



# Expressions Learning Arts Academy

*"Academic Excellence Enhanced by the Arts"*

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## **Poetry in Motion: Teaching Through Dance**

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## **POETRY DANCES OVERVIEW**

The poet John Logan said, "Poetry is a ballet for the ear. It is the dance of language." "Poetry Dances" is exactly that; dances set to poetry. Students interpret and express the meaning and emotions of a poem through movement.

The pace, rhythm and imagery of poetry begs the student to leap, jump, spin or fly. Along the way students experience the power of language and the joy of self expression.

"Poetry Dances" is designed to target kindergarten, first and second grades. For the kindergarten student, these lessons can be a link from nursery rhymes to other styles of poetry. First and second graders are introduced to different forms of poetry and poems from different cultures.

The selection of poetry is vital to the success of the dance. It can, for example, relate to a unit of study, a particular subject area, a season, or a special interest of the group. The poetry book of choice should include illustrations and images of interest to the students. The language should encourage and evoke movement and emotion. Eric Carl's "Animals, Animals", and "Monsters, Myths and Legends", include these qualities. Poems range from the comical to the heartfelt. There are different styles of poetry from diverse cultures that appeal to boys and girls alike. This is the formula for success.

"Song For the Whooping Crane", written by Eileen Spinelli and illustrated by Elsa Warrick, is a wonderful poetry book, beautifully illustrated and appropriate for kindergarten students. The poem creates images of cranes bobbing, jumping and flying.

"Poetry Dances" can be performed to music or voice alone. The correct choice of music can enhance the meaning and emotions of the poem for the students and for the audience. The music should always be instrumental. The "Windham Hill" recording label produces many instrumental artists. Their samplers include various artists and make it easy to match a variety of poems to different music. George Winston's piano instrumentals are on this label. They are ideal to use as a continuous piece of music for a class dance.

### ***Language Arts***

"Poetry Dances" present a unique format that address reading skills. This format allows students to develop abilities to visualize, make personal connections, draw conclusions and make predictions. Each session includes class discussions and teacher prompts. Prompts are grade appropriate. Following are sample prompts for each skill addressed.

## **Visualization**

1. What do you see when you listen or read the poem?
2. How do the characters move: walk, run, fly?
3. What words or parts of the poem help you see pictures in your mind?
4. Were there parts of the poem that were hard to make mental pictures?

## **Personal Connections**

1. Are you like any of the people or animals in the poem?
2. Have you ever had similar experiences or feelings?
3. Have you ever been in a place that reminds you of the poem?
4. Do you know anyone like the characters in the poem?
5. How does the poem make you feel?

## **Inferring**

1. What words describe the characters or poets feelings?
2. What words describe the poets meaning of the poem?
3. What words inspire movement?
4. What is the poet trying to say?

## **Predictions**

Preview the book or poem with students before the first reading.

1. What medium did the illustrator use for this poem?
2. What do you think the poem or poems are about?

## **Movement**

Teachers and students do not have to have dance experience to enjoy “Poetry Dances”. It is important that the movement sessions are introduced in a relaxed and fun manner. Therefore, the teacher must feel comfortable with movement in order to eliminate student’s inhibitions. (A movement workshop for teachers is available through our school. Visit [www.expressionsacademy.org](http://www.expressionsacademy.org) for more information).

Music choice for this session can be contemporary to the student, music that will be used for the poetry dances, or both. Students should be fore warned that only instrumental music will be used for the poetry dances.

Explore pedestrian or everyday movements with students. Pedestrian movements are walks, runs, gallops, turns, hops, leaps and skips. Next, dynamics are discussed, such as, fast, slow, high, low, small and big. Students explore movements using different dynamics.

Following sessions are dedicated to student groups creating their poetry dances. Poems are printed out for each group. During these sessions the teacher rotates from group to group reading poems for each group and assisting, when needed, with movements. During these creative sessions students demonstrate their progress in the

dance. This session allows the teacher to observe and note progress, participation and comprehension, as well as, cooperative learning skills. Teacher intervention depends on the grade level and time allotted for each session.

The final session is the "Poetry Dance" presentation to other classes, family and friends. The presentation is video taped so that students can view and critique their work.

"Poetry Dances" offers a unique format to support reading skills and introduce elementary students to the diverse world of poetry. The enjoyment students feel singing and reciting nursery rhymes is transferred to poetry in a creative and personal way.

The following lesson plan is designed for both kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. The kindergarten lesson is to be a class dance to "Song for the Whooping Crane". 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades are divided into group dances to "Animals, Animals" and "Monsters, Myths and Legends".

## **POETRY DANCES UNIT**

### ***Grade Level***

Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

### ***Goals***

1. Students are introduced to poetry.
2. The student's exploration of imagery and meaning will strengthen reading skills.

