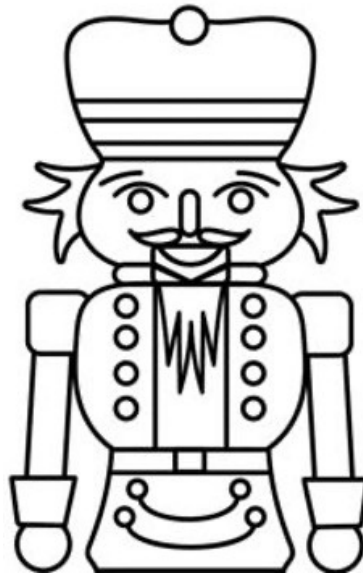




GENERATION
INEXT
EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Ballet San Antonio®
THE NUTCRACKER
(K-2) 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
5	A Short History of The Nutcracker
8	Did You Know...?
9	Ballet San Antonio's Production of The Nutcracker
10	Vocabulary
11	Coloring Pages (Nutcracker, Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier, Draw Your Own Tutu)
14	Main Characters
16	Crack the Code: A Nutcracker Word Game
17	Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions
18	Writing Connections
19	K - Dancing Words: Poetry in the Land of Sweets
22	1 st - Freeze the Story: Tableau from The Nutcracker
24	K-2: March! Spin! Leap! Dance & Motion in The Nutcracker
26	2 nd - Picture the Dance: Photography and The Nutcracker
29	Book Suggestions
30	K-2: Moving Together - Exploring Flora and the Flamingo
34	1 st - Storytime with Clara: A Literature and Movement Connection to The Nutcracker
37	Theatre Manners
39	Sensory Friendly information
40	Answer Key
41	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.

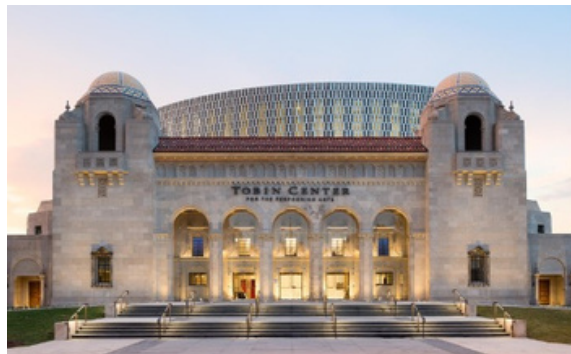
Ballet San Antonio is one of the Resident Companies
of the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts.
Balletsanantonio.org

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:

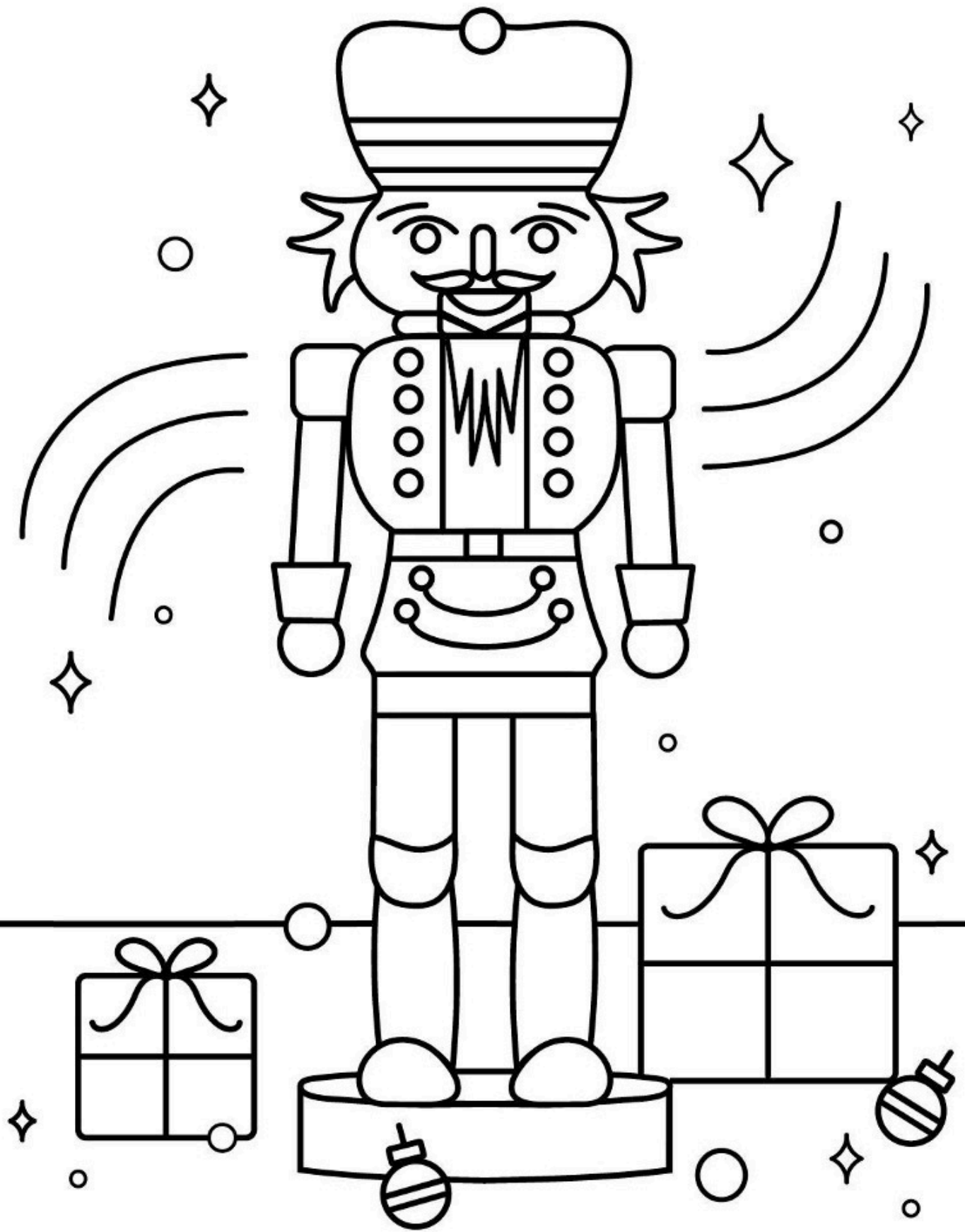
- o Victorian parlor for the Stahlbaum family's Christmas party.
- o Snow-covered night landscapes during the Land of Snow sequence.
- o The vibrant, whimsical Land of Sweets/Candy Kingdom in Act II

