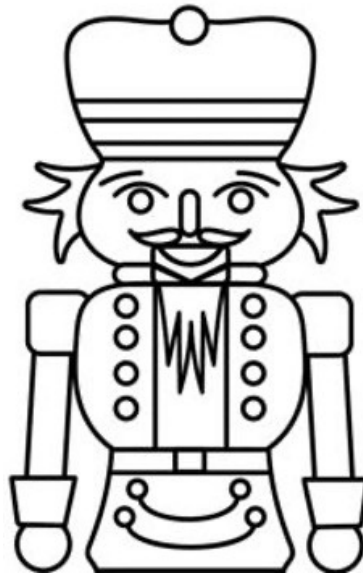




GENERATION
INEXT
EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Ballet San Antonio®
THE NUTCRACKER
(3-5) EDUCATOR
GUIDE



Charline & Red McCombs
ARTS EDUCATION FUND
The Tobin Center

Educator Guide

Created by: Dr. Kimberly Stephenson & Grace Featherston

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Table of Contents

3	Ballet San Antonio & Performance Information
4	Welcome to the Show!
5	A Short History of The Nutcracker
8	Did You Know...?
9	Ballet San Antonio's Production of The Nutcracker
10	The Nutcracker and Tchaikovsky Timeline
12	Vocabulary
13	Coloring Pages (Draw Your Own Tutu, Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier, Nutcracker)
16	Main Characters
18	Cross Word
19	Word Search
20	Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions
21	Writing Connections
22	3 rd - Data and the Land of Sweets: Dances from Around the World
26	4 th - Ornament Engineering
29	5 th - Candy Chemistry
33	3 rd - 5 th - Sugar Detective: Sugar, Nutrition Science, & The Land of Sweets
37	Book Suggestions
39	4 th - Plot Twists & Pirouettes: Exploring Story Structure through The Nutcracker
43	Theatre Etiquette
44	Sensory Friendly information
45	Answer Keys
47	Tobin Center for the Performing Arts and Generation NEXT

NOTE

In this guide, we focus primarily on Act II of The Nutcracker. This Act may be performed without children and allows our young artists to remain in school for the day.

Ballet San Antonio®

The mission of Ballet San Antonio, a professional ballet company, is to share the splendor of dance through diverse artistic performances and outreach programs that reflect, promote, and enrich the cultural heritage of the South Texas community. BSA holds an uncompromising commitment to continually attract and nurture exceptional professional dancers, create distinctive performances, and make dance accessible to the widest possible audiences through partnerships with local organizations.

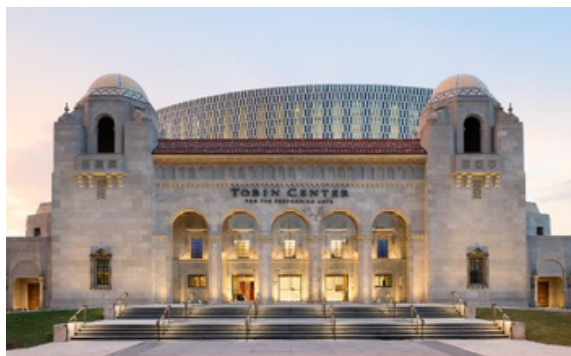
Ballet San Antonio is one of the Resident Companies
of the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts.
Balletsanantonio.org

The Nutcracker

- Youth Performances (traditional lighting and sound, house lights lowered)
 - Sensory Friendly Performance (sound adjusted, house lights not completely lowered)
 - Performance: 1 hour long
 - Recommended Audience: 2nd - 6th; MS / HS: Dance, Theatre, and ELA
-

Location:

Tobin Center for the Performing Arts
100 Auditorium Circle
San Antonio, TX 78205
www.tobincenter.org



Welcome to the Show!



Welcome to the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts!

We are thrilled to have you join us for Ballet San Antonio’s spectacular production of The Nutcracker. For generations, this magical ballet has captured hearts and imaginations, becoming a treasured holiday tradition in San Antonio, Bexar County, and communities around the world.

Here, you will step into a world of twinkling snowflakes, dancing sweets, and timeless music—a world where artistry, athleticism, and storytelling come together to create memories that will last a lifetime. We hope this performance inspires curiosity, sparks creativity, and invites you to see how dance can tell stories without a single word.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ballet San Antonio for bringing this enchanting story to life with such beauty and dedication. Their commitment to excellence and passion for the arts enriches our community and gives our audiences—especially our students—the gift of live, professional ballet right here at home.

May this experience leave you inspired, filled with wonder, and eager to explore more of the performing arts.

With joy,

Dr. Kimberly Stephenson

Director of Education

Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



Valero Sensory Friendly Program



SUPPORTING PARTNERS



A Short History of The Nutcracker

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was a famous Russian composer known for writing beautiful and emotional music. He created some of the world’s most beloved ballets, including *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*.

Tchaikovsky started studying music seriously in his 20s and became known for blending Russian melodies with European style. His music is full of feeling—sometimes joyful, sometimes dramatic—and it is still performed all over the world today.

Although he was shy and often struggled with sadness, his music brought joy to millions. His *Nutcracker Suite*, with pieces like *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* and *Waltz of the Flowers*, is especially popular during the holiday season.

The Nutcracker is a two-act ballet composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and first performed in 1892. It is based on an 1844 adaptation by Alexandre Dumas of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1816 story, “*The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*.” The ballet depicts a Christmas Eve celebration where a young girl’s nutcracker doll comes to life and takes her on a magical journey. While the ballet was not an immediate success, the music, *The Nutcracker Suite*, gained popularity, and the ballet itself became a widely performed and beloved holiday tradition after a while. By the late 20th century, *The Nutcracker* had become a winter holiday favorite around the world.

Reference:

Unknown photographer. (c.1880–1886). Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky [Photograph]. Library of Congress.

● The Story:

The Nutcracker story revolves around Clara, a young girl who receives a nutcracker doll as a Christmas gift during a Christmas Eve party. During the party, Clara's brother damages the doll, and Clara wraps his broken arm. After the party, the doll comes to life and, with Clara's help, battles an invading Mouse King and his army. During the battle, the Nutcracker becomes overwhelmed and is knocked down. All seems lost when Clara bravely intervenes, throwing her slipper. This turns the tide, and Clara, the Nutcracker, and the toy soldiers win the battle. A spell is broken, and the Nutcracker is magically returned to his true form: a prince! The grateful prince invites Clara to see his home, the Land of Sweets. There, the Prince and Clara tell the Sugar Plum Fairy about the battle and their success, and the entire kingdom gathers to celebrate their victory, Clara's bravery, and the return of the prince. After a thrilling celebration, she returns home just before morning and wakes up, wondering if it was all a dream.

Act I: the party, the battle, the invitation, and the journey to the Land of Sweets

Act II: the celebration, the return home

● The Music:

Tchaikovsky's score is famous for its beauty and is a major part of the ballet's appeal. The Nutcracker Suite, a selection of pieces from the ballet, was premiered before the full ballet and became very popular. This helps the ballet eventually become successful.

● The Themes:

Core Themes in The Nutcracker

1. Imagination and Fantasy

- Clara's dreamworld blurs reality and imagination, taking her on a magical journey.

2. Courage and Bravery

- Clara shows courage when she helps defeat the Mouse King and protects the Nutcracker.

3. Transformation and Growth

- The Nutcracker becomes a Prince, and Clara matures through her experiences.

4. Wonder and Celebration

- The Land of the Sweets celebrates joy, beauty, and cultural variety through dance.

5. Good vs. Evil

- The battle between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King reflects classic heroism.

● **Early Productions:**

The ballet premiered in Russia in 1892 but did not achieve immediate popularity in its complete form. Audiences did not like the choreography and found it confusing. One of the reasons was the number of children on stage and the idea of a production told from a child's point of view. Over time, different choreographers adapted the dances to make them more fun and interesting. A few changed the choreography to suggest the story was a love story.

● **American Popularity:**

In the late 20th century, The Nutcracker's popularity grew in the United States. Many major ballet companies put on successful performances. The ballet's popularity was also boosted by its inclusion in Disney's "Fantasia." When George Balanchine's version began to be performed, the ballet became part of the United States' holiday traditions.

