

The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance: Sample Unit Template

Title of the Unit: Revolutionary Black Dancers of the 20th Century	Unit Dates: <u>1/15/22</u> -- <u>2/28/22</u> Number of Class Sessions: 6-8
Dance Teacher Name: School: Jacquelyn Scafidi	Benchmark(s): Grade/Class: 9-12th grade

Unit Description

For Black History Month Students study the Revolutionary Black dancers that changed the landscape of dance for people of color and beyond. Student learn about their accomplishments, their journey, and how they paved the way for underrepresented dancers, the impact they had on all demographics of people and how they influenced dance as we know it today.

Big Ideas of this Unit: Students will understand that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Who are the Revolutionary Black dance artists, who have paved the way when there was no path for them in the dance world.● American Dance history needs revision. How have they contributed to succeeding generations of dancers?● Black dance artists' contributions must be recognized; how they have permanently changed the status quo and created new pathways for the dance world to be more inclusive towards people of color● Appropriation of African movement styles/culture. They will recognize how African movements have been incorporated into most genres of dance, and most of the time usually without proper credit or acknowledgement, usually changed and appropriated for (white)American audiences throughout history.	Essential Questions of this Unit: Students will answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● How have revolutionary Black Dance artists have contributed/helped succeed generations of dancers in the last decades?● How have they permanently changed the status quo and created new pathways for the dance world to be more inclusive toward people of color?● How does the dance field recognize and acknowledge the contributions of past Black Dance artists?● How does dance have the power to influence society and how can we be dancing vessels for social change?
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Indicators of Student Learning

CONTENT—Students will know:

- Who Alvin Ailey, Arthur Mitchell, Katherine Dunham, Raven Wilkenson, and Misty Copeland are.
- How difficult it was for these artists to be the “firsts” in their chosen genre of dance.
- How African culture and movement gets incorporated into every facet of the dance world; and how it gets changed/updated/appropriated to appeal to white audiences, most of the time without proper credit or acknowledgement. .
- Major choreographic works created and or performed by these artists.

SKILLS—Students will be able to:

- Read the bios on Alvin Ailey, Arthur Mitchell, Katherine Dunham, Raven Wilkenson and Misty Copeland to comprehend the unyielding experiences they had to endure to make the pathway for people of color in the dance world.
- Analyze interviews of these artists and be able to explain (either through writing or group discussion) why these revolutionary artists play an important part of our history and how they helped people of color advance in dance.
- Learn about different movement styles throughout history, with the comprehension and connection as to where the movement originated from and how it evolved overtime.
- Engage in different movement styles to make connections to the movement's origins and how that movement is connected to today's dance world.
- Be dancing vessels for social change.

Dance Blueprint Strands Addressed

(Check ONLY the components being assessed)

Dance Making	Developing Dance Literacy	Making Connections	Working with Community and Cultural Resources	Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop Skills and Techniques <input type="checkbox"/> Improvise <input type="checkbox"/> Choreograph <input type="checkbox"/> Perform	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand Dance as a Means of Expression and Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Apply Dance Vocabulary, Terminology and Symbols <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analyze, Critique and Communicate About Dance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify and Compare Dance Styles, Genres, Major Works and Artists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understand Dance History and the Social and Cultural Significance of Dance (Theatrical, Ritual & Social Dances) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connect Dance to Other Arts and Disciplines <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize Technology in Connection with Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Connect Dance to Health and Well-Being	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage with Community and Cultural Institutions, Colleges and Universities <input type="checkbox"/> Use Dance Research Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Share Dance Experiences in and Between Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn About Careers in and Related to Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Set and Work Toward Goals <input type="checkbox"/> Value Dance as a Source of Enjoyment and Lifelong Learning

New York State Dance Learning Standards Addressed

- DA:Re7.1. HSI. Analyze how elements of dance are used in a variety of genres, styles and cultural movement practices within their cultural context.
- DA:Cn11.1.HSI Identify changes that the dance works or practices, and dance artists have engendered in society

Note: Only anchor standards are required. Include learning indicators only if you find them helpful.

