



TEACHER  
RESOURCE  
PACKET

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2023



# The Nutcracker

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# Letter to the Educators

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Dear Educators,

Welcome and thank you for joining Southern California Ballet for our production of *The Nutcracker*.

We appreciate you taking time to plan, organize, and visit Southern California Ballet at the Poway Center for the Performing Arts. We also know that classroom time is precious, so we have created this resource packet to make this year's *Nutcracker* educational and enriching for all.

In this document, you will find background information about ballet, various quick check activities that correspond to each informational section, a variety of complete lesson plans and worksheets, themed word searches, and unique coloring pages based on SCB's set designs. These resources span lessons in Biology, Physics, Engineering, Language Arts, Literacy, and Visual Art, and each activity lists the state standards it meets among the California Arts Standards (CAS), Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

This teacher resource packet is an ongoing body of work. If you have feedback about its contents, or suggestions for additional content, please email [outreach@southerncaliforniaballet.org](mailto:outreach@southerncaliforniaballet.org).

Thank you for your commitment to incorporating performing arts into your curriculum, and for your continued support of Southern California Ballet and Poway Center for the Performing Arts. We look forward to seeing you and your students in December!

Sincerely,

Melissa Fisher, Director of Operations & Brand  
Southern California Ballet  
12285 World Trade Dr Ste L  
San Diego, CA 92128

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# About Southern California Ballet

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Southern California Ballet is the premier dance training institute serving San Diego's Poway and North County areas. As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that relies on earned income from performances, tuition, donations, and grants to produce excellence in dance education, we are here to share our passion.

Southern California Ballet's youth academy offers year-round dance classes at SCB studios for approximately 150 youth students, ages 3-18. SCB holds 60 classes per week, with a focus in classical ballet training and supported by classes in pointe, modern dance, character dance, jazz, hip-hop, tap, conditioning, and pas de deux (partnering technique).

Our students go on to join some of the top dance organizations in the country and indeed the world. More importantly, they graduate to be confident, creative, and successful young adults who have the tools to do well in whichever career path they choose.

SCB has expanded its community engagement through the addition of new programs including an adaptive dance class for adults with disabilities; Dancing Through the Pages, which partners with local authors to share storytelling through dance; and Nutcracker Outreach performances with an inclusive sponsorship program which allows students from select Title I schools to attend free-of-charge. We are excited for you to join over 40,000 students, seniors, and people with disabilities who have participated in Southern California Ballet's community engagement opportunities.

## Our Mission

To empower aspiring dancers to reach their full potential and to enhance the community through education programs and imaginative performances.

## Our Vision

A world class dance facility in San Diego that  
**trains** dancers for a professional career  
**empowers** people for a life of success and  
**welcomes** the community to be part of an extraordinary experience

## Our Values



### Excellence

We hold ourselves to the highest standards in all that we do, from our training and production values to the way we conduct ourselves in the world.



### Balance

We strive to help each individual balance their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.



### Respect

We champion respect and kindness, allowing space for everyone to reach their full potential.



### Acceptance

All are welcome here, and together we can be more than the sum of our parts.

# Theatre Etiquette

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## Before the Performance

Once you have checked in and received your seat assignments, an usher will show you to your seats. Food, gum, and backpacks will not be permitted inside the theater. When the performance is about to begin, the lights in the theater (house lights) will dim and go out. Please ensure your students know to settle down at this time.

## During the Performance

If you have an emergency during the performance, please leave quietly and find a volunteer or usher for assistance.

There will be one 5-minute intermission halfway through the performance. Encourage your students to discuss what they have seen and what they have enjoyed about the performance so far.

## After the Performance

Please remain seated until the house lights come on. Once instructed by an usher, lead your class outside and follow volunteer instructions to return to the shuttle busses.

## Restroom Policy

All students must be accompanied by an adult for bathroom visits. As a courtesy to performers and other audience members, restrooms are available on an emergency basis only during the performance. Encourage your students to go before or after the performance, or during intermission.

## Being a Respectful Audience Member

Attending a performance is a unique experience because the performers are in the same room as you. Performers appreciate when the audience participates politely. They like when the audience laughs at something funny, or cries at something sad. Performers also like to hear you clap at the end of a number, scene, or performance. Let them know that you like what you see!

Whispering or talking during the performance, however, make it difficult for performers to concentrate. Limiting distractions will allow the artists on stage to give you their best possible performance.

# What is Ballet?

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Ballet, from the Italian word "ballare" meaning "to dance," was started in the Italian noble courts as a form of entertainment in the 1400s. At that time, the nobility in Italy held opulent celebrations that included, for example, tightrope walkers, choreographed dances performed on horseback, fireworks, and even elaborate dances performed with lit torches. At formal events, such as balls, the Italians would participate in social dances called "balli" and "balletti," comprised of gentle, elegant steps performed rhythmically to music.



Jan Thomas, *Leopold I on horseback in a costume for a "horse-ballet", c. 1667.*

When the Italian noblewoman Catherine de Medici married King Henry II of France in 1533, she brought her appreciation of these extravagant arts celebrations from Italy to the French courts. This included a style featuring masks, large headdresses, and ornaments and uncomfortable high-heeled shoes. Much later, Louis XIV, known as the Sun King after his role in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* (1653), codified ballet into a dance with specific technique and vocabulary. As popularity grew, these court dances were performed on elevated platforms so that more people could enjoy these increasingly intricate displays.

Before his death in 1715, Louis XIV established two academies in which ballet continued to develop: the *Academy Royale de Danse* (1661) and the *Academy Royale de Musique* (1669). The music academy surprisingly had more impact on the progression of ballet than the dance school. As French operas started to gain popularity, there was a required dance component that was filled by ballet. While ballet was initially only presented as an addition to vocal performances, choreographers including Jean-Georges Noverre started experimenting with combining ballet and mime, creating an entirely new style called ballet d'action. This laid the framework for the creation of narrative ballets, or ballets that tell a story.



Ballet d'action: Gaëtan Vestris in *Médée et Jason*, 1781.

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, a newly-emerging wealthy middle class became the main audiences for theatrical performances during the Romantic movement. These younger generations rejected the strict rules central to the Classical period, which was known for stifling creativity in-line with an adherence to conservative, more regimented ideology. This new movement focused on personal emotion, experiences and incorporated



imagination to express the beauty of nature. *La Sylphide* (1836), featuring the prominent Marie Taglioni, became the prototype for other ballets because of its fairy-like heroine who uses good to defeat evil and injustice. Dancing on pointe and flowing calf-length tutus also became popular as a sign of elegance and femininity.



Alophe, Marie Taglioni in *La Sylphide*, c. 1860.

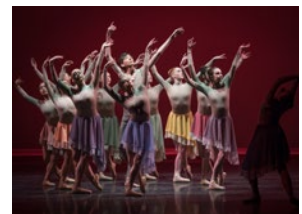
Soon after, the ballet epicenter shifted to Saint Petersburg, where the dance form was supported by the Czar's endless resources. From 1870 to 1903, Marius Petipa dominated Russian ballet, replacing western European stories with Russian ones of his own. Three prominent stories of the time were set to scores by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, including *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *The Nutcracker* (1892), and *Swan Lake* (1895), each featuring the romantic heroine and imaginative storyline central to Romanticism. There was also a heightened interest in exploring the exotic and mysterious, which is reflected in ballets such as *The Nutcracker* (1892) and *La Bayadere* (1877).



