

Capoeira: The Brazilian Martial Art

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- trace the historical origins of capoeira.
 - analyze the nature of the capoeira style of martial arts.
 - compare and contrast capoeira to other martial art forms, particularly Taekwondo.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Capoeira a Martial Art**
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Activities

1. Place the letters K and W on two sides of the chalkboard
 - a. Ask students to tell what they know about the martial arts, and list their comments in the “K” column.
 - b. Follow up the discussion by asking them what they would like to learn about the martial arts, and list their comments under the “W” column.
 - c. If the issue has not already been addressed by their comments, ask students to identify the places of origin of the martial art forms they have commented upon or are interested in. (If maps are available, you may wish to have them locate the places of origin on a map.)
 - d. **Note:** If taekwondo is not mentioned, be certain to enter it as a form of martial arts developed in Korea.
 - e. Write the letter L in the middle of the chalkboard between the letters K and W.
 - f. Beneath the letter L, write the word *capoeira*. Explain that capoeira is a form of martial art, so now they can place that knowledge in the “learned” column.
 - g. Write the word Brazil next to the word *capoeira*. Explain that capoeira is a unique form of martial art that developed among the slave communities of colonial Brazil but which is now practiced all over the world.
 2. Distribute the student handout **Capoeira: A Martial Art**.
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Capoeira: A Martial Art

Capoeira: Background



How could a Brazilian slave defend himself from the abuses rained upon him by his master? Without a substantial amount of weapons, the ex-slaves realized they would have to defend themselves with their hands (and feet!). They created a style of self-defense that would stand against weapons and firearms. This style of fighting was called "Capoeira de Angola"; capoeiras were the name of the brushwoods where the fugitives entrenched themselves, and it was believed that the first group of slaves who arrived in Brazil were from Angola.

In 1890 Capoeira was outlawed in Brazil. It remained outside of the law until in 1928, when *Mestre* (Master) Bimba (Manoel dos Reis Machado) founded what was known as "Luta Regional Baiana". A fusion of Capoeira Angola and batuque (street Capoeira) it was later called Capoeira Regional. During this time Capoeira became more than just a fight. It achieved national recognition and became what it is today: a dance, a sport, a game and an artistic expression of freedom.

Mestre Boa Gente



Mestre Boa Gente is very well known in Vale das Pedrinhas, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Salvador, where he is one of the leaders of the community. He is one of the primary teachers of Capoeira Angola and a member of the Brazilian Association of Capoeira Angola (ABCA), the most important institution of Capoeira Angola in Brazil.

Mestre Boa Gente administers the classes at school, at his academy the Master Boa Association of Capoeira and also in the street. On top of all this, he is also in charge of a community radio station.

In his academy, Mestre Boa Gente teaches more than the movements, rhythms, and discipline of capoeira. He uses it to teach essential values to the children and young adults of the community, to provide inner strength, self-disciplined, and a sense of personal pride.

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