GENERATION NEXT 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

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Table of Contents

3 Ballet San Antonio & Performance Information
4 Welcome to the Show!
5 A Short History of The Nutcracker
8 Did You Know…?
9 Ballet San Antonio's Production of The Nutcracker
10 The Nutcracker and Tchaikovsky Timeline
12 Vocabulary
13 Coloring Page
14 Main Characters
16 A Tale of Two Tutus
17 Cross Word
18 Word Search
19 Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions
20 How to Talk About Ballet: The B.E.S.T. Method
22 Writing Connections
23 7th Grade – Physics and The Land of Sweets
30 6th Grade – Poetry in Motion: Writing The Land of Sweets
36 8th Grade – Candy Chemistry: Science in The Land of Sweets
43 Act II Dance List
44 Book Suggestions
51 6th Grade – Literature Lesson Plan: Page to Stage
52 Theatre Etiquette
54 Sensory Friendly information
56 Answer Keys
58 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 so happy to welcome you to the Tobin Center for Ballet San Antonio's magical production of The Nutcracker! Whether this is your first visit or a favorite tradition, we are delighted to share this special experience with you.

Get ready to enter a world filled with swirling snowflakes, dancing sweets, unforgettable characters, and Tchaikovsky's beautiful music. From the moment the curtain rises, dancers, musicians, designers, technicians, and artists work together to bring Clara's extraordinary adventure to life.

At the Tobin Center, we believe the performing arts are for everyone. We hope today's performance encourages you to wonder, imagine, ask questions, and discover something new. As you watch, notice how the dancers use movement, music, costumes, scenery, and expression to tell a story—sometimes without saying a single word!

We are grateful to our wonderful partners at Ballet San Antonio for sharing their artistry, talent, and dedication with our community. Their work gives students throughout San Antonio and the surrounding region the opportunity to experience the excitement and joy of professional ballet right here at home.

Most of all, we hope you have fun! May your visit be filled with discovery, creativity, and a little bit of Nutcracker magic.

Welcome—we're so glad you're here!

Dr. Kimberly Stephenson
Vice President of Education
Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



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:

<u>Core Themes in The Nutcracker</u>

- Imagination and Fantasy
  – Clara's dreamworld blurs reality and imagination, taking her on a magical journey.
- Courage and Bravery
  – Clara shows courage when she helps defeat the Mouse King and protects the Nutcracker.
- Transformation and Growth
  – The Nutcracker becomes a Prince, and Clara matures through her experiences.
- Wonder and Celebration
  – The Land of the Sweets celebrates joy, beauty, and cultural variety through dance.
- 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

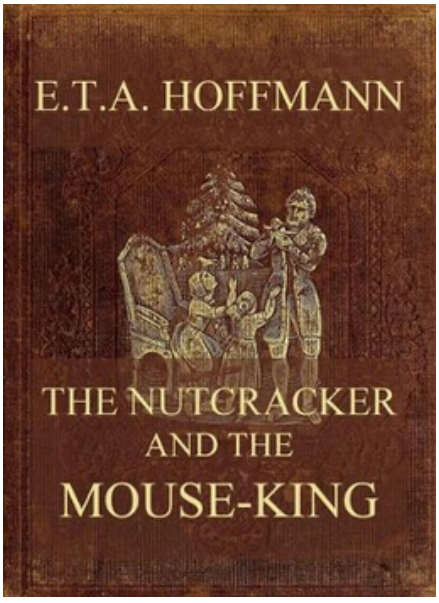
Ballet San Antonio uses high-resolution projections to transform stage settings:

- Victorian parlor for the Stahlbaum family's Christmas party.
- Snow-covered night landscapes during the Land of Snow sequence.
- 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.

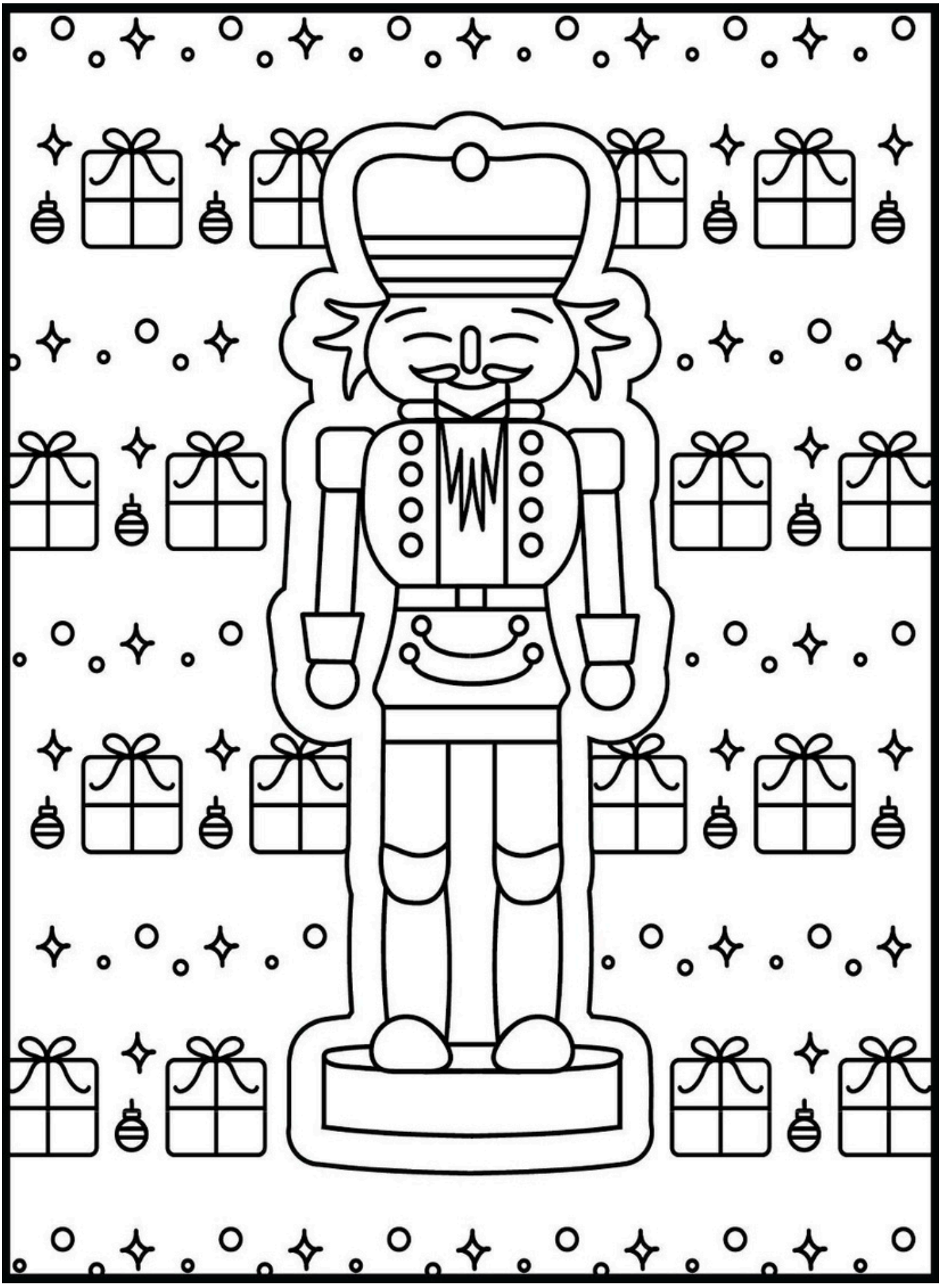
1940
Disney's Fantasia premiered in New York City, featuring segments of the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Tea, the Dance of the Reed Flutes, the Coffee, the Trepak, and the Waltz of the Flowers (but none of The Nutcracker characters, only the music).

