



Study Guide

DanceAlabama

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Artistic Genre: Dance

Alabama Touring Artist Program

presented by the Alabama State Council on the Arts

This Study Guide has been prepared for you by the Alabama State Council on the Arts in collaboration with the performing artist. Much of the vocabulary that is arts related is taken directly from the Alabama Course of Study, Arts Education. With an understanding that each teacher is limited to the amount of time that may be delegated to new ideas and subjects, this guide is both brief and designed in a way that we hope supports your school curriculum. We welcome feedback and questions, and will offer additional consulting on possible curriculum connections and unit designs should you desire this support. Please feel free to request further assistance and offer your questions and feedback. Hearing from educators helps to improve our programs for other schools and educators in the future.

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Set up:

Artists typically arrive 60 minutes before their scheduled performance in order to set up. Please have the space available to the artist as soon as she arrives.

All artists will need some kind of setup prior to arrival. Please communicate with the artist to discuss needs. Before arrival, please make sure floors are clean, and any electrical hook ups are in place for the artist. If she has asked to use your amplification system, please have it ready for a sound test as soon as the artist arrives. Please provide a staff person to assist the artist with set up.

Role of the Audience:

Although many students may not choose to pursue professional careers in the arts, many will choose to remain lifelong participants in, and learners of, the arts. A role that all students may play is that of an appreciative, responsive audience member. This role is one that has lifelong value to the learner as well as to the performer. Learning appropriate audience behavior is an integral component of all of the arts education areas. Positive audience qualities are part of the overall goal of *Achieving Excellence Through Arts Literacy*.

- Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education; 2006

What to expect

Dance Alabama! is a 45-60 minute dance performance choreographed, produced and performed by students and faculty from the University of Alabama. The concert includes all genres of dance, ranging from classical ballet, contemporary, jazz and hip hop dance forms. Students in the audience will be seated during the performance, but will be invited to participate in a **Talk Back** session with the dancers immediately following the performance.

Historical Background:

Dance Alabama (DA!) presents unique and diverse dance productions to the public. The company was established to provide professional performing opportunities for students preparing for careers in dance, while increasing excellence in technique, performance and visibility for the University of Alabama dance program. DA! presents emerging, professional level dancers that have honed their skills by working with master teachers and guest artists in an intensive BFA program. These young professionals are infectious in their ability to engage student audiences, capturing hearts and minds through the magic of movement and creative expression. For more information about the history of the company see 3rd link below.

Websites you might visit:

About the Company:

<http://uadancealabama.weebly.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TURikwK2Mlc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALVdwUoAS60>

What is Classical Ballet?

<https://www.tututix.com/what-is-classical-ballet/>

Contemporary dance and related information (includes advertising):

<http://www.contemporary-dance.org/>

Jazz Dance, and more...

<http://dancelessons.net/dancehistory/HistoryofJazzDance.html>

How Dance Communicates:

Dance is non-verbal communication. It is very good at communicating emotions and abstract moving design. It is not literal, in that if there is a story to tell, it has to be explained in program notes if the audience is to understand the details of characters and plot. However, if you think of dance as a way to communicate what happens between the lines in a story, that would be very close to the truth. Dance is very much related to what students might infer about a story they are reading. Not the story itself.

For example, a famous ballet created using the story of Sleeping Beauty, really does not tell the story well. You have to already know the story to understand it, and most people do. When you go to see the ballet, *Sleeping Beauty*, you go to appreciate the beautiful lines and shapes and patterns created by the dancers. And you get a lot of information about how the dancers/characters feel - more than you would by reading the words.

Having students create movement to express an emotional interpretation of text they are reading is a strong way to support reading comprehension. By embodying an interpretation, they develop a strong understanding and empathy for a character.

Dance communicates to an audience through a kinesthetic response. When you are fully engaged in watching a dancer, believe it or not, your muscles actually fire impulses similar to that of the dancer, which helps you feel what the dancer is feeling. This is why when dance is very fast and energetic, sometimes the audience “sits on the edge of their seats.” If the dancer moves slowly creates shapes that are bent forward, often the audience becomes sad.

When watching dance, students should not worry if they do not “understand” a specific story. They should focus on how the dance makes them feel. That is what the dancers are trying to communicate to their audience.

Dance often uses music to help communicate ideas. Some dance mirrors the sound that accompanies it. Other times it goes against the music or sound. The music or sounds that exist alongside the dance help to set a particular mood and sometimes communicate something beyond or in addition to the movement. It is fun to watch for the relationship between the music and the movement and see if you can determine how the music or sound affects the meaning of the dance you are watching. Just like in a movie, the sound can give you clues about what you should be feeling.

Dance uses specific tools to communicate, which we call the “elements of dance.” They are **time**, **space** and **energy**. When you watch dance, you should pay attention to how much time it takes to do a movement, how much and what kind of space it uses, and how much energy the dancer is using to create the movement. Those variations in the elements of movement are what the dancer uses to create meaning in dance. You “read” that meaning by paying very close attention to these details.