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.

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
solo	a dance performed by one person, alone
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 custom fitted 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 tutu: short, stiff, and projecting straight out from the dancer's waist Romantic tutu: long, soft, draping in a bell shape from the dancer's waist



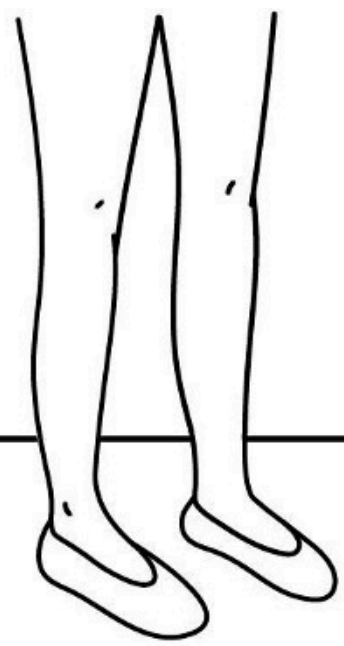
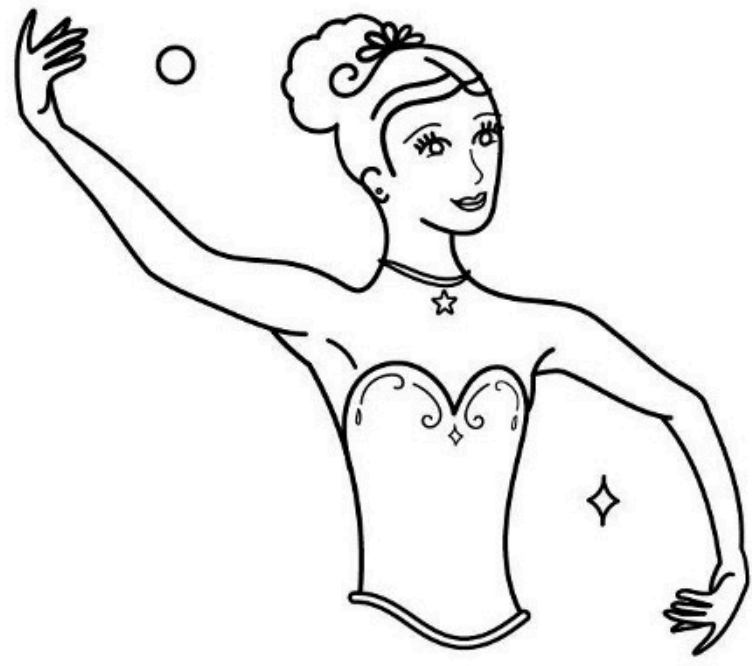
THE NUTCRACKER

THE NUTCRACKER





Fill In The Ballet Dancers Tutu!



