

These activities are designed for students to discover the elements of dance and movement. They are intended for use by classroom teachers during the school day and can be modified for any grade level. For ideas on how to customize activities or to have a PNB teaching artist visit your classroom, please contact PNB Community Education Programs at 206.441.2432 or kayti@pnb.org.

## ACTIVITY 1: Exploring Movement and Descriptive Language

**Learning Goal:** Students will describe and demonstrate different actions with varied movement qualities.

Ask students to generate two lists of words. The first will be a list of movement/action words. Challenge students to expand their list by asking questions such as, “What are different ways of walking? Jumping?” You can also show photos or videos of dancers or statues, and have them describe what they see. The second list will be of descriptive words. Depending on grade level, this might be a list you choose to produce on your own rather than brainstorm with students. Sample lists are below. We provided dance concepts as descriptive words.

### List 1: MOVEMENT WORDS

Run	Walk	TipToe
Gallop	Skip	Hop
Jump	Leap	Twist
Kick	Spin	Sway
Rise	Fall	March
Lunge	Float	Balance
Bend	Push	Shake
Stretch	Swing	Fly
Roll	Crawl	Wiggle
Prance	Strut	Reach

### List 2: DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

SIZE	(big, medium, small)
LEVEL	(high, middle, low)
DIRECTION	(forward, backward, up, down)
PATHWAY	(curved, straight, zig zag)
SPEED	(fast, medium, slow)
WEIGHT	(heavy, light)
ENERGY	(sharp, smooth, shaky, swingy)

Once students have created their lists choose a follow-up activity based on grade level and time:

**Option A:** Have students watch a short excerpt of a dance performance. Ask them to describe what they saw based on the lists. “What steps did the dancers do? Did they spin? On what level? How fast?”

**Option B:** Read a short paragraph or story. Ask students to brainstorm ways they could dance the story by corresponding verbs in the story to the different actions from their first list. Use the second list to determine how a movement should be done for a specific character or tone. For example, a character that is tired might march slowly. Finally, ask the students to do the movements as you read the story aloud.

**Option C:** Divide the class into two groups. One group will be dancers, the other choreographers. The choreographers will choose three movements from the list and ask the dancers practice them. The next step is to have the choreographers alter the movements by specifying different descriptors. For example, jump-kick-lunge becomes: jump fast-kick high-lunge sharply. The choreographers then become the audience. The final step is to have the choreographers become dancers and perform the steps with the opposite qualities (jump slowly-kick low-lunge smoothly) and discuss the differences. Why might a choreographer use different qualities for different stories or characters? Which movements are easier to do quickly? Slowly?

**Option D:** Activity 3 (See Below)

## ACTIVITY 2: A Shape Game

**Learning Goal:** Students will clearly describe the movements and/or shapes of others.

Have students stand in a circle around the room; desks can stay put if needed. Select two students to stand in the center of the circle facing away from each other. Ask one of these students to make an interesting shape. The other student must then try and recreate this shape using only verbal directions from the rest of the class (no peeking!). The students around the circle should describe the shape clearly and decide as a group when the two shapes sufficiently match.

Use the words from the [Activity 1](#) list to get them started:

- Is the shape on a High, Middle or Low level?
- Are the arms to the front, side, or back?
- Are the arms heavy or light?
- Are the fingers closed or open?

For an introductory lesson to this activity, download PNB's Vocabulary Activity, available at <http://www.pnb.org/Community/Teacher/ActivitiesForClass.aspx>



Photos by Bill Mohn

## ACTIVITY 3: Freeze Dance (Self & General Space)

**Learning Goal:** Students will dance in both self space (non-locomotor movement) and general space (locomotor movement).

Have the students make two lists of words – movements that can be done in place (self space) and movements that can be done traveling (general space). If you have completed [Activity 1](#), use these lists to get started. Some movements can only be done in one type of space. Are there any actions/movements that can be done both in self space and general space?

Create a clear space in the classroom and have music ready. When the music is playing, ask the students to dance the movements that you call from the list, alternating between self and general space. When the music stops, they must freeze. In absence of music, you can also use another cue such as a clapping rhythm, visual cue, or simply saying “freeze.” With clear parameters, the activity can also be done around desks and chairs.

Once this concept is mastered, you can elaborate by:

- Having students freeze in interesting shapes
- Having students add different levels to their shapes (high, middle, or low)
- Changing directions of the movements (marching backwards, jumping sideways, etc.)
- Changing speeds of the movements (jump fast, march slow, arms fast and legs slow, etc.)
- Add partners to movements and/or shapes (gallop together, freeze in shapes that go over and under one another)

Remind students that dancers do these activities silently. This is a good way to prepare students for listening skills when at the theater, as well as giving them a chance to try different dance steps and movements in a casual setting.

