



The Nutcracker

**This Teachers guide is presented by
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This teacher guidebook is produced by the Ballet Arts, Inc. for Arts Education. In order for students to receive the full benefit of understanding the arts, they must not only attend the event or exhibition, but also engage the work with curiosity and artistic awareness so that it becomes a learning experience. This document will help you prepare students to attend the selected event or exhibition with an understanding of the elements of the particular art form, its themes, its history, and the way it relates to other subjects. Also included are special activities, which allow students to engage in their own creative processes in regards to this selected arts event.

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The Nutcracker is a ballet. (A ballet is an artistic performance that uses movement/dance to tell a story, express an idea, or relate beauty. Most of the time a ballet is performed with music. Scenery and costumes are used to enhance the story. There are no spoken words in a ballet.)

History of the Nutcracker

The ballet is an adaptation of the story by E. A. Hoffman. Choreographer Marius Petipa worked in close collaboration with composer Peter Tchaikovsky in the composition of the score and development of the ballet. Together they altered the relationship between the music and ballet, creating first the serious dramatic music to support the action taking place in the ballet. Unfortunately, before completing the ballet Petipa became ill and his assistant Lev Ivanov completed the choreography. It was first presented in St. Petersburg in December 1892. In 1954 the New York City Ballet presented their first version with choreography by George Ballanchine. Today The Nutcracker is a holiday tradition for many families in many cities throughout the world.

Peter Tchaikovsky, The Composer

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote the music for the “Nutcracker” in a short two-month period in 1891. He was a stickler for accuracy. He imagined and heard a composition in his mind as if an orchestra was playing it. While he was writing the musical score, one of his friends sent him a crate of children’s instruments. He used them in the ballet to create a special atmosphere for the ballet

The Nutcracker is a ballet that tells a story.

The characters in the story are:

- **UNCLE DROSSELMAYER...**
- **HIS NEPHEW.....**
- **FRAU SILBERHAUS...**
- **MAYOR SILBERHAUS....**
- **CLARA, THEIR DAUGHTER....**
- **FRITZ, THEIR SON...**
- **CHILDREN**
- **MECHANICAL DOLLS:**
- **MICE.....**
- **NUTCRACKER PRINCE....**
- **SOLDIERS.....**
- **MOUSE KING.....**
- **SNOW QUEEN.....**
- **SNOW KING.....**
- **SNOW FLAKES....**

The Nutcracker Ballet Story

Act I

The Party, the Battle and Snowflakes

*The ballet opens with families arriving at the **Silberhaus**' home for a Christmas Eve party. The festivities begin and **Clara** and **Fritz**, the children, dance and play with their friends.*

*Suddenly **Uncle Drosselmeyer** arrives with his nephew. He is **Clara's** godfather and brought **three life size dolls** to dance for the children and parents alike.*

***Drosselmeyer** gives **Clara** a gift, a Nutcracker Doll. **Clara** dances a lullaby with the other girls only to be interrupted by the boys.*

***Fritz**, in a fit of jealousy over **Clara's** gift, grabs the nutcracker from her, dropping it and breaking it.*

***Clara** is heartbroken but **Drosselmeyer** assures **Clara** that he will fix it. The celebration continues until it is time for the guest to leave and the children to be in bed.*

*While **Clara** sleeps, things begin to happen in the living room. **Drosselmeyer** weaves his magic. The Christmas tree grows and **giant mice** and **toy soldiers** battle right in front of **Clara's** eyes.*

***The Mouse King** arrives and it seems like the battle is lost until the **Nutcracker Soldier** arrives and joins the fight. During a battle between them **Clara** throws her shoe at the **Mouse King**, killing him. **The Nutcracker** is transformed into a prince. **The Nutcracker Prince** takes **Clara** on a journey through the land of the snowflakes where the **Snow Queen and King** dance for them. They soon find themselves in the Kingdom of Sweets.*

Act II

The Kingdom of Sweets.