**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.

Crack the Code: A Nutcracker Word Game Key: Pg. 40

The Nutcracker _____ is a story about a young _____ named _____ who receives a nutcracker doll as a gift at her family's _____ party. That night, she enters a magical _____ where her _____ comes to life, battles the evil _____, and transforms into a prince. Together, Clara and the Nutcracker _____ journey through a snowy forest to the _____, where they are welcomed by the _____ and enjoy _____ from around the world, like _____, _____, _____.

The story ends with Clara awakening from her dream, forever changed by the _____ of that special night.

Word Bank

Christmas Mouse King Nutcracker Clara Tea
Prince Land of Sweets girl Coffee Sugar Plum Fairy
dream Candy Canes dances magic ballet

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of when you hear the name The Nutcracker?
2. What do you think the story might be about?
3. What do you think you will see or hear in the show?
4. Have you ever seen The Nutcracker before? What do you remember?
5. What do you wonder about this story or ballet?
6. Have you ever read or heard a story about The Nutcracker?
7. Do you think something like this could happen in real life? Why or why not?
8. Have you ever had a dream or moment that felt like a story or an adventure? What happened?

TEKS - ELAR: K 1st-C, 6AB, 7AB, 9D; 1 1.1ABE, 1.6A, 1.7A, 1.9D; 2 1A-D, 6.A, 7A-B, 9D

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. What did this performance make you think about?
2. What was your favorite part of the show?
3. What did you see that you were expecting?
4. Was there anything that surprised you?
5. How was this show like or different from other shows or movies you've seen?
6. What questions do you still have about the story?
7. Have you read or heard The Nutcracker before? What was the same or different?
8. Did anything in the story remind you of something that has happened to you?
9. How did that part make you feel?

TEKS - ELAR: K 1A-C, 6B-C, 7AB, 9D; 1 1.1AE, 1.6C, 1.7B, 1.9D, 1.10A; 2 1A-D, 6C, 7AB, 9D

Teacher Tip

Encourage students to use sentence starters such as:

- “My favorite part was...”
- “I think this story is about...”
- “It reminded me of when...”
- “I wonder why...”

You can also have students draw a scene from the performance and share their drawings as part of the post-show discussion — reinforcing both comprehension and expression skills.

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	K	1st	2nd
Foundational Language Skills	110.2(1)ABC	110.3(b)(1)(A–E)	110.4(1)ABC
Respond to Sources	110.2(6)ABCDEF	110.3(b)(6)(A–C)	110.4(7)ABCDEF
Literary Elements	110.2(7)ABCD	110.3(b)(7)(A–B)	110.4(8)ABCD
Recognize & Analyze Genre	110.2(8)C,D i–iii ,F	110.3(b)(8)(A–C, E)	110.4(92)ACD i–iii ,E ii ,F
Author’s Purpose & Craft	110.2(9)ABCDE	110.3(b)(9)(A–C)	110.4(10)ABCDEF
Composition: Writing Process	110.2(10)ABCD i–ix ,E	110.3(b)(10)(A–D i–ix , E)	110.4(11)AB iii ,CD i–ix ,E
Generate Questions	110.2(12)ACDE	110.3(b)(12)(A, C, D, E, F)	110.4(13)ACDEF

Grade K-2 Activities

Kindergarten Activity – Dancing Words: Poetry in the Land of Sweets

Objective: Students will listen to and create a simple poem inspired by the sights, sounds, and movements from The Nutcracker ballet, using sensory words and rhythm.

TEKS Alignment

ELAR

- K.7(A): Discuss topics and determine the author’s purpose for writing.
- K.8(A): Discuss elements of poetry (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, repetition).
- K.11(A): Dictate or write messages that convey meaning.

Music

- .4(B): Identify same/different in musical sounds such as pitch and rhythm.

Theatre

- K.4(A): Use movement and voice to express character, feeling, or mood.

Materials Needed

- Clip(s) from The Nutcracker (e.g., “Waltz of the Flowers,” “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy”)
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Word cards with sensory words (e.g., soft, sparkly, spinning, twinkling, sweet, fast, tiptoe)
- Blank paper for drawing and “poem dictation”
- Crayons or colored pencils

Lesson Activities

1. Engage – Watch and Wonder (5-10 min)

- Watch a short dance scene from The Nutcracker.
- Ask: What do you see?

How do the dancers move What words could describe the music or costumes?

2. Explore – Building Word Banks (10 min)

- Introduce sensory words: What does something look like, sound like, or feel like?
- Display a word bank of Nutcracker Words (e.g., twirl, shine, sparkle, bounce, soft, swirl).
- Clap out the rhythm of simple words and phrases.

3. Create – Group Poem (10-15 min)

- As a class, build a simple rhyming or repeating poem together.
- Use rhythm and call-and-response as you read together.