Ballet Russe practicing (LOC) c. 1915-1920.

Inspired by the success of the Imperial Ballet school in Russia, Serge Diaghilev, a Russian producer, brought together the most talented dancers, choreographers, costumers, composers, and musicians to form the Ballet Russes. This high-level company toured Europe and America, with members settling in America in the 1930s. George Balanchine, one of these dancers, established ballet in America by founding the New York City Ballet.

World War II divided ballet schools of thought into the eastern artform, telling specific messages influenced by politics and communist propaganda, and the western artform, featuring abstract thought and expression of emotion. American choreographers George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins used dancers' bodies as a medium to understand individual emotion and experiences. Russian choreographer Yuri Grigorovich, contrastingly, was held accountable to the Communist party and the country's ministry of culture, limiting his ability to challenge the art form. This divide solidified the difference between traditional ballet and contemporary ballet.



Examples of Contemporary Ballet  
Southern California Ballet *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2017

The traditional ideology is often what earns ballet the criticism of being "elitist" in America. Access to the expensive art form, especially to its education and training, has unintentionally prohibited dancers of certain races and socioeconomic statuses from participating. New campaigns such as "Final Bow for Yellowface" (2018) are focusing on ways to preserve the technical components for which the dance form is admired while adapting the racially and socially insensitive parts of some stories to cultivate a more welcoming environment.

Ballet survives because of its dynamic relationship between the past and the present. It is possible to appreciate ballet's historical achievements while still providing opportunities to explore the intricate nuances of our current society. Ballet at its core allows dancers to feel, and will continue to prosper so long as dancers have emotions to express.

### **ACTIVITY: DRAW CONCLUSIONS**

What do you think of when you hear the word "ballet?" Write down 3-5 words that you associate with ballet. How do those words relate to the Romantic Movement when ballet was created?

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### **CCSS**

RI.K-3.3

W.3-5.9



# Dancing “en Pointe”

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Pointe work, dancing en pointe, or "pointe" as it is more commonly referred to, is the term for when a dancer wears specially designed "pointe shoes" in order to dance on the tips of their toes.

Dancers support all of their weight on a small area called the "box" which is made of densely packed layers of cardboard, paper, and lots of very hard glue. The "shank," made of cardboard or leather, runs along the inside of the shoe to offer extra support to the dancer's foot. Because of these fragile materials, the more a dancer wears their pointe shoes, the quicker they will break down. Depending on the dancer, a pair can last a few weeks or for only one performance!

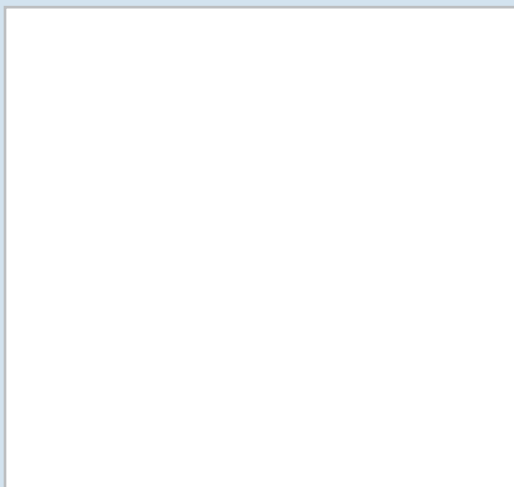
## Why are pointe shoes pink?

Pointe shoes are usually light pink to match the skin tone of Caucasian dancers, which has historically made it more difficult for dancers of color to achieve the same lines. Dancers of color have used a process called "pancaking" which covers the shoe in paint or makeup to match their skin tone. This extra step has often inhibited the accessibility of ballet for non-Caucasian dancers. Recently, companies such as Freed (UK) and Gaynor Minden (USA) have started offering pointe shoes in bronze and brown tones.



### ACTIVITY: DESIGN

Try standing on your tiptoes in your shoes. Try standing on your tiptoes barefoot or in socks. Which is easier? Why? Use your experiences to design the inside of an ideal pointe shoe below. What can you do to make the shoe more comfortable or more supportive for a dancer? Discuss with a partner the similarities and differences between your designs.



**CCSS**  
W.2.8

**NGSS**  
K-2-EST1-1  
K-2-ETS1-2  
3-5-ETS1-1  
3-5-ETS1-2

**CAS**  
2-5.VA:Cr1.1

# Ballet Vocabulary

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**arabesque:** A position standing on one leg with the other leg raised behind the body.

**choreographer:** Someone who makes dances. It originally meant someone who records dances, but has come to mean the person responsible for the design of movement in ballet.

**corps de ballet:** Dancers in the ballet who dance as a group or ensemble.

**coup de pied:** In French, "neck of the foot." This position is created by the working leg bending at the knee slightly, placing the pointed toes of the foot right above the ankle bone of the standing leg.

**croisé:** Facing corner with downstage leg in front.

**dégagé:** An action when the dancer pushes the foot on the floor (with a straight leg) which then causes the leg to lift 2 inches off the ground to the front, side or back positions. Degage is a tendu slightly lifted off the ground.

**développé:** A slow movement when one leg is "peeled" off the ground and draws up the standing leg. After it reaches the knee of the standing leg it opens up or "develops" to a straight leg position.

**divertissement:** A short dance within a ballet used to show off technical skills.

**en face:** Facing the front.

**fondu:** A slow movement when both legs slightly bend and straighten simultaneously. The standing side remains on the ground while the working side moves from the coup de pied position.

**narrative ballet:** A ballet that tells a story.

**ouvert:** Facing corner with downstage leg behind.

**pas:** In French, "step" i.e- pas de chat means step of the cat.

**pas de deux:** In French, "a dance for two people."

**pirouette:** In French, "to turn." Dancers can pirouette in many positions.

**plié:** In French, "to bend." Dancers plie using their legs bending at the knees.

**tendu:** An action when the dancer pushes the foot on the floor (with a straight leg) and finishes the movement with the toes on the ground and a pointed foot. Tendu is used in front, side and back positions.

**tutu:** A traditional ballet costume. A tutu is a "skirt" (normally with a bodice attached) that is flat and short so the leg and footwork of the ballerina can be seen easily.

### ACTIVITY: APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Using 5 vocabulary words above, describe what you see in each of the images from SCB's production of *The Nutcracker* below.

**CCSS**  
RI.K-4.7  
W.K-3.8



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# History of *The Nutcracker*

## START

1816

E. T. A. Hoffmann, a Prussian author, writes the fairy tale *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, which would later become the inspiration for *The Nutcracker* ballet.

1844

Alexandre Dumas adapts Hoffmann's story to create *Histoire d'un casse-noisette* (The Nutcracker). This adaptation is later used as the premise for Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*.