### ***Objectives***

1. Students will interpret and communicate the meaning of a poem through movement.
2. Students will work in small groups and individually to create movements to a poem.
3. Students will explore self expression.

### ***Materials***

#### **Kindergarten**

- "Song For The Whooping Crane", written by Eileen Spinelli and illustrated by Elsa Warrick.

#### **1st and 2nd grade**

- "Animals, Animals", "Monsters, Myths and Legends", Eric Carl
- Music recommendations, "Windham Hill Records, "Sample 88", CD #WD-1065

- “Autumn” George Winston, Windham Hill Records.
- CD or cassette player. Open space.

## ***Time***

Ten sessions, 20-30 minutes each.

## ***Lesson Plans***

### **Session 1 - Introduction and First Reading**

Ask students if they know what a poem is? Do they have a favorite poem? Do poems have to rhyme? Preview the illustrated book before reading, and have students predict and discuss what they think and feel the poem is about.

Read the book. Discuss if predictions were close to the poem. Ask students if they know what the meaning of the poem are and how it made them feel.

### **Session 2 – Second Reading and Movement**

Before reading the poem, ask students to listen for words that suggest movement (leaping, flying, jumping, and bobbing). Ask students to demonstrate the movements. This can be used as a pre-assessment of the student’s motor skills. Discuss mental pictures (visualization).

### **Session 3 – Third Reading, Mental Pictures, and Music**

Ask students close their eyes. Read the poem. Review discussion about mental pictures and ask students what mental pictures they saw as the poem was read. Read the poem again with the music playing. Ask students what mental pictures they saw. Did the music change their visualization? Did the music and poem work together or not?

### **Session 4 - Movement Class**

Students line up across the floor. Individually, or in small groups, ask students to walk forward and then return to their places. Repeat this exercise with runs, leaps, gallops, skips and turns.

Repeat this activity adding dynamics to the movements, fast, slow, high, low, small, and big.) Add flying and soaring arm movements.

### **Session 5-9 - Brainstorming and Choreography**

Brainstorm with students. What movements fit the images and meaning of the poem? Read the poem as students explore the movements. For example, for a crane poem, begin the dance in a V as a flock of cranes. Students fly off to dance solo, duets or trios. End the dance as the group began.

## **Session 10 - “Poetry Dance” Presentation**

The class performs their poetry dance to other classes, family and friends. The presentation is video taped to be viewed and critiqued by the performers and future classes.

### ***Assessment***

Ongoing observations and notations of student’s participation in discussions, group cooperation, movement sessions and presentation. Students preview other poems and discuss why the poems would make successful poetry dances. The teacher rotates from group to group to assess participation and cooperation within the group and to facilitate the process.

### ***Extensions***

1. Students design and create class mural or back ground scenery.
2. Students design and construct costumes and props.
3. Students present other poems to the class and discuss what qualities of the poem make it suitable for a “Poetry Dance”.
4. Students brain storm words that inspire movements and demonstrate movements.

### ***ESOL***

Students unable to perform physical movements can memorize short passages or the entire poem. The student reads or recites the poem as it is danced. Students with English as their second language recite the poem in their first language before the dance. The dance can be performed twice, once in English and then a student’s native language.

### ***Florida Sunshine Standards***

**Language Arts:** LA.A.1.1.1, LA.A.1.1.4, LA.A.2.1.4, LA.C.1.1.1, LA.C.1.1.3, LA.C.1.1.4, LA.C.2.1.1, LA.C.3.1.2, LA.C.3.1.3, LA.D.1.1.1, LA.D.2.1.1, LA.D.2.1.2, LA.D.2.1.3, LA.E.2.1.1, LA.E.2.1.2

**Dance:** DA.A.1.1, DA.A.2.1, DA.B.1.1, DA.D.1.1, DA.E.2.1

**Music:** MU.D.1.1, MU.E.1.1

**Physical Education:** PE.A.2.1, PE.B.2.1, PE.C.2.1

Social Studies and Science standards can be addressed depending on the choice and subject of the poems.

## **GLOSSARY OF DANCE TERMS**

**Walks:** Place the foot on the floor, toe first then heel.

**Runs:** Stand on the balls of the feet and run forward taking baby steps.

Runs can be executed with medium and giant steps, but, should

Always be done on the balls of the feet.

**Gallops:** Keep the same foot forward. Step on the

front foot. Jump up, bringing the legs together. Land on the back foot.

**Leaps:** Step forward on the left foot. Kick the right leg forward, off the ground.

Jump onto the right foot.

**Step Hops:** Step on the left foot. Hop on the left foot. The right leg is bent and

The right foot can be held next to the left ankle or knee. Hops can

Be executed as jumps and the free leg can be held in other

positions.

