Dancing SHapes

Loved it! 😍

*This is a visually stunning and interactive book that will inspire young dancers to get up and move.*

Among the challenges that stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic is the fact that people could no longer gather to practice or enjoy dancing. In direct response to this void, a professional dancer—dubbed Konora for the purposes of this book—and her mother created this interactive guide for displaced dancers.

Written specifically for young ballet dancers, this book is best suited for children aged six to nine. The narrative feels like a dance class, where readers are invited to participate throughout the book. One page in particular encourages dancers of all shapes, sizes, and genders to practice dancing and to attempt the shapes in the book as best they can. While the text may be difficult for young children to read independently, hearing it aloud will no doubt inspire them to get up and start moving. This story would benefit from an audio accompaniment, especially for children to experience the feeling of a dance class at any time within their home.

This book is presented in four sections, including an introduction to the character Konora with warm ups, followed by a description of primary ballet positions, then a section to encourage readers to think about the details of their movements, and a conclusion that thanks the reader for their hard work. A message to the reader at the beginning explains the design of the book, although the book would benefit from having a table of contents and an index for easier navigation.

Easily the most compelling component of this book is its visuals, beginning on the cover and dominating each page. Full color photographs of Konora in costume inspire children to dream of being a professional ballerina. Myriad photographs also feature Konora backlit to focus on her body position instead of what she is wearing. Dynamic body shapes can be challenging to replicate, but the presentation is accessible to children regardless of their abilities.

Young dancers will love having this reference at hand even once dance classes open again. Especially because this book teaches routines and practices to keep moving bodies safe, it is an important addition to a young ballet dancer’s home library.

*-Mary Lanni on Reedsy*
[[**Review Link**](https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/dancing-shapes-once-upon-a-dance#review)]

NUTcracker Dancing SHapes

Loved it! 😍

*This natural extension of the Dancing Shapes series is a delight for ballet dancers who love The Nutcracker story.*

Perhaps one of the most iconic performances of the holiday season is The Nutcracker, a story told through dance by both amateur and professional dance companies alike. In this third installment of the Dancing Shapes series, readers get a backstage tour of many of the twenty-five Nutcracker roles ballerina Konora has played throughout her life.

Like the other books in this series, Konora is featured throughout the book in both the narrative and in the abundance of photographic images. While most of the pictures are of Konora in costume, a few have her backlit as she is demonstrating certain shapes for the reader. These pictures are inspiring to dancers of all ages, especially because each pose can be studied and mirrored with practice.

A table of contents at the beginning of the book gives readers an idea of what to expect and helps them navigate to the sections that are of the most interest to them. This book includes more of a narrative than the others in the series, but there are invitations for the reader to interact, as well. In addition to a warm-up like those found in the other Dancing Shapes books, Konora includes an entire section devoted to The Nutcracker story and the many variations found in performances across the United States. Even readers familiar with The Nutcracker will learn something new!

As in the other books in this series, the storytelling in this book speaks directly to the reader. Invitations to participate are found alongside commentary about Konora’s dancing experience, all of which encourage dancers to work hard and keep trying even when challenges arise. Because of the amount of text, this book is best read by a confident older child or adult caregiver. A small glossary of terms at the end of the book assists with pronunciation of some of the French words and phrases used in the story.

This book is a natural extension of the Dancing Shapes series and builds upon the skills learned in the first two installments. Fans of Konora and her teaching style will love adding this story to their shelves.

*-Mary Lanni on Reedsy*
[[**Review Link**](https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/nutcracker-dancing-shapes-once-upon-a-dance#review)]

Dancing Shapes with Attitude

## Must Read🏆*A heartfelt and detailed non-fiction story that teaches ballet movements while reminding readers to be kind in a subjective world.*

The life of a dancer is rarely predictable, and because dance is a subjective art form, it can be difficult for any dancer to face competition or criticism. Ballerina Konora is back in the newest addition to the Dancing Shapes series. Here, she gets personal with readers and explains some of the dimmer moments of her dancing career. As she anxiously awaits an update on where she will be performing next, Konora introduces readers to more complicated dancing shapes than in the other installments. As readers become ready for more of a challenge, this book provides one, along with the reminder that everyone sees something different when they observe art.

Like the others in the Dancing Shapes series, this book begins with a narrative before transitioning into the movement portion. This book gets more personal with readers than the other stories as it highlights moments of disappointment and how Konora has overcome them throughout her dancing career. Competitive and performing dancers of all types will recognize the emotions mentioned in this book and will find a kindred spirit in Konora.

Dynamic photographs of Konora in action are the visual feature of this book, like in the previous books. In addition to back-lit, black-and-white images are ones of Konora against surprising and compelling backdrops. Each picture gives readers a sense that dance and movement are intrinsic elements of life everywhere.

The instructional section of this book focuses on attitude and arabesque. These movements are described in great detail, giving readers the tools they need to execute each one accurately. Readers who appreciate getting into the important, nuanced pieces of ballet shapes will relish the approach to teaching these two movements.

