

Cultural Music and Movement

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Overview

This unit is intended to focus on the two expressive art forms of music and dance. The unit will explore how African American music affects our body movements in dance. Although there are many different types and styles of music, this unit will reference the black style known across several generations as race music.

One of the goals of the unit is to understand some of the meanings and influences of African American music and dance. We will discern the impact of music with identity and self-expression in dance. We will concentrate on the African American styles of dance movement that music generates with the body and how people have performed to that music for centuries. The mystique that drives the rhythmic movements in dance through the music is what we will investigate.

Dance and the elements of dance become infused with the music. Dance is performed ceremoniously and sometimes ritualistically with the African American music we listen to and perform. African American music is sometimes manifested in dance, traditionally on occasions such as wedding parties, holidays, spiritual or religious ceremonies, funerals and other customs. Dance and music can be used to communicate many things. Music can convey with rhythm and sound a mood or feeling that creates movement. The music facilitates movement of the body that can reveal interpersonal feelings and relationships. This unit will help our students to develop an appreciation for African American music and how it enriches our lives. The work will include different genres of African American music and dance, underground and mainstream.

Rationale

Dance is one way that people view themselves as “individuals” and music can be a catalyst. In this unit we will be considering how our bodies experience dance with African American music in our community. We learn from music at an early age in all cultures. With this knowledge we will examine how African American music is expressed in movement. The core of this unit will incorporate some of these creative and

expressive experiences. For example, students will listen to African and African American music and view videos of African and African American dance. This will be an effective tool to give the students valuable knowledge about these topics.

This research approach will provide students with insight to how and why we listen to music and what it adds to our identity throughout life. We will examine dances that have traditional forms of African and African American movements as well as African and African American genres of music. A five-lesson unit will focus on the manners in which music affects us and how that feeling makes us move to that music. The background information on music and dance introduced in these lessons will be general in nature due to the targeted students. The knowledge that students learn in numerous styles will be supported in this unit.

This unit was created to focus on traditional learning outcomes of critical thinking and discourse. It can also give teachers additional materials to complement what they have been provided to make use of in the classroom. The materials in these lessons will specialize in personal development to meet the needs of students. The approach will encourage students to create from their own individual styles. The instruction will center on the student, not the technique or materials. The student will have ample time for warm-up and rehearsals (practice time).

This unit will incorporate multimedia (e.g. video, cds) and web resources to give students information on the different genres of African American music and dance they can use for their dance compositions. They will have access to these materials in class. We will videotape a class practice of the routines to allow the students to view and build upon their work. Feedback and consultation will be given during class from the teacher.

Objectives

This unit is written for fifth and sixth grade students but may be adapted to upper grade levels. The students will meet once or twice a week for 45 minutes each class period over the course of the semester. Some lesson may take two class periods. The students will not be music or dance major students but will have general prior knowledge of music and dance.

The theme of this unit will have the students explore African American music through physical, emotional, and social dimensions. The purpose is to engage the students and guide them in realizing that customs and traditions of self-expression are universal but can be celebrated in diverse ways. The students will come dressed for dance and the materials will be available in class.

The objectives of this unit include the following:

- The students will be able to develop and maintain an optimal level of physical fitness.
- The students will be able to complete movements: fundamental, creative, expressive and communicational.

- The students will learn dance techniques and be able to execute these techniques in a performance.
- The students will be able to work individually and in groups during class.
- The students will be able to identify various genres of African American music and dance.
- The students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of how music affects our bodies through dance.
- The students will be able to identify their own musical style and showcase how it conveys their identity.
- The students will be able to display a variety of skills to create a dance routine to African American music.
- The students will be able to develop and express movement in a three-minute composition.
- The students will be able to present their own collaboration of dance with music performed by African American artists.

Strategies

The students will present in this class with varied backgrounds in music and dance.

