

**Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad
Program
"Exploring Mexico: Performing Arts &
Culture"**

Dance: Baile or Ballet

A curriculum unit for middle school dance teachers that utilizes the dance scene of Mexico to exemplify both folk dance (baile folklórico) and dances traditionally considered fine art (modern dance, ballet and contemporary). The unit culminates with the students creating their own works of art.

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CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The following are learner objectives sought in the curriculum unit “Dance: Baile or Ballet.” The lessons are aligned with understanding from basic to higher level thinking as depicted in Bloom’s Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.

The learner will....

KNOWLEDGE:

List facts about baile folklórico and ballet/modern/contemporary dance.
Describe what is seen in videos about folk dance and ballet/modern/contemporary dance.

COMPREHENSION:

Distinguish between pictures of baile folklórico and contemporary dance.
Compare and contrast the two forms of dance on a Venn diagram.
Write a definition of each form of dance.

APPLICATION:

Develop a set of instructions to create a folk dance.

ANALYSIS:

Identify political and social factors in Mexico that influence artists.
Compare the artist who created the works you have seen with yourself.
Identify problems that may affect a Mexican and United States citizen’s ability to create art.
Identify factors that may influence a Mexican and United States citizen’s desire to create art.

SYNTHESIS:

Create an original dance that follows the instructions created previously.

Rehearse and perform the dance.

EVALUATION: Judge the dance performance based on factors pre-determined by students and teacher.
Evaluate whether choreographic directions were followed and are apparent in the final product.
Assess knowledge and understanding of the two forms of dance.
Reflect on what was learned, created and discovered throughout the project.

TEXAS OBJECTIVES

The following are Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills learner objectives achieved by “Dance: Baile or Ballet.” It should be noted however that there are no Dance objectives specific to the middle school population. The ones below are for the high school level.

Dance, Level 1

1. Perception. The student is expected to:

(A) demonstrate basic kinesthetic and spatial awareness with others; (B) develop sensitivity toward others when working in groups; (C) express ideas and emotions through movement; and (D) interpret images found in the environment through movement.

3. Creative Expression/Performance. The student is expected to:

(A) perform memorized movement sequences with rhythmical accuracy in several dance styles, including classical ballet, tap, modern, and ethnic dance; (B) identify the effective use of dance elements in practice and performance; (C) improvise and demonstrate original movement; and (D) perform basic compositional forms, using fundamental choreographic processes.

5. Response/Evaluation. The student is expected to:

(B) demonstrate appropriate audience behavior and etiquette in the classroom and at performances; (D) distinguish commonalities between dance and subject areas such as English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The following are objectives for dance according to National Standards for Arts Education . These are taken from a Web site on curriculum resources that integrate a multiplicity of subjects: The Kennedy Center's *Arts Edge*.

Dance. Grades 5-8

- Content Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
- Content Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
- Content Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning
- Content Standard 4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance
- Content Standard 5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods
- Content Standard 6: Making connections between dance and healthful living
- Content Standard 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines

Part 1: KNOWLEDGE

Teacher Preparation:

SLIDE SHOW 1 will serve as a visual introduction for students. In order to help them begin to understand the difference between folk dance and dance forms that are fine arts (ballet, modern and contemporary, for example), a dialogue can begin with the slide show.

(I have a collection of laminated pictures cut from DANCE magazine and glued to index cards. For various projects I have also made lists of Internet sites students can view in a computer lab.)

Some hand-outs of discussion topics are available in this curriculum unit, though a teacher may decide to produce that part of a lesson through an all-inclusive class discussion. I try to do as much verbal discussion in avoidance of paperwork and to alleviate stress for the non-linguistic learners or students who look forward to dance because they are typically required to do less written work. However, handwritten feedback can be valuable because students can collect it throughout the year to review at a later point or during folder pop-quizzes. For some students, hand-written work also serves to help them understand the connection between dance and other subjects and that objectives are being mastered.

