

Unit Plan for
Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa
 Page 1 of 8

Resource Guide
 & Unit Plan
 Teacher-Author:
 Emily Rozitis

Resources used
 & possible
 concerns

Book: Ancient Thunder

Author & Illustrator : Leo Yerxa

Publisher: House of Anansi Press

*This book can be viewed as a Read Aloud in this link: [Read-Aloud link](#)

Possible Concerns:

- Access to the physical book

*Solutions include accessing the Youtube read-aloud via the provided link, or borrowing a copy of the book through your local public library.

Author/creator
 & literature
 background

Author/Illustrator: Leo Yerxa

"**Leo Yerxa** was born of Ojibwa parents in 1947 on the Little Eagle Reserve in northwestern Ontario. He is an award-winning writer, illustrator and artist who studied graphic arts at Algonquin College in Ottawa and fine arts at the University of Waterloo. He has written Last Leaf, First Snowflake to Fall, which won the 1994 Mr. Christie's Book Award. He received the Governor General's award for illustration in 1996 for his exceptional book Ancient Thunder."

*This is a direct quote from <https://www.strongnations.com/gs/show.php?gs=38&gsd=932>

Literature Background:

"A beautiful and visionary book, Ancient Thunder celebrates wild horses and the natural world of the prairies. Using an extraordinary technique, Leo Yerxa, an artist of Ojibway ancestry, makes paper look like leather, so that his illustrations seem to be painted on leather shirts. The art is accompanied by a rich song of praise for the wild horses that came to play such an important role in the lives of the First Peoples.

Years in the making, the book is truly a work of art — one that reflects Yerxa's sense of nature and the place of the First Peoples within it."

*This is a direct quote from https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=87&f=

Literacy, Math
 Skills
 &
 Other Targeted
 Skills for
 preschool -
 Grade 6
 (Disabilities
 Classrooms)

Unit Contents (focus: Literacy and Early Numeracy Skills)

Lesson 1: Picture Walk, Predictions & Shared Reading

Lesson 2: Predictions, Guided Reading, Making the Writing Block Multilevel

Lesson 3: Sequences & Working with Words: An Art Exploration

Lesson 4: Early Numeracy, Counting & Number Representation

Lesson 5: Sequences, & Working with Words: An Art & Music Exploration

Other Targeted Skills include:

Literacy: Following directions and using CORE vocabulary (First-Fifth, Numbers) & engaging with text.

Other: Social Skills- small or large group engagement, turn-taking, visual attention, listening skills (strategies may include personalized seating, whole-body listening, or Give me 5 supports.) Exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling.

All lessons have a primary focus of early numeracy and exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling.

Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 2 of 8

Materials

Ancient Thunder Resource Guide

- "What do you KNOW about horses?" Literacy/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)
- "Make a Strawberry Sun: Art Exploration" Literacy/Art/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)
- "Counting Horses" Literacy/Math Activity (3 pages)
- "Make and Play a Drum" Literacy/Art/Music/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)

Other Materials:

- Writing tools (paper/whiteboard, pencil, crayon, wide-grip bingo-dabbers, marker, etc.)
- Clipboards for Lesson 2
- Coffee container, wax paper, paint, elastics, *beads (optional) for Lesson 5
- Glue or tape
- Scissors (adapted scissors, mounted loop scissors, etc.)
- *Option for physical book or digital copy of the book
- *Option for Computer/SMARTboard use

Rationale

Big Idea: This unit plan facilitates pre-academic skill development (literacy dominant) in early education and disability-focused learning environments.

Purpose: This unit plan supports classrooms with diverse skill levels, promoting engagement with text, reading, writing, and working with words, in individualized ways. The goal is to create meaningful and authentic interactions with Yerxa's text, and facilitate connections and understanding about FNMI languages and cultures in students' lives. Furthermore, the intention is to connect students and educators with positive and authentic representations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences through stories and imagery.