- The students will be encouraged to contribute a successful activity of their own design and creation.
- The students will have ample time for warm-up, practice time, and rehearsals.
- The students will work individually and in small groups to collaborate during class.
- The students will be able to videotape class practices of their routine so they can view their performance and build upon their work.
- Feedback and consultation will be given during class.
- The students will demonstrate a mandatory three-minute composition to their personal style from the framework timeline of African American music genre.

Background

In Africa and African American culture it has been said that music and dance may be considered the same art.

From Africa to America

The earliest history of African dance is known to have dance play a very important role in everyday life. Africans used dance to celebrate special occasions such as birth, marriage and other rites of passage. They also used it to emulate everyday events such as planting and harvesting crops. Africans were taken from many nations with different languages, religions and art traditions. African dance not only reflected the culture, but also showed the dancer's abilities to tell the stories of a culture. (Glass, p. 3)

African dances are largely participatory, with spectators being part of the performance. With the exceptions of spiritual, religious or initiation dances, there are traditionally no barriers between dancers and onlookers. Even ritual dances often have a time when spectators participate. Many dances are performed by males or females, indicating strong

beliefs about what being male or female means and some strict taboos about interaction. Performances could be dances that celebrate the passage from childhood to adulthood or for spiritual worship. (Glass, p. 4-6)

Types of Dances

- Dances of Welcome
- Dances of love
- Warrior dances
- Coming of age dances
- Rites of passage dances
- Dances of possession and summoning

When slave traders brought Africans to the Americas, the slaves danced in order to stay close to their roots. Slave owners banned the dancing. Because the definition of dancing was to lift your feet, the slaves adapted and began using shuffling movements waving their arms and moving their torsos

(http://www.ehow.com/about_5526590_africanamerican-dance-history.html).

With dancing being prohibited at the onset of slavery, some of the first practice dances were the shuffling dances where the feet did not leave the ground but were glided instead of being raised, thereby masking their activities. From the plantation dances enslaved Africans used to express their tragedy and triumph to the ever-changing fluid motions of modern dance, black rhythmic movements are now integral in the fabric of American culture. (Glass, p. 3-7)

African Dance Movements

African Dance Formation

African dance moves all parts of the body in contrast to many European forms that rely mostly on arm and leg movement. Angular bending of the arms, legs and torso; shoulder and hip movement; scuffing, stamping and hopping steps; asymmetrical use of the body and fluid movement are all part of African dance. Pelvic movement and shaking of the hips, which horrified eighteenth century Europeans, resonated with the deeply felt African interest in fertility of both people and land. (Glass p. 16)

Orientation to the Earth

The African dancer often bends slightly towards the end, flattens the feet in a wide solid stance and flexes the knees - compare this to traditional European ballets' upright posture with arms lifted skyward and feet raised up onto the toes. The African stance also reflects work postures, especially agricultural labors. (Glass, p. 16)

Improvisation

Within the patterns and traditions of age-old dance forms, an African felt free to be creative. A dancer could make an individual statement or give a new interpretation to a familiar gesture. (Glass, p. 16)

Circle Line Formations

Circle dances are dance movements that are used as a protective seal that only allows the energy generated to flow within the circle. Lines, or circles, of dancers, perform many African dances as with the vigorous, fast moving circles and lines of Dogon dancers as well as the slow procession of Egungun dancers in Yoruba land. In North America, some of these traditions coalesced in the ring shout, in which worshippers move around in a counterclockwise circle to the singing of a song. (Glass, p. 18-19)

Polyrhythms

African music included several rhythms at the same time and Africans could dance to more than one beat at once. Dancers could move their shoulders to one beat, hips to another and knees to yet another. In African American music, this rhythmic complexity with a basic ground beat and counter beats played against it formed the basis for ragtime, jazz, and rock and roll. (Glass, p. 21)

Pantomime

Many African dancers reflect the motions of life. Dance movement may, in a stylized fashion, imitate animal behavior like the flight of the egret, reenact human task like pounding rice, or express the power of spirits in whirling and strong movements. (Glass, p. 21)