November-December 1890

Ivan Vsevolozhsky, Director of the Russian Imperial Theatres, begins talks with composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to commission the writing of a one-act opera and two-act ballet. In a December 1890 letter written to Mikhail Mikhaylovich Ippolitov-Ivanov, a Russian composer 20 years Tchaikovsky's junior, Tchaikovsky describes concerns that by obliging with the commissions, he will prevent younger composers' works from being performed on-stage. He concludes, "No one knows better than I do how important it is for a young composer to get his works performed at a great theatre, therefore I would be willing to make some sacrifice, if I were sure it would be of any use. But supposing I were to relinquish my commission to compose an opera and a ballet. What would be the result? They would rather put on three foreign operas than risk a new Russian one by a young composer." (The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, 620)

5 February 1891

Choreographer Marius Petipa provides Tchaikovsky with plans for the ballet's first act.

(mid) February 1891

Tchaikovsky begins composing scenes from *The Nutcracker*, completing the first two numbers in Scene I—No. 1, The Decoration of the Christmas Tree, and No. 2, March (the entrance of the children).

18 February 1891

Tchaikovsky goes to Saint Petersburg to discuss new ideas that Vsevolozhsky has for the first act of *The Nutcracker*. In the letter that Vsevolozhsky sends to request their meeting, he explains his belief that Petipa's original plans for the first act will displease the public and irritate the audience.

6 March 1891

Tchaikovsky meets with the choreographer Petipa and they finalize the plans for Act II. Later that day, Tchaikovsky departs Saint Petersburg.

(continued)



## History of The Nutcracker (cont.)

### 10 March 1891

Tchaikovsky arrives in Paris, France with intentions of composing more of *The Nutcracker* there. He finds it hard to complete his work in Paris, so travels to Rouen, France on March 29.

### 3 April 1891

In a letter to Vsevolozhsky, Tchaikovsky questions his ability to finish composing *The Nutcracker* in light of his upcoming trip to the United States. In an appeal to Vsevolozhsky, Tchaikovsky requests postponing the ballet and opera productions until the following season.

### 20 May 1891

Upon returning to Saint Petersburg in Russia, and with Vsevolozhsky's agreement to postpone the ballet and opera, Tchaikovsky resumes working on Act II of *The Nutcracker*.

### January 1892

Tchaikovsky begins orchestrating *The Nutcracker* after completing that of the opera. He finishes the ballet's orchestration on March 23, 1892.

### 6 November 1893

Tchaikovsky dies of cholera (or so we think!)

### 31 March 1891

In Rouen, Tchaikovsky resumes composing *The Nutcracker*. He completes the numbers he had originally left out of Act I as well as the beginning of Act II. It is believed that Act I's sketches were likely finished in Rouen.

### 26 April 1891

Tchaikovsky arrives in New York for 25-days. At the official opening of the Music Hall, now known as Carnegie Hall, on May 5, he conducts his Coronation March. During his trip, Tchaikovsky is extremely depressed and does not work on *The Nutcracker*, writing to a friend "I cannot start working again before June at the earliest... otherwise whatever I tried to write would turn out wretchedly."

### 25 June 1891

Tchaikovsky finishes his sketches for *The Nutcracker*, writing to a friend, "Remember when you were here I boasted that I had something like five days left to finish the ballet? It turned out that I only just managed it in 2 weeks. No! The old man is evidently declining."

### 6 December 1892

*The Nutcracker* premieres at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, produced by Lev Ivanov with conducting by Riccardo Drigo. Tchaikovsky said of the performance, "The Nutcracker was staged quite well: it was lavishly produced and everything went off perfectly, but nevertheless, it seemed to me that the public did not like it. They were bored."

(continued)

## History of The Nutcracker (cont.)

### 4 August 1908

*The Nutcracker* is for the first time staged outside of Russia with a performance at the National Theatre in Prague, wherein the following two years, it would be staged 24 times.

### 17 October 1940

The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo stages an abridged version of *The Nutcracker* in New York, marking the ballet's first performance in the United States.

### 2 December 1944

The first complete performance of *The Nutcracker* in the United States occurs, produced by William Christensen with the San Francisco Ballet.

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### ACTIVITY: PREDICT

*The Nutcracker* was created in eastern Europe in 1892. Predict what influences you'll see during the live performance that demonstrate its eastern European background.

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### CCSS

RI.K-4.3  
W.4-5.9

# Characters

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**Clara** – a young girl. She receives a nutcracker doll for Christmas and dreams of a grand adventure they take together.

**Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum** – Clara's parents. They host a large Christmas party for family and friends.

**Herr Drosselmeyer** – Clara's mysterious godfather. He gives Clara a nutcracker doll and uses his magic to take Clara on her adventure.

**Fritz** – Clara's brother. He accidentally breaks Clara's nutcracker in an attempt to play with it.

**Louisa** – Clara's sister. In some productions Louisa becomes the Sugar Plum Fairy in the second Act.

**Nutcracker** – Clara's toy that comes to life. He is transformed into a handsome Prince and accompanies Clara on her adventure.

**Czar Mouse** – the mischievous King of the Mice. He and his mice minions declare war against the Nutcracker and his soldiers and fight in an exciting battle.

**Snow Queen** – the Queen of the Land of the Snowflakes. Clara passes through here on her way to the Land of the Sweets.

**Sugar Plum Fairy** – a beautiful fairy who is the ruler of the Land of the Sweets. Cavalier, The handsome partner of the Sugarplum Fairy.

## ACTIVITY: CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

Which character do you identify most with? Which character do you identify least with? How do you relate (or not relate) to those characters' motivations?

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**CCSS**  
RL.2-4.3

## ACTIVITY: CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

Choose one character from the list above and draw what you think that character would look like in your own production of *The Nutcracker*. Describe that character's personality using 3 adjectives.

### CAS

3.VA:Cr1.1

1.VA:Cr1.2

PK.VA:Cr2.3

### Adjectives

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



# SCB's *The Nutcracker* Summary

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## Act 1

Prologue with Herr Drosselmeyer & Ragamuffin: Once upon a time in the winter of 1892...

### Scene One – The Stahlbaum's House

Dr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum welcome their guests to a Christmas party. Herr Drosselmeyer is the last to arrive, and he brings his life-sized dolls to entertain the children. He also brings a lovely, wooden nutcracker for Clara. Fritz is jealous, so he chases Clara and knocks the nutcracker from her grasp. Herr Drosselmeyer quickly retrieves it for Clara, for this is no ordinary toy.

### Scene Two – Time Suspended – The Battle

Later when the other guests have gone, Drosselmeyer uses magic to suspend time at the Stahlbaum house. He takes Clara into a world of fantasy. As the fantasy unfolds, life-sized mice begin to appear in Clara's living room. The Christmas tree grows into gigantic proportions. Soldiers and gingerbreads arrive and battle the mice. The nutcracker comes to life and fights the ugly Mouse King. Clara tries to help the nutcracker. Finally, the Mouse King falls. Clara cries because she believes her nutcracker has vanished. Instead, the spell is broken and a handsome prince emerges.

### Scene Three – Land of Snow

The Nutcracker Prince takes Clara on a magical journey that begins at the Land of Snow. They soon meet the beautiful Snow Queen and her Cavalier.

## Act 2

### Scene One – Journey to the Sugar Plum Palace

Later at the Kingdom of Sweets, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her entourage of delicacies from all over the world pay tribute with magnificent entertainment in the young couple's honor. Eventually, the dream must come to an end, and they all gather to bid farewell.