Unit Contents

5 Multidisciplinary Lessons (as described on page 1)

Ancient Thunder Resource Guide (attached as Appendix, following Unit Plan)

****Lesson 1 should be completed as the initial lesson. The following 4 lessons may be interchanged, based on the preference of the educator.*

Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 3 of 8

Lesson 1: Picture Walk, Predictions & Shared Reading

Literacy Connections and Strategies: Picture Walk, Literary Predictions & Shared Reading, from "Shared Reading for Emerging Readers"

(Cunningham, et. al., pp 49-67, 1999.)

Other Skills: Social Skills- small or large group engagement, turn-taking, visual attention, listening skills (strategies may include personalized seating, whole-body listening, or Give me 5 supports.) Exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling.

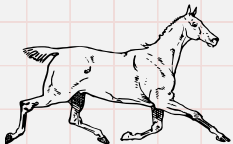
Preparation: Have a copy of the book, and/or the [Read-Aloud link](#). Ask your group of students to sit together, at a table or on the floor. Ensure you have access to any necessary supports, including communication devices or physical equipment to support each student's needs.

Activity (option for one OR two part lesson) :

1. Introduce the Activity: Explain how you will read a book together- you will need HELP to find out what this book is about!
2. Explain how you will take a Picture Walk, flipping through the pages and pointing to what you can SEE in the illustrations. If you are using only the Read-Aloud version, mute the Read-Aloud video and play it.
3. Make a prediction together: Ask students, What will this book be about? Write your ideas down for students to see, on a poster or a SMARTboard. Write THIS BOOK IS ABOUT... in the middle of your page. ****Some classrooms may choose to end here, and complete the remaining steps at another time, based on attention levels in your given class.*
4. Read the book, bringing attention to the text. Ask students to notice things about the pictures and words in the book.
5. Ask students- What did you notice about the words? What did you notice about the images?
6. Conclude the Activity: Ask students, What was your FAVOURITE part about in book?

*This can be done with raised hands, or other physical, verbal, or visual communication.

Accommodations include:
Communication Devices
& Systems,
Read-Aloud Version or Print
Version of Book
Body Breaks
"Chunk" the Activity



Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 4 of 8

Lesson 2:

Predictions,
Guided Reading,
& Making the
Writing Block
Multilevel

Literacy Connections and Strategies: Predictions, Guided Reading and Making the Writing Block Multi-Level, from "Shared Reading for Emerging Readers."

(Cunningham, et. al., pp 67-68, pp 113-114, 1999.)

Other Skills: Attention to task, communication, fine motor skills, functional tool use. Exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling.

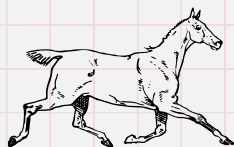
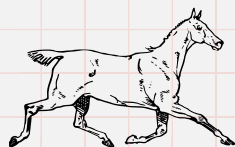
Preparation: Have a copy of the book, or the read-aloud, ready to go. Print out a copy of "What do you KNOW about horses?" Literacy/Fine Motor Activity (1 page) for all students, and one for your example. Alternatively, print one or two and laminate page 1 for students to take turns with. Prepare the activity with a clipboard, a marker, at your learning centre of choice. Encourage 1-2 students at a time to participate with appropriate writing materials and a clipboard.

Activity:

*Optional: if completing this activity on a different day than Lesson 1, you may wish to read the story again with your students. Point to the text, as you read together.

1. Introduce the Activity: Show students the "What do you KNOW about horses?" Literacy/Fine Motor Activity (1 page), and explain how you can draw, write, or colour on the page, to demonstrate your knowledge about horses.
2. Provide students with writing materials. As needed, provide assistance for student needs -encourage independent participation. Prompt with questions like "Where do horses live?" or "What do horses like to eat?" if/when students get stuck.
3. After several students have participated with this activity, gather as a group. Ask students, "Is there something about horses that you want to learn about? What is it?" Write down answers on a collective whiteboard, piece of paper, or your SMARTboard.
4. Conclude the Activity: Ask your students to assist in cleaning up materials, and putting away their list.