Learning Experiences

(Briefly describe each experience following the sequence of lesson plans)

Lesson 1: (To be completed in two sessions)

- **Do Now: (5 min)**

Write down in Journal

“What does it mean to be Revolutionary and/or a Trailblazer?” (I will provide the meaning of the words on board)

- **Mini-Lesson: (10-15 min)**

Students will engage in a 10-15 min class discussion with the teacher about:

- 1)Who are some Revolutionary dancers of color in the 20th century?
- 2)What are they known for and what makes them trailblazers?
- 3)What genres of dance are they connected to?
- 4)What is Ballet, Modern, and African Dance? What are some of the differences and similarities?

- **Activity: (25 min)**

Here we will do a center warm up with Ballet and Modern movement. Then we'll infuse elements of African movement and talk about the differences and similarities of all three. We will also talk about the origins of each and how they might or might not be connected. (20/25 min)

- **Closing: (5 min)**

Stretch & Cool down while reflecting on:

“What does it feel like to be the “first” to accomplish something that no one has done before.

“Is there an area of your life that you might see as an opportunity to better yourself or your community? Do you have “Trailblazer” qualities?”

*****Session 2 of this lesson will have a deeper expansion of movements described above.*****

Lesson 2:(To be completed in two sessions)

- **Do Now: 5 min**

Defining/writing down- What is modern dance? What makes it different from other genres?

- **Mini-lesson: 10-15 min**

Read independently a handout/biography about Alvin Ailey.

1)Who is Alvin Ailey?

2)What is Horton modern dance?

3)What was his impact on the dance world?

- **Activity: 15 min:**

Watch a documentary about Alvin Ailey and his journey.

- **Closing: 5-10 min:**

Brainstorm/Discuss in groups of 4, thoughts about the following questions:

*What did you think about Alvin Ailey's journey?

*What do you think the piece "Revelations" was about?

*What did you think about the choreography? How did the piece make you feel? (use adjectives)

*****Session 2 of this lesson will have a deeper expansion of movements described above.*****

Lesson 3.

- **Do Now: 5 min**

Ask the students to get in a circle and ask them:

*Who can show me the 6 Ballet positions and the French terminology that goes along with them?

*Write down on the board the French terminology & definitions for those steps.

- **Mini Lesson: 5-10 min**

Watch a short youtube video about the origins of Ballet dance and culture, so they can understand that Ballet dancing was for an elite, royal society that rarely allowed people of color to participate.

 [A Brief History of Ballet](#)

- **Activity- 20 min**

Read in groups of 4, handouts about Arthur Mitchell, Raven Wilkenson, Misty Copeland.

- They will make the connection and discuss as a group, how Ballet is a form of dance that has excluded POC for hundreds of years; and how very important it was when Raven Wilkenson and Arthur Mitchell finally broke down that barrier to enter into top tier Ballet Companies; which later helped paved the way for Misty Copeland to become the first Black principal with the top Ballet company in the United States.

- **Closing- 10 min**

Exit ticket on laptops. Writing, 2/3 paragraphs to the following question:

*How do you think they felt being the only people of color in a company? What have you done to make them feel more included?

*What impact did their actions leave on succeeding generations? Or

Improvisational movement reflecting their responses to any of the questions posed above.

Lesson 4 (to be completed in two sessions)



- **Do Now: 5-10 min**

Pose a question on the BB for class discussion:

“Do you think African culture and movement is a part of our current American culture or not?”

