

Activity Plan

<i>Title</i>	Nureyev: Bringer of Light
<i>Subject</i>	Dance: Responding
<i>Author</i>	ArtsEdge: Jayne Karsten <i>Original Writer</i> Jen Westmoreland Bouchard <i>Adaptation</i>
<i>Grade level</i>	Grades 9-12
<i>Time duration</i>	60-120 mins
<i>Overview</i>	This lesson focuses on the alignment of Nureyev’s artistic endeavors and achievements in the dance world of the West with the dramatic political and cultural shifts that occurred at the turn of the century and the reoccurring shifts in the 20th century.
<i>Objective</i>	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquire understanding of the term “Modernism,” particularly as it relates to dance.• Become acquainted with the work of Martha Graham.• Become aware of the dramatic shifts that occur in themes and forms of the fine and performing arts at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century.• Compare modes of dance expression of classical ballet with that of modern dance.• Gain some understanding of the political and social upheaval in Russia at the turn of the century and into the 20th century.• Explore the historical relationship between classical ballet and modern dance.• Give consideration to how Nureyev’s experience in modern dance affected his dance expression and choreography.• Increase their appreciation of the Internet as a valuable research source.• Investigate Nureyev’s participation in the modern dance world.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize some of the influences that initiate and shape this dramatic change. • Strengthen process skills of reading, researching, viewing, listening, collaborating, hypothesizing, presenting, and performing. • Witness Nureyev’s commitment to aspects of his early training in technique under Kirov-trained teachers and his intense drive to sustain the compelling legacy of Marius Petipa.
<i>Materials</i>	<p>Materials</p> <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printable • Assessment Rubric <p>Required Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Computer per Learner • Projector • VCR • DVD Player • Television <p>Technology Notes</p> <p>Internet Access and a CD player is needed.</p>
<i>Activities and procedures</i>	<p>ENGAGE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide students into collaborative groups (3 to 5 students). Assign each group the responsibility to collect background material on a specific area of political turbulence that occurred in Russia from 1917 to the end of the Cold War. For instance: the Russian Revolution of 1917; Lenin and Marxism; Stalin and Communism; World War II; the Cold War and the Iron Curtain; Gorbachev and Glasnost. Ask students to seek out information on the impact of these events on artists and writers, particularly how Nureyev’s life and career were affected by the events. Advise students to prepare a written summary of their findings to be shared with the class. 2. Assign two students to investigate, and report back to the class, information on the impact of social and political change on the Imperial Ballet School and ballet companies in Russia 3. Assign one or two students to gather information to share with the class on Isadora Duncan, including how she fits into the historical framework of the development of dance, and her experiences in opening a dancing school for children in Moscow.

BUILD KNOWLEDGE

1. Explore, as a class, various influences other than political events and war that would contribute to the dramatic shift in the sensibilities of the fine and performing arts, themes and forms of literature, architectural design, fashion, and the manners and mores of the culture of the late 19th century and the 20th century. The grade level and discipline in which the activity is introduced will determine sources selected, time frame, and mode of assignment. Suggested topics include:

- Impact of Darwin, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and Jung
- The influence of the development of psychological science on the arts
- Selections from the works of Russian authors: Pushkin; Turgenev; Chekhov; Dostoevsky; Pasternak; and Solzhenitsyn as mirrors of change in Russia
- The terms “Byronic hero”, nihilism, and the “extraordinary” man
- Selections from the works of Oscar Wilde, Henry James, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot as mirrors of change in the West
- Data on the performances and choreography of dancers Mary Wigman, Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Martha Graham as mirrors of change
- The implications of the terms “photographic realism” and “psychological realism” as they relate to creative expression in the arts

2. Identify students who have had modern dance training or are willing to investigate aspects of modern dance training. Ask them to lead a discussion on the way the modern dance student trains, encouraging them to give a demonstration of some of the movements.

Ask students who have had classical ballet training to draw some specific lines of comparison between classical ballet expression and modern dance expression.

3. Initiate a class discussion on elements of modern art form. Have students build hypotheses about elements of modern form by drawing from discussion of literary sources, the class dance presentations, and what they know about modern graphic, interior, and furniture design. Consider bringing in an abstract painting and a selection of modern music to add to the observations. Have students construct a list of words and phrases they would use to describe such aspects as structure, prevailing tone quality, color, departure from traditional patterns, etc. in the samples they have observed.

4. Consider selecting a vignette of music and request that dancers in the class (or in the school) develop a classical ballet response and a modern dance response to the same piece of music. Follow with a class discussion of the differences students observed in the two renditions.

Encourage students with a special talent and/or interest in drawing to sketch one of the classical and one of the modern dance movements they observed.