***Clara** and the **Prince** arrive in the Kingdom of the Sweets. She tells the **Sugar Plum Fairy** about the battle between the mice and soldiers. The **Sugar Plum Fairy** is grateful to **Clara** for saving the nutcracker and honors her with a celebration. She is entertained with a series of dances in her honor. Each dance represents a dessert.*

***Reed Flutes** represent **German Marzipan**
Russian Dancers represent **Candy Canes***

Spanish Dancers** represent **Hot Chocolate

Arabian Dancers** represent **Coffee

Chinese dancers** represent **Tea

Mother Ginger** and her troupe represent **Bonbons

Dew Drop** dances with her **Flowers

*The **Sugar Plum Fairy** and her Cavalier dance the Pas de Deux (pronunciation-pah-duh-duh) (a dance for a male and female).*

*Soon all the characters say good-bye to **Clara** as she begins her journey home.*



Major Musical Themes

Act I

Children's Dance – March
Grandfather's Dance- ¾ Heavy rhythm
Tree Grows-Wave after Wave of Orchestra
The Battle-Fanfares of Energy
Dance of the Snowflakes-Whirling Waltz

Act II

Waltz of the Flowers-Familiar Waltz
Pas de Deux – Adagio
Tarantella
Sugar Plum solo
Coda

Curriculum Connections

Tennessee English/Language Arts Curriculum Framework

Primary – K-3

Content Standard 1.0 Reading

Learning Expectations

1.01 Develop Oral Language

K.1.01.e – Dramatize, retell, and dictate what has been learned

1.1.01.h – Dramatize or retell what has been learned, heard or experienced

2.1.01.g – Narrate a personal story

3.1.01.3 – Participate in creative responses to text (e.g., choral reading, discussion, dramatization, and oral presentations)

1.02 Develop Listening Skills

K.1.02.c, 1.1.02.c, 2.1.02.c, 3.1.02.c – Listen and respond to a variety of media

Content Standard 2.0 Writing

Learning Expectations

2.08 Write Frequently Across Content Areas

K.2.08.d – Participate in shared writing about the arts and personal activities

1.2.08.d, 2.2.08.d, 3.2.08.d – Participate in shared writing about the arts and class activities

Tennessee Music Curriculum Framework

K- Objective VI, 1st – Objective VII, 2nd – Objective VII, 3rd – Objective VIII –

Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Objective VIII 2nd, Objective IX 3rd. Understanding Music in relation to history and culture

Tennessee English/Language Arts Curriculum Framework

Elementary – 4-5

Content Standard 1.0 Reading

Learning Expectations

1.01 Continue to Develop Oral Language and Listening Skills

4.1.01.j, 5.1.01.j – Interpret and use a variety of non-verbal communication techniques (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, posture)

1.12 Experience Various Literary and Media Genres

4.1.12.a, 5.1.12.a – Read, view, and recognize various literary (e.g., poetry, novels, historical fiction, non-fiction) and media (e.g., photographs, **the arts**, film, video) genres

4.1.12.g, 5.1.12.i – Compare and contrast different versions/representations of the same stories/events that reflect different cultures

Tennessee Music Curriculum Framework

4th – Objective VIII, 5th Objective VIII – Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

4th Objective VII- Evaluating music and music performances.

5th Objective IX-Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Tennessee English/Language Arts Curriculum Framework
Middle – 6-8

Content Standard 1.0 Reading

Learning Expectations

1.01 Continue To Develop Oral Language and Listening Skills

6.1.01.e, 7.1.01.e, 8.1.01.e – Participate in creative responses to text (e.g., dramatization, speeches)

6.1.01.h, 7.1.01.h, 8.1.01.h – Continue to interpret and use a variety of non-verbal communication techniques to enhance meaning (e.g., posture, gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, eye contact)

1.12 Experience and Explore the Elements of Various Literary and Media Genres

6.1.12.a, 7.1.12.a, 8.1.12.a – Read, view, and recognize various literary (e.g., short stories, novels, plays, legends, poetry, autobiographies/biographies, non-fiction) and media (e.g., music, film, video, documentaries, **the arts**, photographs) genres

Tennessee Music Curriculum Framework

6th – Objective VIII, 7th – Objective VIII, 8th – Objective VIII – Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

6-8 Objective IX, Understand music in relation to history and culture.