● **Nutcracker Dolls:**

The Nutcracker doll has a history as a folk art and Christmas decoration well before the ballet. Nuts were expensive, and nutcrackers were used to crack open the shells, making them a special gift for a special treat. The Nutcracker doll traditionally looked like a toy soldier with a fierce face. Lifting the bottom of the coat tail behind the toy opened the mouth. The nut was placed inside the mouth, and then the coattail was pushed back down, cracking the shell. Most nutcrackers today are made as decoration and are not sturdy enough to crack a nut, even if the parts move in the traditional way. The ballet, however, popularized the nutcracker doll as a holiday symbol in a brand-new way.

● **How Do Nutcrackers Work:**

The nutcracker doll was traditionally made of solid wood and was designed to look like a soldier with a fierce face. Lifting the lever hidden in the bottom of the coat behind the toy opened the doll's mouth. The nut was placed inside the mouth, and the coattail was pushed back down, closing the mouth and cracking the shell. Most nutcrackers today are made as decoration and are not sturdy enough to crack a nut, even if the parts move in the traditional way.

Did You Know? — The Nutcracker Edition

- 1... **the original Nutcracker ballet was not an instant hit?** When The Nutcracker premiered in 1892 in St. Petersburg, Russia, audiences were not impressed. It only became a holiday favorite many years later—especially after it was introduced to American audiences in the mid-1900s.
- 2... **The Nutcracker is based on a spooky fairy tale?** The ballet is adapted from a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann titled The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, which was much darker and more mysterious than the cheerful ballet most people know today.
- 3... **Tchaikovsky used a brand-new instrument in the music?** The sparkling sound of the celesta—a keyboard instrument that sounds like tinkling bells—was first used by Tchaikovsky in “The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy.” It was so new that he kept it a secret until the premiere!
- 4... **many versions of The Nutcracker have different lands in Act II?** While most people know about the Land of Sweets, some productions feature unique lands like the Kingdom of Flowers or even modern reinterpretations like Candy Cities or Dream Realms.
- 5... **children are the stars of many Nutcracker productions?** In most performances, the roles of Clara, Fritz, and many of the party and battle scene characters are played by young dancers, making The Nutcracker a special tradition for ballet students around the world.
- 6... **some versions of The Nutcracker call the main girl Clara, and others call her Marie?** In E.T.A. Hoffmann’s original story, her name is Marie Stahlbaum, but in Alexandre Dumas’ French adaptation—the version Tchaikovsky used—she was renamed Clara. Different productions choose one name or the other, depending on the version of the story they follow.
- 7... **San Antonio has about 25 performances of The Nutcracker each year!**

Ballet San Antonio®

Ballet San Antonio's (BSA) The Nutcracker – Production Highlights

Ballet San Antonio's (BSA) annual The Nutcracker, choreographed by Haley Henderson Smith and Easton Smith, unfolds each year at the Tobin Center's H-E-B Performance Hall with a stunning, multi-generational cast. Each production features the professional company (26 dancers) and a children's cast of over 100 local youth, alongside community heroes in the role of Mother Ginger.

Onstage, audiences are transported from a lavish Christmas Eve party into the Land of Snow and the Land of Sweets, enhanced by live music from the Orchestra San Antonio (TOSA), breathtaking snowfall effects, resplendent costumes, and more than 350 lights that illuminate each dance passage. Signature highlights include the Snow Pas de Deux, the vibrant national dances (Spanish, Chinese, Arabian, Russian), and a show-stopping Waltz of the Flowers, performed with precision and grace by both professional and emerging dancers.

By engaging children as both performers and audience members, Ballet San Antonio cultivates a strong community connection. Their offerings include a student-matinee featuring Act II and a sensory-friendly performance of the full ballet—designed to make dance accessible and magical for all.

BSA's Digital Backdrops & Projections

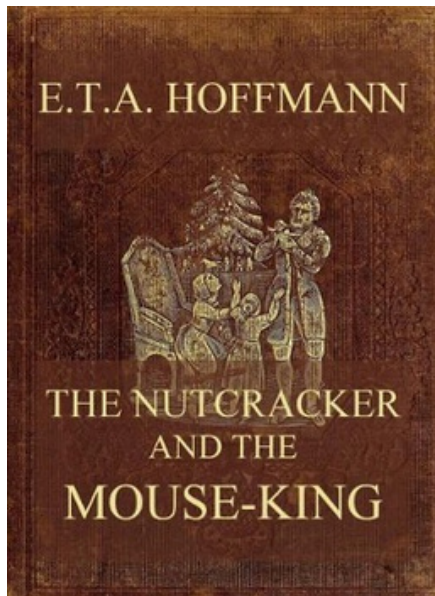
Ballet San Antonio uses high-resolution projections to transform stage settings:

- o Victorian parlor for the Stahlbaum family's Christmas party.
- o Snow-covered night landscapes during the Land of Snow sequence.
- o The vibrant, whimsical Land of Sweets/Candy Kingdom in Act II

Effectively, these scenic projections create a magical backdrop that changes with each scene—portraying snowflakes falling, the grandeur of the palace, and the sweet delights of various cultures. It enriches the visual narrative and supports the ballet's emotional tone.

An Interpretation is when a new version of a story is created, creating new meaning from a creative work. Every ballet is a work of interpretation by the team of directors, choreographers, costumers, light and sound technicians, each working together in collaboration to go from design to finished concept. Ballet San Antonio's interpretation of The Nutcracker is unique, powerful, and a brand-new telling of a timeless fairy tale.

The Nutcracker & Tchaikovsky Timeline



1816

E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" (Nussknacker und Mausekönig) is published.

1840

Tchaikovsky is born in Votkinsk, Russia, on May 7.

1844

Tchaikovsky begins composing music at the age of four.

Alexandre Dumas retells Hoffmann's "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" as a short story.

1865

Tchaikovsky graduates from the St. Petersburg Conservatory and begins his career as a composer. His music blended Russian folk melodies with European classical forms.

Reference:

Hoffmann, E.T.A. (1853). The Nutcracker and the Mouse King [Book cover illustration]. D.Appleton & Company. Image retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: File: Nutcracker and Mouse-king (1853) (14778830311).jpg

Hoffmann, E.T.A. (1816). Nußknacker und Mausekönig [Title vignette illustration]. In Kinder-Märchen (Vol. 1). Verlag der Realschulbuchhandlung. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Retrieved from Staatsbibliothek digital collections

1877–1876

Tchaikovsky composes two famous ballets:

- Swan Lake (1876)
- Sleeping Beauty (1890)

Both show his talent for emotional and dramatic music.

1891

Tchaikovsky begins work on *The Nutcracker*, based on a fairy tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann and adapted by Alexandre Dumas.

December 18, 1892

The Nutcracker ballet premieres in St. Petersburg, Russia. Audiences love the music, but the ballet itself receives mixed reviews.

1892

Tchaikovsky creates *The Nutcracker Suite*, a selection of eight musical pieces from the ballet. It becomes an instant hit in concerts—even more popular than the full ballet at first!

1893

Tchaikovsky dies suddenly at the age of 53, just one year after *The Nutcracker* premiered.

1940

Disney's *Fantasia* premiered in New York City, featuring segments of the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Tea, the Dance of the Reed Flutes, the Coffee, the Trepak, and the Waltz of the Flowers (but none of *The Nutcracker* characters, only the music).

1940s–1950s

The Nutcracker gains popularity in the United States, especially after the San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet begin performing it every December.

