Appalachian Spring

Teacher’s Study Guide

2014-2015 School Year

Presented by:

The Lexington Ballet in partnership with

The PNC Foundation
TABLE OF CONTENTS

KY Core Academic Standards & Program Review  pg 3
Letter from the Artistic Director  pg --
Student Preparation
  The History of Appalachian Spring  pg 5
  Lexington Ballet’s Presentation of Appalachian Spring  pg 6
  Attending a Ballet Performance  pg 7
Lesson Plan 1 Storytelling through Dance
  Activity 1: Pioneer Life in Appalachia  pg 9
  Activity 2: Dance Terminology  pg 10
Lesson Plan 2: Telling Your Story through Dance
  Activity 1: Creativity & Movement  pg 11
Appendix A: Glossary of Ballet Terms  pg 13
Appendix B: Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Method  pg 15
### Lesson Plan #1: Storytelling Through Dance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity # 1: Discussion</th>
<th>Pioneer Life &amp; Appalachian Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **KY Core Academic Standards:** Primary Social Studies | **Big Idea: Cultures and Societies, 2.16** Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups.  
**Big Idea: Geography, 2.19** Students recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations.  
**Big Idea: Historical Perspective, 2.20** Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Review: Arts and Humanities</th>
<th><strong>Curriculum and Instruction</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 1: Student Access (A, B)</td>
<td><strong>Formative &amp; Summative Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 2: Aligned &amp; Rigorous Curriculum (A, B, C, D, E)</td>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 2: Expectations for Student Learning (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 3: Instructional Strategies (A, B, C, D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 4: Student Performance (A, B, C, D, E)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2: Discussion</th>
<th>Dance &amp; Theatre Terminology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
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**1.14** Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music.  
**1.15** Students make sense of and communicate ideas with movement.  
**2.23** Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards.  
**Big Idea: Humanity in the Arts, 2.24** Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions of the arts and humanities.  
**Big Idea: Purposes for Creating the Arts:** Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share some common experiences and attitudes. |

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 3: Instructional Strategies (A, B, C, D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient, Demonstrator 4: Student Performance (A, B, C, D, E)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Lesson Plan #2: Telling Your Story Through Dance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1: Movement Telling Your Story Through Dance</th>
<th>KY Core Academic Standards: Primary Arts &amp; Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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The History of Appalachian Spring
Appalachian Spring, choreographed by Martha Graham and musical composition by Aaron Copland, first premiered in 1944. The ballet is set during the 19th century in rural Pennsylvania, a part of Appalachia. The cast consists of American pioneers who have just built a new farmhouse upon their land. A few of the characters include a bride, groom, congregation, and various towns’ people. The original ballet is comprised of 8 movements, or scenes. Some scenes are very fast, simulating the excitement of country fiddling, square dancing, and celebration of spring. Other movements are slower, reminiscent of the tenderness of family or the fears and curiosities faced by the early American pioneers in their new Appalachian home.

Martha Graham’s choreography was heavily inspired by human emotion and the Appalachian lifestyle. Graham intended for her ballet to show the excitement and struggles of everyday life in Appalachia. The young marrying couple reflects the energy of love and the passage into maturity, while an older pioneering couple reflects a reserved lifestyle of spiritual devotion. Graham crafted her choreography and movements such that it directly imitated the type of dance and song practiced by those in 19th century Appalachia. She spoke of this by saying, “To be great art... it must belong to the country in which it flourishes, not be a pale copy of some art form perfected by another culture and another people”.

Aaron Copland composed the music for Martha Graham before the ballet was given the title Appalachian Spring. The work’s title has its origin in a stanza of a poem by Hart Crane titled “The Dance”,

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;  
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends  
And northward reaches in that violet wedge  
Of Adirondacks!

The most popularly recognized music excerpt from Copeland’s composition is found in the 7th scene, which depicts the daily activities for the Bride and her Farmer husband. The melodic theme and variation was borrowed from the Shaker melody commonly known as "Simple Gifts" written and composed by Elder Joseph Brackett.

Aaron Copeland was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his composition of Appalachian Spring in 1945.

Find more information on Appalachian Spring at the links below:
The Lexington Ballet’s Presentation of Appalachian Spring

The Lexington Ballet’s presentation of Appalachian Spring features original choreography by Artistic Director Luis Dominguez inspired by Martha Graham’s work. Copeland described each of Graham’s original ballet’s movements as follows,

**Very slowly.** Introduction of the characters, one by one, in a suffused light.

**Fast/Allegro.** Sudden burst of unison strings in A major arpeggios starts the action. A sentiment both elated and religious gives the keynote to this scene.