***Teachers should take note of the answers about what students want to learn. Choice to do collective research via a "**question of the day**" or explore an optional, larger **extension/inquiry project into horses**.



Accommodations include:
Communication Devices
& Systems,
Slant boards,
Adapted writing tools
Body Breaks
"Chunk" the Activity
Extra Time

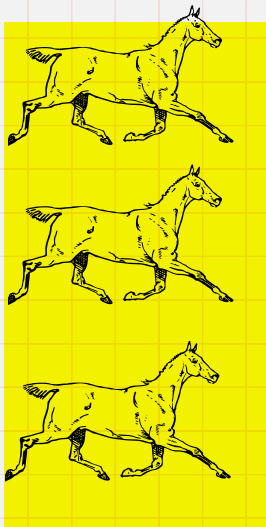
Unit Plan for
Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 5 of 8

Lesson 3:
Sequences &
Working with
Words:
Art Exploration
(2-day activity)

Accommodations include:
Communication Devices
& Systems,
Physical Equipment to
Support Movement Skills
Body Breaks



Literacy Connections and Strategies: Sequences & working with words: art exploration. Following directions and using CORE vocabulary (First-Fifth.) (Cunningham, et. al., pp 142-143, 1999.)

Math Connections and Strategies: Mathematization of everyday knowledge, early numeracy, & number representation skills. (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Education, p 5, 2011)

Other Skills: Attention to task, communication, fine motor skills. Exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling. Balance and coordination skills, following directions. Exploring colour-mixing, painting skills, connecting literacy and art disciplines.

Preparation: Have a copy of the book, or the read-aloud via Youtube, ready to go. Print out a copy of "Make a Strawberry Sun: Art Exploration" Literacy/Art/Fine Motor Activity (1 page) and prepare materials: paper, paint, brushes for day 1, and tape, for day 2. Gather your students together for a creative activity, 1-1 or in small groups.

Activity:

*Optional: if completing this activity on a different day than Lesson 1, you may wish to read the story again with your students. Point to the text, as you read together.

1. Introduce the Activity: Gather students together to do a creative activity at a table with necessary materials. Read all steps from "Make a Strawberry Sun: Art Exploration" Literacy/Art/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)
2. Encourage your student to independently participate in each step of the sequence. Day 1, steps 1-2, Day 2, steps 3-5.
3. Encourage your students to sign their work, as all artists do. If students are pre-literate, encourage signatures of all kinds- no need to be legible or written in letters.
4. Ask students to explain their work to a peer or to the class.
5. Conclude the Activity: Ask your students to assist in cleaning up materials. Encourage students to display their work in the classroom.

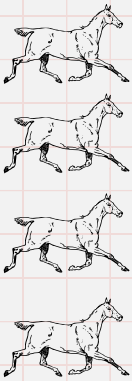
Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 6 of 8

Lesson 4:
Early Numeracy,
Counting &
Number
Representation



Accommodations include:
Communication Devices
& Systems,
Slant boards,
Adapted writing tools
Body Breaks
Assistive Technology
"Chunk" the Activity

Literacy Connections and Strategies: Engaging with text. Using CORE vocabulary (numbers.)

(Cunningham, et. al., pp 42-43, 1999.)

Math Connections and Strategies: Mathematization of everyday knowledge, early numeracy, & number representation skills.

(The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Education, p 5, 2011)

Other Skills: Attention to task, communication, turn-taking, choice-making, fine motor skills. Exposure and engagement with FNMI language and culture, through written, visual, and oral storytelling. Option for assistive technology.

Preparation: Have a copy of the book, or the read-aloud via Youtube, ready to go. **Ideally, a physical copy of the book for this activity.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY OPTION (IF AVAILABLE & APPROPRIATE): prepare assistive technology to support non-verbal students by voice-recording the numbers ahead of time (use a Step-by-Step, voice-output devices, or several Big Mac Buttons- or other available and suitable technology for recording a predictable sequence or a single message, including iPad applications.) ***This is especially engaging for students if you record DIFFERENT voices for each number, providing a fun surprise when the read-aloud happens- ask your colleagues or verbal students to assist.