Today

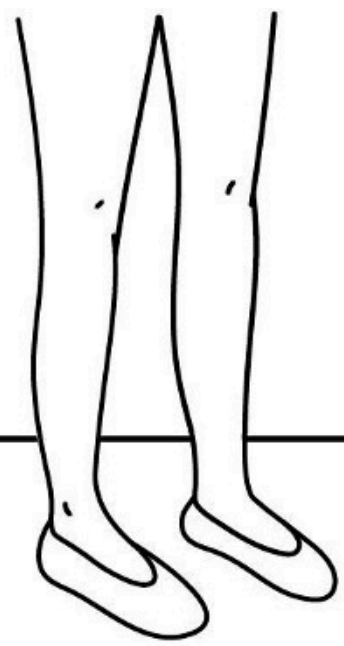
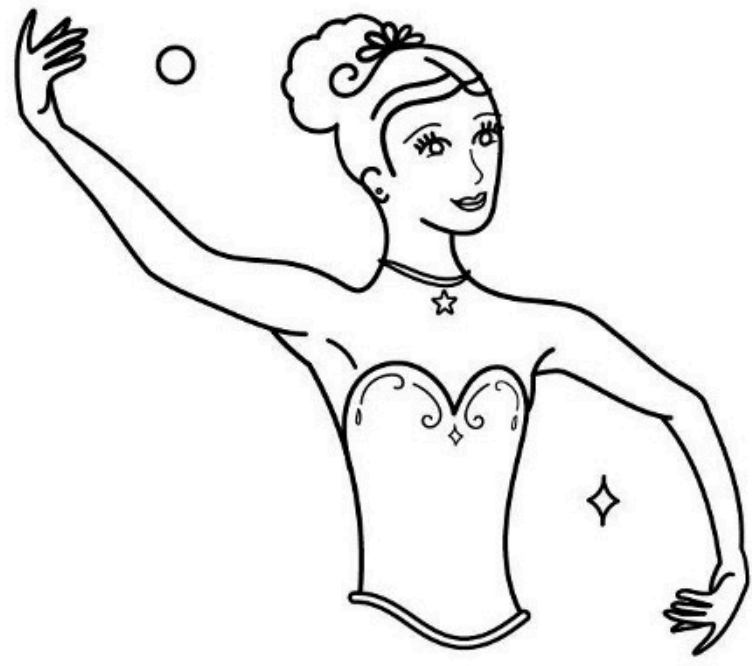
The Nutcracker is one of the most performed ballets in the world, especially during the holiday season!

Vocabulary:

Term	Definition
ballet	An artistic dance form performed to music using precise and highly formalized set steps and gestures
suite	a collection of shorter, independent musical pieces designed to be played in a sequence
choreographer	a person who creates the sequence of steps and moves for a dance
choreography	the sequence of steps and movements in a dance
pas de deux	a dance for two performers, usually a male and female dancer, where they perform steps together and usually show off a high level of skill or artistry
ballerina	a female ballet dancer
cavalier	The principal male dancer who partners with the ballerina
prima ballerina	The principal female dancer in a ballet or ballet company
scene	a clear and distinct section within a performance, often defined by a mood, style, or part of a story
en pointe	a part of ballet dancing where a dancer, usually a female, supports their entire body weight on the tips of their toes
pointe shoes	A specialized type of ballet shoe designed to help a dancer balance on the tips of their toes. These shoes allow dancers to create the illusion of weightlessness and have a distinctive, stiff, box-like area at the toe. Pointe shoes are often <u>custom-fitted</u> to each dancer's unique foot shape, distributing weight and minimizing the risk of injury to the foot, toe, and ankle.
costume	a set of clothes worn as a disguise that makes you look and feel like someone or something else
tutu	Part of a female ballet dancer's classical costume, a skirt made of multiple layers of fabric. There are two basic forms of tutu: Classical: short, stiff, and projecting straight out from the dancer's waist Romantic: long, soft, draping in a bell shape from the dancer's waist



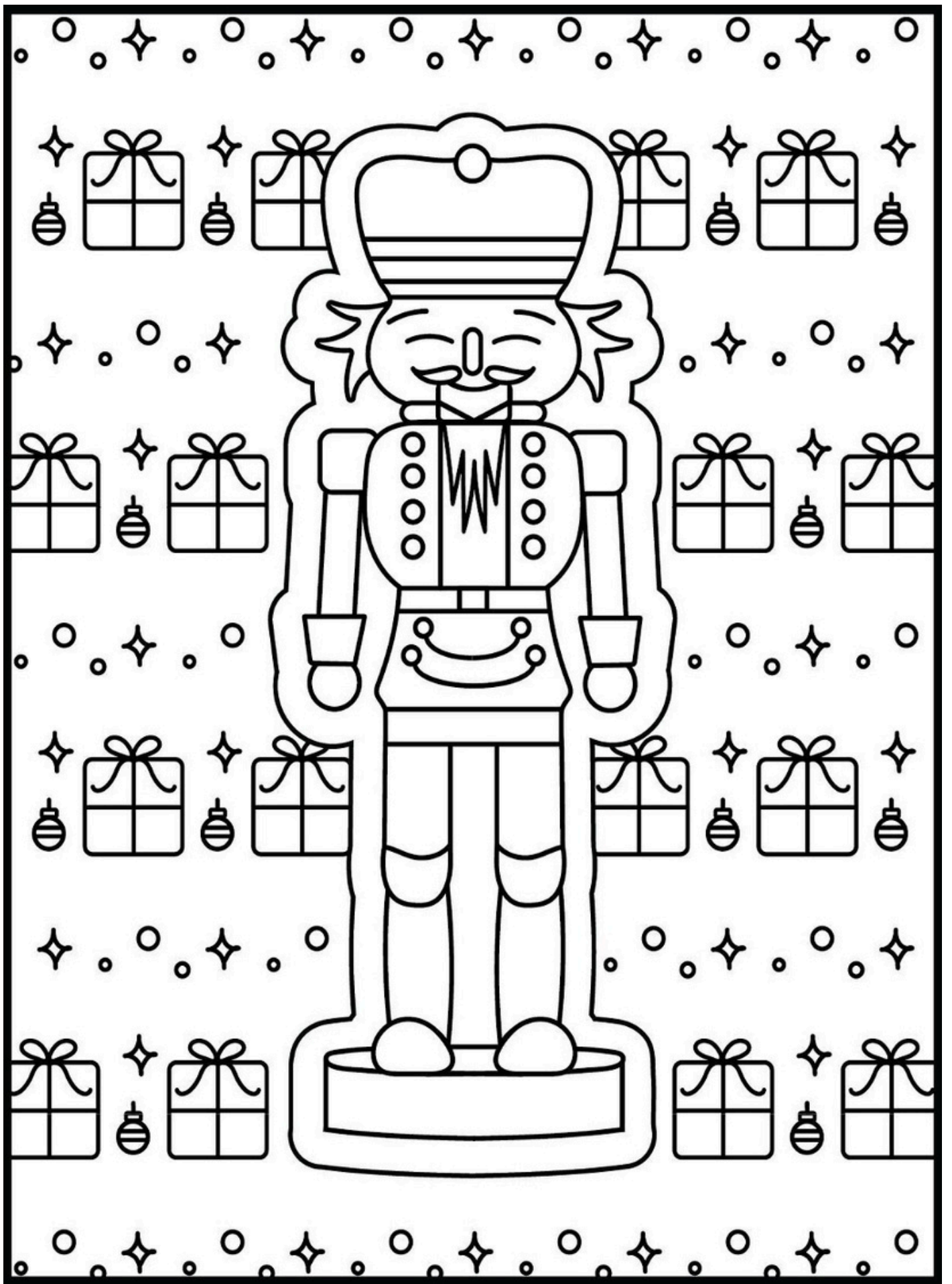
Fill In The Ballet Dancers Tutu!



THE NUTCRACKER

THE NUTCRACKER





Main Characters:

Name	Who They Are
Drosselmeyer	a mysterious and magical man, often described as Clara's honorary uncle or godfather, and a talented toymaker
Clara (Marie)	The main character of <i>The Nutcracker</i> , a young girl who receives a magical doll and then has a fantastic journey through a battle, into the Land of Sweets, and back again
Fritz	Clara's younger brother, an energetic boy who plays with The Nutcracker doll without permission, and then accidentally breaks the toy
Nutcracker / Prince	A toy, given to Clara as a gift, which comes to life and bravely battles the Mouse King. A magic spell is broken and the toy turns into an enchanted Prince.
Mouse King	Sometimes shown as having as many as seven heads, the frightening leader of the mice cast a spell on a prince, turning him into a nutcracker doll. Upon learning Drosselmeyer has brought the doll to Clara, he arrives with a fierce army to fight The Nutcracker once and for all.
Sugar Plum Fairy	The ruler of the Land of Sweets and a symbol of magic and wonder. The Sugar Plum Fairy's music features a celesta, a keyboard instrument that plays small, tinkling bells.
Dancing Snowflakes	A group of glittering dancers who create beautiful patterns of swirling, falling snow through which Clara and the Nutcracker Prince must safely pass as they travel to the Land of Sweets. This scene often features a children's choir along with the orchestra.
Chocolate (Spain)	The Spanish dance utilizes lively trumpet music and castanets, reflecting the passion and flair of flamenco, a traditional Spanish dance form that combines guitar, vocals, and intricate footwork.
Coffee (Arabia)	The Arabian dance is inspired by Middle Eastern and Egyptian traditional dances and includes a rich, slow oboe solo. The costumes often include veils, flowing fabrics, and jewelry like ankle bells. Arabian coffee is rich and thick and is brewed with sugar, rather like the Sweet Tea of the southern United States.