**Moderate/Moderato.** Duo for the Bride and her Intended – scene of tenderness and passion.

**Quite fast.** The Revivalist and his flock. Folksy feeling – suggestions of square dances and country fiddlers.

**Still faster/Subito Allegro.** Solo dance of the Bride – presentiment of motherhood. Extremes of joy and fear and wonder.

**Very slowly (as at first).** Transition scene to music reminiscent of the introduction.

**Calm and flowing/Doppio Movimento.** Scenes of daily activity for the Bride and her Farmer husband. (There are five variations on a Shaker theme. The theme, sung by a solo clarinet, was taken from a collection of Shaker melodies compiled by Edward D. Andrews, and published under the title "The Gift to Be Simple." The melody borrowed and used almost literally is called "Simple Gifts.")

**Moderate. Coda/Moderato - Coda.** The Bride takes her place among her neighbors. At the end the couple is left "quiet and strong in their new house." Muted strings intone a hushed prayer like chorale passage. The close is reminiscent of the opening music.
Attending a Ballet Performance

Ballet is an art form that everyone can enjoy. Simply stated, ballet is fascinating movement set to music. Sometimes it tells a story. Sometimes it evokes a mood. Sometimes it should be observed simply for its sheer athleticism. While there is a rich history to ballet, and many technical terms for a dancer’s movements, there is no trick to enjoying a performance.

Great dance should seem effortless, displaying a certain physical lightness and freedom. Dancers should perform with ease, with confidence, bravura and freedom. A good dancer who has years of training, and is properly rehearsed will be able to let go - forget about the particulars, and be able to think only about human body moving through space. Great dancers, perhaps, will not be thinking at all, but will become the dance they perform.

The word Ballet comes from the Italian word “ballare” meaning to spring or jump about or to move in rhythm. Many subtleties separate a good ballet performance from the truly inspiring. Watch for:

- Variations in speed
- Direction changes
- The height of leaps
- Quiet landings
- Body extension & flexibility
- Smooth movement between partners
- Dramatic ability to create a mood or express emotion
- Movement in connection with the music
- The ability to make it all look easy
Ballet Audience Etiquette

**Dos & Don’ts**

1. As an audience member it is appropriate for students to express their admiration or approval for the dance performance they are watching by clapping for the dancers when they see something they like! Applause is always welcomed by the dancers as it lets them know the audience is enjoying the performance.

2. It can also be appropriate to laugh during a performance as a response to story being told on stage. Humor is often an element of the story on stage.

3. Photography of any kind, but especially flash photography, is prohibited during the performance, as the flash can be a hazard to the dancers while performing on stage.

4. Student should not yell or cheer like they might at a sporting event...at least not during the performance. At the end of the show shouting out “Bravo” or “Brava” for the male and female principle dancers is appropriate.
Lesson Plan 1: Storytelling through Dance

Story telling can take many forms from the visual arts and literature, to dramatic theater and dance performances. All forms of storytelling share common elements. Every story begins with an introduction of main characters. These character’s motives propel the story forward towards its conclusion. In a staged ballet production, the story is presented through a series of scenes which introduce the audience to a cast of characters then describes the character’s relationship to one another. The story is not conveyed through the choreography alone, but is also told via the music, costuming, scenery, lighting, and the artistic expression of the dancers.

In Appalachian Spring, the story of everyday life for a group of early American Pioneers is told through a form of dance known as contemporary ballet. This ballet depicts a young married couple as they start their life together in a newly built farmhouse. We see portrayed the everyday work and struggles of the pioneers who pushed westward to explore and settle new land throughout Appalachia.

The following activities are intended for instructors to help prepare students for LBC’s Appalachian Spring Lecture Demonstration.

Activity 1: Pioneer Life in Appalachia

Goals and Objectives: In this activity students will

- Observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups
- Recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations
- Understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective

Life for the American pioneers who settled in Appalachia was more simple in some ways that life today, but also more difficult. What do your student’s know about the pioneers?

1. Where is Appalachia? Explore the map of The Appalachian Region with your students so that they gain an appreciation for the span of Appalachia and are able to identify where they are located within Appalachia.

2. Discuss with your students some of everyday life activities and experiences of the Appalachian pioneers. (i.e. going to school, doing chores, keeping animals, hunting, farming, building homes)
3. Together or in groups, have your students brainstorm some of their own everyday activities. Have your students compare and contrast the similarities and difference between their activities and those of the Appalachian. Ask students to share their thoughts and ideas with the class.