NO-TECH-OPTION (required for ALL methods): prepare cards according to instructions in the "Counting Horses" Literacy/Math Activity (3 pages) resource. Laminate for durability, connect with a ring. Option to disconnect from ring for a matching activity extension.

In **BOTH** options, when prepared, ask students to gather together in a learning centre.

Activity:

1. Introduce the Activity: show students the cards, showing both sides of the cards.
2. Encourage students to use the cards in various ways: count aloud, on a whiteboard/piece of paper, with fingers, toys or math manipulatives. AT option is well-used here.
3. Ask students to try representing and reading the numbers in at least 3 ways. Encourage students to share with a peer. Explore different ways to use the cards, based on student's developmental level and engagement.
4. Ask students: what number do you LIKE MOST?
5. Conclude the Activity: Encourage students to assist in clean-up of materials and learning space.

Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 7 of 8

Lesson 5:
Sequences, &
Working with
Words:
Art & Music
Exploration Art
Exploration

Literacy Connections and Strategies: Sequences & working with words: art exploration. Following directions and using CORE vocabulary (First-Fourth.) (Cunningham, et. al., pp 142-143, 1999.)

Math Connections and Strategies: Mathematization of everyday knowledge, early numeracy, & number representation skills.

(The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Education, p 5, 2011)

Other Skills: Attention to task, communication, fine motor skills. Exposure and engagement with FNMI languages and cultures, through written, visual, and oral storytelling. Following directions.

Preparation: Have a copy of the book, or the read-aloud via Youtube, ready to go. Print out a copy of "Make and Play a Drum" Literacy/Art/Music/Fine Motor Activity (1 page) and prepare materials: coffee container, wax paper, beads, elastics, paint, and brushes. Prepare music, option for [Native Puppy Love \(A Tribe Called Red.\)](#)

Activity:

*Optional: if completing this activity on a different day than Lesson 1, you may wish to read the story again with your students. Point to the text, as you read together.

1. Gather students in a creative space for art exploration. Show students all of the materials, and explain how you will make drums together.
2. Show students the "Make and Play a Drum" Literacy/Art/Music/Fine Motor Activity (1 page) instructions and read all of the text.
3. Follow the sequence and make drums!
4. Move to a movement space. *** Option to do the next part on another day.
5. Play some rhythmic music- point out the drumming. Encourage your students to play along- demonstrate on your own drum.
6. Conclude the Activity: Ask your students to assist in cleaning up materials (putting away their drums in a safe place) and engage in a cool-down activity (3 rounds of deep breaths, or a whole body stretch.)

Accommodations include:
Communication Devices
& Systems,
Physical Equipment to
Support Movement Skills
Body Breaks
Extra Time

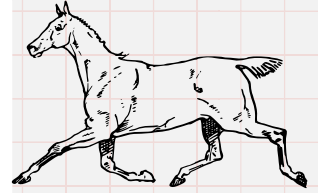
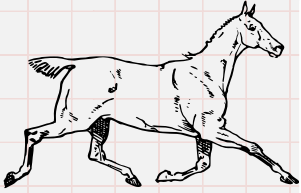


Unit Plan for

Ancient Thunder

by Leo Yerxa

Page 8 of 8



Supporting
Sources,
APA references:

A Tribe Called Red. (2013.) Native Puppy Love. Web. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaCx-hoKph8>

Cunningham, Patrica M., Hall, Dorothy P., & Sigmon, Cheryl M. (1999.) *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks: A Multimethod, Multilevel Framework for Grades 1-3*. Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company.

Once Upon A Story. (2017.) *Ancient Thunder by Leo Yerxa: Children's Books Read Aloud on Once Upon A Story*. Web. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZzipmpYVcC>

Rozitis, Emily. (2020.) *Ancient Thunder Resource Guide with 4 Activities*. Self-Published.

