

CULTURAL DANCE- Flamenco Dance

Objective: Students will be exploring global culture through dance, and will be able to demonstrate an expanding interest and knowledge of cultural art forms originating with indigenous traditions around the world.



Background information: Use a Map or a Globe!

Flamenco is a traditional Spanish dance that requires both poise and elegance. The art form developed over several centuries from Gypsy, Moorish, Andalusian, and other roots. The baile grande, especially, is believed to retain elements of the dance of India, where the Gypsies originated. This dance is a blend of the cultures of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, India, Ancient Rome, and classical Spain.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion:

Choreograph: to design a series of movements for a dance.

Materials: video screen with speaker(s) and internet access.

Opening Activity: Show students this TEDx Talk by Flamenco Dancer and Dance scholar Alice Blumenfeld: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nQYQQcxHf0> Note: this video is 16 min long- the first 6 and a half minutes are JUST DANCING. Then, at 6:50, she transitions to describing the dance as a dialogue with the musician. Or, this TEDx Talk by flamenco musician Kristofer Hill and dancer Julia Chacon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCpjPWWQB3s> This video is much shorter and you could watch just the first 4 minutes for the value of the conversation that will follow. *This is a really neat idea: is dance a language?* If so, how does that work? When you watch a really powerful dancer, do you notice that your own feelings are touched? Is dance a way to communicate feelings, or not? If not, why not? Did you notice how the movements make a percussive sound, similar to STEP?

Core Activity: First, demonstrate the 3 basic Flamenco dance steps: the tap, stamp and heel flutter. So a basic A Tap is a stepping movement of the foot in 2 parts: toe-heel. To tap: place the ball of the foot on the floor, and then bring down the heel: TOE- HEEL, then repeat with the other foot TOE-HEEL. A stamp (correctly known as a 'flat') is where you quickly bring the foot down in contact with the floor, with the heel and toe landing on the floor at the same time to create one single loud stomp noise. Last of all beginner moves, with feet together, bend your knees and lift 1 heel slightly off the ground: you will be fluttering your heels to create a sound like drumming on the floor, pushing the heels down side by side in a drum roll by shimmying your knees! Hands will rotate at the wrists, and arms will be posed and moving around the body at the will of the dancer- again, Flamenco is a language. Often a powerful, passionate way of communicating, but it can also be softer, more melodic. Instruct students to create a short choreography to describe their current feeling using taps, stamps, and heel drumrolls, and then strike a pose with your feet and finish the communication with their arms.

Reflection: What can you say with your body? What ideas are easier to communicate through movement than with words? What ideas are easier to communicate with words? Do you think dance is a kind of sign language? Why or Why not?