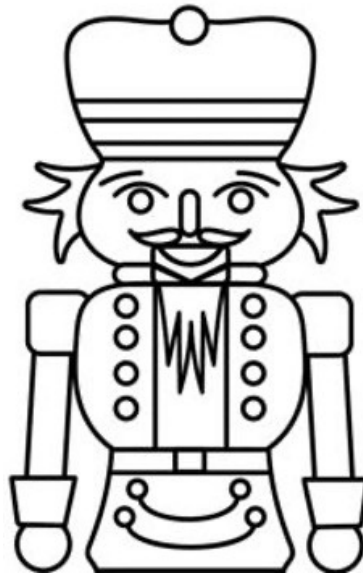




GENERATION
INEXT
EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Ballet San Antonio®
THE NUTCRACKER
(6-8) EDUCATOR
GUIDE



Charline & Red McCombs
ARTS EDUCATION FUND
The Tobin Center

Educator Guide

Created by: Dr. Kimberly Stephenson & Grace Featherston

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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

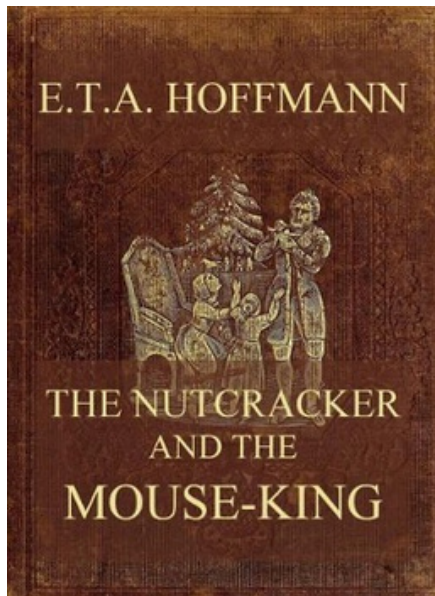
Ballet San Antonio uses high-resolution projections to transform stage settings:

- 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

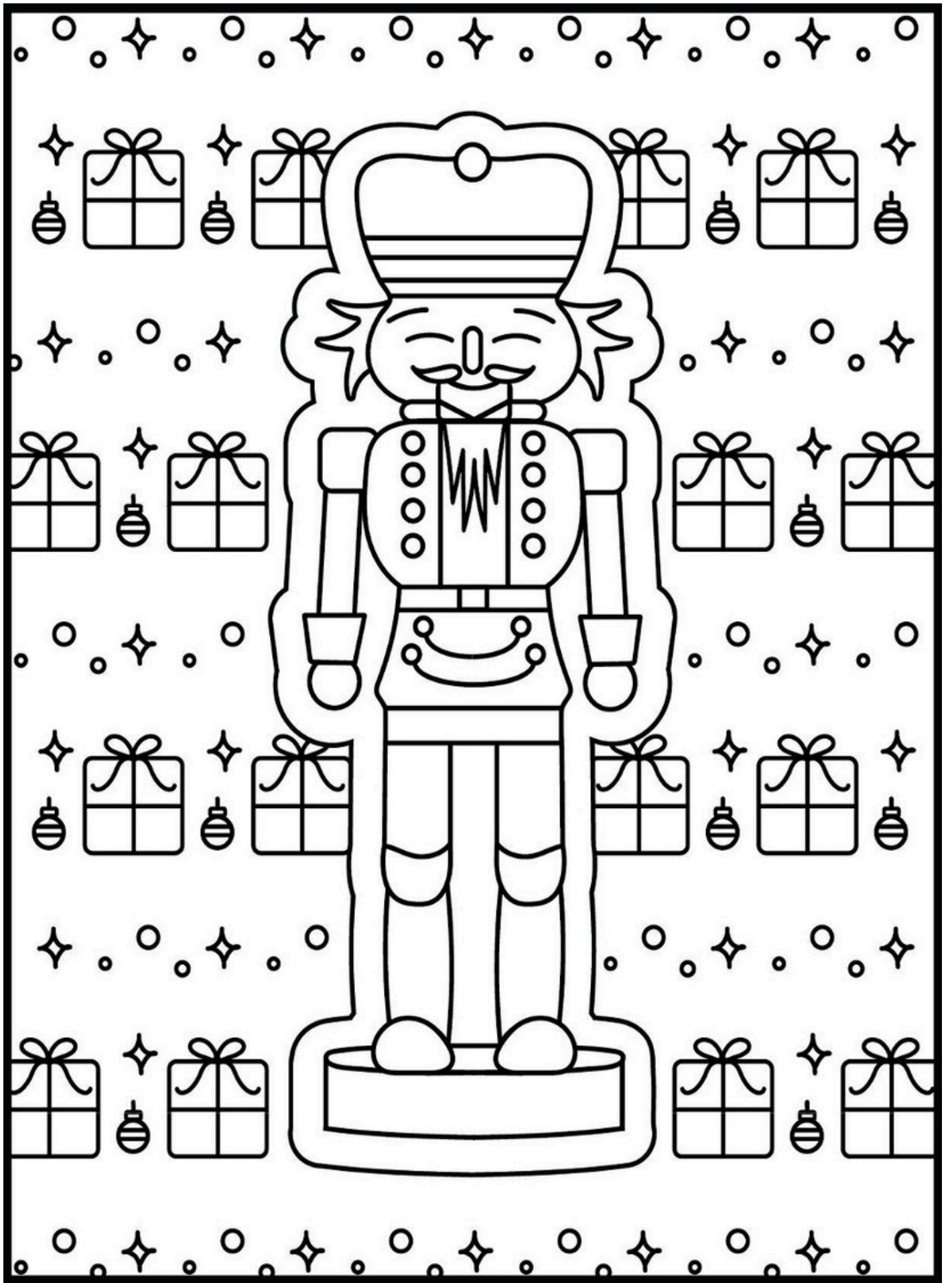
The Nutcracker gains popularity in the United States, especially after the San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet begin performing it every December.

