Lesson 1: Learning “El Pescador”

**Aim:** What are the basic elements of a cumbia song?

**Summary:** Students learn to sing “El Pescador” and learn the instruments and basic rhythms of cumbia.

**Materials:** Musical Explorers digital resources, Musical Explorers Student Guide, classroom instruments, found objects

**Standards:** National 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11; NYC 1, 3, 4

**Vocabulary:** accordion, alegre, gaita, llamador, maraca, tambora

**Sing “El Pescador”**

- Listen to “El Pescador,” Track 3.
- Learn the words and melody to “El Pescador,” using “El Pescador” pronunciation, Track 4, and “El Pescador” chorus, Track 5.
- Notice that the chorus includes a call and response.
  - *What is the call? What is the response? Who sings each part?*
- Sing the chorus once again, trying different ways to perform the call and response. For example, you can split the class into two groups, or give individual students the opportunity to act as a leader.
“El Pescador”

Va subiendo la corriente
Con chinchorro y atarraya
La canoa de bahareque
Para llegar a la playa
(x2)

Chorus:
El pescador
Habla con la luna
El pescador
Habla con la playa
El pescador
No tiene fortuna
Sólo su atarraya.
(x2)

Regresan los pescadores
Con su carga pa’ vender
Al puerto de sus amores
Donde tiene su querer.
(x2)

(Chorus)

“The Fisherman”

The current is rising
With hammock and fishing net
The bahareque* canoe
In order to get to the beach
(x2)

Chorus:
The fisherman
Talks with the moon
The fisherman
Talks with the beach
The fisherman
Has no fortune
Only his fishing net.
(x2)

The fishermen come back
With their catch to sell
To their beloved port
Where they hold their lovers.
(x2)

Chorus

*This refers most likely to a type of construction on top of the canoe.

Explore Rhythm in “El Pescador”

- Explain that there are three basic rhythms layered together to form the cumbia rhythm. One is played by the tambora drum, one by the llamador drum, and one by the maraca. The alegre drum plays an improvised pattern on top of this rhythmic foundation.
- Using Tracks 6–9 and the words and phrases that were created by Gregorio as mnemonic devices, learn each layer of the cumbia rhythm.
- Divide the class into three sections to create a “vocal cumbia” ensemble. Have each section sing a different rhythm, layering one atop the other. Students can volunteer to conduct the ensemble, determining when each part enters and exits.
- Play each rhythm using body percussion, classroom instruments, or found objects.
  - The llamador pattern can be tricky, as students may turn it around to play on 1 and 3. You can experiment with playing a “ghost” beat on 1 and 3 or stepping on 1 and 3.
First play the shell and then
Cum bia cum bia
Stop shake stop shake

Creative Extension: Exploring Colombian Instruments
- On SG10, your students will learn about the instruments used to play traditional cumbia. Three percussion instruments—two drums and a maraca—lay down the signature rhythm while a third drum improvises. An accordion and a flute or whistle made from a hollowed-out cactus stem called a gaita add harmony and melody. Use Tracks 10–14 to listen to examples of the instruments.

Creative Extension: Imagine “El Pescador”
- The lyrics in many cumbia songs are poetic and evocative. The chorus to “El Pescador” is one such example. Using SG11, your students can imagine the fishermen, their life on the sea, and their relationship with the natural world.
- Read the lyrics to the chorus aloud.
  - What did you learn about the fisherman?
  - What kinds of words are used to help you picture him?
  - What do you think it’s like to be a fisherman?
- Draw a picture of the scene in the chorus.

Musical Word Wall
Add the words accordion, alegre, gaita, llamador, maraca, and tambora to the Musical Word Wall.