

## LESSON 11: ABSTRACT MOVEMENT

### Grade-Level Outcomes

#### Primary Outcomes

**Dance & rhythms:** Demonstrates competency in a form of dance by choreographing a dance or by giving a performance. (S1.H2.L2)

**Working with others:** Solves problems and thinks critically in physical activity and/or dance settings, both as an individual and in groups. (S4.H4.L1)

**Self-expression & enjoyment:** Selects and participates in physical activities or dance that meet the need for self-expression and enjoyment. (S5.H3.L1)

**Engages in physical activity:** Creates a plan, trains for and participates in a community event with a focus on physical activity (e.g., 5K, triathlon, tournament, dance performance, cycling event). (S3.H6.L2)

#### Embedded Outcomes

**Working with others:** Accepts others' ideas, cultural diversity and body types by engaging in cooperative and collaborative movement projects. (S4.H4.L2)

**Physical activity knowledge:** Analyzes and applies technology and social media as tools for supporting a healthy, active lifestyle. (S3.H2.L2)

### Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- use random improvisational tasks to create abstracted movements.
- take a mundane task and act it out, then change the acting into dancing using choreographic tools.
- use problem-solving skills to determine how to abstract the movements.
- refine ideas and movements for the choreography project that express the emotion of the selected word.

### Equipment and Materials

- Large open dance space
- Different accompaniment for each task: just background, nothing to distract from the task at hand (it helps if the students are not moving around in silence)

### Introduction

*We will be working on abstract movement today. This is another concept you can use in your choreography project. You will take a recognizable task that should be familiar to everyone and begin by acting it out. Then you will change that acting by creating dance movement. After the task is abstracted into dance, the audience members may not be able to recognize what the original task was unless they are told. Dance is not acting, but we can communicate quite loudly with our movement. There is no such thing as wrong movement today. Choose your own interpretation of the task given and enjoy turning it into dance. We will finish up today with some time to work on your choreography project.*

## Instructional Task: Abstracting Movement

### ■ PRACTICE TASK

*Today, you will work as a soloist in a group of soloists. Your challenge is to think for yourself and create original movement.*

Introduce the idea of taking acting and abstracting it into dance movement. Demonstrate for them so they have an idea.

*Note:* It helps for them to see it done once. I usually abstract changing the oil in a car (pop the hood, find the lever under the hood, lift the hood, find the dipstick, pull it out, clean it off, put it in, take it out, and inspect it). I usually do it once and ask if any student had any idea what I was doing. They never do. I use a lot of space, and I change direction and level often. Then I talk them through it and the light bulb goes on!

Divide students into three or four groups. Give each group a task (e.g., raking leaves, building a snowman, washing dishes, making a bed—it can be anything) and have them act it out for the rest of the class. Students act the task out by themselves (i.e., there should be a group of soloists executing the task).

Begin the background music and let them start. Tell them to keep doing their task until they are asked to stop. Circulate and give help where needed.

Here are some examples of tasks you can choose:

- Old-fashioned washing with a tub and washboard
- Planting a flower, tree, or garden
- Hand-washing dishes
- Sculpting a life-size figure
- Dressing a child
- Making an apple pie
- Cleaning their room
- Comforting a baby
- Sewing a wedding dress
- Putting up a tent
- Gathering wood and building a fire
- Painting a mural

### **Extension**

Make the groups smaller or keep them the same. Go around and secretly give each group a task so the rest of the class cannot hear, or have them pick a task out of a hat. Remind them not to look at what others are doing, but to just create movement.

### **Refinement**

This is a more advanced concept and may be outside of some students' comfort zones. Let them know there are no wrong answers.

### **Student Choices/Differentiation**

- Each student chooses how to act because this is a solo project within a group.
- Students have complete control over what they do and make choices on what they think is right to do.

### **What to Look For**

- All students are acting.
- All students are doing solo acting. There should be little to no interaction.

## **Instructional Task: Peer Performance**

### **■ PRACTICE TASK**

With 20 minutes left in class (or however much is appropriate for the number of groups you have), ask students to sit down. Groups take turns performing their abstract tasks for their peers.

Number each group so they know what order they will perform in. Have each group perform, and then ask the rest of the class if they can figure out what the task is by the common thread of students abstracting it. Announce the task and have the group perform again. See if the class can now see the creation.

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**EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S4.H4.L2.** Use the peer performance as an opportunity to discuss the importance of accepting ideas as well as the physical and cultural diversity of others when choreographing a dance.

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### **Student Choices/Differentiation**

Students perform what they have been working on in class. They made individual choices as they moved their bodies.

### **What to Look For**

- This is a wonderful activity where you really see student growth.
- Watch for kids breaking barriers and becoming more confident than they were at the beginning of the module.

## **Instructional Task: Choreography Project**

### **Practice Task**

Students spend the rest of class working on the movement portion of their projects. Partners discuss and refine their ideas and try some of them out. Provide the final project checklist (see handout) to guide their decisions.

### **Student Choices/Differentiation**

Students choose movements and sequence.

### **What to Look For**

Both students in the duet are contributing ideas.

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## **Formal and Informal Assessments**

Exit slip: In what ways did you collaborate with others in abstracting movement?

### **Closure**

- What did you learn about taking a concept and putting it to movement?
- Was it pleasing to you as the audience member?
- Did it make you think? Did you have different thoughts about each task presented?
- What does this tell you about the dance audience?
- What is your goal in dance performance?
- Is it OK if different audience members saw different things?

### **Reflection**

- How did the lesson go? Did students get out of their comfort zones?
- Did they interpret the tasks differently? Did everyone do their own thing, or did all things look similar because students were peeking at each other?
- How could I change the lesson to be even more effective?

### **Homework**

- Finalize your accompaniment (music or spoken word) for your project with your partner before coming to class.
- Begin moving sections of your choreography paper into your portfolio under the relevant links. Use the feedback to make revisions as appropriate. Add a link for the dress rehearsal video (Lesson 15). (Embedded outcome: S3.H2.L2). You should also think about the appearance of your e-portfolio. You may want to add graphics or photos to make it more attractive.

## Resources

McGreevy-Nichols, S., Scheff, H., & Sprague, M. (2004). *Building dances: A guide to putting movements together*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Reeve, J. (2011). *Dance improvisations: Warm-ups, games and choreographic tasks*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Internet keyword search: "choreography," "abstracting movement"

## FINAL PROJECT CHECKLIST

Name of duet: \_\_\_\_\_

Element	Descriptors	Yes/No
Originality	The piece demonstrates creativity in its use of movement and choreographic tools.	
Amount of dance	Both members of the duet are dancing throughout the piece, with only minor stops or pauses.	
Use of choreographic tools	A variety of choreographic tools are incorporated in the performance.	
Accompaniment choice	The movement is well suited to the music (spoken word).	
Performance quality	Performance is confident and fluid.	
Costume/props design	The costumes and/or props enhance the performance rather than distract from it.	
Presentation of emotion	The expressiveness of the movement conveys the intended emotion.	
Time	Performance is within time guidelines.	