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 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: 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 *The Nutcracker*, 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 *The Nutcracker* 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.

A Tale of Two Tutus

The Traditional Tutu

The tutu has been a symbol of ballet for nearly two centuries. Early Romantic-era tutus of the 1800s featured soft skirts that fell below the knee, creating an airy, otherworldly appearance. As ballet technique became increasingly athletic, skirts gradually shortened so audiences could better see a dancer's intricate footwork and leg movements. By the late 19th century, the short, structured classical tutu emerged, extending outward from the dancer's hips and showcasing the precision, strength, and technique associated with classical ballet.

The Lyrical Tutu

The lyrical tutu draws inspiration from ballet's softer Romantic traditions while allowing designers greater freedom in shape, fabric, and movement. Rather than extending stiffly from the hips, lyrical styles often use lightweight layers of tulle, chiffon, or other flowing fabrics that move with the dancer. These costumes can create a sense of softness, motion, fantasy, or emotion and are especially effective when a choreographer or designer wants the costume itself to respond visibly to the dancer's movement.

Why Choose One Over the Other?

Costume designers consider much more than appearance. A tutu can help establish a character, time period, mood, or choreographic style. A structured classical tutu emphasizes the dancer's lines and precise technique, while a flowing lyrical tutu can extend and amplify movement. Designers must also consider choreography, partnering, lighting, scenery, and how groups of costumes will look together onstage.

Look for It!

As you watch The Nutcracker, become a costume detective! Look for different tutu shapes, lengths, fabrics, and layers. Which costumes hold their shape, and which move with the dancers? Notice how each style changes the silhouette of the dancer and the way you see the choreography. Why do you think the costume designer chose that particular style for that character or dance?



Romantic Era



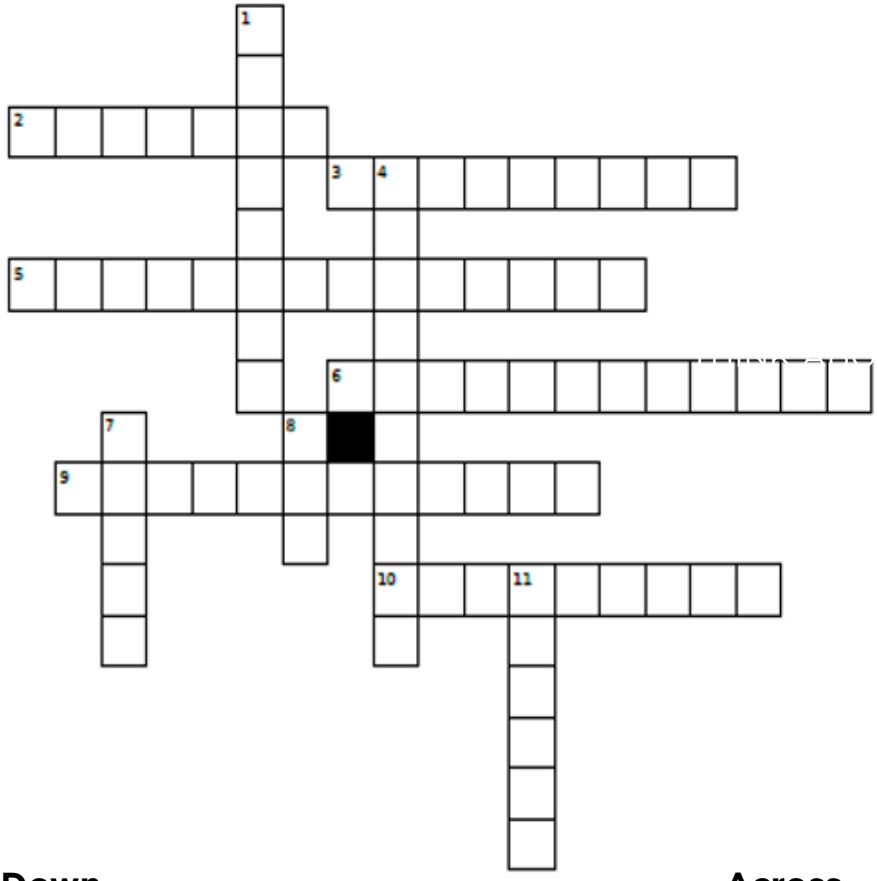
Structured



Lyrical

Cross Word *Key: Pg. 56*

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. 57*

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
Clara
fairy
Sugar Plum Fairy
Russia
leap
pirouette
plie
tendu
releve
saute
arabesque

ballet
celesta
choreography
ballerina
pointe
shoe
dream
prince
cavalier
prima ballerina

Tchaikovsky
Suite
trumpet
oboe
castanets
mirliton
Trepak

Mouse King
Land of Sweets
pas de deux
party
candy
celebration
tradition

Spain
France
China
Arabia



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)

How to Talk about Ballet: The B.E.S.T. Method

You don't have to be a dancer to talk about dance! But there is a difference between sharing an opinion and making an observation. "I liked it," or "It was pretty" tells us how you felt about what you saw. That matters... but it doesn't tell us what happened onstage that made you feel that way.

When we talk about dance, we begin with evidence: what we can actually see and hear. Describing movement helps us slow down, notice details, support our ideas, and understand how dancers and choreographers communicate without words. Once we describe what happened, we can use those observations to explain what we think it might mean. That's where B.E.S.T. comes in!

B — BODY
What is the body doing? Look at shapes, gestures, balance, facial expressions, and which body parts lead the movement. Is the dancer reaching, twisting, stretching, collapsing, or holding completely still?

E — ENERGY
How is the movement performed? Movement can be sharp or smooth, powerful or gentle, sudden or sustained, tense or relaxed. Does Dracula move differently from Mina or Jonathan? What might that tell you about each character?