**Turns:** Step to the side on the right foot. Take a half turn to the right and step

onto the left foot. Continue a half turn to the right, step onto the right

foot. This turn can be executed on the ball of the feet or with bent knees.

## SUGGESTED REFERENCE LINKS

### *General Arts Education*

#### [Americans for the Arts](#)

[www.artsusa.org](http://www.artsusa.org)

A leading arts information clearinghouse of arts research, sponsored events, advocacy and publications.

#### [The Annenberg Challenge](#)

[www.annenbergchallenge.org](http://www.annenbergchallenge.org)

A public-private partnership, that offer grants and funds arts education programs, documents results, and lists publications.

#### [ArtsEdge](#) (The Kennedy Center)

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

A rich resource of arts education materials including teaching materials and professional resources.

#### [ArtsEdNet](#)

[www.artsednet.getty.edu](http://www.artsednet.getty.edu)

The Getty's Arts Education Web Site, offering a wealth of lesson plans and curriculum guides, publications and links.

#### [Coming Up Taller](#)

[www.cominguptaller.org](http://www.cominguptaller.org)

A celebration of arts and humanities programs for children and youth-at-risk.

#### [National Art Education Association](#)

[www.naea-reston.org](http://www.naea-reston.org)

A non-profit, educational organization responsible for promoting art education through such areas as professional development, service, the advancement of knowledge, and leadership.

#### [National Assembly of States Arts Agencies](#)

[www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)

A membership organization of the nation's state and jurisdictional arts agencies.

#### [National Endowment for the Arts](#)

[www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)

A federally-funded arts organization, which shares information on the work of artists and arts organizations, resource links, field reports, and federal funding opportunities.

## ***Curriculum Guides***

### [Center for the Arts in the Basic Curriculum](#)

[www.newhorizons.org](http://www.newhorizons.org)

Engages teachers, administrators, and the public in a dialogue about the power of the arts to educate all children, also serving as a source for changes in curriculum, teaching strategies, and classroom structure.

### [Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning](#)

[www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

A non-profit dedicated to improving education through applied research and development, by providing services and products primarily to K-12 educators.

## ***Teacher Collaborations***

### [The Center for Arts Education](#)

[www.cae-nyc.org](http://www.cae-nyc.org)

An organization committed to identifying, funding and supporting exemplary partnerships and programs.

### [Empire State Partnerships](#)

[www.espartsed.org](http://www.espartsed.org)

A state partnership focusing on student achievement, which contributes to the improvement of teaching and learning.

### [Gaining the Arts Advantage](#)

[www.pcah.gov](http://www.pcah.gov)

A national report responding to questions posed by school and community leaders about public school districts that have made literacy and competence in the arts a primary purpose of schooling.

### [Arts Education Partnership](#)

[www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org)

A partnership of arts education, business, philanthropic and government organizations with related publications, advocacy materials and a toolkit for serving Goals 2000 funding.

## ***Professional Development***

### [Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education](#)

[www.lincolncenter.org](http://www.lincolncenter.org)

A leading educational institution, which offers information on program sponsorship, partnership links, information about art education workshops, as well as individual artists and art works.

## **Funding**

### [Arts and Business Council, Inc.](#)

[www.artsandbusiness.org](http://www.artsandbusiness.org)

A leading organization working to promote beneficial partnerships between corporations and nonprofit arts groups.

### [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)

[www.philanthropy.com](http://www.philanthropy.com)

An online companion to the national biweekly newspaper, that provides extensive information about grant makers, directory and a listing of publications.

### [The Foundation Center](#)

[www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)

An enormous resource of information for grants, a virtual cornucopia of links and basic non-profit information.

### [GE](#)

[www.ge.com/community](http://www.ge.com/community)

A Fund committed to enhancing educational opportunities for students, through generous funding initiatives.

### [National Grant Writers Association](#)

[www.researchassociatesco.com](http://www.researchassociatesco.com)

A tremendous resource for grant-writing, grant-making directories, workshops, and consulting.

### [New York Foundation for the Arts](#)

[www.nyfa.org](http://www.nyfa.org)

A state agency offering financial and informational assistance to artists and arts education organizations in New York State and throughout the country.

### [U.S. Department of Education](#)

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

A plethora of federal funding information, including a database of funding publications, guidelines, and opportunities.

## **Outreach**

### [Art Daily](#)

[www.artdaily.com](http://www.artdaily.com)

A valuable resource for information on artists, architecture, art exhibits, fairs, museums and more.

### ArtsWire

[www.artswire.org](http://www.artswire.org)

A computer-based network serving the arts community by providing arts news, information on conferences and workshops, funding sources, a database of cultural resources, and links to important arts and arts education sites.

### Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students

[www.carts.org](http://www.carts.org)

An online extension of City Lore (a cultural organization), offering arts education articles, teaching tools and staff development resources

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