

Afro-Colombian Influence: Heritage, Music, and Resistance

Reading Comprehension: Afro-Colombian Influence

Before you read: Afro-Colombian heritage is an essential part of Colombia's identity. In this lesson, you will explore how African-descended communities have contributed to music, dance, language, food, festivals, and community life. As you read, notice how these traditions have been preserved, adapted, and shared across generations.

Read the passage and answer the questions. Afro-Colombian communities have played an important role in shaping Colombia's cultural identity. Their influence can be seen in music, dance, food, language, celebrations, family traditions, and collective memory. For centuries, African-descended communities have preserved knowledge and cultural practices while also adapting them to local environments and relationships with Indigenous and European communities.

Musical traditions such as cumbia, bullerengue, mapalé, and vallenato show this cultural exchange. African rhythms and percussion are combined with Indigenous instruments, local stories, and European influences. In Colombia's Pacific and Caribbean regions, music and dance often bring communities together during celebrations, ceremonies, and important social events. These traditions are not only forms of entertainment: they also communicate history, identity, creativity, and resistance.

Palenque de San Basilio is an important example of cultural preservation. Descendants of escaped enslaved people maintained African languages, medical knowledge, social structures, and community traditions. Oral history and intergenerational teaching helped many practices survive and continue to develop. Festivals such as Petronio Álvarez and Barranquilla's Carnival celebrate ancestral memory through music, dance, clothing, food, and satire. Coastal dishes such as sancocho and arroz con coco also reflect African culinary customs adapted to local ingredients.

Together, these examples show that Afro-Colombian heritage is a living influence, not only a part of the past. It continues to shape how people celebrate, tell stories, build community, and understand Colombia's diverse history.

1. What areas of Colombian culture have Afro-Colombian communities influenced?

2. How do several Afro-Colombian musical traditions combine different cultural influences?

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3. What did the people of Palenque de San Basilio preserve?

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4. How do festivals express solidarity and resistance?

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5. Why does the passage describe Afro-Colombian heritage as a living influence?

Part 1: Musical Traditions and Syncretism

Cultural **syncretism** is the blending of different cultural, artistic, and religious traditions. Read the descriptions below and identify each Afro-Colombian musical or dance tradition.

Word Bank: Bullerengue | Cumbia | Mapalé | Vallenato

6. An energetic, fast-paced dance mimicking the movement of fish and fishermen along the coast.

7. A tri-ethnic genre combining African percussive drums, Indigenous flutes (gaitas), and Spanish dance dress.

8. An ancestral vocal and drum tradition historically led by women to preserve community memory.

9. A popular national genre pairing the African *caja* drum with European accordions and Indigenous *guacharacas*.

Part 2: Passive Voice Practice

Choose the correct answer for each sentence. Focus on the form of **be** and the past participle.



Passive voice: object + form of **be** + past participle. Use **by** only when the agent is important.

10. Which passive sentence is grammatically correct?

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| a) African rhythms use in cumbia. | b) African rhythms are used in cumbia. |
| c) African rhythms are use in cumbia. | d) African rhythms is used in cumbia. |

11. Which passive sentence is grammatically correct?

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|---|--|
| a) The marimba de chonta play in Pacific traditions. | b) The marimba de chonta is played in Pacific traditions. |
| c) The marimba de chonta is play in Pacific traditions. | d) The marimba de chonta are played in Pacific traditions. |

12. Which passive sentence is grammatically correct?

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|---|--|
| a) African languages were preserved in Palenque de San Basilio. | b) African languages was preserved in Palenque de San Basilio. |
| c) African languages are preserve in Palenque de San Basilio. | d) African languages preserved in Palenque de San Basilio. |

13. Which passive sentence is grammatically correct?

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|---|--|
| a) Ancestral memory celebrate through festivals. | b) Ancestral memory is celebrate through festivals. |
| c) Ancestral memory are celebrated through festivals. | d) Ancestral memory is celebrated through festivals. |

14. Which passive sentence is grammatically correct?

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|--|---|
| a) Afro-Colombian heritage should protect by future generations. | b) Afro-Colombian heritage should be protected by future generations. |
| c) Afro-Colombian heritage should be protecting by future generations. | d) Afro-Colombian heritage should protected by future generations. |