APPLY

1. Initiate a class discussion on elements of modern art form. Have students build hypotheses about elements of modern form by drawing from discussion of literary sources, the class dance presentations, and what they know about modern graphic, interior, and furniture design. Consider bringing in an abstract painting and a selection of modern music to add to the observations. Have students construct a list of words and phrases they would use to describe such aspects as structure, prevailing tone quality, color, departure from traditional patterns, etc. in the samples they have observed.

2. Have students view vignettes or the full score (if time allows) of Martha Graham's famous work, *Appalachian Spring*, in which Nureyev dances the role of the Preacher.

3. Have students discuss the following in small groups:

- Various ways Nureyev articulates his role of "preacher" in modern dance expression (steps, body language, facial expression, timing of movements, etc.)
- The nature of the choreography in relation to Romantic classical ballet scores, considering, for instance, how the "story line" is developed
- The relationship of the movement to Aaron Copland's music score (for instance, are steps in harmony with the varied rhythms of the score or do they pull against the established rhythm or do both?)

4. Share conclusions in large group discussion. Have students develop, in class, a brief written critique of Nureyev's performance as a modern dance artist. Have them consider such aspects as:

- With what techniques does Nureyev characterize the Preacher?
- Does he project a psychological dimension in his characterization of the Preacher?
- Does his classical training show in his movement?

(*Note:* Teachers of American literature classes in which the Hawthorne text has been studied may want to consider substituting

Graham's *The Scarlet Letter* for *Appalachian Spring*, focusing on Nureyev's interpretation of Reverend Dimmesdale in relation to Hawthorne's development of Dimmesdale's character in the text.)

Conclusions

REFLECT

1. Martha Graham, in describing Nureyev's contributions to the dance world, referred to him as a "Prometheus, a bringer of light." Have students explore, in class discussion, their perception of how that image could match the profile of Nureyev's accomplishments as one of the world's most celebrated dance artists.

After clarifying the central legend of Prometheus as "a bringer of light", encourage students to consider such aspects as how Nureyev energized the male dancer's role; how he exploded the myth that combining modern and classical dance idiom would erode the quality of both, particularly classical ballet; how his performances gave testimony to the power of personal magnetism in dance expression; how he brought the "light" of his inspiring Kirov dance heritage of preciseness and strength in execution to the dance stages of the West, and preserved, with some modifications, the rich inheritance of the choreographic styles of the Kirov's Marius Petipa.

ASSESS

Use the [Assessment Rubric](#), available to you in the Resource Carousel, to evaluate students.

Teacher Assessment:

- Evidence of growth in explicating skills and skills of comparative analysis
- Quality of participation in collaborative and special projects
- Discernment in constructing conclusions
- Enhanced level of self-confidence in oral presentations
- Advancement in writing skills, such as fuller development, structural power, persuasive argument of point
- Sustained focus on the material presented
- Evidence that students are becoming an "informed" audience of dance, and other fine and performing arts, gaining increased understanding of and appreciation for the creative process

Adaptations

Extend the Learning

As a special project, have students work individually or in various group alignments of their choice to choreograph and perform a modern dance that captures the theme and form of a poem they have selected. Ask them to turn in a brief written account of what elements

of the poem became their central focus in developing their creative response. Tell students to explore the following:

- What are your perceptions of and specific arguments for how the quality of Nureyev's dance performance, based on viewing of the films, helped to earn him the title, "The Mongol Tiger"?
- T. S. Eliot, in his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" argues the position that art builds upon art; in his words, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone." Argue this position (or counter it) as it relates to the performance qualities and choreographic skills of Nureyev.

Use the ARTSEGE virtual exhibit, [Capturing Nureyev: Jamie Wyeth Paints the Dancer](#), as further exploration of the connections between classical dance and the visual arts.

Links and Websites

Teacher Background

Teachers should familiarize themselves with Nureyev's work, modern dance, and the legend of Prometheus using the following sources:

Print:

- DeMille, Agnes. *Martha: The Life and Works of Martha Graham*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Jowitt. *Time and the Dancing Image*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.
- Kirstein, Lincoln. *Four Centuries of Ballet*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1984.
- Sinyavsky, Andrei. *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*. Arcadia, Greenfield, WI, 1990.
- Solway, Diane. *Nureyev: His Life*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1998.
- Stuart, Otis. *Perpetual Motion: The Public and Private Lives of Rudolf Nureyev*. Penguin Books, 1996. (for teachers' use only)

Media:

- Nureyev, Rudolf. *Don Quixote*. Australian Ballet and Royal Ballet. 110 min. Kultur International Films, Ltd. 1973. Videocassette.
- Nureyev, Rudolf. *La Bayadere*. Kirov Ballet. 126 min. Kultur International Films, Ltd. 1977. Videocassette.
- Video: *Appalachian Spring*, Martha Graham choreography.
- Video: *The Scarlet Letter*, Martha Graham choreography.

Prior Student Knowledge

Students should be familiar with the basic notions of dance and ballet.