Percussion

In much of Africa, percussion dominates the music and often as the leading instrument. Often a master drummer sets a central beat and other drummers interpolate additional rhythms around that beat. In America, enslaved Africans used a broad range of percussive instruments including drums. (Glass, p. 21)

Something in Hand

African ritual dance makes use of special objects, including masks and costumes, staffs, whisks, pieces of cloth, and other items. In America, African Americans continued to use sticks or staffs, cloths and other items in dance. (Glass, p. 21)

Competition

Competing through dance is a widespread custom in West and Central Africa. In America in the 1700s and 1800s the tradition survived in all sorts of challenge dances: buck dancing contests in minstrels and other traveling shows; in cakewalk contest in which dancers perform for a prize of cake; break dance rivalries in which young men asserted their acrobatic performances; in jitterbug competitions where young couples demonstrated their speed and coordination; in step shows in which African American Greek letter societies showed off signature moves on college campuses. (Glass, p. 21)

African American Dance Movements

The Ring Shout

The Ring Shout is the oldest continuously practiced African derived dance in the United States. Most likely an amalgamation of several African circle dances, it is also the oldest African American religious dance. The Ring Shout clearly included circle formation, polyrhythms, pantomime, and community participation. Orientation to the earth was important, for shouters bent slightly forward as they moved around the circle.

Syncopation, a dominant element in much West African music, was part of the rhythm of a shout. The shout represented a variety of resilient African musical and dance traits that transformed themselves to reappear again and again in African American cultural arts.

(Glass, p. 40-41)

The Cakewalk

The Cakewalk dance was where plantation slaves often competed against one another to be named the most agile and charismatic dancer. The winner usually received some trinket from the slave owner. The most revered dance was a couple's dance for which the winner received cake. The Cakewalk allowed dancers to strut along, back and forth, in their finest clothing with their shoulder postured in an exaggerated backward sway. The Cakewalk soon found its way into white social life, as various interpretations of it, as well as the shuffle and a host of other plantation inspired dances permeated American culture. The Cakewalk was an elegant dance with well-dressed men and beautiful women forming graceful couples and moving to ragtime music. (Glass, p. 156-160)

Minstrel and Vaudeville

African American entertainers were able to enter the minstrel show in very small numbers in the 1850s. At the time, show-business was one of the few professions open to blacks. It was a big break when show-business started. The objectives were first, to make money to help educate the younger ones, and second to try to break the ill feeling that existed towards black people. For younger stars, seeing a professional black performer who was well dressed, confident and able to show off his talent on stage was a compelling experience. (Glass, p. 124-133)

Jig (Negro)

A dancer or dancers showed off original or improvised steps surrounded by a circle of community members. Some of these members provided music for the dancer with banjos, drums, makeshift instruments and/or clapping. The dancer's torso was often bent forward, and knees were raised high in kicks or powerful stamps. Scuffing and sliding moves were as important as speed. (Glass, p. 106-111)

Buck Dance

Buck Dance is similar to the Jig, where the feet were close to the earth, doing scuffing, sliding movements, often with audible taps. Most body movement was from the hips down, although this stance was still Africanist. Lots of dancers made the dance's sound by sprinkling sand on the stage and dancing on it. (Glass, p. 120)

Tap Dance

Tap dance, a lighter and higher version of the old Buck Dance, blossomed into countless variations on stage. No sky oriented vertical posture; the body was now in a more curved, stance infused with both energy and control. In tap there is a two-bar segment referred to as “the break” for solo improvisation. (Glass, p. 100-109, 120-123)

Lindy Hop - Jitterbug

The Lindy also owed something to the Break Way, a dance that included both the Charleston steps and classic breakaway moves. In the Lindy there are moments when the dance couple swings apart and each dancer inserted their own improvised steps. The Lindy – Hopper or rhythm tap dancer is allowed to insert anything, no holds barred, into their improvisation. The Lindy became known as the Jitterbug in 1935, when some 4,000 couples Lindy Hopped to the beat of Swing music. A news writer called them Jitterbugs. Lindy Hopping to Swing music was called Jitterbugging. (Glass, p. 247-252)

