

Study Guide for Teachers

Dance China New York
Lion Dance Plus
presented by
**Young Audiences New Jersey &
Eastern PA**
(866) 500-9265
www.yanjep.org



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Join us on a journey to China! This excellent introduction uses a diverse and authentic selection of dance, costumes, music, props, and historical information to immerse students in the ancient and vibrant culture of China. Students witness beloved Chinese folk-art pieces, including excerpts from Beijing Opera, the popular Monkey King story, and the Chinese “Red Ribbon Dance.”

LEARNING GOALS

Students will

- Be introduced to the culture and dance heritage of China.
- Appreciate the skill and technique involved in the creation of traditional Chinese dance.
- Gain a greater appreciation for diverse historical traditions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Dance China New York takes audiences on a tour of the culture, customs, and dance heritage of China. The audience will be treated to the Lion Dance, which captures the essence of Chinese celebrations worldwide, often marked by the frolicking tricks of lions and their tamer; the Red Ribbon Dance, a regular feature of holidays and celebrations across China; a Monkey King performance (Peking Opera excerpt) from a mythical tale adaptation of one of China's four celebrated epics, *Journey to the West*; the Handkerchief Dance, a peasant dance performed during celebratory occasions such as harvest; and either a Tibetan Dance or a Mongolian Dance.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Dance China NY (DCNY), resident dance company of the New York Chinese Cultural Center, is comprised of award-winning professional dancers from performance stages and academies throughout China and the United States. The company brings the richness of traditional folk dance, Peking Opera, and acrobatics to audiences through its education-based assembly programs. Noted for their powerful grace and contained elegance, DCNY performs regularly for audiences of all ages and has toured to hundreds of cities across 26 states. Each year, DCNY presents live performances and workshops to over 150,000 people, bringing the movements and rhythms of China to communities large and small.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Have students do a bit of research in small groups on the People's Republic of China. Then have the groups teach each other about what they learned. Some topics to explore include geography, history, population, culture and lifestyle, as well as government. Students may want to focus on how these characteristics compare with those of the United States.

2. As a class, discuss how information and traditions are exchanged and passed on within a family or culture. Ask students to share stories, songs, or special traditions particular to their own families and cultures.

Explore how important these traditions are for students. Some possible questions to explore: Does it matter if students are recent immigrants, or if their families have been in the United States for a long time? Why might this be the case?

RESOURCES

Grades K–3

Sungwan So, *C is for China*.

Kate Waters and Madeline Slovenz-Low, *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year*.

Ed Young, *Monkey King*.

Grades 3 and up

Frances Carpenter, *Tales of a Chinese Grandmother: 30 Traditional Tales from China*.

Arthur Cotteral, *Ancient China*.

Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *China*.

Nina Simonds and Leslie Swartz, *Moonbeams, Dumplings and Dragon Boats: A Treasury of Chinese Holiday Tales, Activities, and Recipes*.

Web Resources

Asia Society Kids: <http://kids.asiasociety.org>

The British Museum, Ancient China: <http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/menu.html>

China Institute: <http://www.chinainstitute.org>

Museum of Chinese in America: <http://www.mocanyc.org>

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Review and discuss each of the dances seen during the performance in terms of origin and style and how the dances differed from each other. Consider the area in which each dance originated. Discuss how people of all cultures express creativity in different ways and incorporate objects common to their own culture.

2. In China, the color red is a symbol of celebration and good luck. What do specific colors symbolize in our culture? Consider the following:

- Red, white, and blue for patriotism.
- Red roses, white roses.
- To call someone “yellow.”
- To be “green” with envy.
- To say someone has a “black” heart.
- Wearing white for a wedding, or black for a funeral.

Where did these color symbols come from? Are they still relevant to students today?

3. Make ribbons so that your students can do a Ribbon Dance. For each ribbon, you'll need 3 yards of thin rayon fabric/lining material in a 45-in. width. Cut it into 3 strips, each 15 in. wide by 36 in. long. These are your ribbons. Get inexpensive wooden dowels about $\frac{5}{8}$ in. diameter from a hardware store. Have them cut to 15 in. lengths.

How to: Gather ribbons at one end of the dowel. With a small piece of duct tape secure the material on the tip of the dowel. Wrap the rest of the dowel with the tape. To prevent fraying of the material, put a seam at the end of the ribbon either by hand, with tape, or by machine.

VOCABULARY WORDS

CULTURE: The customs, methods of self-expression, and beliefs of a group. Generally used to describe a large group of people, but every group has its own kind of culture, including families and friends.

CUSTOM: A usual way of doing something.

DYNASTY: A family that rules a country or empire, with one generation receiving the responsibility of ruling from another.