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The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Education. (September 2011.) *Maximizing Student Mathematical Learning in the Early Years*. Inspire: The Journal of Literacy and Numeracy for Ontario. Web. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_Maximize_Math_Learning.pdf

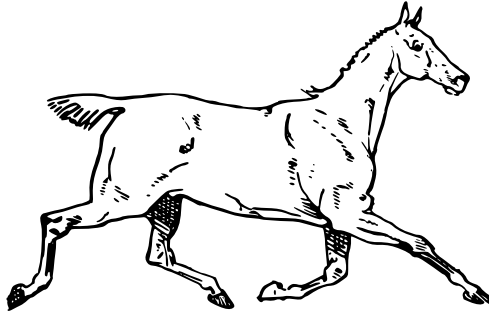
Yerxa, Leo. (2006.) *Ancient Thunder*. House of Anansi Press. Print.

About the
Teacher-
Author:

Emily Rozitis has a Bachelors of Arts in French, and a Bachelors of Education in Inclusive Education from the University of Calgary. She is a practicing elementary school teacher who works in a severe disabilities classroom with non-verbal students (ages 6-12.) Emily uses a variety of communication supports in her classroom to promote a differentiated and inclusive literacy-rich environment. Her multimodal communication approach to learning includes the use of digital and paper-based communication devices, American Sign Language, assistive technology, and both verbal and visual methods of communication.

Emily believes that literacy, and learning, are for everyone. This resource is designed to be used in a multiple-disabilities classroom to support pre-literacy and pre-math skills for every student, at every developmental level. Lessons are easily adapted to the typical Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 classroom.

Appendix for
Ancient Thunder
Resource Guide



Resource Guide for

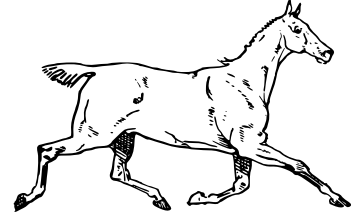
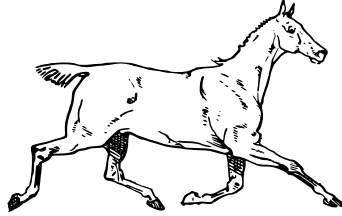
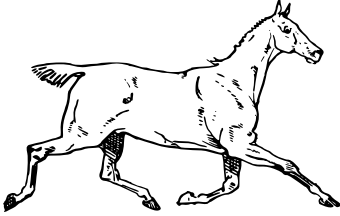
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This resource pack includes:

- "What do you KNOW about horses?" Literacy/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)
- "Make a Strawberry Sun: Art Exploration" Literacy/Art/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)
 - "Counting Horses" Literacy/Math Activity (3 pages)
- "Make and Play a Drum" Literacy/Art/Music/Fine Motor Activity (1 page)

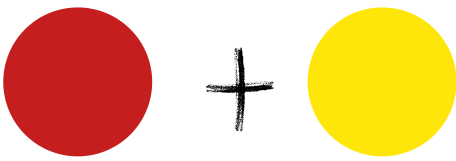
What do you **KNOW** about horses?



Draw or write what YOU KNOW about horses in the box!

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, outlined in a thick orange border. This box is intended for the student to draw or write their knowledge about horses.

Make a Strawberry Sun: Art Exploration



FIRST, paint yellow and red together on your page.



SECOND, let it dry for ONE DAY.



THIRD, use masking tape to cover a round shape in the middle, over your dry painting, with a helper (a teacher).



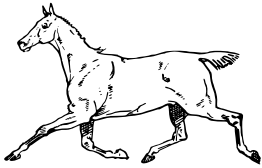
FOURTH, paint black over the whole page. Option for glitter stars.



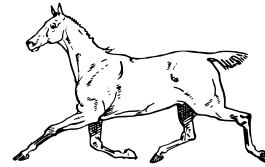
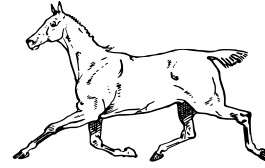
FIFTH, let it dry for ONE DAY. Take off tape and enjoy!