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



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.

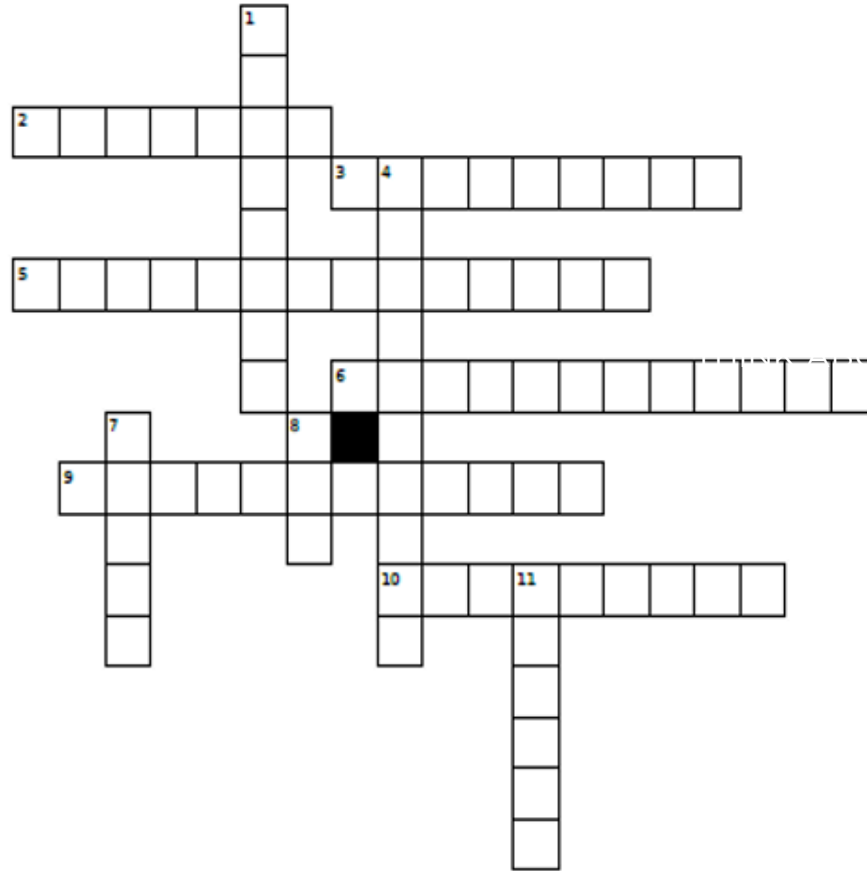
Name	Who They Are
Tea (China)	When <i>The Nutcracker</i> ballet was created, Tea from China was rare and expensive. People would store tea in locked boxes called "caddies." In some performances, the tea dancer will pop out of a tea caddy when the dance begins. In others, the dance is a duet, features 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. 45

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 does The Nutcracker, a fairy tale told through dance, make you think of?
- What do you expect to see in this performance?
- Have you ever seen a different performance of The Nutcracker?
- What questions do you have about ballet, the fairy tale, or this performance?
- Have you ever read The Nutcracker and The Mouse King?
- How could this story happen in real life?
- Where have you seen or experienced something like this story in your life?

TEKS - ELAR 6-8: 110.22(b)(1)(A-D); English II: 110.37(b)(1)(A-D), 110.37(b)(5)(A-C);
English IV: 110.39(b)(1)(A-D), 110.39(b)(5)(A-C)

Post-Show Discussion Questions

- When you watched this performance, what did it make you think of?
- What within this performance had you expected to see? (Or what was missing that you expected, and why did you expect to see it?)
- How was this performance similar to / different from another performance or show you have seen?
- Now that you have seen the show, what questions do you have?
- How close was this performance to the original material in the book (or in another version of the show you have seen)? Name some specific ways the performance was the same/different.
- Imagine a time when you experienced an event similar to this story.

