



Nutcracker

Curriculum Packet

Grades 6-8

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Warmup Activity - The Brain Dance (Created by Anne Green Gilbert)

We recommend using this warm-up activity at the top of each class. For more information on the history of the Brain Dance and how the established pattern can benefit your students visit: <https://www.creativedance.org/about/braindance/>

NOTE TO TEACHERS: *This warm-up provide a transition into your dance/movement class and its pattern can be used to explore new concepts each day. For example, with younger grade levels, the Brain Dance can be used to review patterns, levels (high, middle, low), and tempo (fast or slow movement). In the older grades, Brain Dance can challenge students to consider more complex movement ideas (the difference between how different characters might choose to move and where in the body a movement originates).*

BREATH: Focus on the inhale and exhale of breath from the diaphragm (the students should be able to feel their stomach moving in and out). Can they breathe in such a way that they feel the breath move through their entire body?

TACTILE: The goal of this section is stimulating touch throughout the body. Consider movements such as tap, brush, or squeeze to guide students through stimulating their entire body head to toe.

CORE-DISTAL: This section moves students from a tight core position (consider the fetal position with all limbs as close to the abdomen as possible) to a full “distal” position, with limbs stretched out and as far away from one another as possible.

HEAD-TAIL: For this section of the pattern, consider the “Cow/Cat” sequence in yoga. The goal is to move the head and tail toward one another, then away from one another. This can be done standing (simply curling the neck down and then up) or in a crawling position (arching the back like a cat, then stretching the opposite way in “cow” pose)

UPPER-LOWER: Ask students to freeze one section of their body (either the waist and up or the waist and below) and provide direction in moving the opposite section. Consider providing them descriptive words (move your upper body smoothly, like a robot, as if you’re moving through molasses). Then switch to the opposite section of the body and do the same.

BODY SIDE: Similar to upper-lower, this section works on splitting the body down the center from top to bottom. Freeze the right side, and direct students in moving the left. Then switch. Ensure movement doesn’t cross that imaginary center-line.

CROSS LATERAL: This section can be approached in several ways – the goal is to work on opposition movement (the way that your opposite arm swings forward when you take a step). Exaggerated walking or marching is one way to approach this – for example, when they mark on their right foot their left arm should swing forward and so forth. Another way is to simply stand in place and take the right arm across the body to the left knee and then the left arm to the right knee.

VESTIBULAR: The final section of the pattern asks students to work on their balance and equilibrium. First, ask students to get a little bit dizzy (either by shaking their head back and forth or even spinning in circles) – then they should freeze in place or, if you’re feeling a challenge, even balance in their freeze!

<p>K</p> <p>What do you <u>K</u>now about the topic already?</p>	<p>W</p> <p>What do you <u>W</u>ant to know about the topic? What questions do you have?</p>	<p>L</p> <p>What have you <u>L</u>earned about the topic?</p>

Online Resources

Introduction to the Show (For all grade levels)

- *This video is an overview of Christopher Wheeldon's Nutcracker at the Joffrey Ballet - the show that they will be seeing!*

WTTW - "Making a New American Nutcracker"

- This site features a photo gallery, featured stories, video clips and the full documentary "Making a New American Nutcracker."

Music for Activities (For all grade levels)

YouTube Playlist

Spotify Playlist

- *You can find the music of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker can be found on You Tube and Spotify. We recommend these sources to find music for the activities outlined in your curriculum packet, or even to play in the background during work and reflection time.*

Overview of the Original Nutcracker Story (Best for Grades K-5)

This clip provides an overview of the original Nutcracker story. While this is not the exact story seen on stage in Wheeldon's production, it provides a basis for students to become familiar with the basic idea of the story.

History of the Nutcracker Ballet (Best for Grades 6-12)

Resources on basics and history of Ballet

- Information on the [origins of Ballet](#) as an art form, for Grades 3-12
- [Day in the Life of a Ballerina](#), for Grades 3-12
- [The History of Ballet at Dance Tutors](#), a good resource for teachers of all grades
- [Origins of Ballet at History World](#) a good resource for teachers of all grades

Cool Down and Reflection Activities

ALL GRADE LEVELS - Roll Out: Ask students to move to a space in the classroom where they can stand. Going through each part of their body, from their head down to their toes, ask them to roll each part for 8 counts. Feel free to use the following breakdown of body parts to guide the roll out:

- **Head:** Roll your head back and forth from shoulder to shoulder, with your chin tucked down to your chest
- **Shoulders:** Roll your shoulders back and then forward
- **Arms:** Circle your arms big to roll them out
- **Wrists:** Roll your wrists as if you're stirring something
- **Hips:** Roll your hips in a circle as though you're hula hooping
- **Knees:** Put your knees together and bend them. Carefully draw circles with your knees
- **Ankles:** One at a time, roll each ankle for 8 counts.

