The Mandinka people are one of hundreds of ethnic groups originating from Africa. They form one of the largest groups in West Africa, totalling nearly 11 million people. They are the descendants of the Empire of Mali (1230 to 1600), which rose to power under the rule of the great Mandinka king, Sundiata Keita. The Mandinka live primarily in West Africa, particularly in The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Mauritania and even small communities in the central African nation of Chad.

As with many African peoples, the Mandinka can be found all over world, with large communities throughout Europe and the United States.

Most Mandinka people speak the Mandinka language, often in combination with several other local African dialects as well as French, English or Arabic. Just like the English language, within the Mandinka speaking world, there are many different dialects and spellings, accents and expressions depending on where you are from.

Most Mandinkas live in family compounds in traditional rural villages, where learning is done through stories, proverbs and songs. Mandinka society is an oral society, where much of their history and traditions are passed down by being sung or spoken rather that being written down.

Today, over 99% of Mandinka in Africa are Muslim and much of the population study Arabic and the Qu’ran as well as their traditional culture.
Activity 1. Mapping the Mandinka

Research

• Paper & pen / pencils
• Computers & internet access
• Print out of a map of Africa

30 - 60 mins
Whole class / group
Any age

Using your map of Africa, mark an X on the African countries mentioned above, where the Mandinka people originate.

Now see if you can find out who these well-known Mandinka people are, where they are from and what they are famous for.

Use your map to plot and mark where they live or came from. An additional information sheet for teachers is supplied at the end of this document.

• Mohamed Sissoko
• Martin Robinson Delany
• Salif Keita
• Salomon Kalou
• Kunta Kinte
• Samory Toure
• Cheick Guillaume Ouedraogo
Activity 2. Learn to speak Mandinka

Language

15 - 45 mins  Whole class / groupsAny age

Here’s the Love Music Festival guide to speaking Mandinka! Try a few phrases out and practice on your friends. Spellings and translations for these phrases tend to differ slightly depending on where you go, the kind of dialect of Mandinka you are speaking and who you are speaking to. To make life easier, all the phrases below are written in the way they should sound, with the addition of these two sounds:

É sounds as in ‘a’ in paper
Y sounds ‘ee’ as in bee
Kortananté? = Is everything OK?
Tananté = Yes, everything is OK
Sumolé? = How is the family?
Y be jé = They are well
Y be Kaira toh? = Are you in peace? OR Peace be with you
Kaira dorong = I am in peace OR And peace be with you
Ntoho mung Detta leti = My name is Detta
Y bota minto? = Where are you from?
Mgota Scotland = I am from Scotland

“Ah duniya” and “ah diata” are phrases that are often heard in songs.
“Ah dunyia” means “oh life” and “ah diata” means “oh lion”.

Mandinka Rituals and Traditions:

Mandinka is a culture rich in tradition and ritual. In normal village life, many people continue to live by and preserve the ancient customs and rituals of old. For example, Mandinka children are always named on the seventh day after their birth and the children are almost always named after a very important person. Some of the most popular names for the eldest boy and girl in Gambian Mandinka society are ‘Lamin’ for a boy and ‘Fatu’ for a girl. In fact when spending time in Berefet village in The Gambia in 2008, I had some very confusing situations, when I would call out to someone named Lamin and seven or eight heads would all turn around to answer!

Another traditional ritual relates to marriage. When a young couple wants to get married, the groom’s family will send a bitter nut called a kola nut to the elders of the bride to be. Only when they accept the kola nuts, can the courtship begin.

There are also traditions relating to Mandinka music and the kora. When playing at a celebration or concert, kora players will often dedicate a song to a particular person or family. It is traditional for people to show thanks by placing money or gifts inside the kora or on the ground in front of them.
Activity 3. Exploring Traditions, Rituals and Ceremonies
Research and practical

**Tradition** = A set of customs or practices. For example, it is traditional for a bride to wear white on her wedding day.

**Ceremony** = An event of ritual significance, performed on a special occasion. For example, a wedding ceremony.

**Ritual** = A ceremonial act and the performance of that act. For example, the exchanging of rings between couples on their wedding day.

1. How many different types of ceremonies or traditions can you think of? Do some research and see which new ones you can discover. Make a list of them as you go along. Do any of them involve music? If so, what sort of music? Have you ever been a part of any of these ceremonies or traditions? Are there any specific rituals involved in these ceremonies?

2. Now think about your own daily rituals. Is there anything that you always do, every day, in the same way? Or are there any special rituals that you perform at certain times or in certain places? Are there school rituals that everyone has to do or that you do with your class? Once you’ve thought about it, write them all down and share them with your group or class.

3. In small groups, see if you can invent your own class ritual. It could be something that is related to a particular time of the day or to a particular lesson. It could involve music, like listening to a piece of music, or singing a song. Or it could involve some kind of action that everyone has to do together or something that is spoken together at a certain time. You can be as creative as you like! Once you’ve got all your ideas written down, share them with your class.