#### ACTIVITY: STORY ELEMENTS

Using the description above (or below), circle 3 characters, underline 2 settings, and highlight 1 problem.

CCSS  
RL.K-1.3

## Student Synopsis

Clara's family throws a large Christmas party with many guests. Clara's godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer brings life-size dolls and a nutcracker for Clara. Fritz is so jealous, he chases Clara and breaks the nutcracker.

Later that night, Drosselmeyer takes Clara to a fantasy world filled with large mice who battle soldiers and gingerbread. The Nutcracker comes to life and fights the ugly Czar Mouse. The Nutcracker breaks the curse and becomes the Prince! Next, he takes Clara to the Land of Snow to meet the Snow Queen and her Cavalier. Then, they travel to the Land of Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy and her candy friends charm Clara with a big show! Finally, Clara says goodbye and wakes up safe at home.

# Guest Artists

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## Junna Ige – Sugar Plum Fairy

Junna Ige began her ballet training by Mona Kondo at Ecole Yokohama and later joined Japan Junior Ballet and Asami Maki School in Japan. In 2004, she received a scholarship from the Japanese government to train abroad for two years at the Hamburg Ballet School.

Ms. Ige is currently a principal dancer of Ballet de Monterrey and previously of Silicon Valley Ballet (then known as Ballet San Jose) and Orlando ballet. Ms. Ige's repertoire includes Kitri in Wes Chapman's "Don Quixote," Giselle in Alicia Alonzo's "Giselle," Cinderella in Ben Stevenson's "Cinderella," Marie in Karen Gabay's "The Nutcracker," Maria in Dennis Nahat's "The Nutcracker," "My One and Only" in Balanchine's "Who Cares?," Principal Dancer in "Allegro Brillante," Waltz Girl in George Balanchine's "Serenade," Kitri in Wes Chapman's staging of "Don Quixote," as well as roles in Dwight Rhoden's "Evermore," Jorma Elo's "Glow-Stop" and Annabelle Lopez's "Prism."

With ballet de Monterrey Ms. Ige has performed the roles of Christine in Albert Mendez's "El Fantasma de L'Opera," Odette/Odile in "Swan Lake," Nikiya in "La Bayadere," Kitri in "Don Quixote," Lisset in Alicia Alonzo's "La Fille Mal Gardeé" and Wendy in Septime Webre's "Peter Pan." With Orlando Ballet she performed the roles of Aurora in "Sleeping Beauty," Christine in Jorden Morris's "Moulin Rouge," and Tinkerbell in Jorden Morris's "Peter Pan." Ms. Ige was a finalist of the 2010 International Ballet Competition in Jackson.



## Luis Gonzalez – Sugar Plum Cavalier

Luis Eduardo Gonzalez is originally from Bogotá, Colombia, where he grew up before moving to Atlanta, Georgia to train under former Prima Ballerina of Atlanta Ballet Ms. Maniya Barredo. Gonzalez received the Star Student award at Regional Dance America's SERBA, third place at the Regional Youth America Grand Prix in 2008, first place in pas de deux at the American Ballet Competition in 2013, and was selected to compete as the only representative of Colombia in the 2014 Jackson International Ballet Competition.

Gonzalez began his professional career at sixteen with Houston Ballet II, where he danced works by Stanton Welch, Balanchine, Claudio Munos, and Ben Stevenson, among other renowned choreographers, touring nationally and internationally. At 18, he joined Orlando Ballet for three years, performing and originating works by director Robert Hill. In 2015, Gonzalez joined the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago where he performed and originated roles on stages all over the world and in 2019, returned to Orlando Ballet and took on principal and soloist roles in works by Val Caniparoli, Victoria Morgan, Robert Hill, and Jessica Lang. In 2021, Gonzalez joined the Sarasota Ballet for two years before leaving to turn his focus on freelance work with companies like San Francisco's Diablo Ballet and Atlanta's Terminus Modern Ballet Theater.

Gonzalez has taught for prestigious schools such as Joffrey Ballet, Sarasota Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, Orlando Ballet, Metropolitan Ballet Theatre, Mount Dora School of Ballet to name a few and has a Business degree with a focus in marketing and a minor in Psychology.



# Choreography

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## The Party

The party scene includes many instances of "mise en scene," which function to set the scene and set up the story of Clara and her family. The dances in this scene are based on the social dances that would have been enjoyed by guests at social events in the Victorian Era. The simple steps are danced with a partner in patterns in a ballroom type setting. This scene also includes narrative choreography, meaning that it tells a story with the steps. For example, Clara's solo dance with the doll that she receives as a gift at the beginning of the scene expresses the excitement she feels.

## The Battle

In the battle scene, the choreography is designed to highlight the difference between the two sides of the battle, the mice and the toy soldiers. The toy soldiers' movements are very rigid and their range of motion is limited, just as an actual toy soldier's movements would be. Similarly, their formations are very structured, much like that of a group of soldiers of the time period. In contrast, the mice move freely. Their movements are not uniform and their patterns are much more natural and free form, as if they are real mice scurrying around the house. The gingerbreads always hold the same position with their arms and legs to show that they are "baked" into their position.

## The Land of Snow

The snow scene is an abstract dance, a dance for dance's sake that does not follow a linear story. The dancers represent snowflakes both individually and in their group patterns. Arms and legs stick outward, forming large snowflake patterns. From sharp "icy" movements to soft "drifting snowflake" movements, the movements they perform represent various aspects of snow. Look out for the "blizzard" section towards the end of the scene, during which the choreography and music reach a crescendo and the snow storm is at its height. Once the storm calms, snowflakes drift back onto the stage and wave goodbye to Clara and the Prince.





## Divertissements

"**Chocolate**" choreography and music are heavily influenced by Spanish flamenco dance because, in Victorian Europe, chocolate was a very fine delicacy that was mostly enjoyed in Spain. The passion and flare of flamenco dance also invokes the spicy taste that the chocolate from this era would have had. The dance is powerful, just like the taste of bitter chocolate, with lots of big jumps, leaps, and turns.

"**Trepak**" is based on the traditional Russian and Ukrainian folk dance of the same name. The version performed in *The Nutcracker* is a character dance, a ballet with an emphasis on folk dance. The choreography includes lots of stamps, claps, and steps performed in parallel, with the feet and legs not turned out as they would be in pure ballet, to evoke the folk dance feeling of the original trepak. The dance is also very high energy, just like that of Russian folk dance steps which include very large jumps with tucked legs, low-to-the-ground shunts in a grand plié with knees bent all the way, and other "bravura" tricks like the "coffee grinder," where one leg is swung in a circle and the other leg jumps over it.

"**Tea**" is based on the motions of picking tea in tea fields, such as those that would be found in Southeast Asia. The dancers perform the dance on pointe, forming patterns and lines that represent the way that the tea fields are laid out. The choreography itself expresses the way the tea pickers might interact with each other while working in rows and rows of bushes. For more information on the complex history of "Tea" choreography, visit [Final Bow for Yellowface](#).