Vocabulary:

1. **Dance** Structured rhythmic movement in space and time resulting in communication of an idea, mood, feeling, or situation.
2. **Elements of dance** Time, Space and Energy - tools used in all dance movement to create a particular quality that you can “read.”
3. **Genres** Types of dance, each having its own steps, style, and history (see “categories of dance” on the dancelessons.net website listed above)
4. **Language of Dance** The vocabulary that dancers use to communicate, including the names of dance steps, terms used in the process of creating dance, terms used to refine dancing ability, and terms used to make aesthetic judgments about dance.
5. **Space** The area in and through which dance moves. Also an element of dance that includes shape, line, pattern, and levels.
6. **Choreography** The art of planning and arranging dance movements into a meaningful whole; the process of building a composition; a finished dance work
7. **Concentration** The ability to focus on choreography and technical accuracy throughout a dance.
8. **Creative Process** The logical progression in the making of dance; (similar to writing a paper or creating a poem) choose topic, research the topic, identify important aspects of the topic, devise problems to be solved, ask questions, solve problems and produce material, design artwork, self-evaluate, revise, get and use feedback from performance (concept, investigation, exploration, selection, development, refinement, exhibition).



Suggested Activities to do before the performance:

The goal of these performances is to make the experience about the interaction between the audience and the performers and not just about watching the dance passively. Before the concert, the teacher can prepare students for what they are going to see by doing the following:

- ***Describe and interpret:*** Watch a few of the video clips of the company included under *Websites to Visit*. Ask students to describe what they see. Include timing, energy, shapes and design. Also make sure they notice the production elements, such as the lighting, color of costumes, how the costumes move as they dance. After they have done this, ask them to write about what they think the dance is about. Make sure they support their answers with details from what they have seen. Compare responses with other classmates.
- ***Analyze:*** Have students listen to various types of classical/contemporary music before the performance, especially music without words. When they listen to music, have them describe what the music sounds like. Consider discussing the timing or tempo of the music, the sounds created by the instruments, the quality of the music and any visualizations they may have while listening to the music.

- **Predict:** Have students think about what kind of dance might work with some of the music you listen to. Would it be fast or slow, sad or happy, funny or serious?
- **Predict:** Ask students after looking over the websites of the company, what kind of dance they will see in the performance. Warn them that lighting may not be possible in your school, so ask them how that will affect the performance they see. Ask them if they might imagine the performance with lighting and afterwards tell you what kind of lighting would work best for each piece they see.
- **Research:** Have students research the life of a dancer. What does it take to be a successful dancer? What age do they need to be, typically? How long do they have to study to be professional? What is their day like? How do they train? Where do they work? How do they get jobs?
- **Read:** stories about dancers and design questions you may wish to ask of the dancers who come to your school.

Suggested activities to do after the performance:

Preparation: Clear desks from the center of the room and place chairs on the outside of the room facing in. Create two or three groups by counting off. Work one group at a time and have others watching from chairs and answering your questions after they observe the other students. Keep responses positive and discourage laughter before it occurs. Before beginning establish rules about personal space. Make sure students know they are not to invade each other's personal space as they are moving, and make sure you define boundaries to move within that are safe. (Not touching classmates in chairs)

The following movement exercise may aid students in connecting to existing course curricula and may be modified to correlate with the course material presented at the time the exercise is given.

Dance element used: space - body awareness and relationships.

- Class moves around the room to music. Students may move in their own way to the music, or the teacher may specify the activity, such as:
 - a. walking in zigzag pathways;
 - b. skipping;
 - c. tiptoeing.
 - d. sliding
- Teacher stops music and gives a 'sculpture' or 'shape' instruction - for example, "Form groups of five and create the shape of a cloud".
- Teacher and students comment on the sculptural shapes the groups have created, such as:
 - a. use of contrasting levels;
 - b. use of round/angular shapes.

Shape variations

A variety of shape stimuli may be used. Some of these might employ movement for clarity. Choose those appropriate to the year and level of the students. Ideas and examples include:

- land forms: Kapiti Island, Ward Island, Rangitoto Island
- forms of transport: car, aeroplane, yacht, boat;
- bridge shapes: Sydney Harbour Bridge, Auckland Harbour Bridge;
- food forms: hamburger, birthday cake.
- Machines: lever, piston
- Scientific models: volcano, fossil fuel, water molecule, DNA

Reflective Questions to explore with students

- Why do you think dancers choreograph, (create dances)?
- Did the concert hold you attention? Can you say why or why not?
- Would you recommend that others see it? Why or why not?
- Did you find it entertaining? If so, what parts did you particularly enjoy?
- Did the dance teach a lesson or have a moral? Perhaps just make a statement? What was it?
- How did the dancers' movements allow you to understand what the choreographer was trying to communicate?
- What was the stage setting (or lighting, music, or costumes) like?
- Was the dance happy? Sad? What emotion did the dancers express?
- When did they dance together?
- Was there a story? What part of the story were you able to follow? Describe the beginning, middle, and end.
- Can you describe the characteristics of ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, or tap dance?
- What elements of the production (music, costumes, lighting, scenery) made the biggest impression on you?

Finally: If you are looking for a writing assignment we artists enjoy getting letters from students, especially those that answer some of these questions.