

For Educators

Lesson Plan Overview: Grades 10-12

[Article 1: Pacific Dance Practices at Home and in the Diaspora](#) | [Article 2: Gender and Contemporary Dance in Oceania](#)

| [Activity One](http://dipsy.pbs.org/blackgrace/educators.html)<http://dipsy.pbs.org/blackgrace/educators.html> - sta

Introduction

Dance is an integral part of islanders' lives across the Pacific region also known as Oceania. Pacific peoples dance to tell stories, to record historical events, to transmit important knowledge, to illustrate relations within communities, to honor their ancestors, to have fun, and to express creativity and identity in a changing world. Dance has always been tied to island environments and often reflects how societies are organized, but in the contemporary Pacific many islanders have migrated to new lands.

In this lesson plan we explore traditional styles of dance as well as the ways in which Pacific peoples continue to tell important stories through new forms of dance such as modern or contemporary dance and hip hop. We reflect upon how performance reflects the relations between girls and boys, elders and youth, different ethnic communities, everyday life and people and the landscape. Drawing upon Pacific Islanders' experiences, students working in groups will produce a creative piece of their own reflecting their own classroom community, popular dance in the US, their own values, and the ways in which they relate to each other, teachers, parents, and society at large.

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Objectives

Students will research the role of dance in Pacific Island societies and learn about the history and characteristics of specific styles of dance.

Students will research the role of dance in American society and learn about the history and characteristics of specific styles of dance.

Students will compare and contrast the similarities and differences between how dance functions in the United States and in the Pacific Islands.

Students will consider how migration to new lands changes dance practices for Pacific Islanders.

Students will create a production of their own drawing on inspiration from the film and research and using their own cultural, local and regional reference points and experiences.

Students will reflect on whether dance is about the individual or the community and what it tells us about gender and social relations.

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Estimated time required

Activity One: Research

In class = 50 minutes

Homework = 2 hours

Activity Two: Peer exchange, planning and discussion

In class = 50 minutes

Homework = 2 hours

Activity Three: Rehearsal

In class = 50 minutes

Rehearsal time outside class = 3 hours

Activity Four: Performance

In class = 50 minutes

Activity Five: Reflection and review

In class = 50 minutes

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Materials required

Black Grace video and recommended videos

Black Grace website and recommended sites

CD Player or equivalent and music of students' choice

Sheets of paper for mapping exercises

Indoor or outdoor space for rehearsal and performance

Classroom activity procedure

Five connected activities are designed to produce a creative research, discussion, production and reflection process for students. The activities require in-class periods and homework including rehearsal time. Sufficient space is needed for classroom periods, rehearsal space for each group and performance.

Assessment suggestions

Assess students qualitatively based on individual participation, group research process, connections to resource materials, peer review and feedback, and the degree to which their final production reflects their creative process.

Extension ideas

Encourage students to explore dance in diverse cultural contexts and compare these to the kinds of dance they are used to engaging in or viewing at school, in their communities, and in the popular media. Why is it that all cultures dance? Is dance related to economic and political practices? Is it valued in your community? Does engaging in dance contribute to a person's sense of identity? Does it help with a person's confidence and creativity?

Brief author biography

Katerina Martina Teaiwa has a Ph.D. in Anthropology and is Convener of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. She is co-founder of the Oceania Dance Theater at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, organized Culture Moves! Dance in Oceania from hiva to hip hop, and is an advocate of integrating dance into the social sciences and humanities.

Useful Sites:

Dances of Life

www.piccom.org/dancesoflife

Culture Moves! Dance in Oceania from hiva to hip hop

www.hawaii.edu/cpis/dance

Tagata Pasifika coverage of Culture Moves!

http://tvnz.co.nz/view/video_popup_windows_skin/703537?bandwidth=128k

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STANDARDS (MCREL):

Theater Standards

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=12&standardID=5>

1. Understands how informal and formal theater, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning.
2. Understands how the context in which a dramatic performance is set can enhance or hinder its effectiveness. Identifies and researches cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts.

