

# KNOWLEDGE QUEST

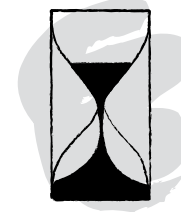
## INFORMATION AND TEACHING TIPS

### Video Clip Search

Category M: Historical (Subcategory: Middle Ages)

Category A: Social (Subcategory: Dances done in a line)

Name of Dance: Washerwoman's Branle (Branle des Lavandières)



Washerwoman's  
Branle

*A woman's work is never done.*

**DIRECTIONS** Give the students the job of researching clips of and about the dance from the Internet. Many are available; have them choose one or two. They can do this in school if the Internet is available, at home, or at a library. Instruct them to take notes about the actual dancing so that they can complete the student worksheet.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION** Before students view the video clip, share the following information with them and give them the KQ worksheets to complete as a homework assignment.

- **Translation:** The word *branle*—pronounced BRAHN-lee—sometimes refers to a brawl. Many different Branle exist. It is also named for its characteristic side-to-side movement (the French word *branler* means to sway).
- **Country or culture of origin:** This dance comes from France.
- **Timeline:** Approximately between 1450 and 1650 European aristocrats, especially in France and England, adopted the 12th-century French chain dance.
- **Function or reason:** The Branle des Lavandières is a dance that mimics the hard life of washerwomen during the Middle Ages.
- **Who does this dance:** The aristocracy did some of the Branle variations while the townspeople did others.
- **Music and rhythms:** Branles were danced with walking, running, gliding, or skipping steps depending on the speed of the music, which was composed in 4/4 time.
- **Traditional clothing or costume:** When the aristocracy performed dances, they wore clothes that represented their status in society. Both men and women wore heavy brocades. When the townspeople danced, they wore their simple clothes, which still meant many layers of skirts for the women and tunics for the men.
- **Other information:** Some of the Branle dances were performed by a chain of dancers who alternated large sideways steps to the left (frequently four) with an equal number of smaller steps to the right. Thus the chain, usually of couples, intertwining arms or holding hands, progressed to the left in a circle or serpentine figure.

## REFERENCES

[www.vjw.biz/ebook/wash.htm](http://www.vjw.biz/ebook/wash.htm)

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/branle?qsrc=2446of>

[www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3branl1.htm](http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3branl1.htm)

**TEACHING STRATEGIES** The video clip should be viewed at least three times (see chapter 1). In the case where students are searching and observing from home, they will need to list the exact Web site they used so that teachers and other students can see the basis for the documentation.



## Washerwoman's Branle

Facilitate a class discussion using the discussion starters listed next. Have students use their recorded answers as a resource. 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 did you first notice about the dancers? If they were in period costume, what impressed you about them? If they were in practice clothes, what did you notice about their stature?

### **Connecting: What Do You Know?**

**Suggested discussion starters and questions:** What do you know about how the dancers relate to one another? What do you notice about the use of rhythm?

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

**Suggested discussion starters and questions:** Look at two different Branles. Compare and contrast the styles and steps. Why do you think that the dance form lasted for so many years?

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 feel is most appropriate for your students.

**Re-create** To re-create any one of the Branles, study a specific video clip, observing the exact steps. Explain to the other dancers how the steps are done. Make this dance into a 32-count phrase.

**Create** Using two different video clips found through an Internet video search, create a dance phrase that intermingles several steps and formations. Double the counts to 64. Find a percussion instrument to play the 64 counts.

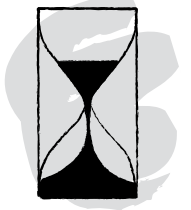
**\*If you need music and don't have it among your resources, use the video.**

**FUN FACTS** The Branle was the washerwomen's way of showing the hard work they did and why you wouldn't want to mess with them. People didn't mess around with washerwomen. How strong would you be if you lifted wet clothing all day?

**WEB EXPLORATIONS** Key terms to search for include Branle, Washerwoman's Branle, and court dances.

### **RECOMMENDED CLIPS**

- [www.vjw.biz/ebook/wash.htm](http://www.vjw.biz/ebook/wash.htm)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBnfigRQlw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBnfigRQlw)
- <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/divideos.html> (video clip no. 46)



**Washerwoman's  
Branle**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT KNOWLEDGE QUEST WORKSHEET**

**Name of Dance: Washerwoman's Branle  
(Branle des Lavandières)**

1. Viewing: What did you see?

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

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2. Connecting: What do you know?

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

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4. Performing: What can you do?

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