

KAISO—A STUDY GUIDE AND PRACTICE TEST ON THEME 9

Origin and Developments
to 1985

THEME 9: CARIBBEAN SOCIETY 1900 TO 1985

- Content 3 (v) Art forms – performing arts
- Links to
 - African cultural forms
 - Post-emancipation social movements
 - Influences of other cultural forms
 - social and economic conditions and aspects of social life (i) to (iii) 1900 to 1985

AIM: THIS STUDY GUIDE WILL ASSIST YOU IN

Understanding the calypso/kaiso art form:

- When it developed
- How it developed, seeing the connections to the culture of Africans and the experiences of enslavement and emancipation.
- The role played by calypso music and calypsonians in the social life of Trinidad and Tobago
- You will also practise using various kinds of information to understand AND to explain aspects of the art form.

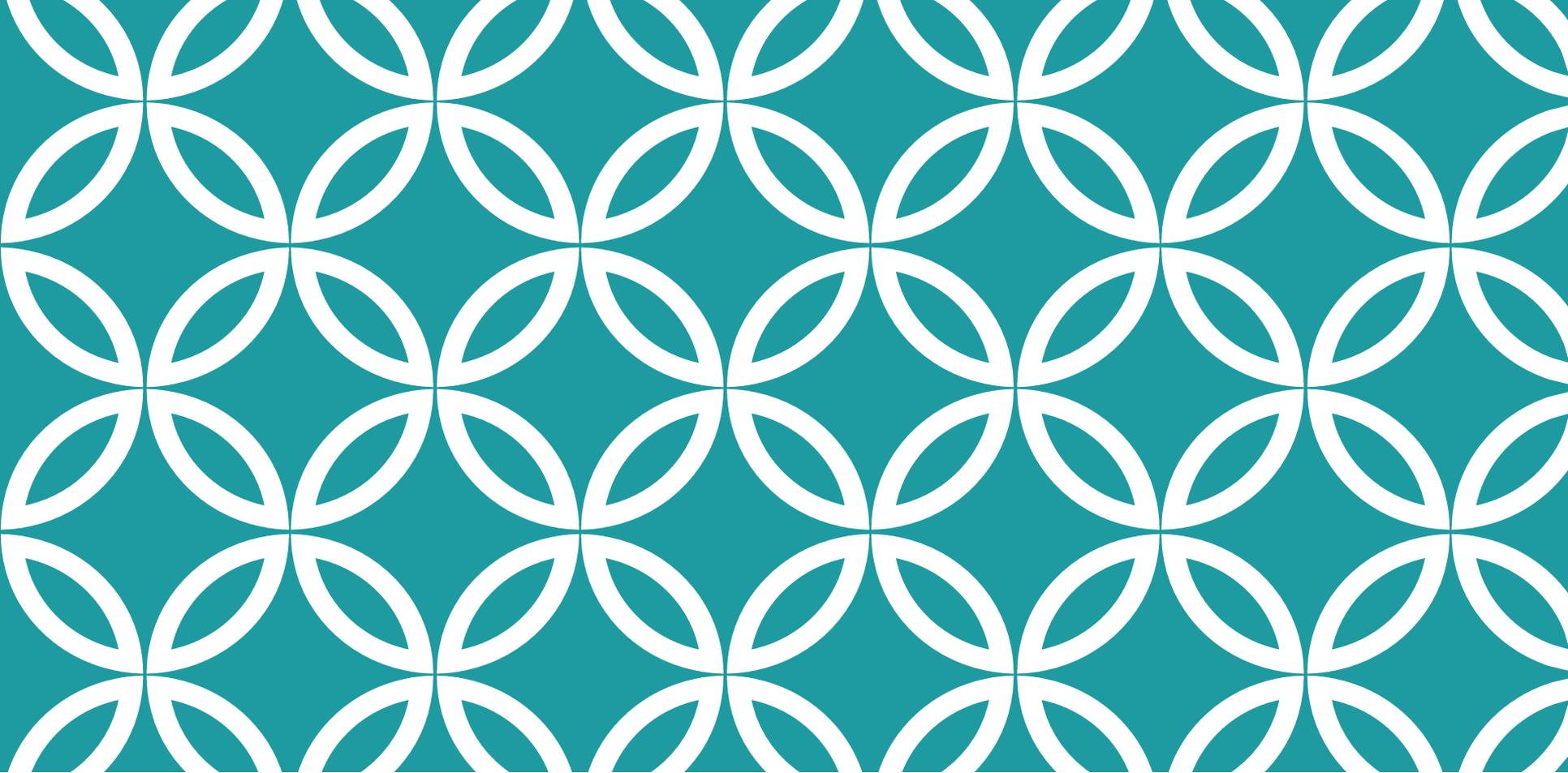
YOU WILL

- Identify the origins of calypso and related art forms (including carnival arts)
- Outline developments and changes during the period 1900 to 1985.
- Identify and illustrate the impact of the art form, particularly:
 - Participation
 - Content
 - Role in social and political commentary

YOU WILL

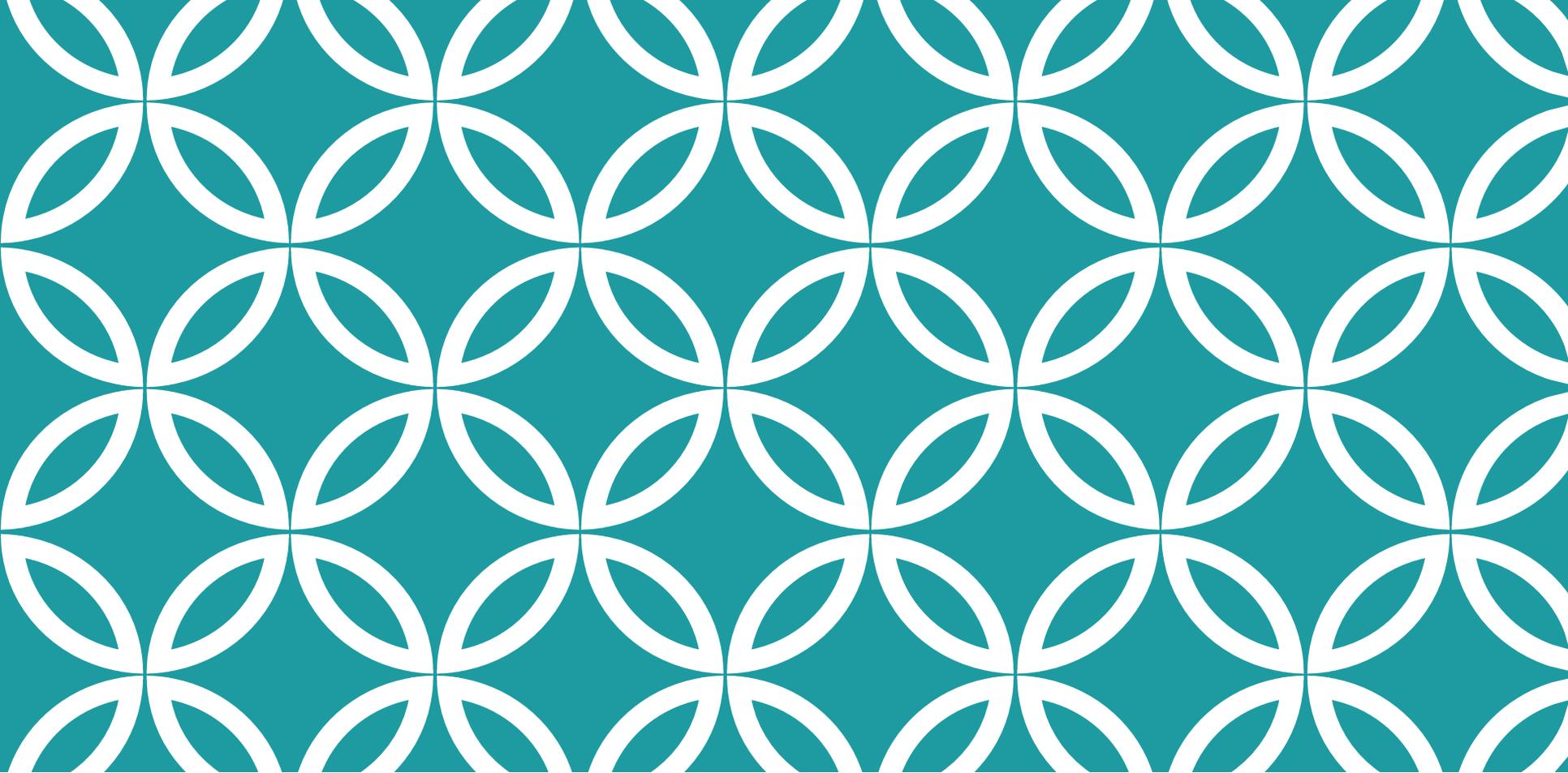
Use the lyrics of David Rudder's *Calypso* music to illustrate