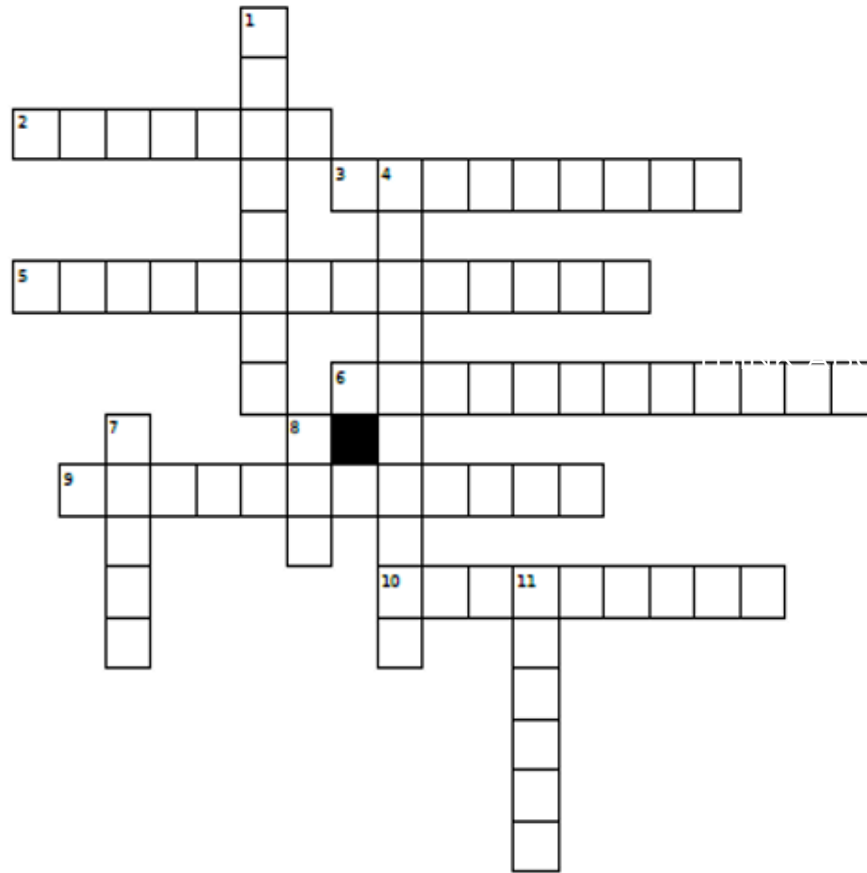
Name	Who They Are
Tea (China)	When <i>The Nutcracker</i> ballet was created, Tea from China was rare and expensive. People would store tea in locked boxes called "caddies." In some performances, the tea dancer will pop out of a tea caddy when the dance begins. In others, the dance is a duet, features oil-paper umbrellas, or is a lion dance instead of a traditional ballet. The music for this scene features piccolo, bassoon, and pizzicato (plucked) strings.
Candy Cane (Russia)	The Russian dance, called "Trepak," is based on a traditional Russian and Ukrainian folk dance of the same name. The choreography features high-energy movements like stamps, claps, jumps, and knee bends, and rapid notes in the strings and woodwinds.
Marzipan (France)	The French dance, sometimes called "Reed Flutes" or "Mirlitons," draws inspiration from marzipan, a sweet treat popular in France that is sometimes eaten by itself and sometimes a filling for cakes or pastries. A mirliton is a simple, tube-shaped flute that has a delicate, airy sound.
Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles (Bon Bon babies or little cookies)	Mother Ginger represents Germany, where gingerbread comes from. She is a cookie or candy jar and is filled with a batch of cookies or candies, played by young children. In the 1890s, a popular Russian candy tin was shaped like a woman in a large skirt that opened at the bottom to reveal the candies. Because Mother Ginger does not "dance" much in the ballet, the part is sometimes "gifted" to a special or important person from the area where the ballet will be performed.
Dancing Flowers and the Dew Drop	A dancing bouquet gathered to honor Clara with a fairy-like dancer who leads the flowers in celebration. This scene sometimes features ladybugs, dragonflies, butterflies, bees, and snails.

Just like movies, books, paintings, and videos, DANCE is a way to tell stories.

Just like a picture or a painting, DANCE tells stories without words.

Just like a book, or a painting, DANCE uses symbols (movements) that can be decoded, read, and understood.

Nutcracker Characters



Down

1. Country of origin for the elegant “Marzipan” shepherdess dance.
4. Brave defenders who battle the Mouse King in Act I.
7. Villain with multiple heads in some versions; enemy of The Nutcracker.
8. Country represented in the “Tea” dance with quick, delicate movements.
11. Mysterious dance from the Land of Sweets often called “Coffee.”

Across

2. Featured soloist in the Waltz of the Flowers.
3. Home of the lively “Trepak” dance in Act II.
5. Whirling dancers who welcome Clara to the Land of Snow.
6. Sweet treats sometimes portrayed by dancing children.
9. Young heroine who travels with The Nutcracker Prince.
10. Country of the spirited “Chocolate” dance.



Word Search Key: Pg. 46

Y S F C D P E L X L T B E E M
 L P T E A O A U E C P A T T I
 Q A E B H N E E H S A L N I R
 X I N S E D D A L R R L I U L
 W N D D E V I Y B R T E O S I
 E A U D O K F A I R Y T P I T
 S O S T O F L D R E A M X F O
 P A B V C L S C E L E S T A N
 P R S O E R R W A O E S U O M
 U K I R G U A R E T R E P A K
 Y E I N S N A C U E I O J S B
 A N V S C L I A K L T Q L J L
 A N I H C E S K P E O S Z O M
 J A Y H P A R G O E R O H C S
 R E I L A V A C T E P M U R T

Word Bank

Nutcracker	ballet	Tchaikovsky	Mouse King	Suite
Clara	celesta	Land of Sweets	choreography solo	pas de deux
fairy	prince	party	ballerina	cavalier
Sugar Plum Fairy	pointe	shoe	dream	mirliton
castanets	oboe	Trepak	candy	celebration
Russia	Spain	France	China	Arabia
leap	pirouette	plie	tendu	releve
		arabesque		saute

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

What comes to mind when you hear the name The Nutcracker?

What do you already know about the story or characters?

What kinds of dances or music do you think you will see or hear in this performance?

Have you ever read The Nutcracker and the Mouse King or seen a ballet version before? How were they alike or different?

What questions do you have about the story, the music, or the dancing?

Why do you think this story has been performed for so many years around the world?

How might the story change if it were told in a different country or culture?

TEKS - ELAR: 3 110.5(1)ABG; 4 110.6(b)(1)1A-D, (6)A-E, (7)AOC, (9)D; 5 110.7(1)ABG

Post-Show Discussion Questions

What part of The Nutcracker performance stood out to you most, and why?

Which dance or scene did you enjoy the most? What made it special (music, costumes, colors, or movement)?

What did you see that you expected? What surprised you?

How did the performers show emotion or tell the story without using words?

What do you think was the main idea or theme of this performance?

How was this version of The Nutcracker the same as or different from other versions you've read, seen, or heard?

What questions do you still have about the story, music, or dancing?

How did this performance make you feel, and what do you think the choreographer wanted the audience to feel?

TEKS - ELAR: 3 110.5(1)ABG; 4 100.6(b)(1)A-D, (6)A-E, (7)A-C, (9)D, (10)A-C; 5 110.7(1)ABG

Teacher Notes

- Encourage students to use complete sentences when responding.
- Support discussion with visuals (photos, storybook pages, or costume sketches).
- Use sentence starters such as:
 - “My favorite part was...”
 - “The performance made me feel...”
 - “I noticed that...”
 - “This reminds me of...”