FOR K-5TH GRADE - Flower and Candle: This cool down is great for centering younger students. Ask the class to sit in a neutral position, either at their desk or on the floor. Have them imagine that they see a flower in front of them, and ask them to pick that flower out of the ground. Ask them to envision what color it is and what it smells like. Then have them take a big sniff of the flower, inhaling through their nose. Now ask the students to look to their other side and picture a beautiful candle. Ask them to picture the color of the candle and size of the flame. Now ask them to blow out the candle with a gentle exhale. Continue three or four times asking students to sniff their flower then blow out their candle, moving them into a cyclical breath meditation.

FOR 6-12TH GRADE - A Class Breath: Stand in a circle with students. Ask them to place their hands on their abdomen and take a deep breath from their diaphragm (belly). They should be able to feel their belly move in and out. Now ask them to close their eyes, if they're comfortable doing so, and as you reflect on each section of the class ask them to take one deep breath in and out as a class. It should look something like this:

INSTRUCTOR: Think back to our warm up today. We focused on working as a team. Breathe in and think about how you felt being a part of a team. Breathe in by the time I count to 5: 1,2,3,4,5. Now exhale and release any stress or frustration that this part of class might have brought to you. (Class exhales)

ALL GRADE LEVELS - Journal Time: Whether your students are able to write full sentences or simply draw, journaling provides a great opportunity for individual reflection and processing at the end of a full class. Provide your students 10 minutes to freely journal in response to the class. Provide an open structure: They can write or draw anything as long as it is about what you have done that day in class. Perhaps they spend the entire time writing about the warm-up or reflecting on how the members of their group worked together. Both are equally productive! This works best if it is clear to students that they will not be graded on what they write. Grades can come from other class activities.

Chicago Architecture – At the time of the 1893 World's Fair and Today



Auditorium Theatre Building (Today and 1889)

Chicago Architecture – At the time of the 1893 World’s Fair and Today



Home Insurance Building (1893/Today)

Chicago Architecture – At the time of the 1893 World's Fair and Today



Old St. Patrick's Church (1893 and Today)

Chicago Architecture – At the time of the 1893 World's Fair and Today



The Art Institute (1893/Today)

Artistic Team Overview

Choreographer

The person who creates the ballets dances performed by the ballet company.



Artistic Team Overview

Costume Designer

The person who designs and creates the costumes worn for the performances.



Artistic Team Overview

Lighting Designer

The person responsible for the design, installation, and operation of the lighting on the stage. It is their job to illuminate the dancers and stage during the performance.



Artistic Team Overview

Set Designer

The set designer builds the scenery on stage for the performance.



Artistic Team Overview

Sound Designer

The sound designer is responsible for everything the audience hears. They must sure the dancers can hear the music on the stage as well as the people in the audience.



Nutcracker Artistic Teams Project

Assignment Overview

THE ASSIGNMENT

In order to move a story from writing on a page onto a full performance, a lot of different teams need to work together to create what the audience sees. Over the next few classes, we will become members of these artistic teams and explore the Nutcracker story through their unique lens. In the end, each team will be responsible for sharing their “vision” for the performance to the rest of the class through a presentation that includes a visual element (poster, video, model, etc.)

YOUR ARTISTIC TEAM

With your team, you will be assigned a specific artistic aspect of the Nutcracker production. Your mission will be explore the story that needs to be told and decide what your artistic team needs to create in order to help tell that story.

STEP ONE: Know your team

1) Choreographers

- How can you show differences between each character through movement?
- How many dancers do you intend to work with? Why?
- What skills do your dancers need?
- Explain what the movement will look like overall. What do you want it to remind the audience of? What mood or emotions do you want the audience to experience?
- What scenes will have just a few dancers and what scenes will have a lot of dancers?
- Be sure to explain why you made each of these choices!