- Origins of Calypso/Kaiso
- Social conditions in which calypso developed.
- Impact of calypso.



NOTE ON THE HYPERLINKS

Videos are embedded which you can view from this presentation. You can also click the other hyperlinks (where the text is dark blue) and let the videos run in the background, listening to the audio while you continue the slide show.



PART I: ORIGINS

Pre-1900 period

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Identify the origins of calypso and related art forms (including carnival arts)

Use the lyrics of David Rudder's *Calypso* music to illustrate

- Origins of Calypso/Kaiso
- Social conditions in which calypso developed.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER THEMES AND CORE TOPICS

- Links to
 - African cultural forms
 - Post-emancipation social movements

WHAT IS CALYPSO/KAISO?

[Link to Calypso Music](#)

Can you hear a distant drum

Bouncing on the laughter of a melody (yea,
yea)

And does the rhythm tell you , come, come,
come

Does your spirit do a dance to this symphony

Does it tell you that your heart is afire

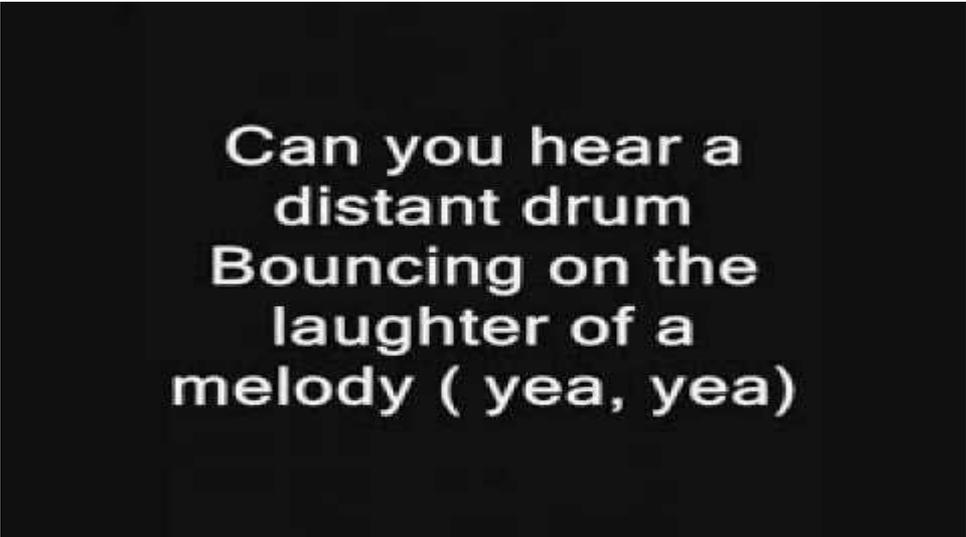
Does it tell you that your pain is a liar

Does it wash away all your unlovely

And are you ready for a brand new
discovery

[Link to the rest of the lyrics](#)