Writing Connections

- Create your own advertisement for the performance.
- Write a review of the performance.
 - Include a show synopsis in your own words.
 - Include at least three positive comments.
 - Include one or two critiques / suggestions for improvement /something you would have liked to have seen in the performance that was not there.
- Describe a favorite moment.
- Create a poem or story based on the show you just saw.

NOTE: Any of the pre- or post-show discussion questions could be reworded to a writing connection.

TEKS – ELAR:

Skill Area	3rd	4th	5th
Foundational Language Skills	110.5(1)ABC	110.6(b)(1)(A–D)	110.7(1)ABC
Respond to Sources	110.5(7)ABCDEF	110.6(b)(6)(A–E)	110.7(7)ABCDEFGH
Literary Elements	110.5(8)ABCD	110.6(b)(7)(A–C)	110.7(8)ABCD
Recognize & Analyze Genre	110.5(9)ACD i–iii, E i–ii, F	110.6(b)(8)(A–C, E, F)	110.7(9)5ACD ii, F
Author’s Purpose & Craft	110.5(10)ABCDEF	110.6(b)(9)(A–F)	110.7(10)ABCDEF
Composition: Writing Process	110.5(11)AB i–ii, CD i–ix, E	110.6(b)(10)(A–B i–ii, C–D i–ix, E)	110.7(11)AB i–ii, CD i–ix, E
Generate Questions	110.5(13)ACDEF	110.6(b)(10)(A–B i–ix, E)	110.7(13)ACDEF

3rd Grade Activity – Data and the Land of Sweets: Dances from Around the World

TEKS: Math 3.8B; Social Studies 3.5B

Objective: Collect and graph data on dances and countries.

Materials:

- Act II dance list
- World map and globe
- Data collection sheet (country, tempo, instruments, cultural traits)
- Graph paper or digital graphing tools
- Country fact cards or atlases

Printable Handouts:

- Data Collection Sheet (columns: Country | Dance Name | Tempo (Fast/Slow) | Instruments | Costume Descriptions | Cultural Notes)
- Graph Template (e.g., Bar Graph: Country vs. Tempo or Country vs. Duration)

Instructions:

1. Watch & Discuss:

Watch short clips of Act II dances from The Nutcracker. Talk about each country's traditions.

- How do the costumes show something about that culture?
- How does the music sound — fast, slow, loud, or gentle?
- What instruments do you hear?

2. Collect Data:

Record details about each dance — country, tempo, instruments, costume, and style — on your data sheet.

3. Graph & Compare:

Create a bar graph or pictograph using your data. Compare which dances had fast or slow tempos, or which countries were represented the most.

4. Reflect:

Write or share your thoughts:

- What did you notice about the connection between dance and culture?
- How are the dances similar or different?

Assessment: Completed graphs and written reflection.

Extension Options (Optional):

- Locate each country on a world map and mark it with a dance symbol.
- Create a class data wall showing global connections through movement and music.

Act II Dance List:

Scene	Who and What
The Land of Sweets	Clara and The Nutcracker Prince are welcomed to The Land of Sweets by the Sugar Plum Fairy.
Clara and The Nutcracker Prince	Clara and The Nutcracker Prince dance together to celebrate their victory over the Mouse King, impressing the Sugar Plum Fairy with their bravery and teamwork.
Chocolate	A lively and energetic Spanish-inspired dance.
Tea	A charming and delicate dance, often with a playful feel.
Candy Cane	A spirited and athletic dance, often with fast footwork and lots of leaping.
Dance of the Reed Pipes	A lighter, more whimsical dance.
Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles	A humorous dance with a large character and small dancers emerging from her skirts.
Waltz of the Flowers	A lush and grand waltz, featuring a larger ensemble of dancers, showing great elegance and beauty.
Pas de Deux	The Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier dance for Clara.
Final Waltz	The entire company dances then says goodbye to their special guests.
Final Scene	Clara wakes, finds her toy nutcracker beside her, and wonders if it was all a dream.



Data and the Land of Sweets: Data Collection Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: As you watch each dance from Act II of The Nutcracker, fill in the chart with details about the country represented, the dance style, music, instruments, tempo, and costumes.

Country	Dance Name	Tempo (fast/slow)	Instruments Heard	Costume Description	Cultural Notes

Reflection Prompt: How do the music, instruments, and costumes in these dances help represent each country's unique culture?

Dance Tempo Bar Graph Template

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Use your data from the International Dance Data Collection worksheet to create a bar graph. Choose one category to graph:

- Option A: Number of fast vs. slow dances by country
- Option B: Instruments heard in the music of each country

Bar Graph Title: _____

Country/Dance											Total
Spain											
China											
Russia											
Arabia											
France											

Color in boxes to represent tempo or time units; adjust scale to fit.

Reflection Prompt:

Which dance had the fastest tempo?

Which had the slowest? _____

What patterns do you notice across diverse cultures?

4th Grade Activity: Ornament Engineering

TEKS: Science 3.5C, 4.6C, 5.6C; Engineering Process Standards; Physics Concepts (Force, Balance, Stability)

Objective: Apply physics and engineering design principles to create ornaments that are creative, balanced, and illustrate symmetry.

Materials:

- Paper clips, pipe cleaners, string, and fishing line
- Small craft sticks, cardboard, foam shapes
- Beads, buttons, washers, paper shapes
- Glue, tape, scissors
- Rulers, hole punches
- Balance test setup (wooden dowel or pencil on a stand or finger test)
- Balance scale or stand (optional)

Instructions:

1. Engage: Begin with a discussion on what makes an object hang straight. Explore concepts of center of mass, symmetry, and gravitational pull using visuals or simple demos.

Demo:

- Show a basic mobile or ornament.
- Ask: “Where do you think it balances? Why?”
- Use the string and finger test to find the center of mass.

2. Design Challenge: Students sketch and label their ornament design with predictions on how it will balance and where the weight will be distributed.

3. Construction: Build ornaments using craft materials. Encourage the use of supports, symmetry, and even weight distribution.

4. Testing: Hang ornaments and test for:

- Upright alignment (balance)
- Structural integrity (no falling apart)
- Redesign: Based on test results, students make modifications to improve performance.

5. Observe: Is it balanced? Does it tilt?

6. Reflect and improve:

- If it tilts, how can you fix it?
- Redesign: Based on test results, students make modifications to improve performance. Shift pieces, change weight distribution, move hanging point.
- Explain: Students reflect on what engineering principles helped their design succeed.

Assessment:

- Planning sketch with labeled forces and mass centers
- Oral or written explanation of design choices and the represented properties of physics

Extensions:

- Compare the mass of ornaments using a scale and graph the results
- Create a challenge rubric with bonus points for style, strength, and innovation

Key Vocabulary:

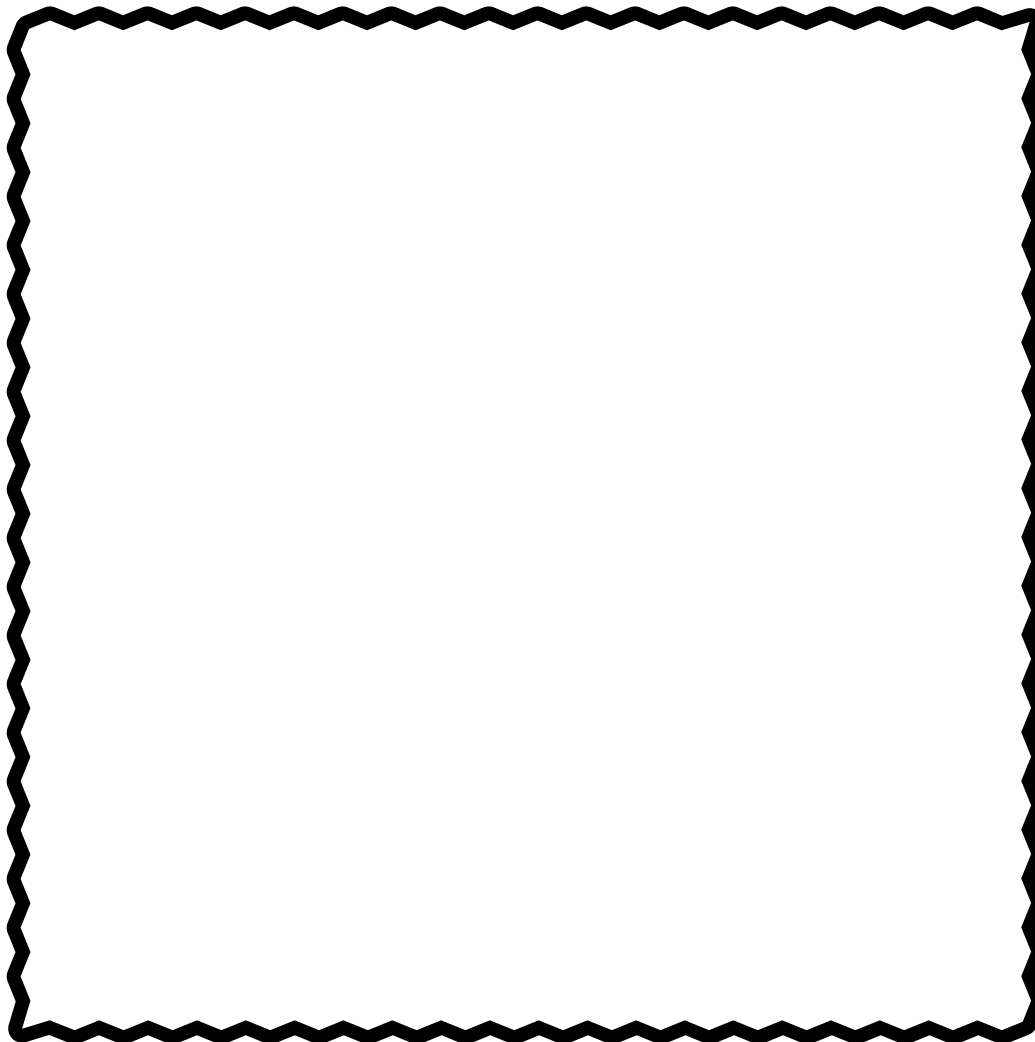
Term	Definition
Force	A push or a pull that can make an object move or stop.
Gravity	A force that pulls objects down toward the Earth.
Tension	A pulling force from a string or connector.
Balance Point (Center of Mass)	The spot where an object balances evenly.
Symmetry	When one half is a mirror image of the other.

Student Recording Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

My design is: (draw it here)

Include labels: string, hook, weights, balance point.



I predict it will balance at: _____

Forces I labeled in my drawing: Gravity Tension Push Pull

What happened during testing?

How I improved my design:

5th Grade Activity: Candy Chemistry

TEKS: Science 3.5C, 4.5A, 5.5B

Objective: Observe and analyze how different types of candies dissolve in various liquids, and apply understanding of solubility, temperature, and polarity.

Materials:

- Candy samples (peppermints, gumdrops, chocolate, marshmallows)
- Clear cups or beakers
- Water, oil, vinegar, club soda
- Timers or stopwatches
- Thermometers (optional)
- Lab sheet or observation chart
- Magnifying glasses (optional)

Instructions:

1. Introduction (10 min):
 - Explain dissolution as a physical change.
 - Discuss how temperature, polarity, and surface area affect dissolving rates.
 - Sugar is polar and dissolves best in polar liquids like water and vinegar—not oil.
2. Hypothesis (5 min):
 - Students predict which candy will dissolve fastest and in which liquid.
 - Record predictions on the lab sheet.
3. Experiment (20–25 min):
 - Place each candy in separate cups of different liquids.
 - Observe and time how long each takes to dissolve.
 - Optional: note liquid temperatures and use magnifying glasses to detect small changes.
4. Observation & Analysis (15 min):
 - Record in a data table: time, texture change, bubbling, etc.
 - Identify which combinations worked fastest or slowest and why.
5. Conclusion & Discussion (10 min):
 - Summarize which conditions led to faster dissolution.
 - Discuss chemical principles and real-life applications (like why sugar dissolves in tea).

Assessment:

- Completed lab sheet with predictions and data
- Use of terms like solute, solvent, polarity, and temperature
- Group discussion showing understanding

Extension Activities

- Surface Area Challenge:

Break one candy into small pieces. Test the same candy in both whole and broken form. Which dissolves faster? Why?

- Temperature Test:

Compare the same candy in cold vs. warm water. Record and graph the results.

- Stir Test:

Compare the same candy in stirred vs. still water. Record and graph the results.

- Polar vs. Nonpolar:

Explore why sugar dissolves in water (a polar solvent) but not in oil (a nonpolar solvent). Use drawings to illustrate what happens at the molecular level.

- Real-World Connection:

How does this experiment relate to dissolving sugar in tea, or making candy melt in your mouth?

Key Vocabulary:

Term	Definition
Surface Area	The total amount of space of the outside of a three-dimensional object (like wrapping paper on a box).
Volume	Surface area is different from volume, which is how much space is inside the shape (like how much sand a box can hold).
Dissolve	When a substance, like sugar or salt, is mixed into a liquid, like water, it breaks down until it can't be seen anymore because the tiny pieces, the molecules, have broken apart from each other.
Dissolution	The process where a solid, like sugar or salt, seems to disappear when mixed into another substance, like water. This is essentially the same thing as "dissolving."
Solute	The material that gets dissolved into another substance. The tiny pieces, or molecules, that are broken apart from each other.
Solvent	The substance that dissolves the original material. This substance surrounds what has been added and breaks up the molecules until everything is spread out evenly.
Solution	The final see-through mixture.
Polarity	A way to describe many things that have two opposite sides, like electric charges in tiny particles, the poles of a magnet, or how certain molecules are built.
Temperature	A way to measure how hot or cold something is, which is related to how fast its tiny particles (like atoms) are moving. Faster moving particles mean more energy, so the temperature goes up. Slower moving particles mean less energy, so the temperature goes down.
Polar	Particles with a slightly positive charge on one side and slightly negative charge on the other. Water is a great example of a polar molecule, which is why it can dissolve so many things!
Nonpolar	Something that is balanced, like a seesaw, with two equal charges – meaning it has no positive or negative ends. Oil is a great example of a nonpolar substance, which is why it doesn't mix with water.



Candy Chemistry Lab Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Question:

Which candy dissolves the fastest in different types of liquids?

Hypothesis:

I think the _____ will dissolve the fastest in _____ because _____.

Materials Checklist (check what you used):

- Water
- Oil
- Vinegar
- Club Soda
- Peppermint
- Gumdrop
- Chocolate
- Marshmallow
- Other: _____

Procedure:

1. Place one candy in each cup of different liquids.
2. Start the timer and observe what happens.
3. Record data in your chart.

Observation Chart

Candy Type	Liquid Used	Start Time	Time to Dissolve (min)	Physical Changes Observed

Conclusion:

Was your hypothesis correct? **Yes** **No** **Kind of**

Which candy and liquid combination dissolved the fastest?

Why do you think that happened?

Which candy and liquid combination dissolved the slowest?

Why do you think that happened?

What surprised you about the results?

3rd – 5th Activity- Sugar Detective: Sugar, Nutrition Science, & The Land of Sweets

TEKS:

Science 3rd 3.5C, 4th 4.5 A, 5th 5.5B;

Math 3rd 3.7B, 4th 4.8C, 5th 5.9A-C

Health 3rd 6(4)(A)(B), 4th 7(4)(A)(B), 5th 8(4)(B)(C)

Objective: Analyze sugar content in sweets.

Materials:

- Nutrition labels
- Calculators
- Chart templates

Instructions:

1. Compare sugar grams per serving to the recommended daily limit.
2. Calculate what percentage of the daily limit a serving of candy represents.
3. Graph sugar contents of Nutcracker Act II sweets and analyze the data.
4. Discuss health implications/moderation.

Recommended Daily Sugar Intake

According to the American Heart Association (AHA):

- Children aged 2-18:

No more than 25 grams (6 teaspoons) of added sugar per day.