**Activity #2: Dance Terminology**

**Goals and Objectives:** In this activity students will understand that

- Elements of music, dance, and drama are intentionally applied in creating and performing
- Elements and principles of design of visual art are intentionally applied in creating works of art
- Responding to or critiquing works of art involves an understanding of elements, principles and structures appropriate to each area of the arts
- The arts are powerful tools for understanding human experiences both past and present
- The arts provide forms of nonverbal communication that can strengthen the presentation of ideas and emotions

Follow the link below to watch an excerpt of Martha Graham’s Appalachian Spring and listen to a portion of Aaron Copland’s score with your students.


Have them close their eyes and imagine what characters might dance to this music, or what part of the story of pioneering life this music might help tell.

1. Ask your students to define and describe the following dance/theater terminology,

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scenery</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Choreography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td>Stage</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How do costumes, choreography, and dancer’s expression help to tell the story of the everyday life of the early American Pioneers?

5. Aaron Copeland wrote the music for this ballet after Martha Graham was done with her choreography. What feelings did Aaron Copeland’s music help the dancers to express?

6. Ask your students how they could use music, scenery, props, costumes, and or dance movements to make a scene that is happy, sad, or express another type of feeling or experience?
Lesson Plan #2: Telling Your Story Though Dance

Activity #1: Creativity & Movement

Goals and Objectives: In this activity students will

- Recognize and identify the elements of dance (space, time, force) and their use in choreography
- Observe, describe, and demonstrate locomotor (e.g. walk, run, skip, gallop) and nonlocomotor (e.g. bend, stretch, twist, swing) movements
- Demonstrate their understanding of basic story elements (beginning, middle, end)
- Use the elements of dance and story structure in a small group to create a short dance that depicts their own “everyday story”
- Perform in a small group the short dance they created for their peers
- Groups in the audience will respond to their peer’s performances and try to interpret the everyday story told through dance of the performing group. (See Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Method, Appendix B)

Basic Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Locomotor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Choreography</td>
<td>Non-locomotor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Beat</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures:

1. Create a chart of Space, Time, and Force elements of dance:

Space: The area covered by the dance movements (This includes shape, level, directions, and pathways.)

- Directions: Forward, backward, sideways, up, down, etc
- Level: The distance from the floor high, medium, low
- Pathways: Patterns that the body makes as it moves through space or on the floor
- Shape: The design of the body as it exists in space
- Locomotor: Traveling in a variety of pathways
- Non-locomotor: Movement while standing in one spot

Time: How fast or slow (tempo); even or uneven (beat); and long or short (duration) the movement is

Force: The use of energy while moving

- Heavy/light, Smooth/Sharp, etc...
2. Warm-up:

Put on some music and call out various elements of dance and movement quality and have students move around the room demonstrating these, such as:

- Walk at a high level, change to a low level, medium level.
- Walk with large steps, small steps
- Skip in different pathways: straight, curved, zigzag
- Gallop forward, backwards and sideways
- Stomp with heavy force, tiptoe with light force
- Slide fast at a quick tempo, slide slow
- Add your own or let your kids throw out some ideas.

3. Create and Perform

a. Break students into small groups. Have them create a short dance phrase based on some everyday activities in their own lives. Make sure their dance uses a variety of movements and the elements of dance. Remind students that their dance should contain a beginning (waking up, eating, getting ready for school), middle (class work, friends, play), and end (after school sports, dinner, bedtime). Remind students ....No words!

b. Have groups perform their dance phrases for the class.

4. Respond

a. Have other students watch and describe what is happening in the story based what they saw each group create and perform. See the Liz Lerman Critical Response Method in Appendix B for reflection and response ideas and questions.

5. Extensions/Differentiation

a. Several small groups can take different parts of one story (i.e. the beginning, middle, or end) and put together a performance that tells an entire story through dance.

b. Groups can design and create scenery for their version of Appalachian Spring. These can be sketched on paper, created from colored construction paper or fabric scraps. Let your groups be creative.

c. Groups can design scenery or props to help tell the story for their own dance.
Appendix A: Glossary of Ballet Terms

Terms for Movement Quality/Timing
Adagio – slow and sustained movements; a slow and sustained dance

Allegro (uh-leh-gro) – fast running and jumping movements; a fast dance

Phrase – a series of steps or patterns, which constitute part of an idea; a sentence in movement

Ballet Steps or Positions
Arabesque (ara-besk) – a frequently used classical ballet position. The weight of the body is supported on one leg while the other is extended in back, the knee straight. The arabesque may be varied in many ways by changing the position of the arms, the angle of the body and the height of the leg in the air.