Curriculum Connections

Dance of the Toys

Language Arts

K-3 - 1.01 (K.1.01.e, 1.1.01.h, 2.1.01.g, 3.1.01.e)

4-5 - 1.01 (4.1.01.j, 5.1.01.j)

TLW imagine their favorite toys coming to life and explore the way these toys might move.

Music- Gr.2 VI.5

Effect of tempo

Warm-Up: Discuss the puppets Drosselmeyer brings to life in the first act. Describe how they move, focusing on the use of adjectives. List the descriptions on the board. Try to move in the same way. What toys come to life during the battle scene in Clara's dream sequence? How did they move? Try moving the same way.

Teaching Activity:

1. Have the students name some of their favorite toys. Discuss what movement each toy would be able to make if it came to life. Examples: ball – bouncy, puppet – stiff movements, rag doll – floppy and loose.
2. Name different toys and let the children explore the different movement possibilities of each toy.
3. Each child is to transform themselves into a particular toy and create a "movement sentence" as that toy. Begin with a still shape representing a toy, add 8 traveling motions (walking, changing levels, skip on a diagonal, twist and turn in a circle, etc.), add a jump, and add an ending shape.
4. Have each child begin in their beginning shape, wind them up, allow them to unwind in their movement.
5. Repeat activity faster or slower.

Closure:

Ask the children which toys was their favorite to perform. Which were their favorite to watch? Which were easier to perform? Which were harder? How did tempo change affect the toy?

Follow-up Activity: Choose a piece of music for the toys to dance to. When the music is played, have all of the toys come to life at the same time. When the music stops, have them freeze in a shape like their character.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Orchestrating the Dance

Music

K- Objective 2.2, 1st – V.2, 2nd – III.1, 3rd – II.4, 4th – II.3, 5th – II.1

TLW demonstrate that both sounds and movements can form rhythmic patterns.

Warm-up: Read a simple sentence to the class in a monotone. Read it again adding different rhythmic patterns to your voice each time. Vary the speed, tone, or energy level of your voice. Clap the rhythmic patterns. Discuss which patterns are more interesting and why.

Teaching Activity:

1. Invite students to form a circle. One at a time, have each student speak their own name in a rhythmic pattern of their choice. Ask the group to echo each person.
2. Have each student speak their name and clap the rhythmic pattern. Encourage them, to explore different patterns. Again, have the group echo their pattern.
3. Have each student add a movement pattern to their rhythmic pattern. Encourage them to use different body parts. Again, echo the rhythm and the movement.
4. Invite students to get in pairs. Give each student pair a simple sentence about a character in *The Nutcracker*. Students create a rhythmic and movement pattern to their sentence.
5. Have the pairs take turns being the "orchestra" (clapping the rhythm) and the "dancer", dancing the rhythm.

Closure:

Discuss other rhythmic patterns that are a part of daily activities. Examples: the rhythm of the school bus, brushing teeth, eating, walking to class, running to class, watching television, skipping rope, bouncing a ball, etc.

Emotions Through Motion

Language Arts

4-5 1.01 (4.1.01.j, 5.1.01.j)

6-8 1.01 (6.1.01.h, 7.1.01.h, 8.1.01.h)

TLW Express a feeling through movement.

Materials needed: Several different emotional situations written on pieces of paper. Ex: angry with brother, lonely for friend.

Warm-up: Discuss the different situations in Nutcracker in which the characters feelings were expressed through their movement. Using many adjectives, describe various feelings and the movements that coincide with each feeling. Example: anger-stamp, explode; fear-shiver, tremble, sad- slow, heavy, downward movements.

Activity:

1. Call out different emotions and ask students to express the feelings. Encourage the students to explore different movement qualities as teacher calls them out.
2. Invite students to get into “pairs”. Let each pair draw an emotion situation to “dance”. Remind them to have a beginning, middle, and an end to their dance.
3. Ask each pair to perform their “dance” for the rest of the class. Have the observers try and determine the emotion situation from the movement.

Closure:

Discuss the various movements each group selected for it’s situation and how these movements conveyed the emotion to the audience.
Discuss ways we all move in relation to how we feel at a particular moment.