Greek Stepping

The Step Show is an African American performance act first developed within fraternities and sororities in historically Black colleges and universities. It is a group or unison form, incorporating dance steps, singing, chanting, percussive clapping and dramatic elements. The societies step in competition with each other, exhibiting signature steps and styles, community, solidarity, percussion, polyrhythms, improvisation, use of special objects, line formation, and a host of other African American performance characteristics. (Glass, p. 282-284)

Hustle

The Hustle was a partner dance that drew on the old box step as well as Latin forms. Dancers assumed a vertical posture and tilted their pelvises backward rather than forward. The man led, the women followed and both dressed up for the occasions. The Hustle was also performed as a line dance. (Glass, p. 273-275)

Break Dance

Today, we know the dance form as Break Dance or Breaking or B-Boxing, named for the break beats in the music as the D.J. remixed - the cadenced rhyming, fast-talking, epic mode of rapping with improvisatory form, punctuated by “locking.” Locking involved old-fashioned freezes called locks when the dancer became immobile in poses. The body “locked” for an instant and then unlocked into movement. Popping is a separate style in which segments of limbs were isolated, muscles are flexed and body parts are shaped into new directions and shapes. All of this occurs to the beat while creating a jerky motion that is yet graceful and aesthetically pleasing. (Glass, p. 279)

Hip Hop

Hip Hop is a street phenomenon, a folk art in which Black and Latino young people were able to express their ideas and personalities. The dancing includes freestyle drops and spins. Dancers go down on the beat and come back up on the beat. (Glass, p. 276)

Classroom Activities:

Lesson 1: Introduction of African American Music

Objectives: The student will be able to identify different genres of African American music. The student will be able to examine an African American music timeline spanning from Africa to present day in America.

Materials/Resources:

- Music CDs
- CD player
- Timeline charts
- Vocabulary target list
- Dance card
- Computer
- Pencils

Procedures: Prior knowledge assessment discussion (to discover the genres of music the students enjoy, the methods used to listen, feeling evoked, whether the music prompts dancing). The students will review a handout of the vocabulary target list. The background introduction will be general due to the length of information and targeted audience. The student will watch videos of African and African American dance.

Strategies/Teaching points: The student will discuss the music they have just learned about. They will contemplate ways to incorporate the music in dance; allow the students to explore different techniques, communication, emotion and interpreting personal style into expanded creative dance.

Closure/culminating activity: Review of possible music choice for use in individual compositions, the musical genre each student makes the strongest personal connection with, journal on emotional connection. Questions.
This lesson may take two or three class periods.

Lesson 2: How does the music make our bodies move from slavery/Africa?

Objectives: The students will examine how music makes people feel and how our bodies react while listening. The student will explore their personal dance formations to several different genres of African American music.

Materials/Resources:

- Music CDs
- CD player
- Vocabulary list
- Timeline charts
- Composition Outline (video)
- Computer

Procedures: Working in small groups, the students will listen to their selection of African American music from the timeline to choreograph techniques to that genre of music. Students will decide what the music elicits, the emotion they wish to express, what connection they have with the music (love, sadness, happiness, joy, anger, fear, etc.) They will convey that emotion in their routines.

Strategies/Teaching Points: The students will discuss what they would like to reveal in their dance compositions. They will choose their musical selection for the dance style that was depicted in the timeline. They will review safety within the dance sequence in reference to energy, space and time.

Closure/Culminating Activity: Discussion of how music and dance was used in society to convey different messages, thoughts and feelings between individuals and groups in African and African American culture. This lesson may take more than one class period.

Lessons 3 and 4: How dance can be used to communicate what the music elicits.

Objectives: The student will be able to break down the functional steps of the dance timeline.