TEKS - ELAR 6-8: 110.22(b)(6)(A-E); English I: 110.37(b)(5)(A-E), 110.37(b)(6)(A-E); English IV: 110.39(b)(5)(A-E), 110.39(b)(6)(A-E)

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	6th	7th	8th	English II	English IV
Foundational Language Skills	110.22(b)(1)ABC	110.23(b)(1)ABC	110.24(b)(1)ABC	110.37(b)(1)ABC	110.39(b)(1)ABC
Respond to Sources	110.22(b)(6)ABC DE	110.23(b)(6)ABC DE	110.24(b)(6)ABC DE	110.37(b)(5)ABCD EFGHIJ	110.39(b)(5)ABCDE FGHIJ
Literary Elements	110.22(b)(7) ABCD	110.22(b)(7) ABCD	110.22(b)(7)ABCD	110.22(b)(7)ABCD	110.22(b)(7)ABCD
Recognize & Analyze Genre	110.22(b)(8) ACDE	110.23(b)(8) ACDE	110.24(b)(8)ACDE	110.37(b)(7)ACD i-iii,E i-iii,F	110.39(b)(7)CD i-ii, E i-iii,F
Author’s Purpose & Craft	110.22(b)(9)ABC	110.23(b)(9)ABC	110.24(b)(9)ABC	110.37(b)(8)ABC DEFG	110.39(b)(8)ABC DEFG
Composition: Writing Process	110.22(b)(10)AB i-iii,CD i-v,E	110.23(b)(10)AB i-iii,CD i-v,E	110.24(b)(10)AB i-iii,CD i-v,E	110.37(b)(9)AB i-ii,CD i-vi,E	110.39(b)(9)AB i-iii,CDE
Generate Questions	110.22(b)(12) ACDE	110.22(b)(12) ACDE	110.22(b)(12) ACDE	110.22(b)(12)ACDE	110.22(b)(12)ACDE

8th Grade: Mic, Music, & Magic – Reimagining The Nutcracker Through Podcasting

Subjects: ELA, Theatre, Technology, Fine Arts

TEKS Alignment

English Language Arts

- 6(A-E) – Respond to and analyze text through discussion, writing, and reflection.
- 7(A-C) – Analyze how sensory language, visuals, and sound contribute to meaning.
- 10(A-E) – Use the writing process to develop compositions with purpose and coherence.
- 11(A-D) – Compose literary and multimodal texts for multiple purposes and audiences.

Theatre (8th Grade)

- 1(A) – Demonstrate safe, appropriate use of voice and movement.
- 2(C) – Create characters and interpret scripts through expressive voice and tone.
- 4(B) – Present performances and evaluate artistic choices in self and others.

Technology Applications (Grades 6–8)

- 5(B) – Create original digital products using design and editing tools.
- 7(A) – Evaluate and use appropriate digital media for communication and expression.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze characters, themes, and emotions from The Nutcracker using both literary and performance lenses.
- Create a short podcast episode that uses narration, dialogue, and sound to tell a story or share analysis.
- Apply the writing process to script development and the digital creation process to record and edit their work.
- Demonstrate understanding of how sound, tone, and pacing influence audience engagement and meaning.

Materials Needed

- Audio recording tools (iPads, Chromebooks, phones with apps like Audacity, GarageBand, Soundtrap)
- Copies of The Nutcracker summary or script excerpts
- Access to music (Tchaikovsky’s score or royalty-free equivalents)
- Podcast planning sheet
- Headphones and microphones (optional)
- Rubric for podcast project

Lesson Activities

1. Engage: Listen & Analyze (15–20 min)

- Listen to a short podcast episode or radio drama excerpt.
- Discuss: “What did you learn just by hearing voices, sound, and music?”

“How can you tell what the characters are feeling?”

“What can you get from listening to a podcast that you cannot get from reading a story or watching a video?”

2. Explore The Nutcracker (15 min)

- Read or review a summary or key scenes (e.g., Clara’s dream, the battle scene, Act II dances).
- Discuss: What themes or conflicts stand out in the story?

How might you represent a scene’s emotion or action through sound?

If you couldn’t see the dancers, how could listeners still understand what’s happening?

3. Podcast Planning (25–30 min)

In small groups or pairs, students choose a format:

- Character monologue (e.g., Clara describing her dream)
- Scene reenactment with narration and dialogue
- Interview Segment (e.g., “interviewing” the Nutcracker Prince, Sugar Plum Fairy, or a stage designer)
- Behind-the-scenes segment on dance/music interpretation, costumes, or choreography choices

Complete a planning sheet:

- Episode title and theme
- Script outline or guiding questions
- Assigned roles and speaking parts
- Sound/music effects and timing cues
-

4. Podcast Production (45–60 min)

- Rehearse scripts with attention to vocal expression, clarity, pacing, and tone.
- Record and edit audio. Add intro music or sound effects.
- Add background music or sound effects that match emotion and pacing.
- Save and share final audio files (school platform, shared drive, or classroom showcase).
-

