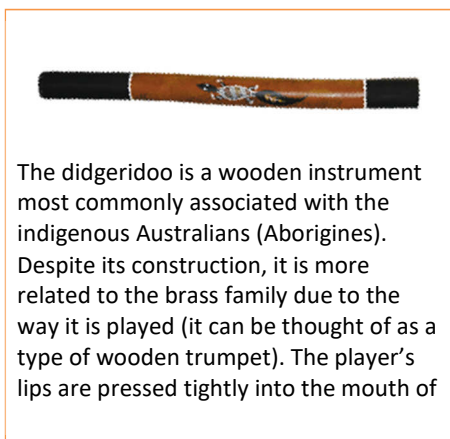
While more associated with America, the banjo actually originated in West Africa where it was known as the banger (or banja). It was taken to the US during the slave trade where it was popular amongst colonial Americans. Over time, the banjo became associated with jazz music, bluegrass and the minstrel shows.

Modern banjos generally have five strings, although 6 string versions played like the guitar are increasing in popularity. Early versions did not have frets. Sections of gourd were used for the circular bodies and skin for the belly.

Although the banjo produces sound in the same way as other guitar-type instruments, it is the nature of the skin of the belly that gives the banjo its distinct timbre (quality of sound). If the skin is stretched tight, the tone is crisp. A wooden resonator forms the back of the body. This helps project the sound outwards and against the underside of the skin, reinforcing the tone.

The five-string banjo has a shorter tuning peg for the fifth string. This is found on the upper side of the neck.

## Didgeridoo



The didgeridoo is a wooden instrument most commonly associated with the indigenous Australians (Aborigines). Despite its construction, it is more related to the brass family due to the way it is played (it can be thought of as a type of wooden trumpet). The player's lips are pressed tightly into the mouth of

the didgeridoo. They are then buzzed together as air is force through them – in the same way that brass players create the air vibration required for their instruments.

Didgeridoos are made from termite-bored hollow branches, usually from a eucalypt tree. Branches are selected with a length of about 150cm and a diameter of 6-10cm. The hollow inner is cleared and the outer surface cleaned and decorated.

Didgeridoo players usually sit with the bell of the instrument resting on both the ground and their feet. They use circular breathing to obtain a continuous drone. This is achieved by breathing air out through the instrument whilst breathing in through the nose (try it yourself with a glass of water and a straw).

Although the didgeridoo generally produces only one tone, expert players can obtain a second higher note.

### Questions

1. What was the African name for the Banjo?
2. How did the banjo appear in America?
3. How many strings are found on a banjo?
4. What is the tone like on a banjo which has a tight skin?
5. With which group of people is the didgeridoo most associated?
6. Describe a didgeridoo.
7. Write step-by-step instructions for making a didgeridoo.
8. Describe the style of breathing required to play a didgeridoo.

### Extension / Research

9. How is the plectrum banjo different from the 5-string version?
10. Try to circular breathe using a straw and a glass of water. Describe how this should be done.

### Word Puzzle

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

Banjo	Didgeridoo	Hollow	Timbre
Belly	Drone	Jazz	
Branch	Frets	Skin	