"**Coffee**" is set in the Middle East in the Arabian Peninsula, where coffee brewing first developed. The three dancers in this scene start out dancing with silk scarves which float magically around the stage, resembling silk banners floating in the winds of the Arabian Desert. Many of the poses in this dance are inspired by traditional Arab belly dances, which have their origins in Egypt. Articulation of the hips accentuate the percussive, fluid, or vibrating torso-driven moments central to Raqs Sharqi, the classic style of Egyptian belly dance. Some of the poses are also reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

The **Grand Pas De Deux** is a traditional classical pas de deux for the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. The term "Grand Pas De Deux" encompasses the duet, the two solos and the coda, the fast and exciting dance for both dancers that finishes the section. The Sugar Plum Grand Pas De Deux is performed by principal dancers who have reached an elite level of dancing, and is therefore very technically demanding despite the impression of being danced with ease. Watch out for big over-the-head lifts, partnered turns, and balances. Many of the turns and lifts are accentuated by crescendos in the very dramatic music.

# Scenery and Costumes

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## Costume Design

designed by Catherine Hand, Marjorie Cutting, Susan Sachs, Terry Worley

Check out an interview with SCB's costume designer Tutu Terry [HERE!](#)

## Set Design

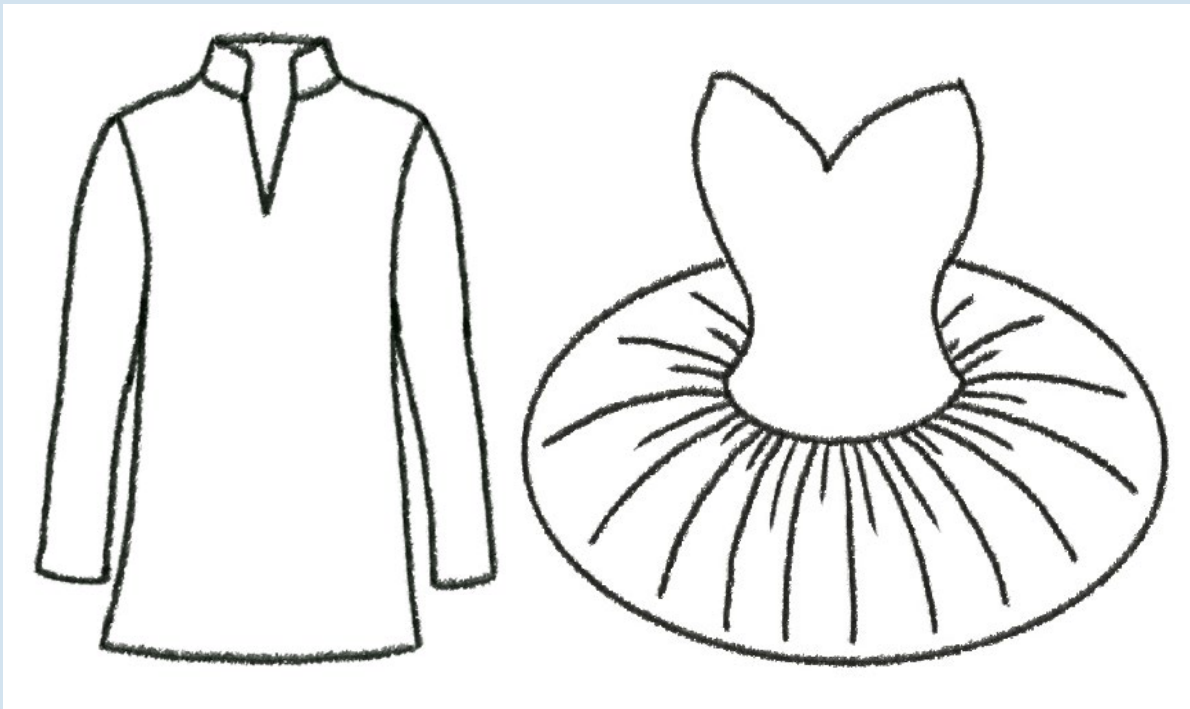
designed by Catherine Hand

Inspired by her mother's legacy and her own travel in Russia, Catherine Hand designed backdrops rich in Russian art and architecture for SCB's performance. "I changed the walls of Red Square into strawberry shortcake. The Russian dachas (country cottages) became gingerbread houses dripping with icing. The onion domes were painted like crystalline candy-coated confections, the pillars, candy canes of exotic marzipan colors." (Catherine Hand as quoted in "Russian-Themed Sets Showcase Nutcracker in Poway," interview, East Coast Magazine, Nov. 2010.)

### ACTIVITY: DESIGN

Using the templates below, design a matching tutu and tunic based on your favorite sweet or dessert.

CCSS  
RL.K-1.3



# Academic Activities

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## STEM

- 23 Science Exploration: Beak Adaptation  
Grades 2-4
- 27 Beak Adaptation Worksheet
- 28 Engineering Design: Jingle Bell Towers  
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## English & Literature

Grades K-5

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- Acrostic Poetry 36
- Writing Prompts 36
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- Memorable Moments Worksheet 39
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# Science Exploration

## Beak Adaptations

Grades 2-4 • Pages 23–27

**Brief Lesson Description:** Students will investigate the effect of beak shape on birds' diets. They will explore how beak shape can determine a bird's habitat, and how differences in beak adaptation allow birds to coexist in certain habitats. Students will participate in an experiment and use the resulting data to either support or disprove their hypothesis. They will apply their knowledge through analysis of other bird adaptations that affect habitat and diet. Students will be evaluated by their ability to design a beak for certain food or conversely food for a specific beak. Additional quantitative examination may be required.

---

**Performance Expectation:** Students will:

- 3-LS3-2 Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment
  - 3-LS4-2. Use evidence to construct an explanation for how the variations in characteristics among individuals of the same species may provide advantages in surviving, finding mates, and reproducing.
  - 3-LS4-3. Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.
- 

**Specific Learning Outcomes:**

- I CAN explain how different types of beaks determine birds' diets.
  - I CAN explain how different diets of birds allow them to coexist in the same habitat.
- 

**Long Term Outcomes:**

- I CAN conduct a controlled scientific investigation.
  - I CAN collect and evaluate data.
- 

**Science & Engineering Practices:**

Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

Engaging in Argument from Evidence

Science Models, Laws, Mechanisms and Theories Explain Natural Phenomena

**Disciplinary Core Ideas:**

LS4.B: Natural Selection

LS4.C: Adaptation

LS3.A: Inheritance of Traits

LS3.B: Variation of Traits

**Crosscutting Concepts:**

Patterns

Cause and Effect

Systems and System Models

---

**Common Core State Standards Connections:**

ELA/Literacy

SL.3.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Mathematics

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively

MP.4 Model with mathematics



## NARRATIVE & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Background Information

Soon, you and your students will be joining Southern California Ballet for our production of *The Nutcracker*. But what exactly is a nutcracker? What is the design of a nutcracker based on? Nutcrackers use a simple lever to break open a hard shell, much like birds who crack nuts for food. Only certain types of birds are able to crack nuts, but which kind? Is there some correlation between the shape and size of a bird's beak and the food they eat?

### Possible Preconceptions/Misconceptions

Birds have teeth in their beaks that help tear food apart.

