

## Choreography Activities

PA Standard - 9.1: Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Arts

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Try out [Basic Ballet Positions!](#)

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### Mime in Ballet

Resources: [Mime Vocabulary](#)

In ballet there is no dialogue. A story ballet relies primarily on pantomime for exposition; it helps convey the story. In *The Nutcracker* we see mime in several places:

- In the party scene, the father tells everyone it's time to dance
- When the Sugar Plum Fairy greets Marie in Act 2, she asks Marie and the Nephew, "Why are you here?" And she tells Marie that she is beautiful and will give her a crown.
- In Act 2 the Nephew retells the story of the battle and how Marie saved him.

In ballet, there is a standard mime vocabulary used by every ballet company. For example, a dancer from Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and a dancer from New York City Ballet would mime the word "love" in a similar fashion. However, based on the character and the role he/she is playing in the story, each dancer may embody the gesture differently. The Mime Vocabulary sheet explains some basic mime gestures.

Activity 1: Charades: For individuals or small groups: review Mime Vocabulary and practice select movements. Students select terms to share with the class WITHOUT using words. Have students in the audience guess which gesture they are making based on their sheet. After they have correctly guessed, be sure to ask all students to perform the gesture together as a class.

### Sidecoaching Suggestions:

- Encourage students to analyze their movements and explore all possibilities. Show all the different ways we "point" to ourselves (for "I") or that we could "hold up two fingers high" (for "promise"). What seems to represent the idea the clearest?
- What could the rest of your body be doing during these mimes--legs, arms, face? Show us what the idea is with these other body parts (especially the face!).

### Reflection Questions for Part One--Exploring Mime Charades

- How did you have to change your communication when you weren't allowed to talk?
- Quick check: What were 3 of the most interesting mime gestures students performed and why?

### Activity 2: Create your own mime story!

In small groups, students will create a story using just mime movements using one of the variations below. Allow students 5-10 minutes to create a story using the 6 movements. After the students have completed their short movement stories, share with the class.

1. Choose 6 movements from the Mime Vocabulary sheet to create a story.
  2. Students can be given random terms and must create a story from the terms.
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Analyze the “Sugar Plum Pas de Deux”

Resources:

[“Sugar Plum Pas de Deux” video](#) on YouTube, American Ballet Theatre (the pas is (00:00 - 11:45))

Characteristics of Classical Ballet:

- Stresses prescribed steps and academic technique
- Women dance on pointe
- Turn-out of the legs and hips
- Upright torso
- Graceful, flowing movements
- Symmetry
- Precision, exactness, clarity of movement
- Athleticism

1. Review classical ballet characteristics. Watch the video and discuss how the movement that we see in the pas de deux can be characterized as classical ballet. Give specific examples.

2. Classical ballet pas de deux have a standard structure - the entrance (featuring both dancers), variations (or solos) by each dancer individually, and a coda, where dancers return to dance together once again. Have students identify each section and the characteristics that each dancer displays.

3. Musicality is the ability of the dancer to express the notes of the music with their movement. Where do we see examples of this in the pas de deux?