- **Mini-Lesson: 10 min- Read independently a journal article-**

“Stealing Steps” African American Dance and American Culture. The students will be asked to examine current dance moves and question where they came from and who created them. They will also realize how African culture and movement is infused into every facet of American dance and culture as we know it today. (except ballet)

- They will have an understanding how dance can have an impact on society.
- They will watch a video on the evolution of Black social dances in America.
 -  History of American Dance
 -  The history of African-American social dance - Camille A. Brown

- **Activity: 25 min**

We will have a guest artist who will explore and teach students how to do different steps that have originated from Africa and evolved in the USA. We will first explore dances that emerged from African tribes and Enslaved Americans :

*Juba Dance

*Cake Walk

- We will further explore: The Charleston, Lindy Hop, The Jitterbug, The Twist, The Wop, The Bop, Bees Knees, Fall Off The Log, The Camel Walk, Chicken Head, Kid and Play (funky Charleston), The Monestary, Hit Dem Folks, The Whip, The Nay Nay, The Cabbage Patch, Running Man, Milly Rock, The Dougie, and Afro Soca.

- **Closing: 2 min-**

For homework they will be asked to write a small essay of 1 or 2 pages, about which trailblazer they found most interesting and why and Do you feel you have any Trailblazer qualities?

*****Session 2 of this lesson will have a deeper expansion of movements described above, and will watch the movie “Rize.”*****

Pre-Assessment

What do students already know and understand about this area of Dance Making?

- Students know of these artists and their artistic accomplishments , but probably not in depth.
- Students have some knowledge of American dance history

What skills related to this unit have students already developed?

- Students have basic foundational movement skills and training in Ballet, Modern, and African Dance
- Students are able to compare and contrast these dance forms

Unit Assessments

Examples: Performance task with checklist, peer observation with feedback protocol, student self-assessment form, videotape of student work with scoring rubric, test with grading system, student journal writing coded for vocabulary

Aligned to learning objectives and NYC DOE dance blueprint indicators

Self-Assessment

- Journaling in each class

Peer Assessment

- Peer to peer discussions & feedback. Students work in pairs to interview each other answering a list of questions posted on the board about these Artists.
- Improvisation & Performance feedback

Teacher Assessment

- Identifying the five major Black dancers of the 20th century who revolutionized dance in their preferred genre of dance. **Exit slip.**
- At the end of the unit, students will write a **short essay**, choosing one of the four artists that they found interesting, and write about what their biggest impacts/contributions were. How did they influence the dance world and society around them?

or
- How can you influence in your life or community and be a dancing vessel for social change? (this can include information from readings or videos we watched).

Resources

(Books, music, articles, websites, etc.)

- **Biographies:**

Alvin Ailey, Raven Wilkenson, Katherine Dunham, Arthur Mitchell, and Misty Copeland

Alvin Ailey Jr.- was an American dancer, director, choreographer, and activist who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He created AAADT and its affiliated Ailey School as havens for nurturing Black artists and expressing the universality of the African-American experience through dance.

Raven Wilkenson- Anne Raven Wilkenson was an American dancer who is credited with having been the first African-American woman to dance for a major classical ballet company. Wilkinson broke the color barrier in 1955 when she signed a contract to dance full-time with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

Katherine Dunham was an American dancer, choreographer, creator of the Dunham Technique, author, educator, anthropologist, and social activist. Dunham had one of the most successful dance careers in African-American and European theater of the 20th century, and directed her own dance company for many years.

Arthur Mitchell- was an American ballet dancer, choreographer, and founder and director of ballet companies. In 1955, he was the first African-American dancer with the New York City Ballet, where he was promoted to principal dancer the following year and danced in major roles until 1966

Misty Copeland- is an American ballet dancer for American Ballet Theater. On June 30, 2015, Copeland became the first African American woman to be promoted to principal dancer in ABT's 75-year history.

- **Movie**- “Rize”- A documentary that shows the evolution of hip hop and krumping with an emphasis on how strongly rooted African tribal movements are in our American culture.
- **Short videos/documentaries** showing each artists journey & dancing style, along with interviews talking about their experience

Alvin Ailey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj_qoMzTgpY

Raven Wilkinson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfc1Iy-OhU0>

Katherine Dunham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESJ-Yvod1xE>

Arthur Mitchell <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRZwCmmQVPw>

Misty Copeland <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXIapH9kc20>

- **Journal article-**

“Stealing Steps” African American Dance and American Culture

<https://www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?Query=jstor.org%2Fstable%2F30041605>.