Birds digest their food in their mouths.

Most birds eat the same types of food and are, therefore, in constant competition for a limited food source.

## LESSON PLAN – 5-E MODEL

### Opening Activity: What have you observed?

Students will come into the room with the following question posted: *Which bird will choose which food? Why?*

Foods: fish, seeds, worms

Birds: seagulls, garden birds (ex: finches), robins

ENGAGE

At the start of the lesson, ask students the question above, and include as many or few of the options listed above. For younger grades, show one bird and two food options.

In small groups or as a class, ask students to share what they chose and why.

Ask students if anyone has seen a wild bird eating and what they observed about the food or the shape of the bird and ask, "According to our past observations, what determines the food that birds eat?" Explain to them that we will investigate this question today.

### STEP 1: Scientific Investigation

Materials:

EXPLORE

Beaks	Bird Food	Stomachs
Spoons	Cut pipe cleaners	Paper cups
Scissors	Macaroni	
Tweezers	Beans	
Clothespins	Sunflower seeds	

Rules:

1. Birds must pick up food using only their beaks
2. Stomachs must be held upright
3. Foods may not be scooped or thrown

**EXPLORE (cont.)**

Distribute "Beaks" randomly to students, ensuring everyone has only one beak. Using visual aids if necessary, have students hypothesize which food they will be able to pick up easiest with their type of "beak." For older grades, have students record their hypothesis on the [Beak Adaptation Worksheet](#) on page 27.

Distribute one type of food either on a table or on the ground and allow "birds" to feed for 1 minutes for older grades and 2 minutes for younger grades. (**Note:** for older grades, divide students into groups with at least one type of "beak" represented in each group. This will help with both crowding when students are feeding and analysis later on)

Clear the first "food" and then repeat the process with the remaining "foods". Once all "foods" have been foraged, invite students to empty their "stomachs" onto the desk. Count the contents together and fill out the Data Collection table on the [Beak Adaptation Worksheet](#) on page 27 individually, as a group, or as a class. For the youngest grades, have students sort their stomach contents into large piles for the whole class (buckets work well), and count together out loud.

Float and monitor teams to assist when necessary. Ask guiding questions to remind them about their hypothesis.

**STEP 2: Analysis and Conclusion**

As a class, use the data in the table(s) to determine which "beaks" were best at "eating" which "foods." Check if students' hypotheses were correct.

For an extension of this activity, reconduct this experiment with students knowing the food their particular "beak" is best suited for. Were students able to "eat" more food once they knew what was easiest to "eat"?

**STEP 3: Connections**

Display pictures of birds with various beaks and ask students to identify which "beaks" used in the experiment correspond with which birds.

- Spoon: mallard duck, pelican, spoonbill
- Scissor: perching birds, tern, kestrel, owl
- Clothespin: goldfinch, wren, finch, jay, chickadee
- Tweezer: egret, kingfisher, heron, hummingbird

---

**Concepts Explained and Vocabulary Defined**

**EXPLAIN**

Some beaks are better at eating certain foods than others. Beaks are just one way birds have *adapted* to *coexist* with each other. Because only some birds can eat some foods, there is plenty of food for every bird, meaning they are not in competition with each other.

Vocabulary: habitat, adapt/adaptation, coexist, beak

## Applications and Extentions

### ELABORATE

Ask your students:

- In which habitat does each beak type forage for food?
- Would certain birds be able to survive if they lived in a different habitat?
- Describe various types of habitats and which "foods" from your scientific investigation you would find there
- What habitats are around your school?
- How does that affect which types of birds you see?

Discuss with your students what other parts of a bird are important to its feeding success and what other adaptations determine the types of food birds eat.

---

### EVALUATE

For younger grades, repeat the introduction activity with more options for both birds and foods, ideally different options than what was discussed during the lesson. Have students

For older grades, modify the introduction activity by displaying images of new birds that have not been discussed, ideally with unique beaks. In a short sentence or two, have students describe the food most likely eaten by that type of bird. Conversely, have students describe the type of beak that would be best for eating a certain type of food.

Additional Formative Monitoring may be required.

---

## References

This lesson is adapted from the Calif. Department of Education and the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge.

---

# Beak Adaptation Worksheet

Activity Description on Page 23

My beak tool is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Hypothesis:** With my beak shape, I think I will be able to pick up \_\_\_\_\_ easiest, and pick up \_\_\_\_\_ with the most difficulty.

**Data Collection:**

		Types of Foods			
Types of Beaks					

# Engineering Design Jingle Bell Towers

Grades K-5 • Pages 28–32

**Brief Lesson Description:** Students will use the steps of the engineering design process to create, test, and critique a jingle bell structure.

---

**Performance Expectation:** Students will:

- K-2-ETS1-1. Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.
  - K-2-ETS1-2. Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem.
  - K-2-ETS1-3. Analyze data from tests of two objects designed to solve the same problem to compare the strengths and weaknesses of how each performs.
  
  - 3-5-EST1-1 Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.
  - 3-5-EST1-2 Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
  - 3-5-EST1-3 Plan and carry out fair tests in which variables are controlled and failure points are considered to identify aspects of a model or prototype that can be improved.
- 

**Specific Learning Outcomes:**

- I CAN design and build a structure that meets specific design criteria .
- I CAN identify shapes and materials that are stronger than others.

**Long Term Outcomes:**

- I CAN follow the steps of the engineering design process.
  - I CAN collect and evaluate data.
- 

**Science & Engineering Practices:**

- Asking questions and Defining Problems
  
- Developing and Using Models  
Analyzing and Interpreting Data
  
- Planning and Carrying Out Investigations
  
- Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

**Disciplinary Core Ideas:**

- ETS1.A: Defining and Delimiting Engineering Problems
  
- ETS1.B: Developing Possible Solutions
  
- ETS1.C: Optimizing the Design Solution

**Crosscutting Concepts:**

- Structure and Function
  
  - Influence of Science, Engineering, and Technology on Society and the Natural World
- 

**Engineering, Technology, and Application of Science Connections:**

- Connections to ETS1.A
- K-PS2-2
- K-ESS3-2
- 4-PS3-4

- Connections to ETS1.B
- K-ESS3-3
- 1-PS4-4
- 2-LS2-2
- 4-ESS3-2

- Connections to ETS1.C
- 2-ESS2-1
- 4-PS4-3



## Common Core State Standards Connections:

### ELA/Literacy

W.5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic

### Mathematics

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively

MP.4 Model with mathematics

MP.5 Use appropriate tools strategically.

## California Arts Standards Connections:

2.VA:Cr3 Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork.

3.VA:Cr3 Discuss, reflect, and add details to enhance an artwork's emerging meaning.

4.VA:Cr3 Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion

---

## LESSON PLAN – 5-E MODEL

### Opening Activity: What have you observed?

#### ENGAGE

Display pictures of two structures (I recommend a bridge and a tall building). Ask students to think of one similarity and one difference between the two structures. Have students share with a partner their ideas and establish together a purpose for each structure (i.e. the bridge has to hold trains and cars; the building must withstand earthquakes).