2) Costume Designers

- How can you show differences between each character through what they are wearing?
- What will costumes for the main characters look like? Explain what your choices do to help tell the story (for example, how can a costume tell the audience how wealthy a character is?)
- Explain what the costuming will look like overall. What do you want it to remind the audience of? What mood or emotions do you want the audience to experience? What colors or materials might help you achieve that?
- What will costumes look like in each different setting? Will characters like Marie have the same costume on throughout or change? If they change, why do they switch outfits?
- Be sure to explain why you made each of these choices!

3) Lighting Designers

- How can you show differences between each scene/setting with the lights? How will the audience know what season it is and what time of day it is in each scene?

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- What will lights look like for the scenes that take place before the tree magically grows? Will the lights change for the scenes after the tree magically grows and the Nutcracker comes to life? How? Why?
- Explain what the lighting will look like overall. What do you want it to remind the audience of? What mood or emotions do you want the audience to experience? What colors of light might help you achieve that?
- Do you think the story needs any special lighting effects? What are they and when do they happen in the story?
- Be sure to explain why you made each of these choices!

4) Set Designers

- How can you show differences between each scene/setting with the backdrop and set pieces that move on and off stage? How will the audience know what season it is and what time of day it is in each scene?
- What will the set look like for scenes that take place before the tree magically grows? Will the lights change for the scenes after the tree magically grows and the Nutcracker comes to life? How? Why?
- Explain what the sets will look like overall. What do you want it to remind the audience of? What mood or emotions do you want the audience to experience? How do you ensure there is enough space for the dancers to move around what you design?
- Do you think the story needs any special effects in the set? What are they and when do they happen in the story?
- Be sure to explain why you made each of these choices!

MY GROUP WILL BE WORKING AS THIS ARTISTIC TEAM : _____.

STEP 2: Create a team plan

Now that you know your artistic team, use the Team Plan page of this packet to figure out how your group will move forward. Each group member is responsible for bringing their unique ideas to the table, and the group “Artistic Director” will lead the team in combining these ideas into a unified concept. You should also choose a team “Scribe” who will take notes of all of your meetings and make sure all of your paperwork is complete!

STEP 3: Do the research!

Before a choreographer, set designer, or costume designer starts to create for a ballet, they do the research. This is the time to learn as much as you possibly can about the story as well as about the time period and people that make it up. For your project, this information will be used to inform your overall concept and will help you create the images and visuals that you share with the rest of the class. Be sure to cite all of your sources. We also suggest keeping an idea board of images or ideas that your group really likes (Designers often create mosaics or “idea boards” of magazine clippings and ideas that inspire them. These days, many designers will use Pinterest and Tumblr for their research!)

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STEP 4: Unify your team's vision

After your group has all independently brainstormed, come together for a meeting led by your team's Artistic Director. During this meeting, each team member should share out their research and ideas. The Artistic Director should then lead the team in discussing the strengths/weaknesses of each idea and choosing what their unified concept will be. Keep in mind:

- What is the most important information you've learned about the story, characters, and setting? (You'll want to ensure this is visible in your end vision!)
- In order to communicate this information to the audience, what does your team need to do?
- Is there any information missing or questions your group still has? (If so, you can still go find the answer!)

STEP 5: Prepare your presentation

Now that you have a unified vision, it's time to prepare yourselves to present it to the rest of the class. Be prepared to share:

- A summary of what your aspect of the production will look like.
- What research or ideas your group found that led you to this idea.
- A visual that gives the group an idea of what your vision will look like in action.
- What materials you think your team would need in order to actually create your idea in reality.

Then it is time to rehearse! This means to practice what you will eventually present to the class. Be sure that you take time to:

- Plan who will be speaking when. Each team member should participate in the presentation by speaking at least once.
- Plan when you will share your visual elements and who will explain them to the class
- Practice running through your entire presentation so you're ready to go!

STEP 6: Present!

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TEAM PLAN

Artistic Focus: _____

Artistic Team Members: _____

Team Artistic Director: _____

Team Scribe: _____

What Do We Need To Know?

Look at the questions listed under your topic in the assignment packet. As you research and re-read the story you'll be telling, take notes on any answers that your research or the story provide you to these questions.

Question 1: _____

Answers/Hints in the Research:

Question 2: _____

Answers/Hints in the Research:

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Question 3: _____

Answers/Hints in the Research:

Question 4: _____

Answers/Hints in the Research:

Research should be completed by this date: _____

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Artistic Presentation Guide

Use the format and checklist below to plan your group's artistic presentation.

Preparation Checklist – Do you have...