Behavioral Studies Standard 2: Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function

1. Understands how the diverse elements that contribute to the development and transmission of culture (e.g., language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs, values, behavior patterns) function as an integrated whole
2. Understands that groups have patterns for preserving and transmitting culture even as they adapt to environmental and/or social change
3. Understands that social groups may have patterns of behavior, values, beliefs, and attitudes that can help or hinder cross-cultural understanding

Dance Standard 3: Understands dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.

1. Understands how movement choices are used to communicate abstract ideas and themes in dance (e.g., isolation, relationships, poverty, the environment)
2. Understands how interpretation of dance can be influenced by personal experience

Dance Standard 4: Applies critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

1. Establishes a set of aesthetic criteria and applies it in evaluating one's own work and that of others
2. Formulates and answers one's own aesthetic questions (e.g., knows what makes a particular dance unique, how much one can change a dance before it becomes a different dance)

Standard 5: Understands dance in various cultures and historical periods

1. Knows the similarities and differences among various contemporary theatrical forms of dance (e.g., jazz, tap)
2. Knows traditions and techniques of classical dance forms (e.g., Balinese, ballet)
3. Understands how dance and dancers are portrayed in contemporary media

Language Arts: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=4>

Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, newspapers; government

publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; the Internet).

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/reference.asp?item=benchmark&BenchmarkID=493&subjectID=7>

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps).

Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand.

Working with Others

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=22&standardID=1>

Contributes to the overall effort of a group.

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LESSON PLAN

Teachers: Read the information on the Web sites listed below before starting your activity sequence with students. Also read the two essays related to the Black Grace video on this website:

[Pacific Dance Practices at Home and in the Diaspora](#)

[Gender and Contemporary Dance in Oceania](#)

Have several definitions of dance and choreography available before starting the process.

Operate with the general understanding that dance is the creative and often formalized art of non-verbal communication and that choreography is the art of arranging dance.

Activity One

Research

Divide students into 3 groups of approximately 5 or 6. If your class is larger, increase the numbers but make sure each group will fit into a final performance slot of 10 minutes. Describe each group as a research and performance community in which each student will have a creative task that will add to an overall group outcome.

A. In class conduct a discussion around these questions:

- What is dance?
- When do you dance?
- How does it make you feel?
- Does anyone in your family like to dance?
- Does anyone you know not like to dance?
- Do you know why?
- Do you associate dancing with boys/men or girls/women? Why?
- What are the most popular dance styles in your school, community, and country?
- Can anyone demonstrate these?
- What and how might dance tell us something about how people relate to their environment and each other?
- What kinds of training do you think professional dancers require and for how long?
- What are some popular American TV shows that focus on dance and what do they tell us about dance in the USA?

* Homework

Direct students in their groups to explore one or more of the following sites:

1. Research the role of dance in Pacific Island societies using:

Dances of Life website at <http://www.piccom.org/dancesoflife/>

Holo Mai Pele website at <http://www.piccom.org/holomaipele>

Culture Moves! Dance in Oceania from hiva to hip hop website at <http://www.hawaii.edu/cpis/dance>

A useful news story from New Zealand on Culture Moves! is also available online at http://tvnz.co.nz/view/video_popup_windows_skin/703537?bandwidth=128k

American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawaii at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/americanaloha/index.html>

After reviewing this students should be able to name 3 styles of Pacific dance, identify which islands and communities they represent, and say what they have learned about the history, practice and significance of dance for the communities.

2. Research the role of dance in American society using:

Free to Dance website at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/>

Hip Hop History 101 at <http://www.daveyd.com/historyphysicalgrafittifabel.html>

Great Performances at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/genre/dance.html>

More resources are listed at:

<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/curriculum/arts/dance/resources/danceculture.html>

Students should be able to name 3 styles of dance, identify which aspects of American society and history they represent, understand the development and social significance of particular styles, and reflect upon what they think dance means for performers.