5. Present & Reflect (20–30 min)

- Play podcast segments for the class.
- Students complete a Podcast Reflection Page with these prompts:

Assessment Criteria

Element	4 – Advanced	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Needs Support
Script content	Strong analysis, engaging voice, clear purpose	Organized and focused	General ideas with limited detail	Incomplete, lacks structure or focus
Vocal expression	Expressive and clear	Mostly clear and appropriate tone	Inconsistent energy or clarity	Hard to hear/monotone
Technical quality	Smooth edits, balanced sound	Minor issues or uneven levels	Noticeable distractions	Poor sound or incomplete
Collaboration	Shared effort and roles	Most participated	Uneven contribution	Relied on one person / minimal teamwork evident
ELA & Fine Arts integration	Accurate language and character, strong connection to Nutcracker themes	Clear connection to Nutcracker	Some connection or understanding	Off-topic, unclear, or missing connection

Total Score: _____ / 20

Teacher Comments:

Extensions

- Publish the podcast on a school platform or announcements for wider audience.
- Create a soundtrack remix using Nutcracker motifs and modern sound – discuss how it changes mood and meaning.
- Research career paths in sound design, directing, or digital media. Connect with other classroom literature.
- Hold a Podcast Premiere Day where students introduce and play their episodes for other classes.

Podcast Planning Sheet

Podcast Title: _____

Group Members: _____

Segment Format (Check One or More)

- Monologue (e.g., Clara, Sugar Plum Fairy)
- Scene Reenactment
- Character Interview
- Behind-the-Scenes: Music or Dance Focus
- Other: _____

Podcast Segment Plan

Main Theme or Message:

Nutcracker Scene or Character Focused On:

Script Outline or Dialogue Plan (list at least 3 talking points or scenes):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Roles & Speaking Parts:

Name	Role	Any Voice Notes

Sound or Music Elements to Include:

What	When	Where

NOTES:

Student Podcast Reflection Page

Name: _____ Podcast Title: _____

1. What was your role in your podcast project?

2. What did your group want the audience to feel or understand?

3. How did you use your voice or sound to create that mood?

4. What was challenging about recording and editing your work?

5. What did you learn about storytelling or performance through sound?

6. Describe one thing you heard in another group's project that inspired you.

7th Grade Activity: Sugar & Nutrition Science & The Land of Sweets

TEKS: Science 6.5C, 7.5B, 8.5B; Math 6.9C, 7.9C; Health TEKS 6.1B, 7.1B, 8.1B

Objective: Analyze the nutritional content of sugar in common foods, interpret health implications of sugar consumption, and apply math and science skills to evaluate personal dietary habits.

Materials:

- Nutrition labels (real or printed from popular sweets, snacks, and beverages)
- Calculators
- Red and blue pens or colored pencils
- Sugar cube equivalents or measuring spoons (1 cube = 4g of sugar)
- Chart templates and graph paper
- AHA guidelines for added sugar intake (25g/day for kids and teens)
- Student sugar tracker worksheet
- Optional: balance scale, food packages, video clips about sugar and health

Instructions:

1. Introduction & Context (10 min):

- Discuss what added sugar is and where it's commonly found (e.g., sodas, candy, cereals). Specify the difference between natural sugar vs. added sugar in foods.
 - Natural Sugars (from fruits, milk, vegetables)
 - Added Sugars (in candy, soda, baked treats)
- Introduce the concept of grams vs. teaspoons of sugar (4 grams = 1 tsp).
- Share AHA recommended daily limits and the health risks of excessive sugar consumption (e.g., energy crashes, dental problems, weight gain).

2. Label Investigation (20 min):

- Students examine nutrition labels from various sweets.
- Record serving size, total sugar grams, and servings per package.
 - Track natural sugar in red ink and added sugar in blue ink.
- Convert grams to teaspoons for both natural and added sugar, then calculate the total sugar if the entire package is consumed.

3. Sugar Tracking & Graphing (20 min):

- Students chart sugar content (natural and added) across various products (Sugar Tracker worksheet)
- Create bar graphs comparing sugar levels (natural and added).
 - X-Axis: Grams of Sugar Food items
 - Y-Axis: Food items
 - Graph natural sugar with red ink and added sugar with blue ink.
- Identify which products exceed the recommended daily limits.



4. Personal Reflection & Dance Connection (10-15 min):

- Discuss how nutrition and sugar intake can affect energy levels and performance for dancers.
- Was there a big difference between total sugar and added sugar?
- What surprised you most about the sugar levels in the foods?
- How would eating a sugary snack affect your ability to rehearse or perform in The Nutcracker?

Assessment:

- Completed sugar chart with accurate conversions
- Graphs demonstrating math skills in comparing products
- Written reflection or class discussion showing understanding of sugar's role in energy and health

Extension:

- Design a healthy snack label for dancers based on daily needs
- Design a Nutcracker-inspired healthy snack named the Sugar Plum Fairy
- Create a one-day “low-sugar” meal plan with grams and percentages
- Optional research: How do elite dancers fuel their bodies for performance?