S — SPACE
Where does the movement happen? Notice levels, directions, pathways, distance, and relationships between dancers. Who moves close together? Who stays apart? Who takes up the most space—and who seems trapped by it?

T — TIME
When and how quickly does movement happen? Look for changes in speed, rhythm, repetition, pauses, and stillness. Does a movement happen suddenly, build slowly, repeat again and again—or make you wait?

From Opinion to Observation

Instead of: “The Snowflakes were beautiful,” start with what you observed.

Try: “The Snowflakes traveled quickly across the stage using light, flowing energy and repeated turns.”

Then interpret: “Their movements filled the space and made the scene feel like swirling snow..”

OBSERVE → DESCRIBE → INTERPRET

Your interpretation can be different from someone else’s. The important part is being able to point to what you saw, heard, or noticed and explain how it shaped your thinking.

The magic isn’t just in what you see. It’s in noticing HOW the dancers create it.



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

7th Grade Activity — Physics and the Land of Sweets

TEKS: Math 7.3A, 7.4(AB), 7.6(G); Science 7.7(ABCDE)

Objective: Students will investigate the physics of movement in Act II of The Nutcracker by collecting and analyzing performance data, calculating rates, interpreting motion, and using evidence to explain how forces affect the speed, direction, and movement of professional dancers.

Materials:

- Access to Ballet San Antonio's The Nutcracker or selected Act II performance excerpts
- Physics of the Land of Sweets Investigation worksheet
- Pencils
- Calculators
- Stopwatch or timer
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Graph paper
- Ruler or measuring tape
- Optional: masking tape for marking distances on the floor
- Optional: video clips that can be paused or replayed

Printable Handouts:

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

Vocabulary

Force – A push or pull that can change an object's motion.
Motion – A change in an object's position over time.
Speed – The distance traveled during a specific amount of time.
Velocity – Speed in a particular direction.
Distance – The total length of the path traveled.
Displacement – The change in position from a starting point to an ending point, including direction.
Balanced Forces – Forces acting on an object that are equal in size and opposite in direction and do not change the object's motion.
Unbalanced Forces – Forces that cause a change in an object's motion.
Acceleration – A change in velocity caused by a change in speed, direction, or both.
Rate – A comparison of two quantities measured in different units.

Lesson Activities

1. The Physics Behind the Magic | 10–15 min

Introduce students to the idea that ballet is both an art form and a physical phenomenon. Ask students to imagine a dancer performing a leap.

Discuss:

- What causes the dancer to leave the floor?
- What happens to the dancer's motion while in the air?
- What forces are acting on the dancer?
- What must happen for the dancer to land?
- How can a dancer change speed or direction?
- How might two dancers perform similar movements at different speeds?

Explain that professional dancers make difficult physical movements appear effortless, but every leap, turn, landing, and traveling sequence involves forces and changes in motion.
Tell students that today they will become performance physicists, using observation, measurement, mathematics, and scientific reasoning to investigate the movements they see onstage.

2. Movement Investigation: Observe & Collect | 15–20 min

Watch selected dances from Act II of The Nutcracker.

Assign students or groups one dance to investigate.

Students record observable movement data such as:

- Length of the dance or selected sequence
- Number of dancers
- Number of major traveling movements
- Number of leaps or jumps
- Number of turns
- Changes in direction
- Moments of stillness
- Repeated movement sequences

Possible selections include:
Spanish/Chocolate
Arabian/Coffee
Chinese/Tea
Russian/Trepak
Dance of the Mirlitons
Waltz of the Flowers
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy

Students should distinguish between observation and interpretation.

For example:

- Observation: The dancer changed direction four times during the selected sequence.
- Interpretation: Each change in direction represents a change in velocity because velocity includes direction.

Encourage students to collect data that can be counted or measured rather than relying only on impressions such as “fast,” “powerful,” or “graceful.”

3. From Stage to Science | 20 min

Students select one movement from their assigned dance for closer analysis.
Possible movements include:
Leap Jump Turn Traveling step Sudden stop Change of direction Lift Landing

Students create a simple movement sequence:
START → FORCE → CHANGE IN MOTION → END
For example:
Dancer standing still → pushes against the floor → accelerates upward → leaps → lands and stops

Students then answer:

- What was the dancer's initial state of motion?
- Where was force applied?
- What changed after the force was applied?
- Did the dancer's speed change?
- Did the dancer's direction change?
- Was there a change in velocity?
- Where can you identify balanced or unbalanced forces?

Students use their observations to connect the movement to Newton's First and Second Laws of Motion.

Think Like a Physicist
Ask: If a dancer wants to accelerate more quickly, what could change?

Students should consider the relationship among force, mass, and acceleration rather than simply concluding that "more force always means more movement."

4. Math in Motion | 20–25 min

Now students use mathematics to analyze movement.

Part A: Calculate a Rate Students select a countable movement from their observation.

Example:
A dancer completes 12 turns in 24 seconds.
Students calculate: 12 turns ÷ 24 seconds = 0.5 turns per second

Or:

A group performs 18 jumps during a 90-second sequence.
18 jumps ÷ 90 seconds = 0.2 jumps per second

Students compare rates between two dances or movement sequences.

Ask: Which sequence had the greater movement rate? How much greater?

Part B: Distance and Time

If distance can be reasonably estimated from a video or classroom simulation, students calculate average speed using: Average Speed = Distance ÷ Time

Example:
A dancer travels an estimated 12 meters in 8 seconds.
12 ÷ 8 = 1.5 meters per second
Students must label answers with the correct units.

Part C: Represent the Data

Students create an appropriate representation of their collected data.
Depending on the investigation, students may create a:

- Bar graph comparing movement counts
- Data table comparing rates
- Distance-time graph showing movement across a selected interval

Students provide a title, labels, units, and an appropriate scale.

5. Professional Performance Connection: Physics You Can See
During the live Ballet San Antonio performance, challenge students to become Physics Detectives.
Ask students to watch for:

- A dancer accelerating
- A dancer decelerating
- A sudden change in direction
- A moment when forces appear balanced
- A moment when an unbalanced force changes motion
- A movement that demonstrates a large amount of force
- Two dancers performing similar movements at different rates

After the performance, discuss:

- Did understanding some of the physics change the way you watched the dancers?
- Which movement made you most curious about the physics happening onstage?

Emphasize that analyzing the science does not take away from the artistry. Instead, understanding what the dancers' bodies are accomplishing can reveal another layer of the skill required for professional ballet.

Physics of the Land of Sweets Investigation Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Observe

Dance observed: _____

Number of dancers: _____

Length of observed sequence: _____ seconds

Choose three movement features to track.

