



Kathak

KNOWLEDGE QUEST

INFORMATION AND TEACHING TIPS

Category M: World (Subcategory: Asia)

Name of Dance: Kathak

Dance is Divine

from Hindu mythology

BACKGROUND INFORMATION Before students view the video clip, share the following information with them.

Note: There are two video clips: One demonstrates the basic 16-count rhythmic foot pattern and the other demonstrates one version of this dance integrating the footwork.

- **Translation:** The Sanskrit word *kathak* means to tell a story.
 - **Country or culture of origin:** One of the main styles of Indian classical dance, Kathak originated in northern India.
 - **Timeline:** Nearly 2000 years old, the Kathak dance began to acquire its distinctive shape and features after the 16th century.
 - **Function or reason:** Kathak dance emphasizes the telling of stories through the portrayal of a variety of traditional characters and themes. Performed originally in the temples to express epic stories of the Hindu gods, it eventually made its way to the royal courts.
 - **Who does this dance:** Both men and women perform this dance as solo dancers.
 - **Music and rhythms:** Rhythmical sounds are made from hundreds of bells on the dancers' ankles. The main instruments are tabla (two-drum ensemble), pakahawaj (a barrel-shaped drum with two heads), sarangi (a stringed instrument played with a bow), a flute, and sometimes a violin and a sitar. Many times it is accompanied by song or poetry.
 - **Traditional clothing or costume:** Women wear a flared knee-length dress over churidar (tight-fitting trousers) with a dupatta (long scarf) draping the head and shoulders. Men wear a Persian costume of wide shirts and round caps.
 - **Other information:** Kathak is known for its fast footwork and spins, called chakkaras, which, combined with hand positions (mudras), steps, expression, and mime, are used to tell the story. The ankle bells (ghungroo) turn the feet into musical instruments. Kathak comes from an oral tradition, and has been passed down from gurus to students for hundreds of years. The four basic elements that must be mastered in Kathak dance are tayari (technique with precision), layakari (mastery of rhythm), khubsurti (beauty), and





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nazakut (delicacy). Traditional storylines, themes, and emotions being expressed revolve around the following: shringar (beauty and attraction), karuna (compassion and sadness), vira (heroic pride and confidence), raudra (anger and ferocity), bibhatsa (disgust and aversion), hasya (laughter and joy), bhayanaka (fear and fright), adbhuta (surprise and wonder), and shanti (peace).

REFERENCES

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathak>

www.geocities.com/kathakdance/kathak.htm

<http://dances.iloveindia.com/classical-dances/kathak.html>

TEACHING STRATEGIES The video clip should be viewed at least three times (see chapter 1). After students record and discuss their observations and before the third viewing, use the discussion starters listed next to facilitate class discussion. Feel free to paraphrase and choose the questions that work best with your students.

Viewing: What Did You See?

Suggested discussion starters and questions: What are the main body parts used? What are some key movements used? How is sound used in this dance? What do you notice about the way the feet are used? What do you notice about the way the hands are used in this dance? What do you notice about the facial expressions?

Connecting: What Do You Know?

Suggested discussion starters and questions: What other dances do you know that tell a story? What are some of the ways the dancer moves to create different sounds with the bells? How is speed represented in this dance? Look at a clip of Flamenco dance (do a Web search for one). What similarities and differences can you see between these two world dance forms?

Responding: What Do You Think? What Do You Wonder?

Suggested discussion starters and questions: What idea or emotion do you think this dance is expressing? What is the role of facial expressions in this dance? Why do you think that Kathak dance might sometimes be referred to as a whirling dance? Why do you think there is such a strong similarity between Flamenco and Kathak dances?

What questions do you have about this dance? Write them down and continue your research. Some of these questions can be answered through movement.

Performing: What Can You Do?

Choose both Re-create and Create, choose one of these two activities, or make your own performing work that you think is most appropriate for your students.

Re-create

1. In small groups, students re-create the basic 16-count rhythmic pattern of the feet demonstrated in the first video clip.
 - Count 1: Stamp right.
 - Count 2: Stamp left.
 - Count 3: Stamp right.
 - Count 4: Stamp left.
 - Count 5: Stamp left.
 - Count 6: Stamp right.



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- Count 7: Stamp left.
 - Count 8: Stamp right.
 - Count 9: Stamp right.
 - Count 10: Stamp left.
 - Count 11: Stamp right.
 - Count 12: Stamp left.
 - Count 13: Stamp right.
 - Count 14: Stamp right.
 - Count 15: Stamp left.
 - Count 16: Stamp right.
2. Try to speed up the tempo of the movement.
 3. Replicate some of the arm and hand movements.

Create Create an original dance using repeating patterns of gestures, facial movements, and body movements that express one of the following traditional Kathak dance themes:

- Beauty and attraction
- Compassion and sadness
- Pride and confidence
- Anger and ferocity
- Disgust and aversion
- Laughter and joy
- Fear and fright
- Surprise and wonder
- Peace

***If you need music and don't have it among your resources, use the video.**

FUN FACTS There are many striking similarities between Kathak and the Flamenco dances of the Spanish Gitanos, most notably in the lack of much deviation from the vertical axis, percussive footwork, and dependence on a sometimes complex rhythmic cycle.

WEB EXPLORATIONS Key terms to search for include Kathak dance, Indian dance, and Gitanos.



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Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

STUDENT KNOWLEDGE QUEST WORKSHEET

Name of Dance: Kathak

1. Viewing: What did you see?

Record your observations. Describe what you see. Be specific.

2. Connecting: What do you know?

3. Responding: What do you think? What do you wonder?

4. Performing: What can you do?