Sugar Tracker Worksheet - Fueling a Dancer's Body

Name: _____ Date: _____

Recommended Daily Limit:

→ 25g of added sugar per day (American Heart Association guideline for kids & teens)

Nutrition Label Investigation

Instructions:

Use actual food labels or printed samples. Examine the sugar content and servings.

Convert grams of sugar to teaspoons (1 tsp = 4g). Then calculate the total sugar if the entire package is eaten.

Product Name	Sugar per Serving (g)	Added Sugar per Serving (g)	Servings per Package	Total Sugar (g)	Teaspoons of Sugar	Over 25g? (Yes/No)

Reflection Questions:

Which item had the most sugar? _____

Which had the least? _____

3. Did any single item go over the daily limit?

Yes No If yes, which one? _____

Performance Connection

4. How might eating a high-sugar snack affect your energy during a dance rehearsal or show?

5. What is one smart snack choice you could make before performing?

6. What was the most surprising fact you discovered while examining these foods?

6th Grade Activity: Ornament Engineering

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

Objective: Apply principles of force, gravity, balance, and material properties to design and construct a functional hanging ornament that demonstrates stability and artistic design. Students will use the engineering design process to test and improve their creations.

Materials:

- Craft supplies (pipe cleaners, cardstock, string, felt, paperclips, craft sticks)
- String or ribbon
- Small weights (paper clips, washers, pennies)
- Hole punch, scissors, glue or tape
- Rulers or measuring tape
- Balance scale (optional)
- Ornament Design Template Worksheet

Instructions:

1. Introduction (10 min):

- Begin with a class discussion: “What makes a successful ornament?” (It should hang evenly, be balanced, and look creative.)
 - Introduce core physics and engineering concepts:
 - Gravity pulls the ornament downward.
 - Force and load affect how the ornament supports weight.
 - The center of mass determines whether it hangs straight or tips.
 - Symmetry often helps objects stay balanced.

Demo:

- Show a basic mobile or ornament.
- Use string and finger test to find the center of mass.
- Demonstrate how moving a single piece changes the balance.
- Ask: “Where does balance come from? How can we design for it?”

2. Planning & Sketching (15 min):

- Distribute Engineering Design Worksheets where students:
 - Draw their ornament concept and label materials.
 - Predict the balance point (center of mass) — circle or mark where the hanger should go.
 - Label parts that experience gravity (downward force) and tension (pull from the string).
 - List materials and plan construction steps.
- Encourage scientific reasoning: “Why did you put the hanger there?”

3. Construction (30–45 min):

- Students build their ornaments (light craft materials, paper clips, string, wire, etc.)
- Attach the hanger or string at their predicted balance point.
- Use testing stations or pencils on strings as simple hang setups.
- Encourage experimentation – test, adjust, and rebuild for better balance or appearance.

4. Testing & Redesign (20 min):

- Have students hang their ornaments from a pencil or stand and record observations:
 - Does it hang straight or tilt?
 - Is it stable or wobbly?
 - Does it support added weight (e.g., a paperclip or bead)?
- On their design diagram or photo, students label:
 - ▾ Arrow for gravity (pulling down)
 - ▴ Arrow for tension (string or hanger pulling up)
- If it tilts or spins unevenly, students adjust:
 - Shift weights or decorative parts.
 - Reinforce weak connections.
 - Move the hanging point to improve the balance.
- Encourage testing multiple times to collect consistent results — a key part of engineering iteration.

5. Construction (30–45 min):

- Students build their ornaments (light craft materials, paper clips, string, wire, etc.)
- Attach the hanger or string at their predicted balance point.
- Use testing stations or pencils on strings as simple hang setups.
- Encourage experimentation – test, adjust, and rebuild for better balance or appearance.

6. Sharing & Reflection (10–15 min):

- Students present their final ornaments and explain:
 - How they improved balance and design through testing.
 - What scientific principles (force, gravity, tension) they applied.
 - What changes made the biggest difference in stability.

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.

Assessment:

- Completed design plan with labeled forces and predicted balance points.
- Ornament passes the “hang test” (hangs evenly and supports small weight)
- Verbal or written explanation of connection design adjustments to physical principals (force, gravity, tension, symmetry).

Extension:

- Create a rubric including categories: symmetry, stability, functionality, and creativity.
- Use a digital scale to measure and graph ornament mass vs. balance accuracy.
- Incorporate peer feedback sessions focused on design goals and improvements.
- Design an ornament that rotates or swings smoothly without tipping.
- Compare materials by mass and strength, analyzing which designs balance best.
- Introduce art integration: explore how color, shape, and design choices affect visual balance and appeal.
- Have students compare beginning design vs. ending design results by mass, stability score, or symmetry level.
- Have students compare other finished design results by mass, stability score, or symmetry level.