3. Direct students to read “Pacific Dance at Home and in the Diaspora.” Based on what they learn, they should then reflect on what happens to dance when Pacific Islanders migrate from their homes to places such as the United States, New Zealand and Australia. Do islanders keep doing the same dances?

Activity Two

Discussion and planning

After completing their homework assignment, students should discuss their research findings and the article they’ve read. Have students compare and contrast the similarities and differences between what they think dance means in the United States and in the Pacific Islands. What have they learned about the kinds of dancing Pacific peoples are doing outside their home islands?

Give students 30 minutes to work in their groups to begin to map out their own dance production based on their own everyday experiences. By now they may have learned that dance in the Pacific is about:

- * everyday life
- * people’s relations to place and the environment
- * males’ relations to females
- * telling contemporary or historical stories
- * honoring their gods and ancestors
- * having fun, playing or joking
- * connecting to a new culture or country
- * expressing identity and gaining respect

Building upon their research, have the students collaborate with each other to create a dance production based on their own stories, experiences, everyday activities, neighborhoods and so forth. The story should be fairly familiar to one or more participants. Have each group come up with at least 1 warm-up exercise for their group. In some Pacific Islands, such as Samoa, this may involve rubbing hands together (the milimili) or clapping (pati).

Some themes for a dance production might be:

How a particular student's family migrated to the United States

The local neighborhood

Sports

The Prom

Cliques at school

A specific river/lake/garden/mountain

Relations between boys and girls

Relations between parents and children

Life in MySpace/Facebook/YouTube/Bebo/Teen Second Life

Why I love my I-Pod

Our favorite TV show

Any style of dance students choose is appropriate, and they can combine traditional cultural dances, street dancing, hip-hop, ballet, modern dance, or invent their own style.

The music they choose can also be of any genre, but the teacher should preview any music that students select to make sure that it is appropriate for use in a classroom setting. Movement with silence is also appropriate. Encourage students to have a story line. Brief dialogue can be included if necessary. Props and other materials are okay, but the emphasis should be on body movement. Each production should be no more than 10 minutes.

* Homework

Have students record their production plan on one page. Here is a template.

TITLE

RELATION TO PACIFIC DANCE

STORY LINE (IF APPLICABLE)

KEYWORDS/ CONCEPTS (IF APPLICABLE)

HOW THIS REPRESENTS OUR GROUP

WARM UP EXERCISE

MUSIC

PROPS

CREDITS (division of labor)

Activity Three

Rehearsal

Allow this period for students to rehearse their production. Space will be needed indoors or outdoors. Access to electrical outlets for music may be necessary. Battery operated CD players and I-Pods with mobile speakers will work too.

Find out what the technical needs of each group are, but encourage them to be low-tech, i.e. limited to mobile props and music player. You or someone else should be assigned to help with technical needs.

Remind students that they are not expected to be professional dancers or experts but that they should try to communicate a story, feeling, emotion, relations between groups, a place, or particular history through body movement.

Activity Four

Performance

Allow this period for the 3 groups to have 10 minutes each to perform. 20 minutes in total is used for technical needs. Ask members of each group to provide constructive feedback to other groups in verbal or written form.

Activity Five

Reflection

Have students exchange their individual feedback/ comments to other groups.

Have students with no formal dance training describe their experiences. Have students with formal dance training reflect on how this was similar or different to their experiences.

* Ask the groups:

Why did you select this particular theme for your production?

How does it relate to the Black Grace video?

Did everyone feel comfortable throughout the process? Why or why not?

What did you learn from trying to connect to Pacific dance through your own production?

Is dance about the individual or the community?

Is dance about history, people, places and relationships or about fun, rhythm and movement?

Did you choreograph together or did someone take the lead?

What part did boys or girls play in the production?

Do boys and girls dance in the same way? How are styles of body movement for boys or girls similar or different?