Movement Feature Count

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Number of changes in direction: _____

One movement I want to investigate: _____

Part 2: Analyze the Motion

Describe the movement you selected.

Starting motion: _____

Force applied: _____

Change in motion: _____

Ending motion: _____

Did the dancer's speed change? Yes / No
Explain:

Did the dancer's direction change? Yes / No

Explain:
If speed or direction changed, what does that tell you about the dancer's velocity?

Part 3: Calculate

Choose one movement you counted.
Movement: _____
Number observed: _____
Time: _____ seconds

Calculate the unit rate:
Number of movements ÷ Time = Rate
_____ ÷ _____ = _____
Rate: _____ movements per second

Compare your rate with another dance or group.
Dance A rate: _____ Dance B rate: _____
Which had the greater rate?

What mathematical evidence supports your answer?

Part 4: Graph It
Create a graph representing one set of data from your investigation.
Your graph must include:

- A descriptive title
- Clearly labeled axes
- Appropriate units
- An appropriate scale
- Accurate representation of your data

Part 5: Explain the Physics
Choose one moment from the performance that demonstrates the effect of force on motion.

Describe what happened:
Was the dancer experiencing a change in motion? Yes / No
What evidence supports your answer?

Final Analysis
What does physics reveal about the movement of professional dancers? Use at least two pieces of mathematical or scientific evidence from your investigation to support your conclusion.

Use a new piece of paper for your analysis.

Assessment

- Accurately collect and organize observable movement data.
- Calculate and interpret unit rates.
- Calculate average speed when appropriate measurements are available.
- Distinguish among distance, displacement, speed, and velocity.
- Identify changes in speed and direction.
- Explain how balanced and unbalanced forces affect motion.
- Interpret or construct an appropriate graphical representation.
- Use mathematical and scientific evidence to support a conclusion about professional dance.

Extensions

Human Distance-Time Graph

Mark a straight pathway on the classroom floor. One student travels the path while another records position at regular time intervals. Students create a distance-time graph of the movement and compare it with movement observed in The Nutcracker.

Choreograph Newton's Laws

Small groups create a short movement sequence containing:

- Stillness
- Acceleration
- Constant motion
- A change in direction
- Deceleration
- A stop

Another group observes the sequence and identifies where forces caused changes in motion.

Same Dance, Different Data

Have different groups analyze the same performance excerpt. Compare their measurements and discuss why observational data may vary. Students identify ways scientists can make data collection more consistent and reliable.

Physics Challenge

Ask students:

- Why can two dancers perform the same choreography but require different amounts of force to produce the same acceleration?

Students use the relationship among force, mass, and acceleration to develop an explanation.

Grade 6 Activity: Poetry in Motion – Writing the Land of Sweets

TEKS Alignment
ELAR 6.4, 6.6(BC), 6.7(A), 6.8(B), 6.9(D), 6.10(BC), 6.11(A)

Objective
Students will analyze how movement, music, costumes, and staging create meaning in Act II of The Nutcracker and translate their observations into an original poem using imagery, sensory language, figurative language, purposeful word choice, and poetic structure.

Materials

- Selected Act II excerpts from The Nutcracker or access to the live performance
- Poetry in Motion: Land of Sweets Observation & Writing Sheet
- Paper or student journals
- Pencils
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Optional instrumental excerpts from Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker
- Optional thesaurus or digital vocabulary resource

Vocabulary

Imagery – Language that creates sensory pictures or experiences for the reader.

Figurative Language – Language that goes beyond literal meaning to create an effect or comparison.

Simile – A comparison using like or as.

Metaphor – A comparison that describes one thing as another.

Personification – Giving human characteristics to something nonhuman.

Alliteration – Repetition of beginning consonant sounds.

Line Break – The place where a poet chooses to end one line and begin another.

Stanza – A group of lines within a poem.

Tone – The attitude or feeling communicated by a writer or work.

Lesson Activities

1. Can Movement Become a Poem? | 10–15 min

- Begin by writing one word on the board: SNOW
- Ask students to brainstorm words or phrases describing snow.
  They might initially suggest: cold, white, soft, falling, frozen
- Challenge them to move beyond literal description.
- Ask: How does snow move? What might it sound like? If snow could feel an emotion, what would it feel? What could snow be compared to? What verbs could make snow seem alive?
- Develop several phrases together.
  For example:

Literal: The snow falls. Imagery: Snow drifts silently through the dark.
Simile: Snow spins like feathers caught in the wind.
Personification: Snow whispers across the stage.

- Discuss how poets select words that allow readers to see, hear, and feel something they are not directly experiencing.
- Explain that ballet does something similar without words. Dancers, musicians, costume designers, lighting designers, and choreographers communicate ideas and emotions through artistic choices.

Today's challenge: Turn movement into poetry.

2. Watch Like a Poet | 15 min

- Watch a selected excerpt from Act II of The Nutcracker.
- During the first viewing, students simply watch.
- Before the second viewing, tell students:
  This time, don't just watch the dance. Collect words.
- Students record observations in four categories:
  What I SEE What I HEAR How it MOVES What I FEEL

Encourage specific language.

Instead of:
The dancer moves fast.

Try:
darts – races – explodes – flashes – slices

Instead of:
The music is quiet.

Try:
whispers – trembles – floats – shimmers
Discuss how precise verbs and adjectives change the image created for the reader.

Possible selections include:
Spanish/Chocolate
Arabian/Coffee
Chinese/Tea
Russian/Trepak
Dance of the Mirlitons
Waltz of the Flowers
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy

3. Figurative Language Laboratory | 15–20 min

- Students select three observations from their chart and transform them using figurative language.
- Simile The dancer turns. becomes The dancer turns like a leaf caught in a whirlwind.
- Metaphor The dancers move across the stage. becomes The dancers are a river flowing across the stage.
- Personification The music becomes louder. becomes The music wakes and races through the theater.
- Students create at least: One simile One metaphor One example of personification
- Then challenge students to create one line using alliteration or purposeful sound.
  Example: Flowers float, flutter, and fly.
- Students share selected lines with a partner and identify the poetic device being used.

4. Choreograph the Words | 15 min

Explain that choreographers decide where movements begin, end, repeat, pause, and change.

- Poets make similar decisions with words.
- Display the same sentence in two forms:
  The dancer spins across the stage and suddenly stops.
  Then:

  **She spins
  and spins
  and spins—
  still.**
- Ask: Which version feels more like the movement? What does the line break accomplish? Why might the poet isolate the word still? How can empty space or punctuation create a pause?
- Students experiment with arranging one of their own observations in at least two different ways. They decide which structure best represents the movement they observed.