Student Recording Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

My design is: (draw it here)

Include labels: string, hook, weights, balance point, arrows for gravity vs. tension.



• 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:

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Original Texts & Ballet History

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King by E.T.A. Hoffmann (Unabridged Translation)

Ideal for close reading, literary comparison, and discussions of tone and symbolism.

Ballet for Martha: Making Appalachian Spring by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

While not about The Nutcracker, this nonfiction title explores the creation of a ballet and connects well with dance production and lighting studies.

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.

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.

Middle-Grade Fiction

“On Pointe” by Lorie Ann Grover

This novel captures the emotional journey of a teenage ballet dancer navigating challenges at school and in the studio. Facing rejection, personal growth, and family struggles, the protagonist ultimately finds her place through dance and self-acceptance.

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 Stahlbaums’ 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.

6th Grade Literature Lesson Plan: Page to Stage – Comparing The Nutcracker Text and Ballet

Subjects: ELA, Fine Arts (Theatre/Dance)

TEKS Alignment

English Language Arts (ELA):

- 6.6(A) – Comprehend and analyze literary texts.
- 6.7(A–C) – Analyze plot elements, character relationships, and themes.
- 6.9(B) – Explain how media influences meaning.
- 6.10(D) – Compose written responses that reflect understanding, interpretation, and personal insight into texts.

Theatre/Dance TEKS:

- Theatre 6.1AC – Interpret character using body and movement.
- Theatre 6.3(B) – Respond to and evaluate theatrical performances, describing emotional impact and artistic intent.
- Dance 6.1A, 6.2C – Describe expressive elements in performance.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Read and analyze selected scenes from the unabridged *The Nutcracker and The Mouse King* by E.T.A. Hoffmann.
- Compare characters, plot, and tone in the literary version to a professional dance performance of *The Nutcracker*.
- Reflect on how movement, costume, music, and staging influence audience understanding.
- Present written or oral responses connecting text and performance.

Materials Needed

- Copies/excerpts of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (unabridged)
- Access to a live performance (field trip or recorded ballet)
- Comparison chart or Venn diagram handout
- "From Page to Stage" reflection worksheet
- Whiteboard or anchor chart for shared notes
- Audio/visual equipment for showing ballet clips if a live performance is unavailable

Extensions

- Create a podcast, tableau, or monologue comparing Marie's experience in the book vs. Clara's in the ballet.
- Write a script for a scene from Hoffmann's version that does not appear in the ballet and act it out.
- Explore how costume and lighting design support storytelling without words.

Lesson Activities

1. Literary Exploration (30–45 min)

- Read selected scenes from *The Nutcracker* and the Mouse King, focusing on:
 - Marie(Clara)'s discovery of the Nutcracker
 - The battle with the Mouse King
 - The transformation into the magical kingdom
- Discuss literary tone and language:

What kind of world does Hoffmann describe? Is it scary, dreamy, or funny?

How is Marie's personality shown through her actions and thoughts?

2. Performance Viewing & Response (Field Trip or 45–60 min)

- Attend a live performance or view a filmed version of *The Nutcracker* ballet (e.g., Ballet San Antonio).
- As students watch, have them observe:
 - How are characters like Clara, Drosselmeyer, and the Mouse King portrayed?
 - What visual elements replace spoken storytelling?
 - How does music create mood?

3. Compare & Contrast (30–45 min)

- Students use a Venn diagram or chart to compare:
 - Characters: Marie vs. Clara, Drosselmeyer, Nutcracker/Prince
 - Tone and setting: dark and surreal vs. magical and festive
 - Plot elements that appear in one version but not the other
- Class discussion:

Why might choreographers change parts of the story?

What details are easier to show in dance than in writing?

4. Reflection & Writing (30 min)

- Students complete the “From Page to Stage” worksheet:
 - What moment from the ballet surprised you based on the book?
 - Which version (ballet or book) made the story more emotional or interesting for you?
 - What choices did dancers and designers make that helped you understand the story?

Assessment

Criteria	Exceeds	Meets	Developing
Comprehension of both versions	Strong analysis with evidence	Clear comparisons and responses	Limited or vague understanding
Observation of performance	Insightful and detailed notes	Accurate observations	General or incomplete notes
Participation & discussion	Engaged and thoughtful sharing	Participated consistently	Needed reminders
Written reflection	Deep, clear, and well-explained	Organized and complete	Basic or off-topic responses

Score _____ / 12



From Page to Stage Comparison Chart: Book vs. Ballet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Ballet Performance: _____

Story Element	Book: <i>The Nutcracker and the Mouse King</i>	Ballet Performance: <i>The Nutcracker</i>
Main Character's Name		
Personality Traits		
Mouse King Scene		
Transformation Scene		
Ending		
Mood/Tone		
Setting Details		
Special Characters or Creatures		

Bonus Question:

What surprised you about the differences between the book and the ballet?