- Teenagers and adults:

Women: 25 grams (6 teaspoons)

Men: 36 grams (9 teaspoons)

Act II Characters

- Sugar Plum Fairy (small, round candy of flavored, boiled sugar)
- Mother Ginger (cookie jar) and Bonbon babies (chocolate candies) - Germany
- Chocolate - Spanish
- Tea - Chinese
- Coffee - Arabia
- Candy Canes - Russia
- Marzipan (almond pastry) - France

Assessment: Completed data chart and math problems.

Extension Characters

- Compare two foods (e.g., yogurt vs. a candy bar)
- Consider the difference between sugar content and healthy foods (are they different, can they be the same)
- Think about fueling a dancer's body and connect with an understanding of sugar contents. Ginger (cookie jar) and Bonbon babies (chocolate candies) - Germany

Sugar Detective Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Look at the nutrition labels on different snacks or drinks. Fill in the chart with sugar content and compare it to the recommended daily limit of 25g. Use your math skills to convert grams to teaspoons (1 tsp = 4g).

Food/Drink Item	Sugar per Serving (g)	Number of Servings	Total Sugar (g)	Sugar in Teaspoons	Over 25g Limit? (Yes/No)

Reflection Questions:

Which item had the most sugar? _____

Which had the least? _____

Why is it important to know how much sugar you eat each day?

Sugar Detective Food Nutrition Label

Name of Food: _____

Brand or Where You Got It: _____

Nutrition Label (complete from provided labels)

Nutrient.	Amount in One Serving	What It Means
Calories.	_____	Energy for your body
Total Sugar	_____ g 🍯	How sweet it is!
Added Sugar	_____ g	Extra sugar added in
Fiber	_____ g	Helps with digestion
Protein	_____ g 💪	Builds muscles
Fat	_____ g	Gives long energy
Sodium (Salt)	_____ mg 🧂	Keep it low!

Label It! (Draw a picture of the food here)



What Did You Learn?

1. Is this a healthy snack? Why or why not?

2. Did this food have a lot of sugar? Yes! Just a little No sugar at all

3. How can reading food labels help you eat less added sugar?

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Original Texts & Ballet History

A Child's Introduction to Ballet by Laura Lee

A richly illustrated nonfiction book including a section on The Nutcracker, ballet history, and key vocabulary—great for dance-focused middle school students.

Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite by Anna Harwell Celenza.

It's a challenge to transform the "Nutcracker Suite's" romantic orchestra into jumpin' jazz melodies, but that's exactly what Duke Ellington and his collaborator, Billy Strayhorn, did. (Includes music CD)

STEM & Other Connection Books:

The Science of Dance & Ballet: An Anthology of 28 Graphs for Kids

This nonfiction title presents ballet movement in terms of physics and data — acceleration, velocity, trajectories, biomechanics, breathing, and muscle activity — visually represented in

Chapter Books & Cultural Exploration

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King by E.T.A. Hoffmann, adapted by Bernadette Watts or Janet Schulman

These adaptations offer a child-friendly version of the original tale with more plot detail and character depth.

Emma and the Sugar Plum Fairy (Magic Ballerina series) by Darcey Bussell

A chapter book blending ballet, magic, and character development. Encourages independent reading.

The Nutcracker Comes to America: How Three Ballet-Loving Brothers Created a Holiday Tradition by Chris Barton

A nonfiction picture book about how the ballet became popular in the U.S., integrating social studies and performing arts.

Becoming a Ballerina: A Nutcracker Story Starring the Dancers of the Boston Ballet by Lise Friedmann Duke.

Follow Fiona, a young dancer starring in Boston Ballet's The Nutcracker, as she navigates tense auditions, hours of rehearsal, and the thrill of opening night. Full color photographs.

Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite by Anna Harwell Celenza.

It's a challenge to transform the "Nutcracker Suite's" romantic orchestra into jumpin' jazz melodies, but that's exactly what Duke Ellington and his collaborator, Billy Strayhorn, did. (Includes music CD)

STEM & Other Connection Books:

The Science of Dance & Ballet: An Anthology of 28 Graphs for Kids

This nonfiction title presents ballet movement in terms of physics and data — acceleration, velocity, trajectories, biomechanics, breathing, and muscle activity — visually represented in graphs.

Grades: 5–8

STEM Connection: Excellent for quantitatively analyzing dance motions, linking perfectly with lessons on energy and biomechanics.

Ballerina Activity Book for Kids

Combining ballet-themed mazes, coloring, and challenging math puzzles and reasoning problems, this activity book weaves dance into math practice in a fun, age-appropriate way.

Grades: 3–5

STEM Connection: Reinforces logical reasoning, spatial thinking, and basic math through dance-themed activities.

The Magical Dance of Matter (The Science Explorers Series)

A whimsical picture book where the four elemental “queens” (Solida, Liqua, Gasa, Plasma) perform a magical dance representing the states of matter.

Grade Level: K–2 (or early 3–5)

STEM Connection: Introduces science vocabulary and basic physical concepts (solid, liquid, gas, plasma) in a dance-themed narrative.

Dance & Belonging Books:

Danbi Leads the School Parade by Anna Kim

Danbi, a newcomer, drifts into her new school feeling lost—until her creativity through movement (tap-tap with chopsticks!) brings classmates together. The parade becomes a shared moment of connection and inclusion, illustrating how dance and rhythm create belonging.

Other Books:

Search and Find The Nutcracker by Federica Frenna

An illustrated “Where’s Waldo?”-style Seek & Find adventure based on the Hoffmann story. Each spread features rich, detailed scenes—from the Stahlbaum’s Christmas party to the Land of Sweets—packed with hidden characters and objects to spot. Great for visual literacy and classroom engagement.

The Nutcracker Activity Book, Bk 1: 8 Favorites from Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite (Alfred Music)

While focused on piano and music theory, this activity book includes puzzles, coloring, and game pages tied to The Nutcracker melodies. Useful for music integration, pattern recognition, and reinforcing rhythm and notation skills.

4th Grade Activity - Plot Twists & Pirouettes: Exploring Story Structure through The Nutcracker

TEKS Connections

ELA 4.6(AB) 7(ABD) 10(A) 11(C) **Theatre** 4.1(A) 3(A)

Objective: Students will read and analyze a version of The Nutcracker (literary adaptation), identify story structure elements, and reflect on how Clara’s journey reflects character growth and theme.

Materials Needed

- A storybook version of The Nutcracker (e.g., by Susan Jeffers, Michael Hague, or an adapted version of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s original)
- Chart paper or graphic organizer for story structure (Beginning-Middle-End or Plot Mountain)
- Character Trait anchor chart
- Student response worksheets
- Optional: Nutcracker music excerpts or dance performance clips (Act I & II)

Lesson Activities

1. Read-Aloud & Discussion (Day 1, 30–40 min)

- Read The Nutcracker aloud or in small groups.
- Pause for discussion:
 - “What kind of girl is Clara at the beginning of the story?”
 - “What magical elements shape the plot?”
- Students use sticky notes to mark story events and character moments.

2. Story Structure & Character Change (Day 2, 30–40 min)

- Complete a story structure organizer together:
 - Beginning: Setting, characters, Nutcracker gift
 - Middle: Battle with the Mouse King, transformation
 - End: Journey to the Land of Sweets, return or resolution
- Create a character trait timeline for Clara: how does she change and grow?
 - Use text evidence to support their answers.

3. Writing Reflection or Response (Day 3, 30–45 min)

- Students write a literary response:
How did Clara show courage in The Nutcracker? What lesson can we learn from her?
- Optional prompt: Which scene would you want to act out on stage? Why?

Assessment

- Completed story structure organizer
- Accurate identification of Clara’s character development
- Written response with textual evidence
- Participation in discussion or theatre extension (if included)

Extension: Compare to Ballet

- Watch a ballet clip of the same scenes students read.
- Discuss: How does the music and movement help us understand the characters?
- Compare the story structure of the ballet to the story structure of the book.

Plot Twists & Pirouettes

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Story: The Nutcracker

Author/Illustrator: _____

Beginning:

- Setting:

- Main Characters:

Middle:

- Main events or problems:

End:

- How is the problem solved?

- What is the final outcome?