Variation: Do the same exact movement but with a different felling. How does this change the movement? For example, stamp your foot in anger, and then stamp it with joy. Does your posture change? Does the placement of your head and arms in the movement change?

TEACHING ACTIVITIES



A Personal Story

Curriculum Connection:

Language Arts

K-2 1.01 (K.1.01.e, 1.1.01.h, 2.1.01.g, 3.1.01.e) Dictated to teacher for K-1)

K-3 2.08.d,

4-5 2.08e

6-8 2.09(6-2.09e, 7-2.09f, 8-2.09e)

TLW write their own Nutcracker stories based on their Christmas experiences.

Warm-up: Engage students in a conversation about their own holiday celebrations.

- Does their family have a holiday gathering?
- How do they dress?
- Are music and games involved in the festivities?

Activity:

1. Students write their own versions of Nutcracker. Ask them to imagine they are Clara (or a male version of Clara) and the party takes place in their home. What might occur at the party that could be transformed into a character and or a place during a dream.
2. Illustrate a particular scene from their story.
3. Working in groups, act out a part of their story with movement only- no voices

Closure:

Ask students to share their stories with the class. Let the students take the stories home and share them with their parents. Ask the parents to share a childhood holiday story.

History and movement

Music Kindergarten VI.1

TLW move to the beat using simple dances to relate music with geography.

Activity: Using a globe or map, point out France,. Read Ballet Beginnings to students and explain. Demonstrate plie and releve. TLW demonstrate and practice moving from releve to plie.

Closure: TLW will move on the beat doing releve, then plie to one of the selections.

Contrasts

Music Grade 1 V.4,II.2

Grade 4 VI.6

Grade 5 VI.6, IX.2

Grade 7 VI..2

TLW recognize the difference in mood of contrasting pieces of music.

Warm-up: Children observe while the teacher tosses a balloon in the air and allows it to float to the ground.

Activity: Have children toss their balloons in the air and observe as it floats to the ground. Duplicate the movement with their bodies. Do several times. Ask children to keep their balloons in the air while maintaining their own floating, sustained movement. Use different body parts to keep the balloon in the air. Come to a soft slow ending.

Activity 2: TLW move on the beat to "March". Teacher directs movement (i.e. pat knees, clap, tap) as music plays. Students pattern.

Closure: Discuss differences between movements.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Compare and Define

Music Grade 6 IX. 2

TLW describe the differences between two dances.

Warm-up: Discuss with students the different types of dances (solo, duets, corps) before the performance

Activity: Using the program as a guide, TLW write descriptions of each dance using musical terms-tempo, dynamics, meter, and tone color to compare and contrast two dances.

Be a Great Audience

Music Grade 2 VIII.2

TLW demonstrate appropriate audience behavior.

Activity: Teacher will read and discuss "Student Behavior at a Live Performance".

Closure: After performance, TLW state specific example of appropriate behavior.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR AT A LIVE PERFORMANCE

In order to fully appreciate the ballet, students need to know something about the kind of behavior expected from them during the performance. The following suggestions are offered to teachers to share with the students before they see the ballet.

1. Please arrive on time so that everyone can be seated before performance time. This may be the first time for some students to be in a performance hall so you may want to point out special features such as the lobby, rest rooms, orchestra pit, proscenium arch, the house or main curtain, and emergency exits.
2. Please have your group enter and exit in an organized manner. There will be ushers to direct you to your seats.
3. Let the students know that whispering or talking during the performance makes it harder for the dancers to do a good job. At the same time let them know that natural responses such as laughter or sadness, can be a part of the story ballet experience. The artists on stage will be trying to communicate feelings as well as ideas to the audience.
4. Most performances have one or two ten-minute intermissions. Students should use this time to share comments about what they have seen, use the rest room, etc. Please be sure they are in their seats before the performance begins again.
5. **NO CAMERAS, PLEASE.** A flash from a camera may temporarily blind a performer and can cause an injury,
6. **APPLAUSE!** Let the artists on stage know you like what they do. If you see a movement you think is really spectacular, let them know by clapping. Clapping is the audience's way of saying "thank you, we enjoyed it." Performers work long, hard hours to prepare for the program you see. Applause makes it all worthwhile.