Materials/Resources:

- Music CDs
- CD player
- Timeline charts
- Outlines
- Computer
- Videos
- VCR
- Television
- Pencils

Procedures: The students will begin viewing videos of choreography techniques to develop movement. After viewing video of African American dance steps for rhythm, timing, synchronization of movement, space, direction and levels, students will develop their dance story.

Strategies/Teaching Points: The students will be able to recognize how the dance is used in movement. The students will also have practice time during class. The students will work individually and/or with teacher assistance if needed.

Closure/Culminating Activity: Students will start to monitor their progress and review basic dance steps. Address any questions.

Final Lesson: Presentation of dance performances

The students will present their finished compositions. They will receive evaluation from the instructor and feedback from peers. This may take more than one class session.

Assessment Rubric

Points	Comment
5	Outstanding
4	Very Good
3	Good
2	Making Progress
1	Needs Improvement
0	Not Completed

Assessment will be made through observation. The lesson will culminate with a student/teacher survey of the video. Students will also have an opportunity to teach their new dance to the class and to perform other student dances they have learned.

Adaptations:

Change in music speed

Improvisation

Journals (Dance card)

Discussion and collaboration

Student Handouts

African American Music Timeline

Pre-19th Century

- 1600 – Work songs, Field Holler, Call and Response, Play songs, Dance songs

19th Century

- 1800 – Folk Spirituals, Cultural Spirituals
- 1880 – Rural Blues, Ragtime
- 1890 – Folk, Gospel, Brass Bands

20th Century

- 1900 – Gospel Hymns, Vaudeville, Boogie Woogie, New Orleans Jazz Bands
- 1920 – Folk Jubilees, Early Urban Jazz Bands
- 1930 – Traditional Gospel, Swing Bands, Big Bands
- 1940 – Gospel Groups, Urban Blues/Rhythm, Bebop
- 1950 – Rock & Roll, Soul, Modern Jazz,
- 1960 – Rock, Soul, Cool Jazz, Protest
- 1970 – Urban Gospel, Disco, Funk, Fusion, Jazz, Latin
- 1980 – Reggae, House, Electric Funk, Techno
- 1990 – Rap, Gospel, Hip-Hop, Smooth Jazz

African American Dance Timeline

Pre-19th Century

- 1500 – Ring Shout

19th Century

- 1800 – Cakewalk, Black Bottom
- 1880 – Jig, Buck Dance
- 1890 – Tap

20th Century

- 1900 – 1920 Charleston, Lindy Hop, Swing
- 1930 – 1940 Swing, Jitterbug
- 1950 – 1960 Latin Dances, Greek Stepping, Twist, Animal Dances: Dog, Monkey, Chicken, Bunny Hop
- 1970 Twist, Cha Cha, Hustle Bump
- 1980 – 1990 Vogueing, Moonwalk, Break Dancing, Cabbage Patch, Hammertime
- 2000 – Present Line dancing, Chicken Noodle Soup, Improvisational Street Dances, Wu Tang, Cat Daddy

Vocabulary Target List*

Africanisms: something that is characteristic of African subculture or tradition

Art music: classical music from European to African contributors; music that tries to achieve higher musical standards

Ballet: orchestral dance; classical dance form demanding grace and precision and employing formalized steps.

Black music: colored music, race music, cultural music

Bamba: a Puerto Rican musical style; rhythm and beat are played by hand drum; Bamba dances are a challenge between dancers and drummers to a synchronized beat.

BeBop: A jazz style associated with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie

Blues: a song that is marked by the frequent occurrence of blue notes and that takes the basic form of a twelve-bar chorus.

Break dancing: a style of acrobatic dancing originating in the mid-1970's often performed to rap music; street dances with intricate footwork, pantomime, spinning, headstands, tumbling and elaborate improvised movements.