From Page to Stage - Student Reflection Worksheet

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Book Reflection

1. What was your favorite part of the original story by E.T.A. Hoffmann? Why?

2. What kind of world did the author create with words?

Magical Dark Dreamy Funny Other: _____

Explain your answer:

Ballet Reflection

3. What was the most memorable moment in the performance? Why?

4. How did dancers or costumes help tell the story without words?

5. Which version (book or ballet) made you feel more connected to the story? Why?

Scene Selection Guide: The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

(Use this to guide reading selections for class)

Scene	Pages/Chapters (varies by edition)	Description
Marie receives the Nutcracker	Beginning (Ch. 1–2)	Introduces Marie, her family, and Drosselmeyer. She receives the Nutcracker.
Nighttime & Battle Scene	Middle (Ch. 3–4)	The Nutcracker comes alive; toys fight the Mouse King's army.
Nutcracker transforms	Middle-Late (Ch. 5–6)	The Nutcracker becomes a prince after Marie shows bravery.
Magical Journey	Late (Ch. 6–7)	Marie travels through enchanted lands with the Prince.
The Ending	Final Chapter	Marie wakes—or perhaps continues dreaming; interpretations vary.

Theatre* Etiquette - Preparing for the Experience

Purpose:

Teaching theatre etiquette helps students understand that audience behavior directly affects a live performance. Unlike movies or TV, live theatre is a shared experience — the audience and the performers influence one another.

“Etiquette” means the expectations for polite or respectful behavior. Another word for etiquette is manners. These expectations often depend on the type of performance and its traditions.

Example:

At a **Gospel concert**, the audience may clap, sing, or move with the music — that’s part of the experience!

At a **Classical Orchestra concert**, the audience usually listens quietly and waits until the conductor lowers their hands before applauding.

When attending a performance at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, the following guidelines help students act respectfully and confidently as audience members.

Before the Show

- Arrive early: Allow time to find seats, use the restroom, and settle in calmly before the lights dim.
- Silence devices: Turn off or silence all phones, watches, and electronics to avoid noise or bright screens during the performance.
- Listen for instructions: Ushers or teachers may share information about seating, timing, or theatre rules.
- Discuss expectations: Remind students that live performances require focus, respect, and quiet observation.

During the Show

- Be attentive and quiet: Whispering, talking, or making noise distracts both the performers and other audience members. Performers can see and hear the audience.
- Stay seated: Unless there’s an emergency, students should remain in their seats. If someone must leave, they should do so quietly with help from an usher.
- Applaud appropriately:
 - Clap when the conductor or key performers enter.
 - Show appreciation after songs, dances, or acts — applause is a way of saying “thank you.”

- Respect the performance: Avoid unwrapping food, chewing gum loudly, or fidgeting. Encourage students to engage visually and emotionally — there’s always something on stage to discover.
- No photography or video: Using cameras or phones can distract others and potentially endanger performers if flashes occur.
- Respond appropriately: Laugh, smile, or react when it fits the scene. Genuine responses show appreciation, but excessive noise or commentary can distract from the performance.

After the Show

- Stay for the curtain call: Performers return to the stage to bow — this is the audience’s time to applaud and thank them.
 - If everyone stands while clapping, it’s called a standing ovation — a sign of exceptional appreciation.
 - Occasionally, performers return for an encore (pronounced “ON-core”) to perform an extra piece.
- Clean up: Dispose of wrappers, bottles, or papers to keep the theatre tidy for the next audience.
- Exit calmly: Walk quietly as you leave. Remind students that even soft talking becomes loud when hundreds of voices echo in the space.

Additional Tips for Students

- Posture matters: Sitting up straight helps others see and shows attentiveness.
- Show respect: Performers dedicate time and effort to their craft. Focused, polite listening demonstrates appreciation for their work.
- Ask for help when needed: Ushers (theatre staff) assist guests with seating, questions, or directions. Encourage students to approach them respectfully if help is needed.
- Be present: Encourage students to enjoy the live energy of the moment — no screens or distractions needed.

Teacher Tips

- Review theatre etiquette as part of your pre-trip classroom preparation. Discuss why these behaviors matter — link them to empathy, discipline, and teamwork.
- Role-play appropriate and inappropriate behaviors before the trip to reinforce expectations.
- Remind students that audience participation (like applause or laughter) is part of the performance energy — the goal is to contribute positively to the shared experience.

Key Takeaway

Middle school students are developing independence and awareness of social norms. Theatre etiquette helps students build self-control, empathy, and respect — essential skills not only for the arts but for life beyond the classroom.



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

What to Expect the Day of the Sensory Friendly Performance

The Sensory-Friendly Performance at The Tobin Center for the Performing Arts provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for students with a variety of sensory, social, or attention-related needs.

The goal is to make live theatre comfortable, accessible, and enjoyable for all — while giving every student the chance to experience the magic of a professional performance.