Example:

*Twinkling lights and tiptoe feet,
Spinning dancers, music sweet.
Candy canes and sugar plums,
Dancing dreams – here it comes!*

4. Illustrate – Draw & Dictate (10 min)

- Students draw their favorite part of the performance or poem.
- Teacher / aide helps them dictate a line inspired by the performance or their drawing.
- Example: My dancer twirls like a snowflake.

Assessment

- Participation in group poem creation
- Oral responses showing understanding of descriptive words
- Drawing with dictated phrase or poem line
- Ability to use a word to describe something they saw or heard in the performance

Extension

- Bind drawings and lines into a class poetry book: Dancing Words from the Land of Sweets
- Perform the poem with movement: tiptoe, twirl, freeze on rhyming words
- Set the poem to music or use rhythm sticks to add sound effects

Class Poem Template: Dancing Words in the Land of Sweets

(A class collaborative poem inspired by The Nutcracker)

Line 1: _____

(Describes what they saw – lights, snow, costumes, etc.)

Line 2: _____

(Describes movement – twirling, jumping, tiptoeing)

Line 3: _____

(Describes sound – music, bells, whispers)

Line 4: _____

(Describes feeling or magic – dreamy, happy, excited)

After completing, you can:

- Post this in the classroom or hallway
- Bind student pages into a class poetry book
- Recite the poem with matching movement
- Record the class performance



Poetry in the Land of Sweets - Drawing & Dictation Sheet

My Nutcracker Poem Picture

Name: _____ Date: _____

Draw a picture of something beautiful, sweet, or exciting you saw in The Nutcracker or imagined from our poem.



My Poem Line:

My dancer / scene / candy / music:

1st Grade Activity – Freeze the Story: Tableau from The Nutcracker

Subjects: Theatre, ELA, SEL, Dance

TEKS Alignment

Theatre:

- 1.1A – Interpret characters using body and movement.
- 1.2A – Demonstrate safe use of the body and space.
- 1.3A – Express ideas and feelings through dramatic play.

ELA:

- 1.6A – Understand and make inferences about plot and character.
- 1.7B – Describe characters’ actions and feelings.

SEL/PE:

- Identify and express feelings; work cooperatively in groups.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand what a tableau is and how to express a moment from a story using body and facial expression.
- Create frozen scenes (tableaux) based on key moments or characters from The Nutcracker ballet.
- Reflect on character emotions and storytelling without words.
- Collaborate safely and respectfully in small groups.

Materials

- Short video clips or picture book versions of The Nutcracker
- Character cards or visual cues (Clara, Nutcracker, Mouse King, Sugar Plum Fairy, Toy Soldiers, Snowflakes)
- Open classroom space
- “Nutcracker Tableau Reflection” worksheet
- Optional: light music (Nutcracker Suite), scarves or props

Lesson Activities

1. Introduction to Tableau (10 min)

- Ask: What do we call it when actors freeze on stage to make a picture?
- Define a tableau as a frozen picture that tells part of a story.
- Demonstrate how to show emotion and action without sound or movement.
- Practice together: “Show me ‘excited’... now freeze!”

2. Story Time: The Nutcracker (10–15 min)

- Share a simplified summary or read a picture book version.
- Show 2–3 images or short clips from key scenes:
 1. Clara receiving the Nutcracker
 2. Battle with the Mouse King
 3. Snow Scene
 4. Sugar Plum Fairy’s Dance
- Ask: How does Clara feel here? What shapes do the dancers make?

3. Tableau Creation (5–10 min)

- Divide class into groups of 3–5 (no more than 5 in a group).
- Each group is to select a scene or character:
EX: Group 1: Clara and the Nutcracker Group 2: Coffee Group 3 Mirlitons
 Group 4: Sugar Plum Fairy, Cavalier, and Attendants Group 5: Candy Canes
- Students plan and practice their frozen pictures.
 1. What parts will they need
 2. Who will play which part? (Everyone must participate.)
 3. Remind groups to use different levels with their bodies (low, middle, high) and clear facial expressions.
- Each group practices and then presents their tableau at the same time (teacher checking for understanding).
- Each group prepares a sentence of narration. (This tells the viewers what their scene is and names each person and which part they are playing.)
- Each group practices with narration and then presents their tableau (teacher checking for understanding).
- Each group performs their tableau.

4. Reflection & Drawing (10–15 min)

Students complete The Nutcracker Tableau Reflection worksheet:

- Draw their group in their frozen pose.
- Describe each person and what they played in the tableau.
- Describe the character and action using a sentence stem:
(“Showed” = body position or emotion that connects to the group tableau)
“My group was _____. I played _____.
I showed _____ because _____.”

Extension Activities

- Use scarves or props (e.g., a toy Nutcracker) to enhance creativity.
- Play Tchaikovsky’s music and freeze at dramatic moments for improvised tableau.
- Create a class storybook with photos of each group’s tableau and student captions.