Call and response: a style of singing in which melody sung by one singer is responded to or echoed by one or more singers; interaction between speaker and listener

Choreograph: to manage, maneuver or direct to compose the steps and dance for a piece of music, ballet or musical

Choreographer: one who works as a composer of dance steps in a musical or video

Form: a manner, method or style shape, arrangement or design in the arts; a point of view of its shape or sound rather than meaning

Gospel: music that has a personal testimony; music that addresses religion, pertaining to or proclaiming the gospel.

Hip-hop: the popular subculture of big city teenagers, which includes rap music

Jazz: a music of the people, now is art music; style of dance music popular in the 1920s, arranged for a large band

Melody: single tones in musical composition as distinguished from harmony and rhythm

Minstrel: one of a troupe of comedians, usually white men made up as black performers; presenting songs, jokes, etc.

Pantomime: the art and technique of conveying emotions, actions, feelings, etc., by gestures, often without speech.

Polyphony: many sounds, melodies overlapping

Ragtime: A style of American music; a rhythm in which the accompaniment is strict two-four time and the melody with improvised embellishments is in steady syncopation.

Rap: to talk rhythmically to the beat of rap music.

Reggae: a style of Jamaican popular music blending blues, calypso and rock and roll characterized by a strong syncopated rhythm and lyrics of social protest.

Ring shout: a religious dance

Salsa: known for its sensual hip action and sexy flair, a Latin dance that is gaining popularity.

Spiritual: A type of religious song originating among Black slaves in the American South.

Swing: A style of jazz, especially popular in the 1930's and often arranged for a large dance band.

Vernacular: the language or vocabulary peculiar to a class or profession.

Zambo: Offspring of Negro man and an Indian woman

* All definitions retrieved from www.dictionary.com

Dance Card (5x8)

Name _____

Date _____ **Title** _____

Room # _____

Style of Dance: _____

Music Genre: _____

Composition Time: _____

Emotions you will express and why: _____

Standards

The Core Curriculum of the Philadelphia School District also aligns with the Pennsylvania State Academic Standards of Health, Physical Education, Safety and Dance.

- *Physical Education Standards*
 - K.M.1 Move in personal and general space
 - K.M.2 Move in various directions upon command
 - K.M.5 Balance on various body parts in various positions while static and moving
 - 1.F.3 Perform three phrases of involving developmentally appropriate activities
 - 1.M.4 Perform locomotive skill: hopping, jumping
 - 3.M.3 Explore the aesthetic and creative qualities of movement
 - 4.F.1 Perform level of fitness standard
 - 4.F.4 Complete a 45-minute physical education class without fatigue
 - 4.F.7 Complete an interval training workout of appreciate activities
 - 4.M.2 Create patterns and combination of movement in repeatable sequence
 - 6.M.2 Participate with a group in creating a movement activity or dance
 - 7.M.2 Perform contemporary social dance

- *Dance Standards*
 - 6.M.2 Participate with a group in creating movement activity or dance
 - 7.M.2 Perform contemporary social dance

- *Music Standards*
 - 1.M.1 Move responsively to music (walking, marching, hopping, skipping and swaying, etc.)
 - 5.M.1 Recognize a steady beat, accents and downbeat, a simple rhythm patterns and syncopation patterns

Bibliography

Teacher Resources

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Annotated Bibliography

- Glass, Barbara S. African American Dance: an Illustrated History. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2007. Print
Great source for background information, with useful poems and pictures.

www.articlebase.com

“How to Dance the Nago African Healing Dance”

Learn about the history of African dance. This is a good video of dance steps and the meaning of the dances.

www.ehow.com/video_2388733_history_african_dance.html

Web Resources

www.Africanmusic.com

www.ExperienceAfrica.co.uk

www.Africa.si.edu

www.Columbia.edu/libraries

www.wacheva.com/k12.htm

www.articlesbase.com

www.ehow.com/video_2388733_history_african_dance.html

Student Resource

PBS Kids Jazz Site

www.pbskids.org/jazz/index.html