- ✓ A summary of your team's ideas and concept and a team member ready to share that with the class?
- ✓ The important parts of the story that you used to support your concept and a team member ready to share these with the class.
- ✓ Specific reasons and examples from your research to support the design decisions that you made, and a team member ready to share these with the class?
- ✓ An idea of the types of materials your team would need in order to fully execute the concept? (What do you need to make the costumes or set? What colors of lights and special effects will you need? How many dancers are needed and what should they be able to do?) Is a team member ready to share these with the class?
- ✓ A visual representation of your team's ideas and concept?

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Presentation Template

Use this template, along with the checklist, to prepare for your presentation. In the “Notes for you to remember” section, write down anything your team wants to be sure is included in that section so the team member responsible doesn’t forget important parts of the concept!

Introduction: Introduce your team members, the artistic area you were responsible for, and provide a brief description of what this artistic area is.

Team Member Speaking: _____

Notes for you to remember (for example: “Be sure to say all team member’s names. We were responsible for choreography. Choreography is the creation of the dance movement.”)

Summary of Concept and Ideas: Share your group’s overall concept and ideas. What sort of thing can they expect to see on stage?

Team Member Speaking: _____

Notes for you to remember (for example: “You will see a lot of ensemble work, with these characters dancing duets and solos....”)

Supporting Details from Story: Share the parts of the story that support your ideas and concept.

Team Member Speaking: _____

Notes for you to remember (for example: “The story noted that the tree needed to magically grow so we chose to do ____ to show this part of the story onstage.”)

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Supporting Details from Research: Share the parts of the time period of the story and your research that support your ideas and concept.

Team Member Speaking: _____

Notes for you to remember (for example: "Since the story is set in Chicago in 1893, we wanted to include recognizable landmarks of the time...")

Materials We Think We'll Need: Share an overview of what materials you think will be needed to actualize your concept.

Team Member Speaking: _____

Notes for you to remember (for example: "In order to accurately represent all of the characters, we think we will need this many male dancers and this many females.")

Visual Element of Presentation: How can you visually share your concept with the class? Who will create this visual (will you create it as a team?) and who will describe it during the presentation?

Team Member Speaking: _____

Team Member(s) Creating Visual: _____

Artistic Presentation Instructor Assessment

	Exemplary	Proficient	Room to Grow
Team Plan Completion	The team's plan is complete, with appropriate details present to support how each team member will be involved moving forward.	The team's plan is complete, but lacks detail.	The team's plan is incomplete.
Research Completion	<p>The team's research is complete and demonstrated in either a written list or visual "idea board" that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information. 	<p>The team's research is lacking one of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information. 	<p>The team's research is missing two or more of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information.
Rehearsal Participation and Focus	Team members actively participated in all rehearsal time, remaining focused, supportive, and encouraging.	Team members participated in most of the rehearsal time, but were sometimes off task or unsupportive.	Team members did not participate productively in rehearsal time.
Presentation	<p>Team had all materials prepared and had rehearsed the presentation which included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending. 	<p>Team could have been better prepared to present by the deadline. Presentation lacked one of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending. 	<p>Team was unprepared to present. Presentation lacked two or more of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending.

Artistic Presentation Student Self-Assessment

	Exemplary	Proficient	Room to Grow
Team Plan Completion	My team's plan is complete, with appropriate details present to support how each team member will be involved moving forward.	My team's plan is complete, but lacks detail.	My team's plan is incomplete.
Research Completion	<p>My team's research is complete and demonstrated in either a written list or visual "idea board" that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information. 	<p>My team's research is lacking one of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information. 	<p>My team's research is missing two or more of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Specific description (via words or images) of how their artistic area will come to life in the performance. 2) Referenced examples from the Nutcracker story to support all choices. 3) Referenced examples from research to support the accuracy of choices for the time period of the story. 4) Cited sources of all information.
Rehearsal Participation and Focus	I participated in all rehearsal time, remaining focused, supportive, and encouraging to my teammates.	I participated in most of the rehearsal time, but was sometimes off task or unsupportive.	I did not participate productively in rehearsal time.
Presentation	<p>I had all necessary materials prepared and had rehearsed the presentation with my team which included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending. 	<p>I could have been better prepared to present by the deadline. My team's presentation lacked one of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending. 	<p>I was unprepared to present. My team's presentation lacked two or more of the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Each team member speaking at least once. 2) Visual elements that were clearly explained 3) A clear connection between the artistic team's area of focus and its role in telling the Nutcracker story. 4) A strong beginning and ending.