

Storytelling with Dance

8th Grade ELA and Dance

Adapted by Paige Satcher

CORE SUBJECT AREA

ELA

ART FORM + ELEMENTS

Dance
Body
Action
Energy

DURATION

4-5 Days

OBJECTIVES

TSW identify and analyze thematic elements in the production of “Swan Lake,” including metaphors and symbols, that tell the story behind the famous ballet.

TSW compare and contrast story telling through literary forms and dance forms.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Computer with internet access
Screen, and projector
Copies of comprehension questions
Optional: Copies of literary text of Swan Lake

VOCABULARY

ELA Vocabulary: metaphor, symbol
Dance Vocabulary: ballet, Romantic movement

MSCCR STANDARDS

RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an accurate summary of the text based upon this analysis.

RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a literary text propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

RL.8.7 Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating choices made by the director or actors.

MSCCR CREATIVE ARTS STANDARDS

DA: Re7.1.8a. Describe, demonstrate and discuss patterns of movement and their relationships in dance in context of artistic intent.

DA: Re7.1.8b. Explain how the elements of dance are used in a variety of genres, styles, or cultural movement practices to communicate intent. Use genre-specific dance terminology.

DA: Re8.1.8a. Select a dance and explain how artistic expression is achieved through relationships among the elements of dance, use of body, dance technique and context. Cite evidence in the dance to support your interpretation using genre specific dance terminology.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

American Ballet Theater’s Swan Lake (2005): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfmc6ZV17uA>

Swan Lake in story form: <https://www.uexpress.com/tell-me-a-story/2003/4/20/swan-lake-a-german-tale>

Original lesson plan with helpful resources, vocabulary, etc.:

<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/swan-lake.html>



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Swan Lake Ballet Performance Study Guide:

https://calperformances.org/learn/k12/pdf/2005/Study_Guide_SwanLake.pdf

Short story with no words video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKk2f8K1jas>

LESSON SEQUENCE

Pose this question to students: “Can a story be told with no words?” Ask how this might be possible. Guide students to a discussion about stories being told through dance, music, etc

Have students watch this story that is told without words. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKk2f8K1jas>

Ask questions such as: How were you able to know what was going on? (Facial expressions, body movements, etc.) Did the music play a part in the storytelling? How so?

Explain to students that for the next several days, they will be “reading” a story entitled Swan Lake. However, they will not be reading words on a page. Instead, the purpose is to analyze movements, costumes, and instrumental music to interpret the story.

Days 1 and 2:

Background / Acts I and II: Before watching the ballet, give students a background on Swan Lake, including these three points.

1. This ballet is full of metaphors and symbols; they will need to recognize them while watching the ballet. (Note: A mini-lesson about metaphors and symbols would be helpful here.)
2. This ballet was first performed in Russia in the late 1800s. It is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful works in all of ballet.
3. Ballet takes serious, dedicated athletes. Although the movements are elegant and graceful, it takes substantial control and stamina of the human body to be able to perform at this level. Students should appreciate the athleticism behind this art form. More helpful background information can be found here: <http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/swan-lake.html> Briefly introduce the characters that will be portrayed throughout the ballet: Von Rothbart-the evil wizard Siegfried- the prince, The Queen-Siegfried’s mother, Odte-the beautiful enchanted swan, Odile-Odette’s wicked double.

Before watching Acts, I and II: of the play, give students these questions:

1. How does Rothbart trick Odette?
2. How is it evident that Odette has changed from?
3. How does the Prince feel about Odette? What emotions are conveyed through their movements?
4. What is communicated to the audience when Rothbart comes to the stage?
5. What is Odette’s relationship with the rest of the swans?
6. Describe Odette’s dance movements.
7. How is it evident that Rothbart has control over Odette?

Have students watch Act I and II*

(Note: It is not necessary to watch the entirety of the Prince’s birthday scene or the dances of the swans. To save time, both may be shortened significantly, as they are not essential to the storyline. However, it is important for students to recognize the grace and beauty of the ballerinas during these scenes.)

*Ends at 1:02:00.

Discuss the Act I and II questions and how students figured out the answers. Ask students: What symbols and metaphors have they found in the play so far?

Days 3 and 4: Act III and IV*

Before watching Acts III and IV of the play, give students these questions:

1. Before Odile enters, how does the Prince feel about his choices of wives?
2. Why is the swan now wearing black instead of white? (Remember: it is the same ballerina). Who is the man with whom she entered?
3. Describe Odile's dance movements. How does this differ from Odette's? Why is there a difference?
4. How does the Prince communicate that he has chosen Odile?
5. What does the Prince realize when he sees the white swan in the window?
6. What was the final act of the Prince and Odette?

*Start Act III at 1:19:55

Discuss the Act III and IV questions and how students figured out the answers. Ask students: What metaphors and symbols were carried through the entirety of the play? Did the meanings of the symbols help you understand the story? How?

Day 5:

Use this day to assess the week's objectives. This can be in the form of a quiz or a writing prompt that addresses key points from the ballet.

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Writing Integration: Have students compose an essay or narrative writing based on the ballet, its history, symbols, etc.

Professional Dance Integration: Invite a local ballet dancer to teach students basic positions and movements of ballet.

SOURCES

Original Lesson: <http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/swan-lake.html> Adapted by: Paige Satcher

TIPS + FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This lesson will require students and teachers to think outside of the box. Although we are applying literature standards, students will be interpreting motions and music instead of words on a page. Embrace this opportunity for students to be able to think creatively while covering the same objectives that can be met through literature.

This lesson may seem daunting at first glance because the ballet itself is lengthy. Keep in mind that it is not imperative to watch the entire ballet if time is constrained. Only certain parts are essential to the storyline; others are included in the ballet for their technical precision and beauty, which students need to learn to appreciate also.