---

#### Materials:

Jingle Bells

Clay/Playdough

Construction paper

Tape

#### Instructions:

Distribute a piece of construction paper and all building materials and the [Jingle Bell Engineering Worksheet](#) on pages 31-32 to each student, pair, or group.

#### EXPLORE

Establish design constraints for your students' structures. This could be a height min/max, width min/max, weight min/max, materials min/max, or something new altogether. Students should record these constraints on the Design Constraints section of the worksheet.

Help your students as they navigate the remaining steps of the engineering design process, setting time limits for each section if necessary.

TIP: Encourage your students to build their structures on their piece of construction paper. It serves as good boundaries, makes it much easier to move, and minimizes the mess!

To Test: Place construction paper with structure onto your testing surface. Tape the corners of the paper securely to the table so it cannot slip. Shake the table vigorously for 10 seconds (more if their structures are quite sturdy; less if they aren't).

Have students complete the remaining section of their worksheet, focusing on ideas for improvement for their designs.

**EXPLAIN**

Explain that for this process students used the engineering design process. Lead your students in a discussion about what each step means individually and as part of the whole process.

Depending on the age range and engagement, discuss stability of structures and what shapes are best for building strong buildings (triangles) using verbal feedback from the class,

Vocabulary:

Engineering design process, problem, brainstorm, design, build, test, solution

---

**ELABORATE**

**Applications and Extentions**

Have students compare their model with others and establish patterns about what worked and what didn't. Collectively explore those successes and failures, focusing on the steps of the engineering design process. Would those problems have been solved had the steps of the engineering design process been reversed or altered?

Brainstorm what other problems could be solved using this method.

---

**EVALUATE**

Additional Formative Monitoring may be required.

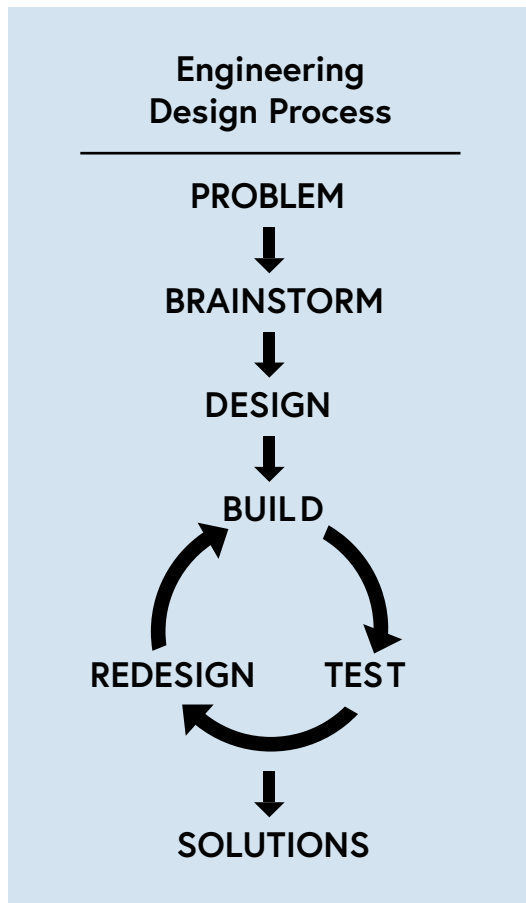
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# Jingle Bell Engineering Worksheet

Activity Description on Page 28

## Objective

Construct the (tallest/largest/widest) structure possible within the given constraints.



## Brainstorm

What type of structure do you want to build?

What shapes will you use for your structure?

How will you make it strong?

## Design

Draw and label your design below. Include any notable features.

**Design Constraints**

---

## Build

Record how much material you use in the table below.

Material	Amount Used

## Test

My structure (survived/didn't survive) the test.

Record your observations below.

## Reflection

Why was your structure successful or unsuccessful?

If you could change one thing about your structure what would it be? Include a sketch of this improvement below.

# Chemistry At-Home

## Growing Crystal Snowflakes

Grades K-5 • Pages 33–34

### Materials:

- White pipe cleaners
- String
- Scissors
- Pencil or popsicle stick
- Wide-mouth mason jars
- Water
- Borax



### Instructions:

#### *Making your snowflake*

1. Cut your pipe cleaner into thirds.
2. Make an X with two pieces and wrap one around the middle of the other to stay in place.
3. Wrap the third piece around the middle of the X to make a snowflake shape.
4. Tie string onto one of the ends. (This string can be used to hang the snowflake on a tree.)
5. Place the snowflake in the mason jar and tie the string onto a pencil or popsicle stick so that the snowflake hangs freely in the mason jar without touching the bottom or sides.
6. Remove the snowflakes from the jar for the following instruction section.
7. For larger groups, use large tupperware or a bucket and a yardstick to suspend multiple snowflakes at once

#### *Making the supersaturated solution*

1. Fill each container roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way full of boiling water. Add food coloring, if desired. (It requires a LOT of food coloring to have a vibrant color)
2. Add 4 tablespoons of borax for every 1 cup of water. Stir until dissolved.

#### *Growing crystals*

1. Add the snowflake into the jar and leave for 24 hours.



## Vocabulary:

- Solution
  - Solute
  - Solvent
  - Saturated liquid
  - Supersaturated liquid
- 

## Science explained:

For any *solution*, there is only a certain amount of *solute* that can dissolve into the *solvent* (a liquid). When the maximum amount is dissolved, the solution is *saturated*, and that amount depends on the temperature of the solvent and the chemical properties of both the solvent and solute.

When we heat up a solvent (in this case, water) the molecules move farther apart, allowing more space for the solute (in this case, borax) to be dissolved in the solution. This makes the solution *supersaturated*. When the water cools, the solute has nowhere to go, so it condenses into a solid crystal made up of a regular, repeating pattern of molecules (and clings to our pipe cleaner).

---

## For a controlled experiment, try one of the following:

- Repeat this activity using boiling water, room temperature water, refrigerated water, and ice water. At which temperature does the most crystal growth occur? The least? The largest? The smallest?
  - Repeat this activity dissolving different minerals in boiling water. Are the shapes of the crystals specific to the type of mineral used? Research the molecular shape of each mineral. How does that relate to the shape of the crystal structure?
- 

## References

- <https://www.adventuresofadiymom.com/2012/11/diy-crystal-snowflakes.html>
  - <https://afewshortcuts.com/how-to-grow-borax-crystals-kids-science-project/>
-

# Literacy Activities

Grades K-5 • Pages 35–41

## STORY ELEMENTS

### Overview:

Have students read the grade-appropriate [Nutcracker Summary](#) on pages 17 and 18 to complete the following activities. Simplify or elaborate as much as necessary to appropriately scaffold for your students.

### CCSS

RL.K-2.1  
RL.K-5.3  
RL.2.5  
L.K-4.1

Using the student summary, complete the table below.

<b>Main Characters</b>	
<b>Setting</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	
<b>Solution</b>	

Using the student summary, complete the following instructions:

- Circle any character names (only once each)
- Underline any active verbs
- Box any transition words (first, next, later, etc.)
- Highlight any adjectives

[Answer key](#) on page 37

## ACROSTIC POETRY

Using the [Acrostic Poetry Worksheet](#) on page 38, have students show their understanding of the theme through the writing of their poem. This could be anything from what your students know about *The Nutcracker* to what they think they will see.

