

NUREYEV: THE RUSSIAN YEARS

VIEWING GUIDE

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: As you watch NUREYEV: THE RUSSIAN YEARS, answer each question below using specific details, quotes, and information from the film.

1. Describe Nureyev's lifestyle as a child in communist Russia. Provide details about:

- his parents' political views
- his family's economic status
- how other children viewed/treated Nureyev
- his education as a dancer
- how he was influenced by American culture

2. Explain how his meeting with Leonid Romankov and his sister Liuba opened Nureyev up to new ideas and thinking while he was attending the ballet school in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in the late 1950s.

3. Because he was a famous dancer, how was Nureyev's lifestyle different from that of the average person in Russia? Provide specific examples.

4. Although Nureyev was the best dancer in Russia, the government deemed him "politically unreliable" and was less than enthusiastic about allowing him to travel outside of the country to perform. Provide specific examples of incidents that would have given the government cause for concern.

5. Discuss the film made by Nureyev's friend and ballet school classmate Teja Kremke in 1960 and how this film could have mentally prepared Nureyev to defect.

6. Why do you think the Soviet government allowed Nureyev to travel to France to perform in May 1961?

7. What did the Russian government do to try to ensure Nureyev would "behave" while in France and return to the Soviet Union?

8. Describe Nureyev's defection or "leap to freedom." as the newspapers headlines of the time called it.

9. Describe how each of the people/groups below reacted to Nureyev's defection, or how his defection affected them:

- Nureyev's father
- Nureyev's mother
- Teja Kremke
- Alexander Pushkin
- The Romankovs
- Ninel Kurgapkina
- Ghislaine Thesmar
- Pierre Lacotte
- The Communist Party/Russian government

10. Do you think Nureyev was happy with his decision to defect from Russia? Provide reasons and examples from the film to support your ideas.

11. Although Stax eventually went out of business, what legacy did the company and its artists leave behind, and why is it important to American culture?