



# THE BANJO

**The banjo, one of the most iconic instruments of traditional stringbands, originated in Western Africa.**

This four- or five-stringed instrument with a head of hide or plastic stretched over a circular wooden rim evolved from a related family of African gourd instruments – known by a variety of names such as **banjars, bandoras, and banzas.**

When enslaved people were brought to the Americas, they carried the memories of these instruments with them and built similar ones here. By the early 19th century, African American banjo playing was influencing the music of the

Appalachians as traditional fiddle music mixed with the musical styles and traditions of the banjo. The banjo can be heard on several 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings.



# DESIGN A BANJO

Luthiers are skilled men and women who make stringed musical instruments like banjos, along with guitars, fiddles, mandolins, and dulcimers. They carry on the old traditions of wood working to create beautiful and functional instruments, while also bringing their own creativity to each instrument they make. Luthiers are also artists, often adding intricate decoration to their instruments. ✨

*Check out the decoration examples below, and then create your own decoration on the neck and head of the banjo!*



*These examples are known as inlay decoration.*