5. Write: Poetry in Motion | 20–30 min

Students choose one dance, character, or moment from The Nutcracker as inspiration for an original poem. Their poem should include:

- A clear connection to the observed performance
- Sensory imagery
- Precise verbs
- At least two different types of figurative language
- Purposeful line breaks or stanza organization
- Words that communicate the movement or mood of the performance

Students should not simply summarize what happened in the dance. Instead, challenge them to recreate the experience of watching it.

Possible Opening Lines - Across the stage... The music sounds like... Suddenly...
The dancers become... I hear... I see... The stage is...

6. Poetry Revision: Does It Move? | 10–15 min

Students exchange poems with a partner. The reader identifies:

- One image I could clearly picture:
- One example of figurative language:
- One word or phrase that created movement:
- One place where the poem could use stronger language:

Writers revise their poems based on the feedback.

Ask students to consider: Does the poem move like the dance that inspired it?

Assessment

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- Record specific observations from a professional dance performance.
- Use sensory details and precise language to communicate an experience.
- Create similes, metaphors, personification, or other figurative language.
- Explain how word choice contributes to imagery and tone.
- Use line breaks and poetic structure purposefully.
- Compose and revise an original poem using characteristics of the genre.
- Make meaningful connections between movement and written expression.

Extensions

Two Dances, Two Tones

Students observe two contrasting Act II dances and write a short poem for each. They compare how their word choice, imagery, rhythm, and structure changed to communicate different tones.

Found Poetry

Students collect individual words while watching a performance and create a poem using only —or primarily—the words collected during observation.

Poetry in Performance

Students read their poems aloud while classmates create simple movements inspired by the language. Discuss how emphasis, pacing, pauses, and movement affect the audience's interpretation.

Soundtrack Swap

Play two contrasting selections from The Nutcracker. Students write several lines inspired by each and analyze how the music influenced their tone, imagery, rhythm, and word choice.

Gallery of the Land of Sweets

Display completed poems around the classroom. Students conduct a gallery walk and identify examples of imagery, metaphor, simile, personification, sound devices, and purposeful structure in their classmates' writing.

Poetry in Motion Student Worksheet

Name:_____ Date: _____

Part 1: Watch Like a Poet Dance or scene: _____
What I SEE

What I HEAR

How It MOVES

What I FEEL

Part 2: Find Stronger Words
Replace each ordinary word with a more precise word inspired by the performance.

move → _____ walk → _____ turn → _____

jump → _____ quiet → _____ loud → _____

Part 3: Build Figurative Language

Simile
The _____ moves like _____.

Metaphor
The _____ is _____.

Personification
The music / stage / costume / scenery _____

_____.

Sound
Write one line using alliteration or repeated sounds:
_____

Part 4: Choreograph Your Words
Write one line describing a movement:

_____

Now arrange the same idea using line breaks, punctuation, or repetition to make the words move like the dancer.

What changed when you rearranged the words?

Part 5: Write Your Poem

Poetry in Motion

Title: _____

Part 6: Reflection
Choose one line from your poem that you think best captures the performance.

_____

What poetic technique did you use?

Why did you make that choice?

8th Grade: Candy Chemistry - Science in the Land of Sweets

TEKS Alignment

Science 8.6(ABCDEF)

Objective

Students will investigate the chemistry behind familiar sweets by examining their ingredients and properties, identifying elements and compounds, distinguishing between physical and chemical changes, and using observable evidence to explain how chemical processes transform ingredients into the treats represented in Act II of The Nutcracker.

Materials

- Images or ingredient labels from several candies or sweets
- Sugar
- Water
- Clear cups or beakers
- Measuring spoons
- Stirring sticks
- Periodic tables
- pH paper or strips
- Calculator
- Safety goggles
- Candy Chemistry Investigation worksheet
- Access to The Nutcracker Act II or selected performance excerpts
- Optional: hard candy, chocolate, candy canes, marshmallows, or other teacher-selected samples
- Optional: digital scale

Safety Note:
Candy and ingredients used during laboratory investigations should be treated as laboratory materials and should not be eaten. Check school policies and student allergy information before introducing food products into the classroom.

Lesson

1. Welcome to the Chemistry of Sweets | 10–15 min

- Introduce students to the Land of Sweets in Act II of The Nutcracker.
- Ask: What does chemistry have to do with candy?
- Display several familiar sweets represented by or connected to the ballet, such as:
  Chocolate
  Coffee
  Tea
  Candy canes
  Sugar-based candies
- Explain that although we think of candy as food, every sweet is also matter composed of atoms, elements, compounds, and mixtures.
- Give students several candy ingredient labels.
- Ask: What ingredients do you recognize? Which names look like chemical compounds? What substances appear in more than one product? How could several very different candies contain some of the same ingredients?
- Introduce the day's challenge: Become a Candy Chemist and uncover the science hiding inside the Land of Sweets.

2. What's Inside a Sweet? | 15–20 min

- Provide students with ingredient labels from several candies.
- Students identify familiar substances and investigate selected chemical formulas.

  For example: Water: H_2O

  Students determine: Elements present: hydrogen and oxygen

  Hydrogen atoms: 2 Oxygen atoms: 1 Total atoms represented: 3

  Sucrose: $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$

  Students determine: Elements present: carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen

  Carbon atoms: 12 Hydrogen atoms: 22 Oxygen atoms: 11

  Total atoms represented: 45
- Students use the periodic table to locate each element.
- Discuss: Is sucrose an element or a compound? How do you know? What does the chemical formula tell us? How is a compound different from the individual elements that make it up?

Candy Chemistry Challenge

- Compare H_2O and $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$.

  Both contain hydrogen and oxygen, but they have dramatically different properties.
- Ask: Why can't we predict a compound's properties simply by looking at the properties of its individual elements?
- Use this discussion to reinforce that atoms combine in specific arrangements and ratios to form substances with their own properties.

3. Physical Change or Chemical Change? | 20 min

- Introduce students to several transformations involved in making sweets.

Examples: Crushing a candy cane Dissolving sugar in water Melting chocolate
Freezing a sugar solution Caramelizing sugar Baking ingredients into a cookie
Breaking chocolate into pieces Dissolving hard candy

- Students classify each as primarily a physical change or chemical change and justify their answer.
- Physical Change - A substance may change: Size, Shape, State, Appearance, but its chemical identity remains the same.
- Chemical Change - Atoms are rearranged and one or more new substances form.

Possible evidence includes: Unexpected color change, Gas production, Temperature change, Formation of a new substance, New odor, Formation of a precipitate

- Emphasize: A change in appearance alone does not prove that a chemical reaction occurred.

Students must use evidence to justify their classifications.

4. Candy Chemistry Investigation | 20–25 min

Sugar + Water Investigation - Students investigate what happens when sugar is added to water. Have students record:

- Appearance of sugar before mixing
- Appearance of water before mixing
- Observations during mixing
- Appearance after mixing

- Ask: Did the sugar disappear?
- Guide students toward the understanding that the sugar particles remain present even though they are distributed throughout the solution.
- Students classify dissolving as a physical change and provide evidence supporting their conclusion.