Counting Horses

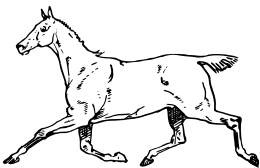
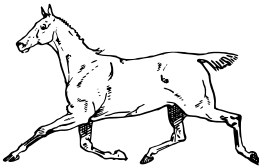
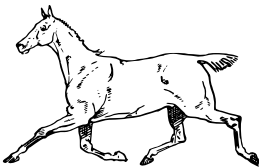
Print, cut, glue together. Option to laminate cards- attach with a ring.
Alternatively, you may print 2x copies for matching activity.



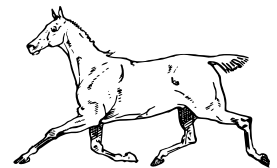
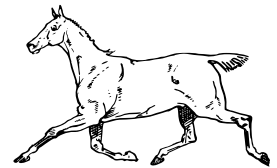
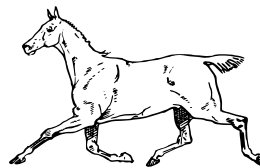
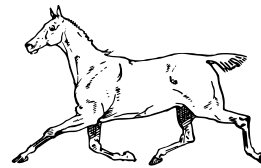
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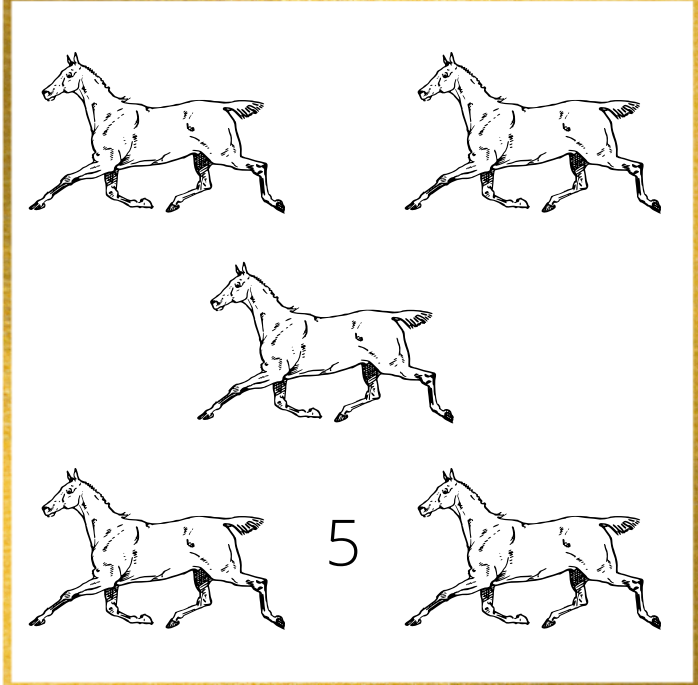
2



3



4



ONE
HORSE

TWO
HORSES

THREE
HORSES

FOUR
HORSES

FIVE
HORSES

COUNTING
HORSES

ONE - TWO - THREE
FOUR - FIVE
1 2 3 4 5

Check out music by
A Tribe Called Red
to drum along with!

Make & Play a Drum

Music and Art Activity

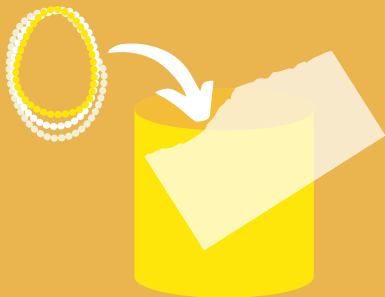
- 1** Gather materials:
- One empty coffee container
 - Coloured paint
 - Wax paper
 - Elastics
 - Option for rice/beads to fill drum



- 2** Paint your drum base!
(your coffee container.)
Let it dry 24 hours.



- 3** ***Option to fill drum
with beads or rice
Cover your drum with
wax paper, about
2-3 inches over the edges.



- 4** Place your elastic band
over the edge, and play
your drum!