Calypso Music David Rudder



Can you hear a
distant drum
Bouncing on the
laughter of a
melody (yea, yea)

Calypso, calypso (oh oh oh)
Calypso Music (yea yea)
Calypso, calypso (oh oh oh)
Calypso Music (yea yea)
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso
Ah say I'm the seed of the Growling Tiger now
I got to sing calypso
Wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

It is a living vibration
Rooted deep within my Caribbean belly
Lyrics to make a politician cringe
Or turn a woman's body into jelly
It is a sweet soca music calypso
You could ah never refuse it calypso
It make you shake like a Shango now calypso
Why it is you shaking you dont know
That's calypso.
Calypso, calypso
Calypso Music (yea yea)
Calypso, calypso
Calypso Music
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

Ah say I'm de seed of the Growling Tiger now
I got to sing calypso
Wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

I can still hear de Lion roar
Through Greenwich village
While Executor kills them dead at the Rainbow Blue
Lord Invader conquers Berlin but their hearts this time,
And Lord Kitchener make Ole London feel so new
Beginner and Terror Too
Fitzroy Coleman fingers dancing on the fret
And when you think that he through
He aint start nothing yet

Carnegie hall graced by the presence of
Sparrow
And when Slinger done with they tail
Hear them signing Sparrow, don't go
Sparrow don't go

Calypso Music (yea yea)
Calypso, calypso
Calypso Music
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso
Singing wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso
Ah say I'm de seed of the Tiger now
I got to sing calypso
Wo yea yea yea
wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

I want to rise, I want to rise
From the time the first bamboo come
And we drag it down from the St. Anns hill
From the day the first chantwell lead the band
The real jamming start that day
And we jamming still
Creating rhythm dat could be deadly like
Headley
Only this time
The spirit and de melody that sending they soul
to the boundary
From the bongo drum to de roll of de tassa
Ever since Europe come and She make massa
bassa
We jamming it!

Calypso Music (yea yea)

Calypso, calypso

Calypso Music

Singing wo yea yea yea

wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

Singing wo yea yea yea

wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

Singing wo yea yea yea

wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

Singing wo yea yea yea

wo yea yea yea, wo yea calypso

We gonna sing it in London

we gonna sing it in America

We gonna sing it in Africa

We gonna sing it in Europe

We gonna sing the calypso (repeat)

ORIGINS

African cultural forms

- Drum
- Griot tradition
- Call and response
- Nation dances
- Worksongs
- Lavway
- Calinda
- Chantwells (male and female)

ORIGINS

Traditions during enslavement era

- Canboulay
- Carnival

ORIGINS

Calypso Roots with Holly Betaudier and Gordon Rohlehr



ORIGINS



Calinda (Stick fight)



African Cultural forms



Growth of carnival in 19th century—role of chantwells



Gros Jean—e.g. of calypso (kaiso) on the estate



Canboulay—role of chantwells

CALINDA/KALINDA AND THE CHANTWELLS

"Each band had its lead singer, or chantuelle, whose task was to harangue the stick-fighters into action, to sustain the courage of his champion and to pour scorn on the rival group and champion Each lead singer was supported by a chorus drawn from among the band "



POST-EMANCIPATION INFLUENCES

Developments after emancipation

- Suppression of Canboulay, drumming, African forms
- Development of Carnival
- Tents
- Jamette carnival--bands
- Immigrants from the Eastern Caribbean

Springer: We must remember the history behind Canboulay



SUPPRESSION OF CANBOULAY AND THE CANBOULAY RIOTS

Had an impact on Calypso

- Calinda went underground
- Chantwells had to find a new forum
- Majority of singers were male whereas there were both women and men chantwelles in calinda.
- **Canboulay Riots Re-enactment, Trinidad Carnival 2010** Note the different characteristics of music and singing that went into the calypso genre
 - **Call and response**
 - **Rhythms**
 - **Patois –predominant use of French based creole**
 - **African influences (religious chants, music)**

OTHER INFLUENCES IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Urbanisation – movement of large numbers of persons from the rural areas to towns and suburbs of Port-of-Spain, San Fernando

- Emergence of the urban poor communities, members of whom became known as the people from the *diamentres* (French for borders) or *jamettes*.