K-2 Activity

March! Spin! Leap! Dance & Motion in The Nutcracker

TEKS: Science K.6D, 1.6D, 2.6D

Objective: Explore physical movement through ballet.

Materials:

- Video clips of Act II dances
- Open space for movement

Instructions:

1. Discuss how different forces are needed to move objects.
2. Watch clips of Act II. How many dancers spun? How many different types of movements were seen in the dances? Look for up and down, side to side, rotating, fast / slow, jerky and smooth.
3. Students mimic movements and identify push/pull and spin in their own bodies.
4. Discuss how force and motion are used and how they affect the movement in the dancers' bodies.

Dance movements

Leaping

Spinning

Marching

Kicking

Motion

body pushing up and gravity pulling back down

rotation (around a central point)

steady beat movement

rotation, action and reaction / inertia

Assessment: Observation of student movement and discussion.

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	The Spanish dance utilizes lively trumpet music and castanets, reflecting the passion and flare of flamenco, a traditional Spanish dance form that combines guitar, vocals, and intricate footwork.
Tea	When The Nutcracker ballet was created, tea from China was rare and expensive. This dance, with piccolo, bassoon, and pizzicato (plucked) strings, sounds as beautiful and exciting as having the chance to sip real tea!
Candy Cane	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.
Dance of the Reed Pipes	The French dance, sometimes called "Reed Flutes" or "Mirlitons," draws inspiration from marzipan, a sweet treat popular in France. A mirliton is a simple, tube-shaped flute that has a delicate, airy sound.
Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles (Bon Bons)	Mother Ginger represents Germany, where gingerbread comes from. 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. Her many cookie babies run out from under her heavy skirt.
Waltz of the Flowers	A dancing bouquet gathered to honor Clara with a fairy-like dancer who leads the flowers in celebration.
Pas de Deux	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.



2nd Grade Activity: Picture the Dance: Photography and The Nutcracker

Objective: Students will explore how photographs can capture movement, emotion, and storytelling by observing scenes from The Nutcracker and creating their own “photo frame” drawings inspired by the performance.

TEKS Connections:

Visual Arts TEKS:

- 2.1B: Identify and apply elements of art (line, shape, color, texture, space).
- 2.2A: Express ideas through original artworks.
- 2.4A: Interpret visual messages and symbols in artworks.

ELA TEKS:

- 2.6A: Establish purpose for reading, listening, viewing (e.g., to gain information).
- 2.7: Describe characters, setting, and key events in a story.
- 2.11: Dictate or write brief literary texts (e.g., narrative, descriptive).

Theatre TEKS (Optional Extension):

- 2.5A: Respond to and evaluate dramatic performances.
- 2.1A: Demonstrate safe and appropriate audience behavior.

Materials:

- Printed or projected still images from The Nutcracker (stage photos, dancer poses, costume scenes)
- Paper photo “frame” templates (or cut paper rectangles to simulate photo borders)
- Drawing materials (crayons, markers, pencils)
- Optional: paper cameras (printable or cardboard) or real camera demonstration
- Chart paper for word bank (movement, costume, mood)

Lesson Activities:

1. Engage (5–10 min): “What Do You See?”

- Show students several photographs from The Nutcracker.
- Cue students to think and speak concretely about the pictures.
When I see, I think... When I see, I feel... When I see, I wonder...
- Then ask: What do you think is happening in this picture?
How do the dancers look or feel? What do you think is the story in this photo?

2. Explore (10 min): “Picture the Moment”

- Discuss how a photographer chooses a moment in the show to capture — just like picking a page from a story.
- Introduce vocabulary: framing, pose, background, emotion, action.
- Ask students what moment they would “snap a photo” of if they were watching.

3. Create (15–20 min): “Picture the Dance”

- Students draw their favorite moment from The Nutcracker inside a paper photo frame.
- Add details like movement lines (swirls, jumps), costumes, or stage setting.
- On the back or bottom, write a short caption or dictated sentence:

EX: The dancer is leaping during the snow scene.

Clara is holding the Nutcracker in the party.

4. Share & Reflect (5–10 min):

- Display drawings like a photo gallery on the board or wall.
- Invite students to “tour the gallery” and describe what they see in each picture.

Key Vocabulary

framing	When the things around the person or thing in the picture create a “frame”, like a picture frame, around the person or thing.
pose	A body or face position with a choice behind it (different than “posture”). A pose helps to tell a story by bringing a feeling or action to the picture.
background	Part of the scene that helps tell the story of the picture but is far away from the camera.
emotion	The mood or feeling a picture is showing.
action	A frozen picture that captures something in motion, usually something exciting or athletic.