Extension: Concentration

- Prepare or demonstrate solutions containing different amounts of sugar dissolved in the same amount of water.
- Students compare:
  Solution A: Small amount of sugar
  Solution B: Larger amount of sugar
- Ask:
  What stayed constant?
  What changed?
  Which solution is more concentrated?
  Does adding more sugar create a new substance?
  What evidence supports your answer?
- Connect this to candy production, where controlling the amount of sugar and water can dramatically affect the final product.

5. Acids, Bases & the Candy Counter | 15–20 min

- Introduce the pH scale and compare several teacher-approved substances associated with sweets or beverages.
- Possible samples include: Water Sugar solution Lemon juice Vinegar Baking soda solution
- Students use pH paper to test each substance.
- Record Results
- Discuss: Which substances were acidic? Which were basic? Which were closest to neutral? Was sugar water acidic simply because it tasted sweet?
  Can taste or appearance reliably tell us a substance's pH?

6. From Chemistry Lab to Land of Sweets | Performance Connection

- Before viewing Act II, assign students a Land of Sweets Chemistry Challenge.
- As different characters and dances appear, students select one sweet, food, or beverage represented in the ballet and consider the chemistry behind it.
- Possible connections include:
  Chocolate - What physical and chemical changes are necessary to transform ingredients into chocolate?
  Coffee - What happens when soluble substances from coffee enter hot water?
  Tea - How does water help extract substances from tea leaves?
  Candy Canes - How can heating, cooling, shaping, and crystallization affect a sugar-based material?
- After the performance, students choose one example and explain: The audience sees the art. What chemistry might be happening behind the sweet that inspired the dance?

Extensions

Conservation of Candy

Use a sealed-system demonstration to investigate conservation of mass before and after a chemical reaction. Students compare measurements and explain their results using the principle that atoms are rearranged rather than created or destroyed during chemical reactions.

Molecular Candy

Students construct models of H_2O and $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ using classroom molecular-model materials. Compare the number and types of atoms in each compound.

Candy Label Investigation

Students compare ingredient labels from several sweets and research the chemical identity and purpose of one unfamiliar ingredient.

Chemistry Meets Choreography

In groups, students create a short movement sequence representing:
Reactants → Chemical Reaction → Products
Students must explain what each movement represents and demonstrate that atoms are rearranged rather than destroyed during a chemical reaction.

Candy Chemistry Investigation Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Decode the Compound

Sucrose: $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$
Elements present:

Number of carbon atoms: _____

Number of hydrogen atoms: _____

Number of oxygen atoms: _____

Total number of atoms represented: _____

Is sucrose an element or compound? _____

Use evidence from its chemical formula to explain your answer.

Part 2: Physical or Chemical?

Classify each change and provide evidence.

	Physical or Chemical?	Evidence?
Crushing a candy cane		
Dissolving Sugar		
Melting Chocolate		
Caramelizing sugar		
Breaking Chocolate		
Baking cookie dough		

Choose one example that represents a chemical change.

What evidence suggests that a new substance formed?

Part 3: Sugar + Water

Before Mixing
Describe the sugar:

_____

Describe the water:

_____

After Mixing
What did you observe?

Did the sugar cease to exist? YES / NO
Explain:

Is dissolving sugar a physical or chemical change?
Evidence:

Part 4: Investigating pH
Record the results of your investigation.

Substance	Predicted pH	Measured pH	Acid, Base, or Neutral?
Water			
Sugar solution			
Lemon juice			
Vinegar			
Baking soda solution			

What pattern do you notice?

Part 5: Chemistry in the Land of Sweets
Choose one sweet represented in Act II.

My selection: _____
Identify one physical change that could occur while making or preparing it.

Identify one possible chemical change.

Explain the difference between the two changes.

Final Analysis
Candy may look simple, but its ingredients and preparation involve chemistry. Using at least two pieces of evidence from today's investigation, explain how chemistry helps transform ingredients into the sweets we recognize.

Act II Dance List:

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

Grade 6 Activity: Page to Stage – Adapting *The Nutcracker*

TEKS Alignment ELAR 7.6(EFGH), 7.7(ABCD), 7.8(C), 7.9(F), 7.10(C)
Fine Arts - Theatre - 2.1(F), 2.2(BC), 2.3(AB)

Objective
Students will analyze how a written story can be transformed into a staged production by comparing narrative elements from The Nutcracker story with choices in ballet and theatre, then create and justify their own artistic adaptation of a selected scene.

Materials
- A grade-appropriate written version or synopsis of The Nutcracker
- Access to Ballet San Antonio's The Nutcracker or selected performance excerpts
- Page to Stage: Adaptation Lab student worksheet
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Pencils
- Paper
- Optional costume, scenery, and lighting images
- Optional instrumental selections from Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker

Vocabulary

Adaptation – A new version of a story that has been changed to work in another form or medium.

Narrative – A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

Choreography – The planned movements and patterns of a dance.

Characterization – The ways an artist communicates a character's personality, emotions, motivations, and traits.

Design – The visual and technical choices used to create the world of a performance.

Interpretation – An artist's particular way of understanding and presenting an idea or story.

Stage Direction – Information describing movement, action, setting, or other elements of a staged work.

Nonverbal Communication – Communicating ideas or emotions without spoken words.

Lesson Activities

1. What's Lost When You Take Away the Words? | 10–15 min

- Write a simple sentence on the board:
  Clara is frightened when she sees the Mouse King, but she decides to help the Nutcracker.
- Ask: If performers could not speak this sentence, how could an audience understand what was happening?
- Generate possibilities: Facial expression Gesture Body position Movement Music Costume Lighting Scenery Interaction with other characters
- Ask a student volunteer to communicate the sentence without speaking.
- Have the class identify the choices that helped them understand the character and action.
- Introduce the essential question: What happens when a story moves from the page to the stage?
- Explain that an adaptation does not simply copy a story. Artists must decide what to keep, what to change, what to remove, and what to add when presenting the story in a different medium.

2. Page: Read Like an Adapter | 15 min

- Read a selected scene or synopsis from The Nutcracker.
  Good possibilities include: The Christmas party Clara receiving the Nutcracker
  The battle with the Mouse King The transformation of the Nutcracker
  The journey through the snow Arrival in the Land of Sweets
- Students identify:
  Character – Who is involved?
  Setting – Where and when does the scene happen?
  Action – What happens?
  Conflict – What problem, challenge, or tension exists?
  Emotion – What might the characters be thinking or feeling?
  Important Detail – What must an audience understand for the story to make sense?
- Then ask: Which of these ideas are easy to write but difficult to show onstage?
  For example, a story can simply tell readers: Clara wondered whether she was dreaming.
  A stage adaptation must find a way to show that idea.