**CCSS**  
RL.K-1.2

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## WRITING PROMPTS

### Prompt 1:

In *The Nutcracker*, Clara and the Prince travel to a magical place and see performers from around the world, and are presented with coffee from the Middle East, tea from China, mirlitons from France, chocolate from Spain, and candy canes from Russia. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and what would you do?

**CCSS**  
L.K-5.1-2  
W.K-5.1

### Prompt 2:

Using the [Memorable Moments Worksheet](#) on page 39, have your students draw and write the most memorable moment from *The Nutcracker* or describe their opinion of the ballet they have just seen.

**CCSS**  
W.K-5.1  
W.K-5.3  
SL.K-5.3

### Prompt 3:

Critics of *The Nutcracker* argue that there is not a strong plot. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Use evidence from the summary and/or ballet to support your ideas.

**CCSS**  
W.3-5.1

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## VENN DIAGRAM

Using the [Venn Diagram Template](#) on page 41, have students compare and contrast the [Comparison Images](#) on pages 40, with specific focus on set design, costumes, color scheme, and mood. Have students predict what may be happening in each scene based on these characteristics.

**CCSS**  
RI.K-1.3  
RI.K-3.9  
RL.K-4.7

**CAS**  
1.VA:Re7.2  
4.VA:Re7.2

For younger grades, prompt students to verbally identify similarities and differences as a group.

# Story Elements – Answer Key

Activity Description on Page 35

Clara's family throws a large Christmas party with many guests. Her godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer brings life-size dolls and a nutcracker for Clara. Fritz is so jealous, he chases Clara and breaks the nutcracker.

Later that night, Drosselmeyer takes Clara to a fantasy world filled with large mice who battle soldiers and gingerbread. The Nutcracker comes to life and fights the ugly Czar Mouse. The Nutcracker breaks the curse and becomes the Prince! Next, he takes Clara to the Land of Snow to meet the Snow Queen and her Cavalier. Then, they travel to the Land of Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy and her candy friends charm Clara with a big show! Finally, Clara says goodbye and wakes up safe at home.

# Acrostic Poetry

Activity Description on Page 36

In an acrostic poem, the first letter of each line spells out the subject of the poem. Write an acrostic poem for "Nutcracker" below.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_

**U** \_\_\_\_\_

**T** \_\_\_\_\_

**C** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

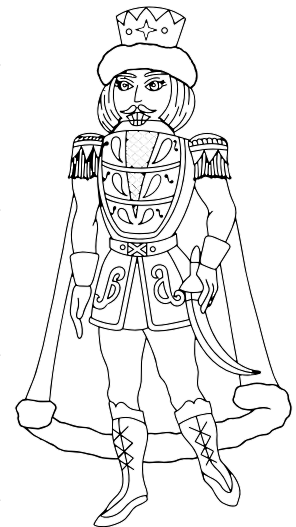
**A** \_\_\_\_\_

**C** \_\_\_\_\_

**K** \_\_\_\_\_

**E** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_





# Memorable Moments!

Activity Description on Page 36



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# Venn Diagram Comparison Images

Activity Description on Page 36

## Selection A



## Selection B



## Selection C

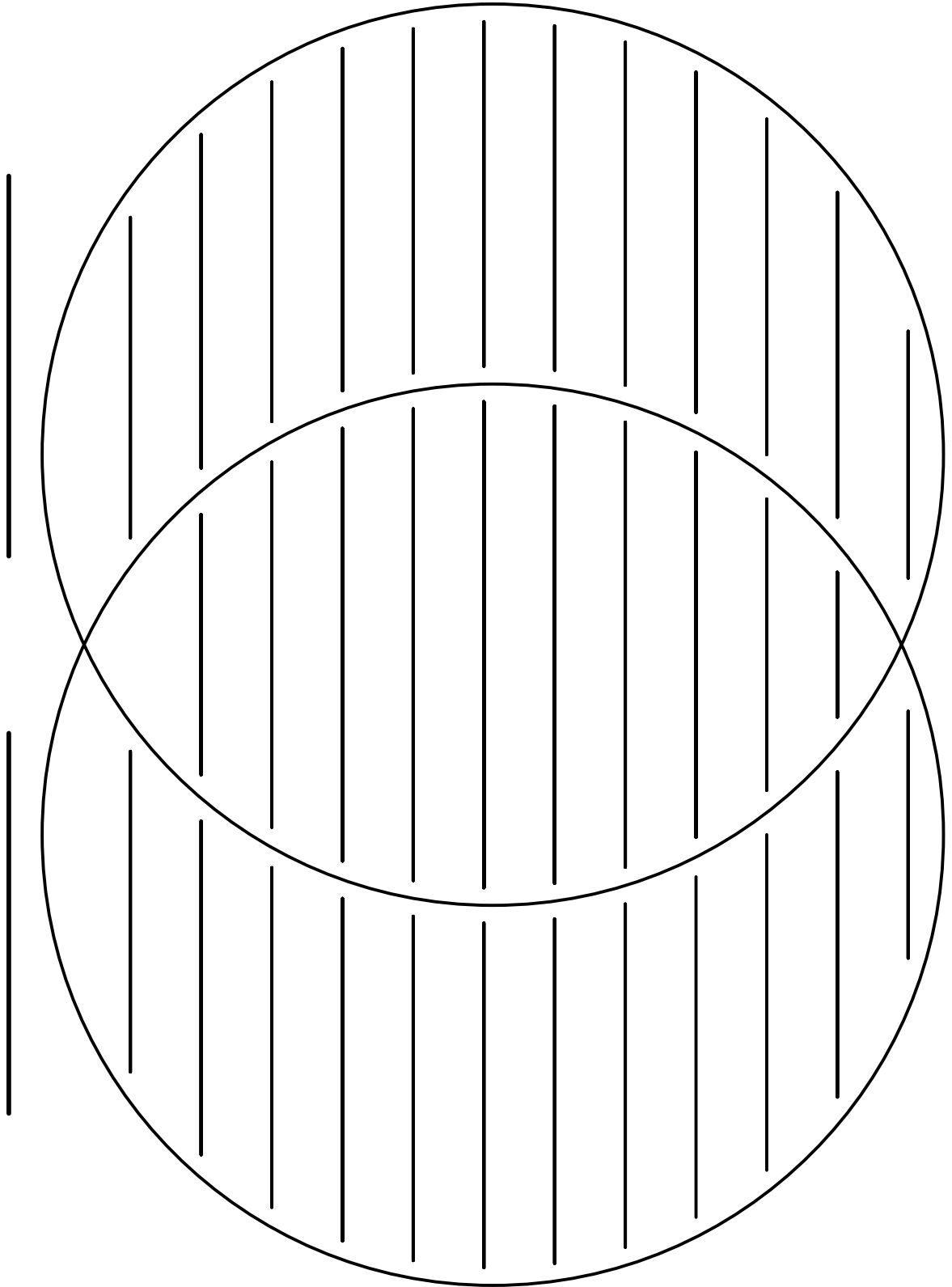


## Selection D



# Venn Diagram

Activity Description on Page 36



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Note: Any image without citation is property of Southern California Ballet.

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