Assessment:

- Student drawing includes specific elements from the performance (character, movement, costume, action).
- Student drawing includes specific elements of photographic design (framing, pose, background, emotion, action)
- Caption or sentence shows understanding of the scene.
- Participation in class discussion using appropriate vocabulary.

Extension Ideas:

- Make a classroom “Nutcracker Photo Album” with student work.
- Create “before and after” frames around one dance moment (e.g., preparation, jump, and landing).
- Use a pretend camera to act out being a Nutcracker photographer and have classmates create the moments to be captured.

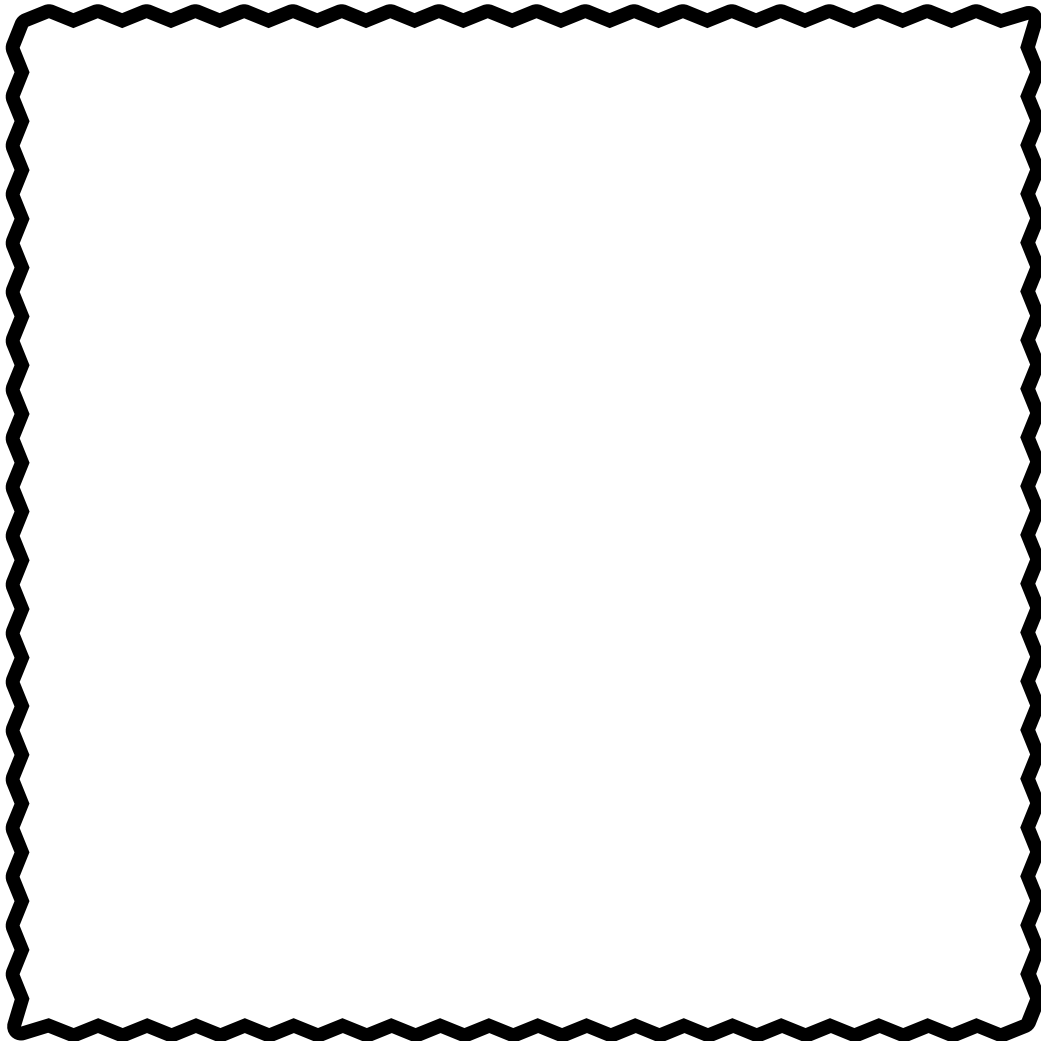
Picture the Dance!

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions:

Draw your favorite moment from The Nutcracker ballet inside the picture frame.
Show how the dancer is moving or what emotion they are showing.

Describe what is happening by using words like jumping, spinning, twirling, or magical!



My photo shows:

I chose this moment because:

BOOK SUGGESTIONS: K-2: Picture Books & Read-Alouds

The Nutcracker by Susan Jeffers

A beautifully illustrated classic retelling with elegant, accessible language. Great for introducing the story to young children.

The Story of The Nutcracker Ballet by Deborah Hautzig (Step into Reading)

A simple, early-reader adaptation perfect for developing readers and read-aloud sessions.