3. Stage: Watch Like a Director | 15–20 min

Watch the staged version of the same or a similar moment. Students become Adaptation Detectives. They look for evidence in four areas:

PERFORMER	MUSIC	DESIGN	STORY
Facial expression	Tempo	Costume	Events included
Body language	Volume	Scenery	Events omitted
Focal Point	Instrumentation	Props	Events changed
Dance or movement	Mood	Lighting	New details added for the stage

After viewing, compare observations.

- Ask: What stayed the same? What changed? What disappeared? What was added? How did you understand what the characters were feeling? Which artistic choices helped tell the story most clearly?

- Emphasize: Different does not necessarily mean incorrect. An adaptation makes choices because a stage performance communicates differently from a written story.

4. Page vs. Stage | 15–20 min

- Students organize their observations. (See worksheet following)
  Story Element On the Page On the Stage Why Might It Change?
  Character Setting Action Emotion Conflict Important detail
- Students select one significant adaptation choice and analyze it.
  Claim One important change from page to stage was... Evidence In the written story... In the performance...
  Reasoning: This change was effective/not effective because...
- Encourage students to move beyond: "I liked the stage version better."
- Instead: "The stage version used _____ to communicate _____, which was effective because _____."

5. Become the Adapter | 25–30 min

Students now become the creative team.

- Assign or allow students to select a short moment from The Nutcracker.
- Their challenge: Adapt this moment for the stage.
- Students may work individually or in small groups.
- They must make decisions in five areas.
  1. Story - What must the audience understand?
  2. Character - How will performers communicate what the characters are feeling?
  3. Movement - What gestures, actions, blocking, or choreography will communicate the story?
  4. Sound - What should the music or sound communicate?
  5. Design - What choices would you make for:
     Costume Scenery Props Lighting
- Students do not need to create elaborate physical scenery or costumes. Their goal is to make and justify artistic decisions.

6. Stage It! | 15–20 min

Groups create a 30–60 second staged interpretation of their selected moment.

- Challenge: Use little or no dialogue. Students should rely primarily on: Movement Gesture Facial expression Position Levels Relationships between performers
- After each presentation, the audience identifies:
  What happened?
  What emotion or idea did you understand?
  What performance choice communicated that idea?
  Then the group briefly explains one adaptation choice they made and why.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- Identify character, setting, conflict, plot, and important details in a narrative.
- Compare how ideas are communicated in written and staged versions of a story.
- Make inferences using evidence from text and performance.
- Analyze the purpose and effectiveness of adaptation choices.
- Identify how movement, music, costume, scenery, and lighting contribute to storytelling.
- Use movement and body language intentionally to communicate character and ideas.
- Develop an original theatrical interpretation of a narrative moment.
- Justify artistic decisions using evidence and reasoning.

Extensions

Director vs. Choreographer

Students investigate the responsibilities of a theatrical director and a choreographer. Identify where their responsibilities overlap and where they differ.

Same Page, Different Stage

Give two groups the same short scene but do not allow them to see each other's work. Compare the resulting adaptations. Ask: How can two interpretations both be successful even when they are different?

Design the Moment

Students create a costume, scenery, or lighting design for their selected scene and write a brief designer's statement explaining how their choices support character, setting, mood, or story.

Change the Setting

Move a familiar Nutcracker scene to a completely different time or place. Students determine what would need to change—and what must remain—for the central story to still be recognizable.

Professional Performance Connection

After seeing Ballet San Antonio's The Nutcracker, students select one moment in which movement, music, or design communicated information that might have been explained through narration in a written story. Students describe the theatrical choice and explain why it was effective.

Page to Stage: Adaptation Lab Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: On the Page

Scene: _____

Who?

Where?

What happens?

What is the main conflict or challenge?

What is the character thinking or feeling?

One detail the audience MUST understand:

Part 2: On the Stage
Watch the staged interpretation.

Movement I noticed:

Facial expression or gesture:

Music or sound:

Costume or scenery:

Lighting:

One thing that stayed the same from page to stage:

One thing that changed from page to stage:

One thing that was added or removed from page to stage:

Part 3: Analyze the Adaptation

One important adaptation choice was:

Evidence from the page:

Evidence from the stage:

Why do you think the artists made this choice?

Was the choice effective? YES / NO / PARTIALLY
Use evidence to explain your answer.

Part 4: Your Turn – Become the Adapter
Scene we are adapting:

STORY - What must the audience understand?

CHARACTER - What should the audience know or feel about the character? How will the performer communicate it without simply telling the audience?

MOVEMENT - Describe one important movement, gesture, or piece of choreography.

What does it communicate?

MUSIC/SOUND - The _____ should feel_____

because_____

_____.

DESIGN NOTES: What would you add, remove, or change?

Costume ideas:

Scenery ideas:

Prop ideas:

Lighting ideas:

Part 5: Director's Note

Complete the statements:
We adapted this scene by _____ because

_____.

Our most important artistic choice was _____ because

_____.

Anything else your team wants to share about your adaptation?

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.

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:

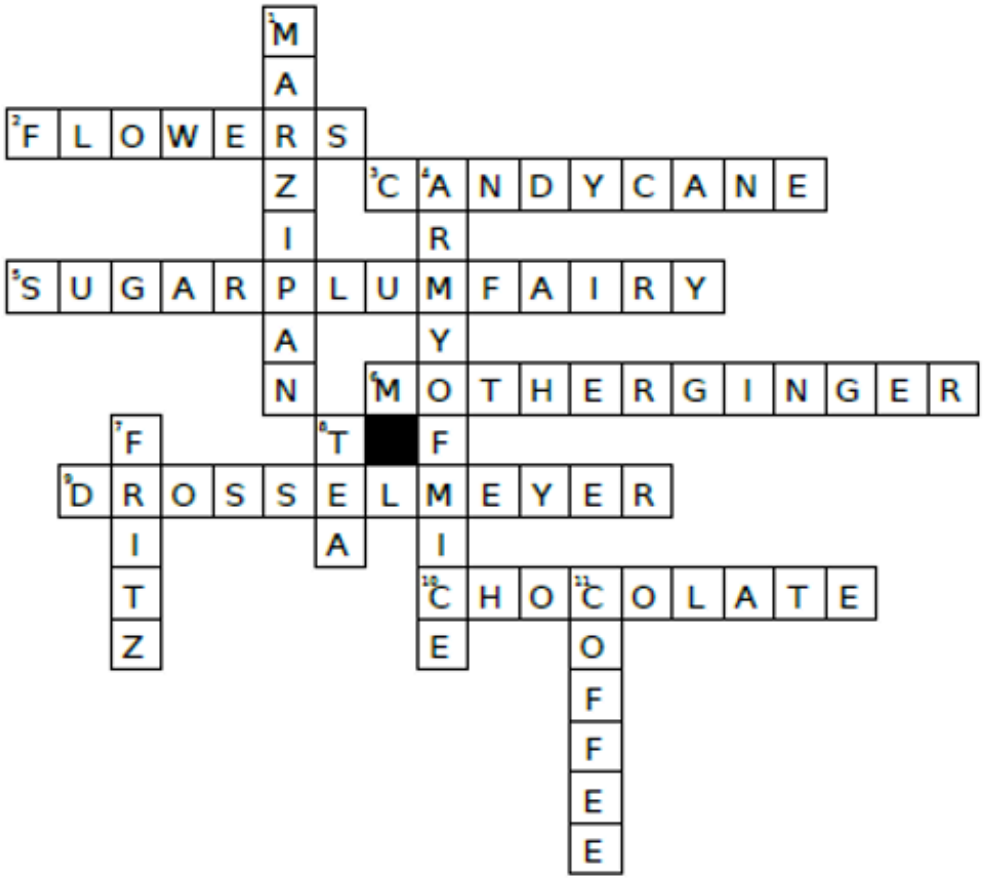
- Fidgets or small sensory tools
- Headphones or earbuds
- Cushions, weighted lap pads, or blankets
- Small snacks or drinks
- Tablets or communication devices