This curriculum unit uses the ArtesAmericas' resource guides on: Mexico, Ballet Folklorico de Mexico and Delfos Contemporary Dance. The information I use from these sources is included with the unit, but full-color versions can be borrowed from Natalie Arsenault, Outreach Coordinator, Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin (n.arsenault@mail.utexas.edu; 512/232-2404).

However, you may chose to use information on Mexico and two different Mexican dance companies from another source, such as the Internet.

Assess students' current knowledge and interest in the topics. Write responses on overhead, poster paper, or not at all, but this may be an important step in your ability to guide them through the project at their level.

Details and resources for the first three steps of this project are given. For steps four through six, I have written ideas for how a teacher may continue with the project.

Student Introduction:

Discuss project with students. Inform them that they will be expected to have performed and evaluated a dance of their own creation by the end of the unit.

Students will be learning about two forms of dance art in Mexico: Baile Folklorico and Ballet/Modern/Contemporary Dance. These dance forms exist elsewhere but will be studied, for this unit, in Mexico.

Picture Presentation:

SLIDE SHOW 1 (Guillerman_BaileBallet.ppt)
Share a variety of pictures of different forms of dance, especially folk dance and contemporary, with students. You may even wish to parallel these dances with the folk art and fine art of other countries. Have students respond by identifying which group these pictures might belong to. The students should be able to justify (EVALUATION) why they have made a particular decision. They may also be able to make predictions about what a dance is about. Can students answer: Which is this a picture of: Baile Folklorico or Ballet/Modern/

Contemporary? Do you know why you have made that choice?

The picture presentation is intended to charge the students' memory, excite them in learning the new information, and prompt discussion about knowledge or experience of the dance forms.

Questions can be answered on paper, verbally or with signal cards (with a signal card labeled A: Baile Folklorico or B: Other, students hold up the card they think matches the picture for only the teacher to see and check for understanding.)

Readings:

Students should read and/or be read to information about Mexico. For this, I will use ArtesAmericas' Guide to Countries and Cultures: Mexico, specifically the sections on "Life in Mexico" and "The Arts." The text is downloadable with this unit.

Follow these readings with a discussion, written or verbal.

** This section can be skipped, particularly if there is a time constraint. It can also be assigned for homework so as to better utilize class time.*

Check for Understanding:

Handout: Baile or Ballet: Reviewing Vocabulary. On the back students should write five facts they have learned about each dance form. They may use the definitions, prior knowledge and knowledge from readings.

Video Presentation:

Show students a video of Ballet Folklorico de Amalia Hernandez (or other folklorico company) and of Delfos Contemporary Dance. Through the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies Outreach Library, run by Ms. Arsenault, educators can borrow DVDs on each company. A discussion following or during the videos should guide students

in evaluating how the definitions and the facts they've learned about the companies are evidenced in the videos. Address new questions students have about the dance forms.

PART 2: COMPREHENSION

Teacher Introduction:

Though Part 2 includes assessment of prior knowledge for “comprehension,” there is still a significant amount of new “knowledge” obtained. They overlap.

In this section, students will be reading about two specific dance companies that exemplify the two forms of dance. If you are using the same resources as I am, students will be reading about dance companies they have already seen in video. You, the teacher, will be able to gauge student understanding through a picture presentation in which students will identify whether a picture belongs to one group or the other. Students will be tested on their knowledge of and ability to define and differentiate between the two dance forms using tools provided here.

Student Introduction:

Now you will be learning about two specific dance companies. As you read about them, remember what you have already learned about the two specific types of dance and what you have seen in the videos. When people think of dance in Mexico they usually think of Baile Folklórico. Dance in Mexico, however, is just as diverse as that in the United States and other countries. The contemporary dance in Mexico uniquely expresses the social, economic, political and environmental issues its citizens experience just as dance does in any country or community in which it is presented. Though it is considered traditional, can you determine how folk dance served the same purpose during the time it was created?

Assessment:

Students complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two forms.

Students write their own definitions of the two forms.

See handout.

Readings:

Students should read and/or be read to information about two different dance companies in Mexico. I have chosen Delfos Contemporary Dance and Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández. ArtesAmericas has teacher resource guides, which are downloadable with this unit, on each of these companies. Any two dance companies can be used if you do not have access to this information.

