



Classroom Guide for
Capoeira: Game! Dance! Martial Art!
Written and photographed by
George Ancona

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

Interest Level: Grades 2–7

Guided Reading Level: S

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.4/.5

Lexile™ Measure: 890

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Sports, Martial Arts, Traditional Games/Dance, Self-Expression, Latin American (Brazilian) History and Interest

Synopsis

CAPOEIRA—it's a game, a dance, and a martial art! It's a way of expressing oneself through movement and music. With action-packed photographs and accessible text, readers are introduced to this exciting, popular game. At Madinga Academy in Oakland, California, a group of girls and boys practice the acrobatic moves of capoeira. Then they begin to play games to the infectious, rhythmic beat of traditional music and singing.

The book then moves on to Brazil to experience capoeira in its historic birthplace, where it dates back four hundred years. Capoeira developed as a way of fighting among enslaved Africans, was outlawed the government, and was permitted once again in 1930 as a martial art and game. Short biographies of Mestre Bimba and Mestre Pastinha, the fathers of modern capoeira, are also included.

The book concludes back at Madinga Academy in Oakland, at an end-of-year ceremony where students receive their colored ropes indicating their levels of accomplishment. The students also look forward to the next year, and the fun of expressing themselves through the game, dance, and martial art of capoeira.

BACKGROUND

From its historic beginnings in Brazil to today's academies, capoeira is quickly becoming a worldwide phenomenon. It is a martial art that combines elements of music and dance. In a game, combat is simulated through a series of traditional movements, and strategy and skill are emphasized over size and perceived strength of the players.

FROM THE BOOK:

In 1500 the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the land now known as Brazil and claimed it for Portugal. Thirty-two years later, the first permanent Portuguese

settlement was founded. The colonists needed laborers for their plantations, but when the settlers tried to enslave the native people, they fled or resisted. Their bows and arrows were no match for the horses and armor of the Portuguese. Many native people were killed. Others died from diseases brought by the colonists.

In the mid-1500s the Portuguese turned to the African slave trade as a source of labor. Soon sailing ships were bringing thousands of people from Africa to Brazil to work on the land, in the mines, and in the homes of the colonists. The Africans were chained together in terrible conditions in the overcrowded holds of the ships. They brought nothing with them but their languages, cultures, and traditional ways of fighting. The owners felt threatened by their slaves' fighting skills, so they forbade them to practice. The slaves then disguised their fights with music to trick their owners into thinking they were dancing.

Some slaves managed to escape to remote areas and formed settlements called *quilombos*. Traditional fighting was refined there and developed into what is now capoeira. After the abolition of slavery, the freed slaves headed to the cities. There was little work, and some of the men formed gangs that used capoeira. As a result, the government outlawed capoeira around 1890. Many *capoeiristas* were arrested. In 1930 the ban was lifted, and the playing of capoeira as a Brazilian martial art and game was allowed.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft & Structure, Strand 5)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. What do you know about martial arts? Which martial arts have you heard of? What are the goals of each martial art?
2. Where do people learn and practice martial arts?
3. How are informational texts structured? What are some nonfiction text features you expect to find in an informational text? What is the purpose of each nonfiction text feature?

Exploring the Book

(CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft & Structure, Strand 5)

Display the book and read the main title (for pronunciation help, see the guide at the back of the book). Then have a volunteer read the words that are floating around the people. Ask students what they think the title refers to. What information do they think the text will provide?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: title page, acknowledgments, dedication, introduction, photographs, Glossary and Pronunciation Guide, websites for more information, the Author's Sources.

VOCABULARY

(CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)

In addition to the vocabulary below, it would be helpful to go through the vocabulary in the glossary at the back of the book. There is also a pronunciation guide there, which will be helpful before a read aloud.

Have each student write his or her own sentence using each word or phrase, or where appropriate, create a simple illustration to depict the meaning.

martial art	capital	lash out	drenched	trickery	academies
legends	illegal	identities	acrobatics	techniques	springboard
size up	arching	sequences	chorus	myth	change the pitch
direct	peddlers	tone	rasping	graceful	cunning
enslave	colonists	plantations	colonists	forbade	abolition
outlawed	dreadlocks	role model	pace		

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. **Encourage students** to refer to passages and photographs in the book and **to cite evidence from the text to support their responses.**

Literal Comprehension

1. What is capoeira? What inspired the author/photographer George Ancona to write this book? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
2. What is a capoeira academy? Which academy is featured in the book? What is special about this academy? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
3. What happens during a capoeira class? How does class begin? Then what happens? How does class end? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)
4. What role do musical instruments and song play in class? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)
5. Why do *capoeiristas* use Portuguese nicknames? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
6. Name three movements used in capoeira. What are their Portuguese names? How is each move executed? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
7. What are the rules of capoeira? How does a capoeira game go? What are the important elements of a capoeira game? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)
8. What is a *pandeiro*? What is a *berimbau*? How does it work? What does it sound like? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
9. What is an *atabaque*? A *reco-reco*? How do they work? What do they sound like? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)
10. What is *chamada*? Why is it used? How do you know? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

1. What are the most important traits of a *capoeirista*? How do you know? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 8)