At the end of the book, readers are left with a teaser to learn where Konora will be performing next along with a reminder to be kind—both to one another and to themselves. Once Upon a Dance reiterates the message that dancing truly is for everybody, and this book makes that fact especially obvious. Dancers with an interest in leveling up their dancing ability will love adding this book to their libraries and practicing the skills it teaches.

*-Mary Lanni on Reedsy*
[[**Review Link**](https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/dancing-shapes-with-attitude-once-upon-a-dance#review)]

PEtunia Perks Up

Loved it! 😍 *Young readers will love the interactive component of this series and will feel like a calm princess by the end of this installment.*

Princess Petunia is bored with a capital B. Stuck inside for six days because of a relentless rainstorm, she has not been able to see her friends and seems to have exhausted every indoor activity she can think of. When her attention is drawn to her window, however, she begins to imagine herself doing things outside by moving her body. Swaying like a swing, melting like ice cream on a hot day, and pretending to blow enormous bubbles, Petunia finds a comforting sense of calm within herself.

Movement has a soothing effect on children and adults alike; couple that with delightful storytelling, and it becomes the Dance it Out series by Once Upon a Dance. This second book in the series begins with an introduction by Ballerina Konora, the primary subject of all the stories in this rapidly growing collection. She invites readers to safely participate in the story at whatever level is comfortable for them.

Petunia’s tale has three layers which can be consumed equally well in tandem or independently. The first layer features whimsical illustrations of Petunia in a variety of settings. Beginning in her bedroom, attentive readers will recognize details which foreshadow later events in the narrative. Second is the text itself, written for a young elementary school-aged audience because of its length. Important words are presented in different fonts and styles to draw attention to them, and the story often addresses readers directly. Third is the movement section, which explains motions that correspond to events or objects found on that page in the story. These descriptions are accompanied by photographs of Ballerina Konora—dressed as a princess herself—demonstrating the actions.

Young readers will love the interactive component of this series and will feel like a calm princess by the end of this installment. Inviting multiple readings, children will soon be able to act out this story from memory with their bodies. Fans of the Dancing Shapes series will love this new addition, and all readers will connect with this charming character and her vivid imagination.

*-Mary Lanni on Reedsy*
[[**Review Link**](https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/petunia-perks-up-a-dance-it-out-movement-and-meditation-story-once-upon-a-dance#review)]

Joey Finds His Jump!

## Must Read🏆

*A simple little story about a baby kangaroo trying to find his jump as well as introducing us to some fun things to do along the way.*

What an ingenious little story this is. To combine the story of an animal and in the process teach children some basic movement, it creative and fun. Bravo to the author and I hope to see many more. It is a new way to think about incorporating two very different fields of creativity. It's fun and interactive and has interesting characters in it. The illustrations are clear and there is never a doubt on what will happen next.

This is a very simple book of a kangaroo that tries to find his jump. On his quest he meets some animals and does some moves which then gets changed into movement exercises for children. It is simple yet ingenuous. To have such a different and creative way to combine the art of ballet or movement with writing is creative and original. The illustrations and movement explanations are clear and wonderfully done. It is easy to follow the instructions and one never wonders what or how to do them because there are small illustrations for these too. From the onset to the end, each page is filled with colorful drawings and little adventures that happen. It both sweet and innovative.

The book is geared towards young children. It is perfect for those that are not going to formal school yet, so the age range is about 4-7 years old. It is written simply and combines some movement for children to do. I highly recommend this book to every parent that want to get their child involved in movement in a fun and interesting way. It is easy to follow the instructions and dare I say - the parents can try them too. The author hit a sweet spot with this book and it is going to be great to follow the next books in the series. Highly recommended for anyone with young children and those young at heart too.

-[Hanlie Robbertse](https://reedsy.com/discovery/user/hanlie-robbertse) on Reedsy
[[**Review Link**](https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/joey-finds-his-jump-once-upon-a-dance#review)]

# DANCING SHAPES: BALLET AND BODY AWARENESS FOR YOUNG DANCERS

# *A ballet dancer presents beginning positions and discusses body awareness in this picture book designed to get readers moving.*

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a young White dancer collaborated with her mother to create videos, aiming to inspire others stuck at home to start moving. In this book by Once Upon a Dance, Konora (her stage name) recounts her ballet journey, complete with beautiful photographs of her onstage performances over the years, before launching into the types of instruction she has shared on YouTube. After providing solid warmup directions that will help kids visualize the movements, Konora describes ballet’s traditional five positions as well as basic instructions for performing pliés. Then she calls for readers to create shapes with their bodies, using their imaginations to mimic animals or fashion other poses. The clear, white backgrounds put the images of Konora in stark relief, and the lighting underscores each position’s details. Pages at the beginning and end offer students other shapes to mimic, and Konora urges readers to invent their own. The small font and frequently text-dense pages may intimidate newly independent readers. But confident readers and parents can use the work as a prompt to move in new ways. Konora emphasizes that “Dance is for everyone!” and encourages awareness: “Always be gentle with your body. Don’t do anything that hurts.” With constant support and innovative descriptions that will spark imaginations, Konora invites readers to share the joy of dancing.

A superb tool for young dancers, full of accessible poses to mimic.

*-Kirkus Reviews*

**[[Review Link]](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/once-upon-dance/dancing-shapes/)**