Dance & Belonging Books:

“Firebird” by Misty Copeland

A lyrical picture book featuring a young girl learning ballet who finds her confidence through dance. The mentor-mentee dialogue highlights inner strength, community support, and belonging in a ballet studio setting.

I Will Dance by Nancy Bo Flood & Julianna Swaney

Celebrates dance and inclusion, showing how every child can express themselves through movement.

Dance & Movement Books:

Everybunny Dance by Ellie Sandall

A delightful, minimal-text story filled with colorful bunnies encouraging young readers to get up and move!

Barnyard Dance! by Sandra Boynton

A fun, rhythmic board book that’s perfect for classroom dance-alongs.

Song and Dance Man by Karen Ackerman

A charming tale of a grandfather sharing his vaudeville song-and-dance routines with his grandchildren.

Flora and the Flamingo by Molly Idle (K-2)

Wordless, graceful illustrations perfect for silent “mirror movement” activities.

A Shadow of a Dream by Kathleen Estes (Grades 1-4)

This imaginative picture book pairs a shadow-puppet “DANCER” magnet with expressive artwork. The dancer transforms into animals (a raven, fish, elephant, etc.), inviting young readers to physically mimic each shadow form. Great for creative movement, dramatization, and exploring shape, line, and shadow.

Classroom Connections: Have students mimic “A Shadow of a Dream” dancer shapes to practice body awareness and shadow projection.

K-2 Activity: Moving Together – Exploring Flora and the Flamingo

TEKS Alignment

Science

- 1.6D – Observe and record changes in movement caused by push and pull forces.
- 1.3A – Ask questions about the natural world and seek answers through observation.

Fine Arts: Dance & Theatre

- Dance 1.1A – Demonstrate awareness of movement elements (space, time, energy).
- Theatre 1.2B – Express emotions and ideas using movement and facial expression.

ELA

- 1.6A – Understand and make inferences about text with visual elements.
- 1.7B – Describe characters and feelings based on illustrations.

Objective

Students will explore concepts of movement, cooperation, and nonverbal storytelling by reading *Flora and the Flamingo*. They will practice mirrored dance movements, identify pushes and pulls, and reflect on a professional movement performance.

Materials

- *Flora and the Flamingo* by Molly Idle (physical copy or projection)
- Music for movement (instrumental or ballet music)
- Open space for movement
- Large mirror (if available) or mirrored movement pairs
- “Flora’s Movement Reflection” student worksheet
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Optional: Access to a dance or physical theatre performance (live or recorded)

Lesson Activities

1. Read-Aloud & Discussion (10–15 min)

- Read *Flora and the Flamingo*, focusing on body language, emotion, and mirrored movements between characters.
- Ask: How do Flora and the flamingo show friendship without speaking?

What kind of movements do they do together?

2. Push & Pull Warm-Up (10 min)

- Lead students in identifying push/pull in their own bodies:
 1. Pushing hands away
 2. Pulling arms inward
 3. Pushing off the ground to jump
- Record examples of push and pull on chart paper.

3. Mirror Movement Activity (15–20 min)

- In pairs, students take turns leading and following gentle, graceful movements.
- Emphasize body awareness, balance, and smooth transitions.
- Encourage students to express emotions like joy, shyness, or surprise with their arms and legs.
- Remind students that faces are very important when understanding what feelings the body is expressing. Revisit the students movements and encourage paying attention to choices with both body and face!

4. Professional Performance Connection (live or video)

- Watch a professional ballet or modern dance performance (excerpts are fine).
- Ask: Did the dancers move together like Flora and the flamingo?

What emotions did you see in their movements?

5. Reflection & Drawing (15 min)

Students complete the Flora’s Movement Reflection worksheet:

- Draw a picture of their favorite mirrored movement
- Circle a movement that showed a push or a pull
- Answer: How did you feel when you moved like Flora, and what did your body do to show that feeling? What did your body show or tell?

When you danced like Flora, how did the movement help you show or feel emotion?

Assessment

- Participation in movement warm-up and mirrored dance
- Verbal identification of push/pull
- Completed drawing and reflection worksheet
- Class discussion showing engagement with performance

Extensions

- Add scarves or ribbons for expressive movement
 - Create a short class mirror-dance sequence to music
 - Write a group poem or sentence about “Moving Together”
1. See Kinder Activity Dancing the Words

Flora's Movement Reflection Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Let's Reflect on Movement!

Draw your favorite movement that you and your partner did together:
(Show how you moved like Flora and the Flamingo!)



2. Circle one: Did your movement use...

A PUSH A PULL

3. How did you feel when you moved together with your partner?

Happy Silly Calm Excited

Other feeling: _____

4. What did you notice in the performance we watched?

"The dancers moved like..."