PART 3: APPLICATION

Teacher Introduction:

Your students should now be ready for the creative part of this project. Review new parts of the Ballet Folklórico de México video. (The video precedes each dance with a brief introduction about its history. There are numerous dances and I don't suggest having students view them consecutively. The ones they have not yet seen should be used for this next assignment.)

This unit will focus on creating a folk dance. My students experience choreographing contemporary works in other projects and usually toward the end of the year when they have learned a variety of ballet and modern dance techniques. Folk dance, because it is a dance for "a people," is not based in the rigidity of discipline that a fine art would require. Also, a dance teacher using this unit may have less experience with ballet, modern and contemporary dance. For these reasons, creating a folk dance in this project seems the most effective vehicle for students to have a successful experience in creating and choreographing. You may choose, however, to have students create a contemporary dance. One such project is briefly outlined in the ArtesAmericas hand-out on Delfos Contemporary Dance Company, in which a poem is the basis for choreography. The activity is included in the guide that is downloadable with this unit.

Student Introduction:

Now you understand the difference between a folk dance and a dance form that is a fine art. You will be given tools to deconstruct the pieces of a dance. For example, you will be able to identify stage directions and spatial patterns as well as basic movements used in some of the folk dances you see.

Video Presentation:

Review the Handouts: Stage Direction and Spatial Patterns. When watching the video of folkloric dance, identify which of the forms you see. You are doing this in order to write a set of instructions with which you are going to create your own folkloric dance.

Picture Presentation:

**SLIDE SHOW 2 (Guillerman_Mexico.ppt)
Share pictures of Mexico with students. I have prepared and included a slide show presentation of my trip to five cities in Mexico during my month-long trip as a Fulbright Fellow. You may also choose to have students find articles and pictures current to issues in Mexico. This picture presentation and following discussion will be critical to the next step of this process.**

Creative Process:

After practicing identifying stage directions and spatial patterns, students should identify movements they see. They should add to their list pedestrian movements they want to include in their dance. From these elements, the teacher and students should create a set of instructions for building a folkloric dance. For example:

**Beginning Position
Ending Position
Number of Dancers
Number of Counts or Phrases
Spatial Patterns
Stage Directions**

PART 4: ANALYSIS

Discuss factors which may compel a person to create art.

Identify political and social factors in Mexico that influence artists.

Identify problems that may affect a Mexican and United States citizen's ability to create art.

Identify factors that may influence a Mexican and United States citizen's desire to create art.

Write the biography of an artist who created one of the works of art.

Part 5: SYNTHESIS

Create an original dance that follows the instructions created previously.

Rehearse and perform the dance.

Part 6: EVALUATION

Judge the dance performance based on factors pre-determined by students and teacher.

Evaluate whether choreographic directions were followed and are apparent in the final product.

Assess knowledge and understanding of the two forms of dance.

Reflect on what was learned, created and discovered throughout the project.

Part 1: HAND-OUTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Slide Show 1 (download Guillerman_BaileBallet.ppt)

**ArtesAmericas Mexico Readings: “Life in Mexico” and “The Arts”
(download AA_Mexico.pdf)**

Hand-out: Baile or Ballet: Reviewing Vocabulary (front and back)

Part 2: HAND-OUTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Hand-out: Venn Diagram

**ArtesAmericas Readings: Delfos Contemporary Dance and Ballet
Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez
(download AA_Delfos.pdf and
AA_AmaliaHernandez.pdf)**

Part 3: HAND-OUTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Video: Ballet Folklorico de Amalia Hernandez
*Or another folklorico video***

**Hand-out: Stage Direction
Spatial Patterns**

Slide Show 2 (download Guillerman_Mexico.ppt)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Baile or Ballet: Reviewing Vocabulary

1. Read the definitions below.

2. Fold the paper in half, vertically. Turn the paper over. Title column A "Folk Dance/Baile Folklorico." Title column B: "Ballet/Modern/Contemporary." In each column, list at least 5 facts you have gathered about those types of dance.