Before the Show

- **Shorter Performance:** The show runs about 1 hour to support focus and comfort.
- **Early Entry:** The theatre opens 1 hour before curtain, giving groups extra time to find seats, use restrooms, and adjust to the environment.
- **Smaller Audience:** Capacity is limited to reduce crowd noise and congestion.
- **Trained Staff & Volunteers:** Tobin Center staff and volunteers are specially trained to assist students and teachers during the event.
- **Judgment-Free Zone:** All responses — talking, movement, vocalizations, and stimming — are accepted and respected.

Performance Adjustments

To create a more comfortable sensory experience:

- **Lower sound levels:** Music and effects are adjusted to prevent startling moments.
- **Softened visuals:** Bright flashes, jump scares, or quick lighting changes are reduced.
- **No strobe lights:** Any flashing effects are replaced with gentle pulses.
- **No lights toward the audience.**
- **No confetti cannons or sudden special effects.**

Relaxed Theatre Environment

Students and teachers are encouraged to move or take breaks when needed. The following relaxed rules apply:

- **Lights:** House lights stay on at a low level throughout the show.
- **Comfort items:** Drinks, snacks, fidgets, small toys, noise-canceling headphones, tablets, and cushions are allowed.
- **Freedom of movement:** Exiting, re-entering, or stretching is permitted — students can visit the lobby or calming areas as needed.
- **Vocalization:** Talking, whispering, or soft vocalizations are welcome; students can express themselves freely.
- **Supportive staff:** Ushers are available to guide students to and from sensory or calming spaces.

Special Sensory-Friendly Features

Floor Sensory Path:

A self-guided path where students can walk through short movement activities to release energy before or after the performance.

Wheelchair-Accessible Sensory Path:

Adapted for students who use mobility aids, allowing seated or minimal-movement participation.

Sensory Supports Table:

A station offering free sensory tools to borrow during the show:

- Earplugs
- Sunglasses
- Fidget tools
- Limited noise-reduction headphones

Items are sanitized between uses and can be returned at exit bins or to ushers.

Calming Center - “The Peaceful Place”

A designated low-stimulation space for students who need a sensory break.

It includes:

- Tables for coloring or quiet drawing
- Crayons, finger crayons, and universal cuffs for accessibility
- Comfortable seating (bean bags, couch, rocking chair with cushions)
- Dim curtain lights and sensory bottles for calming focus
- A private “**Peaceful Place**” area separated by curtains to reduce sound and light

Teachers may accompany students to this area for short breaks before returning to the performance.

Accessibility & Facilities

- Adult Changing Room: A private, accessible restroom with additional space for personal care needs.
- ADA Drop-Off Zone: Located in front of the Tobin Center (look for the blue tent). A companion or staff member must remain with the student at all times.

Bringing Comfort Items

Students are encouraged to bring familiar comfort items that support focus and regulation, such as:

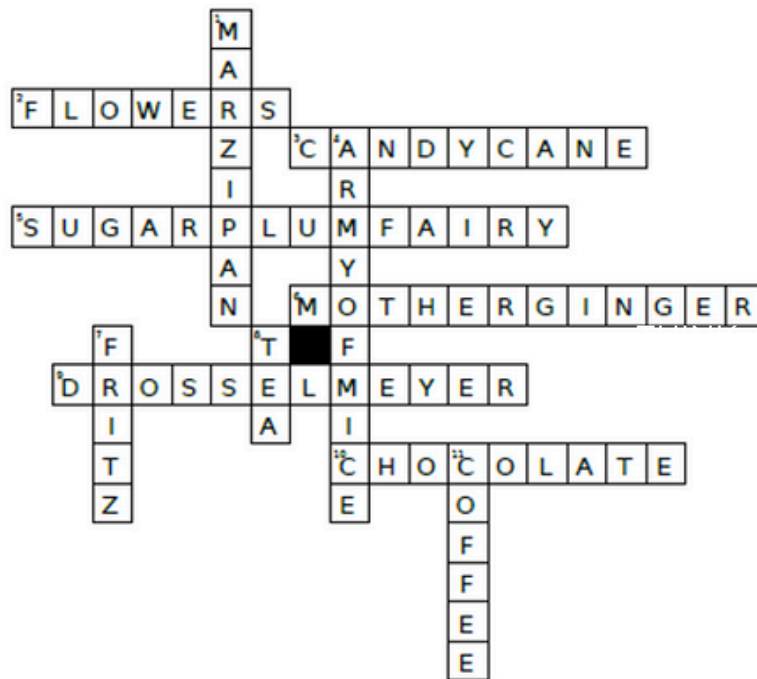
- Fidgets or small sensory tools
- Headphones or earbuds
- Cushions, weighted lap pads, or blankets
- Small snacks or drinks
- Tablets or communication devices

Please note: full meals or hot food are not permitted inside the theatre due to catering restrictions.

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.

Donate directly on our site: tobincenter.org/donate

Office Hours

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

tobincenter.org

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