Movement Observation Chart (Classroom Use or Student Group Work)

Flora & the Flamingo – Movement & Emotion Chart				
Movement Action	Push or Pull?	How Did It Feel?	Facial Expression Shown	Partnered or Solo?
Arm reaches forward	Push	_____	😊 😐 😞 😡 😍	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Solo
Arm pulls to chest	Pull	_____	😊 😐 😞 😡 😍	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Solo
Slow spin or twirl	_____	_____	😊 😐 😞 😡 😍	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Solo
Tiptoe or stretch up	_____	_____	😊 😐 😞 😡 😍	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Solo
Bow or reach out	_____	_____	😊 😐 😞 😡 😍	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Solo

Discussion Prompt:

What was your favorite way to move like Flora? What emotion did it show?

- As each part is retold, students act it out:
 - 1.Small, careful steps as Clara
 - 2.Strong arms and frozen shapes for the battle
 - 3.Gentle twirling or floating for the Land of Sweets

3. Emotion Match & Tableau (10-15 min)

- Match each scene to an emotion card (e.g., surprised, scared, joyful).
- In pairs or groups, students create a frozen tableau showing one scene and feeling.
 - 1.See 1st grade activity Freeze the Story

4. Reflection & Drawing (10-15 min)

- Students complete the “My Favorite Nutcracker Moment” worksheet:
 - 1.Draw their favorite part of the story.
 - 2.Finish the sentence: I thought Clara felt _____ when I saw _____.

Assessment

Skill	Demonstrated	Developing	Needs Support
Understands beginning-middle-end			
Uses movement to show emotion			
Completes drawing related to story			
Completes sentence related to story			

Score _____ / 12

Storytime with Clara

Name: _____ Date: _____

My Favorite Nutcracker Moment

Finish the sentence:

“I thought Clara felt _____ when I saw _____.”

Draw your favorite part of the story...



My favorite part was:

This was my favorite because:



Theatre Manners – Getting Ready for the Show

The word etiquette means good manners or kind behavior.

When we go to a theater, we show respect for the people performing and the people watching around us. We can see the performers on the stage and the performers can see everyone in the audience, too.

Different shows have different traditions for etiquette!

For example:

- At a Gospel music show, people might clap, sing, or move along with the music.
- At a Classical music concert, people usually sit quietly and wait to clap until the conductor lowers their hands.

At The Tobin Center, each performance is a little different — but here are some good general manners to remember!

Before the Show

- Arrive early so you have time to find your seat and use the restroom.
- Use quiet feet and voices when walking into the theatre.
- Turn off or put away devices so they don't make noise or shine bright lights.
- Listen to your teacher or grown-up helper for special directions before the show begins.

During the Show

- Eyes on the stage! Watch carefully — the performers can see and hear you, too!
- Quiet mouths, still bodies. Try your best to stay in your seat and listen.
- If you need to leave, raise your hand or tell your teacher quietly. Ushers (helpers in black clothing) can assist you.
- Clap when it's time! It's great to clap when something exciting, beautiful, or funny happens — and especially at the end!
- No flash photos or videos. Flashing lights can hurt the performers' eyes.
- Be respectful. Please don't unwrap noisy snacks, chew gum loudly, or play with items that make sounds.
- Enjoy yourself! Laugh when it's funny, smile when it's beautiful, and show your appreciation with applause.

Theatre Manners – Getting Ready for the Show

After the Show

- Stay for the curtain call. This is when the performers come back out so the audience can clap and say “thank you!”
- If everyone claps while standing, that’s called a standing ovation — it means “We loved it!”
- Sometimes, the performers might do a short extra piece called an encore (say: “ON-core”).
- Clean up your area. Throw away wrappers or trash in bins.
- Exit quietly. Use walking feet and quiet voices as you leave the theatre.

Extra Tips

- Sit tall so others can see.
- Show kindness and respect — performers work very hard to make the show special for you.
- Ask an usher for help if you need something. Ushers help people find their seats and make sure everyone enjoys the show.

Fun Fact!

- The word “theatre” (with “re”) is often used for the art form — acting, dance, and performance.
- The word “theater” (with “er”) is often used for the building where the show happens

At The Tobin Center, we celebrate both!



**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

Crack the Code: A Nutcracker Word Game

The Nutcracker ballet follows a young girl named Clara who receives a nutcracker doll as a gift at her family's Christmas party. That night, she enters a magical dream where her Nutcracker comes to life, battles the evil Mouse King, and transforms into a prince. Together, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince journey through a snowy forest to the Land of the Sweets, where they are welcomed by the Sugar Plum Fairy and enjoy dances from around the world, like Tea, Coffee, and Candy Canes. The story ends with Clara awakening from her dream, forever changed by the magic of that special night.

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](#)



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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

115 Auditorium Circle,
San Antonio, TX
78205

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