Folk dances are traditionally performed during social events by people with little or no professional training. New dancers often learn informally by observing others and/or receiving help from others. Folk dancing is viewed as more of a social activity rather than competitive, although there are professional and semi-professional folk dance groups, and occasional folk dance competitions.
"Folk Dance." Wikipedia

Baile folklórico, literally "folk dance," is a collective term for traditional Latin American dances that emphasize local folk culture.

Each region in Mexico, the southwest United States and other Central American countries is known for a handful of locally characteristic dances. The province of Jalisco, for example, is especially known for its jarabe, son and el baile de los sonajeros. The province of Guerrero is known for its sintesis and tixtla. Michoacán is known for its huetamo and "Historia del Traje de la Mujer Michoacana," a dance which depicts a local folktale (Alegria). Though the dances differ from region to region, the basic steps and style of dance are similar. Traditional bailes are characterized by a basic set of steps called zapateadas which involve percussive heel-stomping. *"Baile Folklorico." Wikipedia.*

Ballet is a specific academic dance form and technique which is taught in ballet schools according to specific methods... Ballet is best known for its unique features and techniques, such as pointe work and high extensions; its graceful, precise movements; and its ethereal qualities.
"Ballet." Wikipedia.

Modern dance is a dance form developed in the early 20th century. Although the term Modern dance has also been applied to a category of 20th Century ballroom dances, Modern dance as a term usually refers to 20th century concert dance. *Wikipedia*.

Contemporary dance, simply, can be thought of as a combination of ballet and modern dance techniques.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Baile or Ballet: Reviewing Vocabulary

Column A:

Baile Folklórico

Ballet/Modern/Contemporary

Column B:

Name: _____

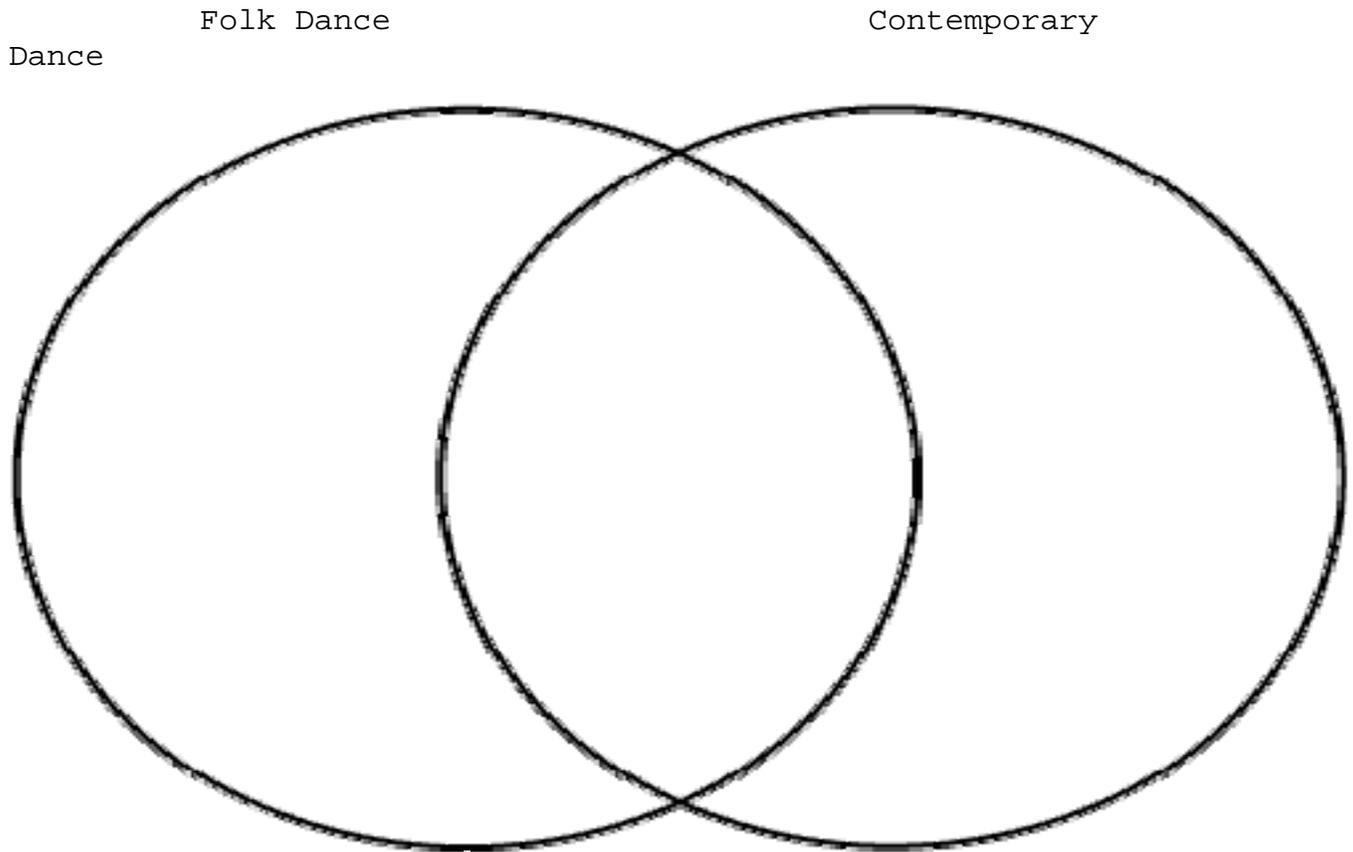
Date: _____

Assessment

VENN DIAGRAM:

Folk Dance & Contemporary Dance

*For the sake of this exercise, Ballet and Modern are in the Contemporary Dance category as Fine Arts.



How do you define or describe BAILE FOLKLORICO?

How do you define or describe BALLETT/MODERN/CONTEMPORARY DANCE?

What is one main difference between these types of dance?

Name _____

Date _____

STAGE DIRECTIONS

UPSTAGE

STAGE RIGHT

CENTER STAGE

STAGE LEFT

DOWNSTAGE

AUDIENCE

Name _____

Date _____

FOLD YOUR PAPER SO THAT YOU HAVE FOUR BOXES. CREATE A
DIAGRAM OF AT LEAST FOUR DIFFERENT STAGE DIRECTIONS AND
SPATIAL PATTERNS YOU SEE DURING THE BALLET FOLKLORICO
VIDEO.

Name _____

Date _____

FOLD YOUR PAPER INTO FOUR SECTIONS. CREATE A DIAGRAM OF AT
LEAST FOUR DIFFERENT STAGE DIRECTIONS AND SPATIAL PATTERNS
YOU WILL PUT INTO THE FOLK DANCE YOU CREATE.

Bibliography

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McGreevy-Nichols, Susan, and Helene Scheff. *Building Dances*. Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1995.

This book is an excellent introduction for teaching dance to beginners. It breaks down complicated information to its most basic levels. It also offers activities for the higher level student.

ArtesAméricas. Austin: University of Texas.

Beautiful and well-written documents that go perfectly with this lesson and are attached with links.

Arts Edge. The Kennedy Center ArtsEdge. 11 June 2007.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/>

This is my favorite Web site of curriculum inspiration and integration. It is easily navigated and provides lessons combining a multiplicity of subjects and grade levels. Additionally, it has

worksheets, assessment tools and hands-on, on-line lessons in which students can participate.

Covarrubias, Luis. *Regional Dances of Mexico*. Eugenio Fischgrund: Mexico, D.F. (no year).

This may be hard to find. This book however is one of few I have come across in English that describe the dances.

The Original and Only! Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández. Mexico: Martín Casillas de Alba, 2001.

A must-have for the teacher interested in teaching this lesson or about folk dance in Mexico. There are others, but because this is the most renowned company for preserving and exploiting these dances, it would be the most important to own.

Royal Academy of Dancing. *Step by Step Ballet Class*. United Kingdom: Contemporary Books, 1993.

I use the vocabulary and illustrations in this book when I am introducing my students to ballet. The pictures are thorough and descriptions are complete.