

INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL DANCES IN THE TOOLKIT



Whether they are called play party games, folk dances, or simply games, the dances included on **Dances from Many Cultures** are “community dances.” These community dances involve patterns of singing, dancing, poetry, mimicry, and play acting that were used in the past to teach social customs. Some are courting dances; some are for play after coming together to work; some are used to celebrate seasonal accomplishments such as the harvest. People of all ages have enjoyed them and passed them on for generations. **Dances from Many Cultures** gives young people a multicultural and historical perspective, encouraging them to value their own and other cultural traditions.

The **Dances from Many Cultures** video includes seven traditional dances and games, some centuries old, taught by outstanding performers to groups of young people. This guide includes instructions as well as additional background information about the dances. These dances are enjoyed by people of all ages. Rather than indicate a specific grade level, we recommend that you view the dance to determine if it’s appropriate for your students. Use the tape/guide for your own education or show the videotaped dances to your students to help them get a picture of the dance they will be learning and performing.

The dances are:

- **Punchinella**
(*French*) taught by Jennifer Rose Escobar
- **Seven Jumps**
(*Danish*) taught by Jennifer Rose Escobar
- **Ciranda**
(*Brazilian*) taught by Jennifer Rose Escobar
- **Little Johnny Brown**
(*African American*) taught by Paula Larke
- **Zuni Harvest Dances**
(*Native American*) taught by Arden Kucate
- **Goin’ to Boston**
(*Appalachian via the British Isles*) taught by Anndrena Belcher
- **Upon a Summer’s Day**
(*Renaissance/European*) taught by Jennifer Rose Escobar

Addressing Core Content

DANCE: Primary-Grade 5

Students will be performing traditional folk and ethnic dances [AH-EP-4.2.3 and AH-(04) 05-4.2.3], and these dances use the elements of dance—space, time, and force—and locomotor and non-locomotor movements [AH-EP-1.2.1, AH-EP-1.2.2, AH-(04) 05-1.2.1 and AH-(04) 05-1.2.2]. Take time after learning and performing the dances to identify elements in the dance students have learned; describe how they’re used to create simple dances; discuss how these elements contribute to the idea of the dance; and compare dance movements to everyday movements.

Consider having students watch and learn two or more of the dances and then describe how the dances are similar and different. These dances can be categorized as:

- **ring dances** (*Punchinella, Seven Jumps, Ciranda, Little Johnny Brown*) or
- **line dances** (*Zuni Harvest Dances, Goin’ to Boston, Upon a Summer’s Day*)

Ask students how the dance they’ve learned might communicate ideas, thoughts, and feelings [AH-EP-3.2.1 and AH-(04) 05-3.2.1]. Little Johnny Brown, for instance, communicates on a variety of levels.

The introductory comments from the instructors as well as the additional information in this guide will help students understand and explain how dance has been a part of cultures and time periods throughout history [AH-EP-2.2.1 and AH-(04) 05-2.2.1]. These video excerpts can be used to initiate discussion of the ceremonial and recreational purposes of dance. You could also ask students to compare and contrast the dances of different cultures (African, Native American, Colonial American).

DANCE: Middle School

As students grow more comfortable performing traditional dances, they can begin perfecting their skills and movements. Learning, practicing, perfecting, and recalling the more complex dances featured on **Dances from Many Cultures**—Zuni Harvest Dance, Goin’ to Boston, and Upon a Summer’s Day—help students perform dances and under-

stand compositional forms. Students can describe and critique the dances as they are performed by their peers or by watching the dances on the videos.

These dances use the elements of dance—space, time, and force—and locomotor and non-locomotor movements to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings. **Dances from Many Cultures** is designed to get students up and moving, but by building in time for reflection, you can have students identify, describe, and discuss these elements and movements and how they're used as well as how they differ from other movements [AH-(06) (07) 08-1.2.1]. Middle school students can also look at these dances in terms of their compositional forms. For example, have students identify the form used in Little Johnny Brown or in Goin' to Boston and then discuss its use.

The instructors on the video provide insight into where and why these dances originated and what they mean to the culture in which they flourished. Their comments plus information in this guide can provide students with the background they need to discuss how dance has been a part of cultures and historical periods [AH-(06) (07) 08-2.2.1] and to identify and describe dances from different cultures and purposes [AH-(06) (07) 08-3.2.1].

DANCE: High School

The dances featured on **Dances from Many Cultures** hail from a variety of cultures—from the Zuni Pueblos of the Southwest to the African American culture found along coastal South Carolina. Many of the dances originated in Europe, immigrated to America with the settlers, and are still performed today in regions such as the Appalachian Mountains. Learning these dances will introduce and immerse students into these cultures and time periods, enabling them to perform the dances [AH-HS-4.2.4]; discuss how they reflect history and culture [AH-HS-2.2.1]; and describe the similarities and differences in recreational, artistic, and ceremonial dance styles [AH-HS-3.2.1].

SOCIAL STUDIES

As students learn about the arts of a culture, they learn about that culture. These dances and their origins and meanings can be integrated into other subject areas, particularly in the “Culture and Society” strand of the social studies core content. The rationale for such study is inherent in the introductory statement to this strand: “Culture is the way of life shared by a group of people, including their ideas and traditions. In America’s multicultural society, students need to understand that culture influences viewpoints, social rules, and social institutions.” Consider integrating these dances into lessons that help students define

and better understand various cultures as well as see how the arts of a culture reflect its unique history, situation, and perspective [SS-EP-2.1.1, SS-(04) 05-2.1.1, SS-(06) (07) 08-2.1.1, and SS-HS-2.1.1].

Because the dances on **Dances from Many Cultures** are “community dances,” they also reflect how various human needs can be met through interaction in and among social groups, and they are a powerful demonstration of what cooperation and compromise within a group can produce—positive social interactions, an overcoming of stereotypes and prejudice, and art.

These dances can also bring life and understanding to history studies, enabling students to compare and contrast, analyze and interpret the interconnectedness of the history of human activities and ideas with the evolution of the arts, including dance (e.g., evolution of dance styles as a reflection of their times).

PRACTICAL LIVING: PHYSICAL EDUCATION SUBDOMAIN

Since dance is composed of locomotor and non-locomotor movements and requires an understanding of fundamental movement concepts (e.g., body and space awareness, time, effort, and relationship), learning these folk dances can be used to address the core content associated with the development of psychomotor skills [PL-EP-2.1.01, PL-EP-2.1.02, PL-(04) 05-2.1.01, PL-(04) 05-2.1.02, PL-(06) (07) 08-2.1.01, PL-(06) (07) 08-2.1.02, PL-HS-2.1.01]. One of the functions of dance—particularly these folk dances—is recreational, and physical, social, and emotion benefits can result from participating in dance movement classes [PL-EP-2.2.01, PL-(04) 05-2.2.01, PL-07-2.2.01, PL-HS-2.2.01]. Performing folk dances successfully requires following directions and team skills—cooperation and communication—making dance an excellent way to help students develop employability skills [PL-EP-4.2.01, PL-EP-4.2.02, PL-(04) 05-4.2.01, PL-(04) 05-4.2.02].