4. Now as a class choose one or two rituals to carry out for a week. How does it feel to carry out your rituals? Does everybody do it? Is it possible to photograph it? Let me know what your rituals are on our Glow discussion board, and upload any photos you have to the sharing space on our Glow pages.
Activity 4. West African Sweet Potato and Roast Cashew Soup

Cooking

Time to get a taste of West Africa! Have a go at making this tasty soup with your class. Go easy on the chilli if you’re not a fan of spicy food!

Ingredients

- 450g sweet potatoes, sliced
- 11 vegetable stock
- 30g butter
- 1 tsp chopped scotch bonnet chillies
- 1 tbsp chopped ginger
- 1 tbsp chopped garlic
- 180g carrots, sliced
- 180g onions, sliced
- 60g plain flour
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 170ml coconut milk
- 240g cashew nuts
- salt and black pepper to taste
- a few sprigs of coriander

Method

Add the sweet potatoes and vegetables to a pan with the vegetable stock and boil for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large pan and add the chillies, ginger, garlic, carrots and onions and fry over moderate heat until the onions become soft. Mix in the flour with a wooden spoon then pour in a little of the sweet potato stock. Now combine the sweet potatoes and the onion mix. Allow to cool then blend to a smooth paste in a food processor.

Return to the pan and cook on low heat for 15 minutes. Add half the soy sauce, the coconut milk and most of the coriander and season to taste.

Meanwhile place the cashew nuts in a shallow bowl and pour over the remaining soy sauce. Mix well to coat then place in an oven pre-heated to 200 degrees C and bake for 10 minutes, turning once to ensure an even browning.

Serve the soup hot, garnished with coriander leaves and with the cashew nuts sprinkled on top.
Additional Information for Teachers for Activity 1. Mapping the Mandinka

Mohamed Sissoko

Mohamed Lamine ‘Momo’ Sissoko Gillan (born 22nd January 1985) is a French-born Malian footballer who is currently playing for Juventus F.C. in the Italian Serie A and the Malian national team. Although he could have elected to play for France internationally, he chose to play for his native country Mali. Sissoko is a touch tackling defensive midfielder.

Martin Robinson Delany

Martin Robinson Delany (born 6th May 1812, died 24th January 1885) was an African-American abolitionist and arguably the first proponent of American black nationalism. He became the first African-American field officer in the United States Army during the Civil War.

Delany was born a free black man in Charles Town, West Virginia, to Pati and Samuel Delany. His father Samuel was a slave, but his mother was free. Delany’s maternal grandparents were born in Niger and of Mandinka ethnicity, where his grandfather was said to be a prince.

In 1831, at the age of 19, he journeyed west to the growing city of Pittsburgh, where he became a barber and labourer. He harboured ambitions to visit Africa, which he considered his spiritual home. In Pittsburgh, Delany studied medicine with abolitionist doctors and began writing on political and public issues.

In 1863, after Abraham Lincoln called for a military draft, Delany began recruiting black men for the Union Army. In 1865 Delany was commissioned as a major, becoming the first black line officer in the U.S. Army.

Salif Keita

Salif Keita (born 25th August 1949) is an internationally recognised afro-pop singer-songwriter from Mali. He is unique not only because of his reputation as the ‘Golden Voice of Africa’, but also because he has albinism and is a direct descendant of the founder of the Mali Empire, Sundiata Keita. This royal heritage meant that under the Malian caste system, he should never have become a singer, which was deemed to be a griot’s or jali’s role.

To listen to some of Salif Keita’s music, check out:
http://www.myspace.com/salifkeitamusic
Salomon Kalou
Salomon Kalou (born 5th August 1985) is a professional football player from the Ivory Coast who plays club football as a forward for Chelsea in the English Premier League, and formerly for the Dutch club Feyenoord. He is often used on the wings at Chelsea and has a preference for playing on the left wing as this gives him opportunities to cut inside and take shots with his favoured right foot.

Kunta Kinte
Kunta Kinte is the central character of the novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by American author Alex Haley and of the television mini-series *Roots*, based on the book. Kunta Kinte is a Muslim of the Mandinka tribe. He is captured and brought as a slave to Annapolis, Maryland and later sold to a plantation owner. He tries to escape on several occasions, for which he is severely punished. Throughout the novel, Kunta Kinte continually impresses upon the slaves around him the glory of being free, the need to return to African origins, and the need to oppose slavery.

Samory Toure
Samory Toure (also Samory Touré or Almamy Samory Lafiya Toure, from around 1830-1900) was the founder of the Wassoulou Empire, an Islamic state that resisted French rule in West Africa from 1882 until his capture in 1898. He fought the French with such mastery that they referred to him as ‘The Black Napoleon’. He was a master of military strategy and tactics.

Cheick Guillaume Ouedraogo
Cheick Guillaume Ouedraogo (born 17th May 1975) is a professional French heavy-weight mixed martial artist and kick-boxer, currently fighting in the Ultimate Fighting Championship.