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:

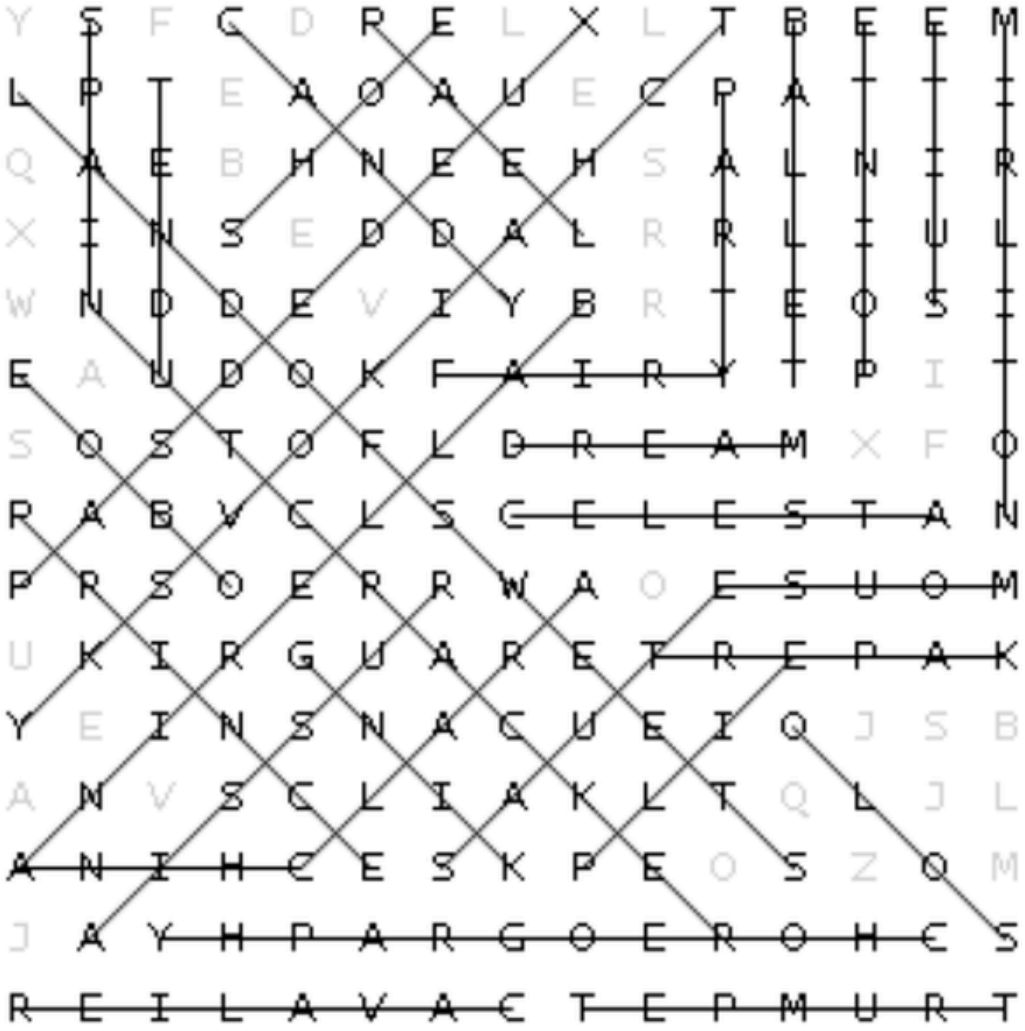
1. France
4. Toy Soldiers
7. Mouse King
8. China
11. Arabia

Across:

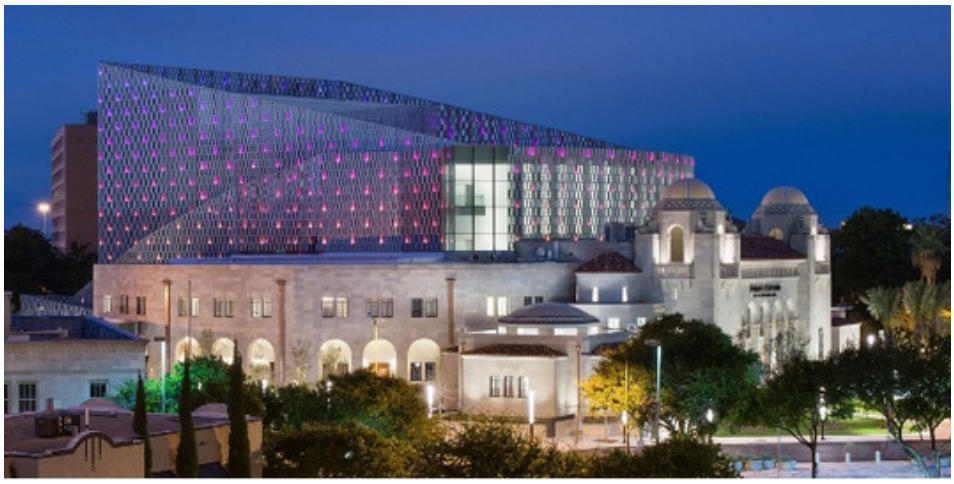
2. Dew Drop
3. Russia
5. Snowflakes
6. BonBons
9. Clara
10. Spain

Answer Key

Nutcracker Word Search



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 EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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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