2. Why is music an important part of capoeira? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
3. How is a *mestre* different from an instructor? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 8)
4. How does a player win a capoeira game? What is most important when playing capoeira? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
5. What is the audience like during a game of capoeira? How does the audience respond to the *capoeiristas*? Why? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
6. How has capoeira changed and evolved since the 1500s? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
7. Who was Mestre Bimba? Why was he important? How do you know? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
8. Who was Mestre Pastinha? Why was he important? How do you know? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–8)
9. What makes capoeira an important part of Brazilian culture? How do you know?
10. What is the tone of the author's voice? Is it formal or informal? How does the voice make a difference when reading the book? In how the text is understood? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas, Strands 1–2; Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 6; Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)
11. How might the book be different if the author used a different genre, another voice, or wrote the book for a different age level? How could the book be different if another author wrote it? (CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Craft and Structure, Strand 6 and Reading Standards, Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)
12. How did the author choose to end the book? How did the ending images leave you feeling? Why? (Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas, Strands 1–2)

Literature Circles

(CCSS: Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 & Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for places in the text where special capoeira terms are explained.
- The **Illustrator** might create scenes on a timeline that follow the history of capoeira.
- The **Connector** might find other books written about capoeira or other martial arts.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might look for information about capoeira and its role in Brazilian culture and history.

*There are many resource books available with information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK

CLUBS AND READING GROUPS by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and LITERATURE CIRCLES RESOURCE GUIDE by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

(CCSS: Reading Standards, Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, & Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–9)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work, if they wish to.

1. What is *chamada*? Why is it used? How do you know? Do you think it's a good strategy or an unfair trick? Write an opinion piece on whether or not you think it's fair to use this move in a game of capoeira.
2. Which parts of the author's explanation of capoeira did you connect to the most? Enjoy reading about the most? Why? Would you like to visit Brazil or Oakland to take a capoeira class? Why or why not? What would you most like to see and experience? Cite passages from the text to relate to your answer.
3. What values does capoeira teach the people who practice it? How do you know? Find evidence in the text that supports your answer.
4. In the book, there are two very different styles of illustrations: photographs and drawings. Why do you think the author chose to include both? What is the purpose of each? When is each style used? How do both the nonfiction text features and the illustrations help you understand the information presented in the text?
5. Have students write a recommendation for this book explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.
6. If you could choose any sport, game, or art form and travel anywhere in the world to research and then write a book about it, what would you study and where would you go? Research the subject and write a short informational article about it in the style George Ancona used to write *Capoeira*.

ELL Teaching Activities

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners.

1. Assign ELL students to read the book aloud with strong English readers/speakers.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the photographs and illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about a character or central figure in the book.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(CCSS: Introduction to the Standards, page 7, "Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.")

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas.

Language Arts

Ask students to choose their own *capoeirista* nicknames and then research what the nicknames would be in Portuguese. Have students make a class poster with photos of themselves and their nicknames written below in both English and Portuguese.

Social Studies

1. Have students look on a world map or a globe to locate Brazil and note the surrounding countries. Brazil is geographically varied and packs within its borders mountain ranges, rain forests, and mighty rivers. Have students research where these items occur in Brazil, and then on a blank map of South America, label them as well as the countries that surround Brazil.
2. Have students research and report on why Brazilians speak Portuguese while people in the rest of South America, and in Central America and Mexico, speak Spanish.
3. (Upper grades) Slavery is part of the history of both Brazil and the United States. Split students into two groups. Ask one group to research slavery in Brazil in the 1500s. Ask another group to research slavery in the United States prior to the 1860s. Once each group presents to the class, ask students to compare and contrast aspects of slavery in each country.

Science/Physical Education/Math

1. Teach students [how to take their resting heart rate](#). Then using the descriptions in the book, have students try one of the capoeira moves. Ask students to take their heart rate again. Did it go up or down? Record the results. Each day, repeat the process with another capoeira move. Record, average, and graph the data to determine which capoeira move raised students' heart rates the most.
2. Research how capoeira moves affect the body's muscles. Which muscles does each capoeira move use/exercise? Where is each muscle located?

Art

Tell students to imagine they are opening a capoeira academy. Ask them to design the logo for their academy, and T-shirts and *cordaos* for the instructors, *mestres*, and students.

Art/Music

1. Split students into groups. Assign each group to research how to make one the following instruments: *berimbau*, *agogo*, *pandeiro*, *reco-reco*. If you have the facilities, let each group try to construct and decorate the instrument it researched and then play it.
2. Have each group of students create a "How To/All About" book outlining how to make the instrument, and explaining the history of the instrument and how it is played. Pictures of the instruments each group made may be used as illustrations.

Sports

Interested students may wish to research and report to the class about other martial arts. If any students study a martial art, she or he might be interested in demonstrating some moves, or an adult could be invited to class to give a demonstration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR / PHOTOGRAPHER

George Ancona is an award-winning author and photographer known for his vivid, eye-catching images. He has written and/or photographed more than one hundred fifteen books for young readers. In 2002 Ancona received the *Washington Post* Children's Book

Guild Award for his work providing quality nonfiction for young readers. Ancona and his wife live in Santa Fe, New Mexico. You can find him online at georgeancona.com.

Book Information

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Themes: Sports, Martial Arts, Traditional Games/Dance, Self-Expression, Latin American (Brazilian) History and Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Capoeira* at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/29/hc/capoeira_game_dance_martial_art

Order Information**On the Web:**

<http://www.leeandlow.com/order> (general order information)

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