Clara's Character Trait Timeline

Character Study: Clara

Story Moment	What Clara Does or Feels	Character Trait	Text Evidence (Quote or Summary)
Beginning of the story			
During the battle with the mice			
After The Nutcracker transforms			
In the Land of the Sweets			

Reflection Questions:

How does Clara grow or change by the end of the story?



Plot Twists & Pirouettes: Literary Response Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story Title: The Nutcracker

Writing Prompt:

How did Clara show courage in The Nutcracker? What can we learn from her?

Use at least one example from the story to support your answer.

Challenge:

Would you like to visit the Land of the Sweets? Why or why not?

4th Grade Writing Rubric - Literary Response

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Developing (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Clear Topic Sentence				
Details from the Story				
Text Evidence Included				
Explains Clara's Actions				
Grammar/Spelling				
Neatness & Effort				

Comments:

Theatre Manners – Getting Ready for the Show

“Etiquette” means showing good manners and respectful behavior. In theatre, it means knowing how to act before, during, and after a performance so that everyone can enjoy the show — the audience and the performers!

Different performances have different traditions.

- At a Gospel concert, people might clap, sing, or move to the music.
- At a Classical Orchestra concert, the audience listens quietly and waits to clap until the conductor lowers their hands.

At the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, these are the general rules to follow.

Before the Show

- Arrive early: Give yourself time to find your seat, use the restroom, and get settled before the lights dim.
- Turn off devices: Phones, watches, and electronics should be silenced and put away so no lights or sounds distract others.
- Remind students that performances are live — what they do can be seen and heard by the performers!

During the Show

- Stay seated: Remain in your seat unless there is an emergency. If you need help, raise your hand or ask an usher quietly.
- Applaud at the right times:
 - If there is an orchestra, it’s polite to clap when the conductor walks on stage.
 - Clap to show appreciation at the end of scenes, songs, or the entire performance.
- Enjoy and respond appropriately: It’s great to laugh when something is funny or applaud when something is amazing.

After the Show

- Stay for the curtain call. At the end, performers return to the stage to take a bow. This is your chance to clap and say “thank you” for their hard work.
- If everyone stands while clapping, it’s called a standing ovation, which means the show was extra special!
- Sometimes performers may do a short extra piece afterward, called an encore (say “ON-core”).
- Large crowds can get noisy fast. Walk slowly, talk softly, and follow your teacher’s directions.

Additional Tips for Students

- Sit tall and stay aware: Good posture helps you see the stage and helps others see too.

Teacher Note

You can review these etiquette points before your field trip or class performance. Encourage students to compare theatre behavior with other places they visit (like a movie theatre, concert, or sporting event). This helps them understand why theatre manners are special and important.



**Equitable services for the creative arts
to promote justice, inclusion, and empowerment for all.**

What to Expect on the Day of the Sensory-Friendly Performance

Before the Show

- The show will last about 1 hour (shortened for young audiences).
- The theatre will open early so everyone has plenty of time to find seats and get comfortable.
- Fewer people will be in the building, making it calmer and quieter.
- Specially trained staff and volunteers will be available to help families feel supported and welcome.
- This is a judgment-free zone — everyone is free to be themselves!

During the Show

- Sound levels will be lower, and any loud or surprising sounds will be softened.
- Flashing or bright lights will be reduced, and no lights will shine into the audience.
- There will be no confetti or sudden effects.
- Lights in the theatre will stay on at a low level the whole time.
- Movement and talking are allowed! Students can stand, move, or make sounds as they need.
- Comfort items are welcome — such as fidgets, headphones, small snacks, or a favorite toy.
- Tablets and cell phones may be used if they help calm or engage a student.
- You can enter and exit the theatre whenever needed.

Sensory-Friendly Features

Sensory Paths

- Floor Sensory and Wheelchair-Accessible Paths – self-guided paths with fun movements to help students use extra energy before the show.

Calming Center and “Peaceful Place”

- A quiet area near the theater for anyone who needs a break.

Accessibility

- ADA Drop-Off Area – Look for the blue tent in front of the building. Companions must stay with patrons.

Bringing Comfort Items

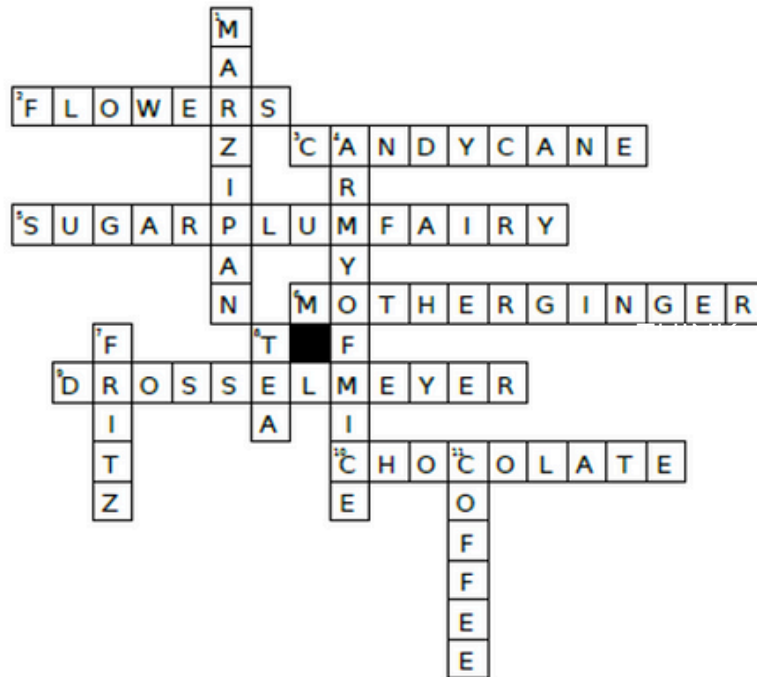
- You are welcome to bring comfort items, small snacks, and drinks.

(Please note: no full meals or lunches are allowed inside the theatre.)

Visit the Sensory-Friendly page on The Tobin Center website for more information.

Answer Key

Nutcracker Characters



Down:

1. France
4. Toy Soldiers
7. Mouse King
8. China
11. Arabia

Across:

2. Dew Drop
3. Russia
5. Snowflakes
6. BonBons
9. Clara
10. Spain



Answer Key

Nutcracker Word Search

Y S F G D R E L X L T B E E M
L P T E A O A U E C P A T T I R
Q A E B H N E E H S A L N I R
X I N S E D D A L R R L I U L
W N D D E V I Y B R T E O S I
E A U D O K F A I R Y T P I T
S O S T O F L D R E A M X F O
R A B V C L S C E L E S T A N
P R S O E R R W A O E S U O M
U K I R G U A R E T R E P A K
Y E I N S N A C U E I Q J S B
A N V S C L I A K L T Q L J L
A N I H C E S K P E O S Z O M
J A Y H P A R G O E R O H E S
R E I L A V A C T E P M U R T



About the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



An Incredibly Powerful Vision

Situated along the banks of the San Antonio River in the city’s heart, the historic Municipal Auditorium, with its original facade preserved, has been transformed into a world-class venue. This theatrical icon is once again the pride of the river and a shining beacon of creativity, fine art, and downtown development. There is no better place — anywhere — to see and hear a live performance.

The remarkable flexibility of the 1,738-seat H-E-B Performance Hall, with its distinctive “flat floor” capability, opens the door for performances and events of almost any sort. The acoustics in the Hall can be “tuned” to fit the performance and physical set-up of the hall. The sound insulation throughout The Tobin Center enables simultaneous use of the Performance Hall, the Studio Theater, and the 600-seat River Walk Plaza.

Audiences can see and hear performers and hear performers and performances of every description at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, WHERE THE ARTS LIVE.

www.tobincenter.org

[Tobin Center Floor Flip Video](#)



Generation NEXT connects education and the arts, promoting creative classrooms and culturally relevant learning. We believe creative empowerment is central to a 21st century education.

Powerful Art. Powerful Education. Excellence in both.

Questions?

How to book a field trip or tour:

Visit the education page on our website to book directly: tobincenter.org/education

Support The Tobin Center

As a non-profit organization, The Tobin Center relies on generous donors and arts advocates like you to help us sustain and grow our diverse array of cultural, educational, and artistic experiences that ensure people of all ages and communities have access to the performing arts.

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Monday - Friday
8:30 am - 5:00 pm

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