Immigration of persons from other Caribbean territories, particularly the Windward Islands and Barbados.

- Other island territories had similar musical traditions which they brought with them and some of which influenced kaiso.
- English speaking “small islanders” influenced the eventual switch in Trinidad’s language from French-based creole to English-based creole, including icalypso.

ROLE OF CALYPSO

An expression of the African descended working peoples which made calypso

- Social protest
- Commentary on life
- Tied to their varied cultural practices
 - Carnival
 - Religion
 - Nation dances

As with the working people's depictions in carnival, the ruling classes did not always appreciate or agree with the subject matter of calypsos. Hence this view was expressed

A COMPLAINT FROM THE 1800S

“It is common during Carnival for the vilest songs, in which the names of ladies of the island are introduced to be sung in the streets, and the vilest talk to be indulged in while filthy and disgusting scenes are enacted by both sexes, which are beyond description and would be almost beyond belief were it not that they were vouched for by witnesses of unimpeachable credibility...”

YET BY THE 1930S...

History of Carnival Atilla
the Hun (Raymond
Quevedo)

From a scandal and
hideous Bacchanal
Today we've got a
glorious carnival
We used to sing long ago
nuneos and pusenio
But today you can hear
calypso
On the American radio



*Carnival of long ago you used to see
Half naked women for the Pisse-en-lit Shak shak and
vera in their hand
Twisting their body as they led the band
You weren't safe in your own home
Through accident bottle and stone
But today you can hear calypso
On the American radio.*

*Some of the songsters I can remember, Were
Marlborough and Executor,
And Black Prince Pharaoh
And Edward the Confessor who I knew well
They used to sing mama morial
Captain Baker was a
But today you can hear a Trinidad calypso
On the American radio.*

Carnival of long ago was very terrible

And the orgies reprehensible

In those days women sang calypso

Like Sophie Matelonia and Marigold

They used to walk out with bully face

I mean in the days of canboulay

But today you can hear our Trinidad calypso

On the American radio.

*A prophet has no honour in his own land
The truth of that proverb I now understand
When you sing calypso in Trinidad
You are a vagabond and everything that's bad,
In your native land you're a hooligan
In New York you're an artist and a gentleman
For instance take Lion and me
Having dinner with Rudy Vallee.*

READING

[Songs from the Sugar Fields](#)

[Gros Jean, The First Calypsonian](#)

[Calypso \(NALIS guide\)](#)

[Evolution of Calypso](#) from [“Evolution and History of music in Trinidad and Tobago](#)

[History of Calypso 1 of 6](#) First of a 6 part series featuring Hollis Liverpool, Pretender and others.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY

View the video (David Rudder, [Calypso Music](#)) as many times as you need to.

Read at least one source given under “READINGS”

Answer the stimulus questions. Explain what the specific lines given tell us about calypso.

Incorporate additional information provided to answer the questions.

THE QUESTIONS ON ORIGINS OF CALYPSO

“I want to rise, I want to rise
From the time the first bamboo come
And we drag it down from the St. Anns hill
From the day the first chantwell lead the
band
The real jamming start that day
And we jamming still
Creating rhythm dat could be deadly like
Headley
Only this time
The spirit and de melody that sending they
soul to the boundary
From the bongo drum to de roll of de tassa
Ever since Europe come and She make
massa bassa
We jamming it!”
David Rudder, Calypso Music

1. What does the narrator wants to “rise” from?
2. Explain “Ever since Europe come and She make massa bassa“.What historical events (situations) does this refer to?
3. What’s a chantwell?
4. Explain the developments described in the lines from “From the time the first bamboo come...” to “ ... lead the band.” And then
5. State what historical event led to these developments.
6. Bonus question: explain the references to Headley and boundary.