

# B ● D Y V ● X

## Teacher Study Guide



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# B ● D Y V ● X

## [Before the performance](#)

Preparing students for the dance performance can pique the students' interest and heighten the value of their viewing experience. Students must be made to feel that their unique contributions to the viewing will be valuable, that their opinions are valid, and that the opinions and perspectives of others are to be respected. This is a time to remind students that we all look at the same dance through different eyes. Our cultural perspectives and past experiences will influence our responses to the dance.

The preparation information should be brief. Too much information can strongly influence the students' first impressions and inhibit the flow of ideas. Advance publicity will provide the teacher with some information. Depending on the experience of the students, topics to be discussed could include the following:

- history of modern dance
- biographical information about the dance artists involved
- basic points of audience etiquette
- the elements of dance

## [What is Dance?](#)

Dance has many different descriptions and many definitions. One definition of dance is “a series of rhythmical motions and steps, usually to music.” No matter how you describe or define it, dance is a very significant part of our history and culture. It has been around since the beginning of time and has seen its way through history surviving changed cultures, people and historical disasters while giving us a glimpse of the past. Even now, anywhere you turn, you see dance: on television, in the theater and even in the streets.



Isadora Duncan in London.

### [Isadora Duncan](#)

(May 26, 1877 – September 14, 1927) was an American dancer. She was born Angela Isadora Duncan in San Francisco, California. She is considered by many to be the mother of modern dance.

## Ruth St. Denis

(January 20, 1879 – July 21, 1968) was an early modern dance pioneer. Ruth St. Denis founded Adelphi University's dance program in 1938 which was one of the first dance departments in an American university.



## History of Modern Dance

One hundred years ago, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, saw that dance was so much more than what was seen on stages in Europe and the big opera houses in America. The dances were usually about swan queens, sleeping princesses, damsels in distress, or dolls coming to life. These two women, and other American men and women that followed, revolutionized the art of dance. So what was once an art form for only kings, queens and the wealthy was transformed in true fashion to an art of the people. These women danced without pointe shoes, without tutus, and without elaborate sets. Instead their costumes were very simple and free of constricting corsets. They danced barefoot and the stages were often bare. Great masters wrote the music they danced to. The subjects they chose to dance about were from real life and from different people around the globe. They danced about poverty, politics, death, birth, women's right to vote, the American frontier, Native Americans, football, and much more. They portrayed people from Appalachia, the American south and southwest, New Englanders and the Shakers. They also used the authentic dance steps of different cultures – Chinese, Indian, African, Central and South America.

Modern Dance is like a modern painting or modern music – it is art that is about our time. Like paintings and music, modern dance grew out of all that came before, but unlike earlier forms of dance, which strive to preserve tradition, modern dance is always striving to be new. It is always looking for new ways to express the human spirit through the human body. With the birth of modern dance a new word came into existence – choreographer. The choreographer is the person who creates dances, and this person is so important to the concept of modern dance that they can hardly be separated. Before the 1900's the person in ballet companies who created dances was simply called the ballet master. While there were some great and innovative ballet masters who were truly choreographers in the modern sense of the word like Marius Petipa, Jean-George Noverre, Jules Perrot, Jean Coralli, Filippo Taglioni and Auguste Bournonville, the primary responsibility of the ballet master was to arrange the steps to teach them to the ballet company and rehearse them. It was only gloriously presented. When the earliest pioneers of modern dance began to explore new ways of moving they created a term that describes the process (choreographing) and in time became choreographers. Another term that came into use a little later to describe the creation of dance was composition. Some dancers prefer this word instead of choreography. Like all modern artists, whether they are painters, sculptors, composers or writers, choreographers pride themselves on being original and innovative.

## The elements of dance

**Actions:** What the body is doing describes the body's action. A rich vocabulary of actions increases the capacity to express through dance. Actions fall into the following categories: traveling, stillness, gesturing, jumping, falling, turning, twisting, contracting, expanding and transferring weight. Following is a list of actions – can you think of others?

run	leap	roll	dart
float	spring	settle	freeze
kick	quiver	wiggle	jerk
stamp	grow	extend	open
close	wither	squeeze	drip
skip	gallop	bend	creep
soar	vault	pause	balance
punch	tremble	twitch	shiver
jab	expand	spread	stretch
shrink	dwindle	crumple	sink
swing	slide	flee	bound
wobble	perch	hold	listen
flick	shake	flap	vibrate
inflate	rise	swell	explode
shrivel	collapse	melt	lower

### Classroom activities:

Have the students think of things that move and then stop. For example, a ball rolls and comes to a stop, trains move and stop, planes fly and land, and machines start and stop. Draw the students' attention to the fact that our day is shaped by stopping and starting – our play, work, eating and sleeping. Use objects found in the classroom to demonstrate starting and stopping.

Ask the students what “freezing” means to them. Have them think of things that are frozen (ice cubes, ice cream, icicles). Explain to students that the word “freeze” in dance means to be very still, “not to move, not even to wiggle the nose.” Have students run and freeze using signals given by the teacher; for example, drum sounds or words. Shake and freeze on the spot, varying the body parts used. (Note: Use clear signals the students understand for starting and stopping.)

Explore words which naturally connote stopping; for example, freeze, squeeze and fall. Combine these stopping actions with other actions in various ways; for example: shake, shake, shake, freeze; jump, jump, fall.

Practice different kinds of walks, runs, leaps, slides, gallops, jumps, hops, turns, twists, stretches and bends. Demonstrate a few ideas to stimulate students' imaginations.

Encourage students to use a variety of movements in their dance creations; for example, walking with the knees high, walking in a crouch, or walking in a floppy way.

