

Dancing Through the Decades

**Educational Resources
Grades 6-12**

2023/2024



Dancing Through the Decades: Lesson Plans and Activities

Pre-Performance questions

1. Have you ever been to a live performance? If so, how do you think it will be the same as the *Dancing Through the Decades* performance today? How will it be different?
2. When does movement become dancing?
3. What do you think a professional dancer must do to prepare for a performance?

Post-Performance questions

1. What was your favorite part? What was your least favorite part?
2. What is something you would have changed about the performance?
3. What qualities do you think a professional dancer needs to have in order to be successful at their job?

Grades 6-12 Supplemental Lesson: Performance Review Podcast

Standards Addressed:

NC.W.9.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

NC.W.9.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

NC.SL.9.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NC.SL.9.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

NC.L.9.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; demonstrate proficiency within the 9-12 grammar continuum.

NC.L.9.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

NC.B.R.1-NC.P.R.1 Use a variety of thinking skills to analyze and evaluate dance.

NC.B.C.1-NC.P.C.1 Understand cultural, historical, and interdisciplinary connections with dance.

Summary: Students will use podcasting as a medium to create a review on the *Dancing Through the Decades* program. Through this activity, students will apply skills in critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

Essential Questions: How can we effectively communicate our personal experience of a dance performance through podcasting while informing and engaging an audience?



Lesson Steps:

1. Students should observe the *Dancing Through the Decades* program. Before the performance, tell students that they will complete an assignment based on what they observe. Remind students to pay close attention to the style, music, and composition of the dance pieces.
2. Discuss podcasting as a means of communication. Ask students what podcasts they are familiar with or listen to.
3. Play an excerpt from a dance podcast as an example for students: *Conversations on Dance, Episode 342 with Charlotte Ballet Artistic Director, Alejandro Cerrudo*
4. Tell students that they will create a short podcast to review the *Dancing Through the Decades* program.
5. Divide the students into groups of three or four.
6. Assign the podcast activity: As a group, students should write a script that outlines the content in their podcast review. The script should include:
 - a. A brief description of the performance (name of performing group, various dance styles that were presented)
 - b. A brief personal opinion of the performance from each group member. Each student should remember to use specific observations to support their opinions. Each group member should also include a final recommendation on whether or not someone should see the performance
7. After completing the script, students should practice reading through it as a group.
8. Each group should present their “podcast” to the class or record their podcast for presentation.

Additional Student Activities:

- Research: Review the information on the “Influential Choreographers Through the Decades” handout. Students should conduct research to identify choreographers who are gaining prominence in the 2020's. Students should include information about the choreographer's background, their choreographic style, artistic and societal influences, and key works.
- Create: Review the information on the “Elements of Dance” handout. Working in small groups, assign each group one of the five elements. Have them collaborate to choreograph a mini dance that highlights and emphasizes their assigned element. For example: “body” might experiment with various shapes, while “time” could experiment with different tempos. Share pieces when finished.

Recommended Videos:

[Ballet 101: Basic Positions](#)

[Nutcracker Ballerinas Most Important Accessory: Pointe Shoes](#)

[Making a Tutu](#)



Influential Choreographers Through the Decades

DECADE	CHOREOGRAPHER	CONTRIBUTION
1920's	Martha Graham	A pioneer of modern dance with her groundbreaking choreography and technique.
1930's	George Balanchine	Co-founder of the New York City Ballet, he is renowned for neoclassical and abstract ballet choreography.
1940's	Jerome Robbins	An influential choreographer in both ballet and Broadway, he is known for his work in musical theater.
1950's	Alvin Ailey	Founder of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, his choreography explores the African American experience and spirituality.
1960's	Merce Cunningham	A key figure in modern dance, his avant-garde approach to choreography challenged traditional concepts of dance.
1970's	Twyla Tharp	Known for her innovative blend of ballet and modern, she created works for both Broadway and concert stages.
1980's	William Forsythe	He challenged traditional ballet conventions with works that emphasized dynamic movement and spatial exploration.
1990's	Mark Morris	Founder of the Mark Morris Dance Group, his inventive choreography and musical collaborations make him an acclaimed figure of contemporary dance.
2000's	Christopher Wheeldon	A renowned ballet choreographer, his choreography seamlessly balances classical ballet technique with innovative contemporary movement.
2010's	Kyle Abraham	A contemporary choreographer with an interdisciplinary approach, his work explores themes of race, identity, and social justice.

Elements of Dance

When observing a dance performance, we use five elements as the framework to discuss movement. The five dance elements are:
body, action, space, time, and energy.

ELEMENT	QUESTIONS TO ASK	KEY WORDS
Body	What shapes does the body make? What parts of the body are used? How does a dancer use their whole body?	angular, twisted, curved, circular, straight, symmetrical, asymmetrical, geometric, upper body, lower body, whole body
Action	What type of movement do you observe?	leaping, walking, turning, pantomime, facial expressions, pauses, rests
Space	How does the dancer interact within the space? Do they stay in one place, or travel in different directions? How do dancers move in relation to other dancers? Do they use formations?	horizontal, vertical, high, low, middle, forwards, backwards, crossing, geometric patterns
Time	What is the tempo? Does the movement have rhythm? Does the movement follow a distinct beat?	fast, medium, slow, even, uneven, rhythmic
Energy	What is the quality of movement?	smooth, sustained, robotic, stiff, fluid, delicate, strong, powerful