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## ACTIVITY 4: Choreographing an ABA Phrase

**Learning Goal:** Students will choreograph and share an ABA phrase.

This activity allows students to explore the role of a choreographer. First, explain to students what an ABA phrase is. Similar to music or poetry, an ABA phrase is when one movement or movement combination (A) acts as bookends for a dance or phrase of movement. A different, middle section comes in-between (B). Ask students why a choreographer might use an ABA phrase. Does the story start and end in the same location or with the same characters on stage? Does the music repeat?

Ask students individually, in groups, or as a class to create a unique ABA phrase. There are no wrong answers as long as the beginning and end are exactly the same. Encourage students to use movement lists from previous activities for ideas if they get stuck.

Ways to create an ABA dance include:

- Freezing in a shape, dancing for 8 counts, then freezing in the same beginning shape
- Galloping for 4 counts, jumping for 4 counts, then galloping for 4 counts
- Moving in self space for 12 counts, moving in general space for 8 counts, then back to self space for 12 counts
- Jumping fast, then slow, and ending with fast

Have students share their phrase in groups. Have half of the class perform their choreography while the others watch. After the dances are shared, have the students state what they saw objectively. (“I saw one dancer who moved very fast.” “One dancer made a great shape up high”). This is good practice for theater etiquette (silence, appropriate applause, and respect for the performer) as well as having the students engage in post-performance reflection. You may also have the students write a description of their dance which will give them a chance to translate movement to words.

## ACTIVITY 5: Make a Ballet

**Learning Goal:** Students will explore and understand the varied careers in the world of dance.

In this activity, students collaborate in small and large groups. As a group, decide what story you would like to tell as a ballet. Assign or elect 3-4 students to each of the jobs listed below. These are all jobs at Pacific Northwest Ballet! Give the groups of students a selected amount of time to complete their task. Students can share their work informally in group presentations or can put on a final performance if time allows!

**Artistic Director** – Responsible for deciding the theme/story of the ballet; provides guidance and works in collaboration with all other groups. Must be a good listener, decision maker, and collaborator.

**Choreographers** – Creates the movements and teaches them to the dancers. Must be a patient and clear teacher.

**Dancers** – Responsible for rehearsing and performing the choreography. Must be good listeners, observers, and act as the “instrument” for the choreographers.

**Set Designers** – Creates the look for the stage including lights, backdrops, and set. Must make choices based on the story and work collaboratively with the costume designer- should the same colors be used? What about the same time period?

**Costume Designers** – Creates the design for the costumes. Must collaborate with the set designers for overall look and choose costumes that are easy to move in.

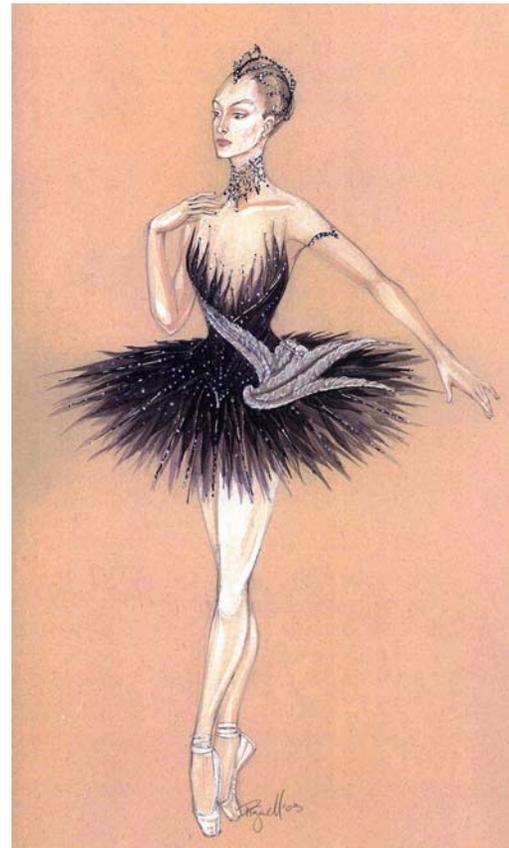
**Conductor** – Leads the orchestra and assists the choreographer in selecting music. Must choose music that correlates to the story and has a good tempo for dancing.



Choreographer Sonia Dawkins works with Pacific Northwest Ballet School students. Photo by Bill Mohn



Scenic design for George Balanchine's *Coppélia*  
Design by Roberta Guidi Di Bagno



Costume design for Kent Stowell's *Swan Lake*  
Design by Paul Tazewell