Explore action words such as:

- gallop and turn and fall

- roll and pause and rise
- sink and crawl and look
- bend and stretch and walk

Encourage students to use a variety of actions in their dance creations.

Explore different ways of moving and then stopping in a “cookie cutter shape.” For example, have students whirl and twirl and stop, crouch low, then extend into a cookie cutter shape. Apply this activity by having students end their dance phrases in a shape.

Explore actions by taking unusual shapes and then travelling. Suggest the following to the students:

- “Glue your nose to your knee, and now move from here to there.”
- “Glue your seat to the ceiling and your hands to your feet; now move.”

Explore new vocabulary verbs through movement. Use the movements in the students’ dance creations when appropriate.

Have students observe different toys such as a spinning top, a rag doll, a slinky, a ball or a toy snake. Ask students to describe how the toys move. Keep track of the words on the board. Explore the descriptive words of one toy through movement; for example, a rag doll flops, folds and bends.

**The Body:** The body is the instrument in dance. Just as a painter paints with a brush, in dance it is through the body that movements appear. Awareness of the body is encouraged in the dance curriculum by learning about the following body concepts:

The whole body

Body parts –head, arms, hands, legs, feet, torso, elbows, wrists, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles

Body zones –body areas of front, back, left side, right side, upper half, lower half

Body bases –whatever supports the rest of the body; for example, when standing –the feet, when kneeling –the knees

### Classroom activities:

Have the students look at their own bodies. Ask questions such as, “Show me your big body parts.” Make a list of the body parts. Label a large picture of the body.

Have the students notice how certain objects, such as toy trucks, move. When a truck moves, the whole thing moves. Other objects have moving parts but do not move themselves; a clock, for example, where just the hands move. Relate this idea to their bodies. “We can move the whole body or we can move body parts.”

Ask students how many ways they can move their arms, legs, etc. Explore different ways of moving the body parts; for example, swinging arms, marching arms and reaching arms.

Have students find body shapes where a body part is very important. You might say to them, for example, “Make a shape where your legs are important.” Ask students, “What are your legs, arms, knees, etc., doing now?” Are their knees high when walking? Are their arms moving in the same direction or the opposite direction?

Encourage students to be aware of their body parts in their dance experience. Have students include body part actions in their dance creations; for example, scooping with arms and hands, creating a shape in which the feet are very important, or walking with the feet reaching.

Explore using body parts to pull the body through space. If students have trouble with this, use the image of “eyes” on a body part to help them. For example, tell them they have an “eye” on their elbow and it must lead the rest of the body.

Explore whole body and body part movements. Give directions such as “Shake a leg, shake a seat, run around with dancing feet.” Encourage students to use whole body and body part movements in their dance creations.

**Dynamics:** How the body moves. Dynamics give dance its expressiveness. Awareness of dynamics is encouraged in the dance curriculum by learning about the following dynamic concepts:

Even Rhythm –movements of equal duration; for example, walks

Uneven Rhythm –movements of unequal duration; for example, skips

Quality –characteristics of a movement; for example, strong, light

Speed –velocity of movements; speed is on a continuum of very slow to very fast

Time –a symbol that denotes a metric or measured rhythm; for example, 3/4 or 4 signature



### Bibliography and Resources

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth\\_St.\\_Denis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_St._Denis)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isadora\\_Duncan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isadora_Duncan)  
<http://www.sfmuseum.org/bio/isadora.html>

## After the performance

Provide a non-judgmental atmosphere where the students will feel confident to give their first reactions and where all students' reactions will be accepted. During the discussion students will be clarifying their ideas. They will discover that there may be different points of view as each student brings a unique set of life experiences and perceptions to the dance. New insights into possible interpretations will give the students food for thought and further reflection.

Encourage students by asking questions such as:

- what moments in the dance they liked most
- how particular moments in the dance made them feel
- whether they had a favorite dancer
- which costumes or outfits they liked
- how the music or sound score made them feel
- a description of the movements; for example, strong high leaps, fast turns, slinking movements on the floor
- the relationships of the dancers; for example, solos, duets, trios, a group of three dancers with a fourth dancer moving in isolation
- the way the space was used; for example, the dancers always moved in a circle, usually moved on the diagonal, moved in a small space, had round shapes or angular shapes
- the dynamics or qualities of the movements; for example, lyrical movements, fast and sharp movements, collapsing and suspending movements
- the entrances and exits of the dancers
- descriptions of the sound score, costumes, outfits, props and sets
- did the dance have a story
- what was the theme or the subject of the dance
- was the dance expressing a feeling or an idea
- what does the dance mean to them
- what images did the students associate with the dance





## Performance Etiquette

Each year thousands of teachers, students, bus drivers, and parents take part in CSB/SJU's Education Series. To make your theater experience the best it can possibly be, below are a few helpful hints to follow at the theater.

It is our hope that a review of these procedures will answer any questions that you or your students may have.

- ◆ Please make an effort to bring a minimum of one adult chaperone for every fifteen students.
- ◆ Prepare your students to enter the theater in single file in the order of seating. Position your chaperones in such a way as to maximize adult supervision of your group.
- ◆ Trips to the bathroom must wait until your group is seated in the theater. Then, if necessary, students may go in small groups with the teacher's permission. Please, chaperone younger students.
- ◆ To make the theater experience enjoyable for all, we do not permit:  
Food, gum, or drinks  
Radios, Cameras, Tape or Video recorders  
Inappropriate behaviors
- ◆ Always feel free to applaud when you see something that you like. Dancers love to hear that the audience is paying attention and enjoying the show!

Following the performance, a member of the CSB/SJU Fine Arts Programming Department will dismiss schools from the theater.

Thank you and enjoy the performance!



This study guide was adapted from materials provided by BodyVox