Attitude – a classical position similar to the arabesque, except that the knee of the raised leg is bent

Battement (baht-mahn) – extension of the leg

Bourree (boo-ray) – a rapid run, like a trill on the points of the toes, with the feet in fifth position. The feet move so quickly that the transfer of weight is almost imperceptible. The ballerina seems to skim across the stage.

Chaine (sheh-nay) – a series or chain of turns, executed in a line or in a circle, in which the feet remain close to the floor and the weight is transferred rapidly and almost imperceptibly from one foot to the other as the body revolves

Chasse (shah-say) – a slide in which the weight is transferred from two feet to one, or from one to another

Glissade (glih-sahd) – a gliding step, beginning and ending in fifth position

Develope (day-vel-oh-pay) – a smooth, gradual unfolding of the leg toward the front, side or back

Jete (zheh-tay) – a jump from one foot to the other

Pas de deux (paw de duh) – literally “step for two”; a duet, often in several positions

Pirouette (peer-oh-wet) – a turn in place, on one foot. A good dancer can execute four or five continuous revolutions; a virtuoso, as many as a dozen

Plie (plee-AY) – a bend of the knees

Rond de jambe (rohn de jahm) – a circular movement of the leg, accomplished either with the toe on the floor or with the working leg raised

Tour en l’air (tour ahrn lair) – a complete single, double or triple turn in the air, usually beginning from and ending in fifth position. It is almost always executed by male dancers.

Other Ballet Terminology
Choreographer – the person who creates, or composes, the dance

Corps de ballet (cor-de-bah-lay) – the supporting dancers of the ballet company
Ballerina – any professional female ballet dancer

Danseur (dan-sir) – any professional male ballet dancer

En pointe (on point) – the ballerina rises as far from the floor as she possibly can by dancing on the tips of her toes. She carries her weight not merely high on the balls of her feet but literally on the top of her toes. Originally, dancers did this in soft slippers; today toe shoes are blocked across the front to give added support.

Tutu – the traditional ballet skirt usually made of many layers of gathered tulle. The length of the tutu varies according to the period or style of the ballet being performed.

Ballet shoes – soft slippers made of flexible leather with thin, flexible soles.

Toe shoes – soft fabric (usually satin) slippers blocked across the toes with a hard pad to give support when the dancer raises en pointe.

For more ballet terminology and videos examples of ballet movement go to:

Appendix B: Liz Lerman Critical Response Process

MacArthur Award winning choreographer Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process has been a widely adopted as a tool for providing valuable critical response to the work of both professional and student artists and is a great tool to introduce to students. This method is easily adapted and applied any technical or academic subject matter!

For Lesson Plan #2 this Process will use your students in two of three roles; artist (when they present their dance), and responder (when they offer feedback to their peer groups),

- The artist perform their dance for their peers and knows they will get to discuss with the audience afterwards;
- Responders, view their fellow student artist’s dance and offer appropriate feedback to the dance in a dialogue with the student artists;

The class instructor will serve as the facilitator,

- The facilitator initiates each step, keeps the process on track, and works to help the artist and responders use the Process to frame useful questions and responses.

The Critical Response Process will take place after each student group presents their “Everyday activity” dance story. This Process can be applied to any presentation, short or long, large or small, and at any stage in its development. As facilitator, lead your student artists and responders through the following four steps:

1. **Statements of Meaning:** Responders give POSITIVE feedback to the performers about their dance they just observed. Statements like ...
   a. I liked how your dance showed …
   b. My favorite part was …

2. **Artist as Questioner:** Now your student artists get to ask their peer audience specific questions about the dance. This gives the student artists a chance to check with their audience to see if they understood the story they were trying to tell through dance. Questions might include...
   a. Could tell what we were doing when ______?
   b. Did we dance ____ big (long, soft, sharp, etc…) enough?

3. **Neutral Questions:** Responders ask neutral (no stated or implied opinions) questions about the dance and the student artists respond. Here the audience gets to find out why the student artists did something in a particular way. For example,
   a. Rather than asking “Why did you spinning like crazy?” ask “What was the reason you were spinning?”

4. **Direct Comments:** Once all the other questions have been exhausted, the responders may state opinions, but only if the given permission by the student artists. The usual form is “I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?” The student artists may answer no if they do not wish to hear the opinions for any reason.