

Haitian Dance Forms

Topic, or Concept, and Goal (if the lesson is part of a learning experience or a unit plan)

Haitian Dance Forms – understanding other cultural traditions

Grade

Grade 6-8, 9-12

Class/Lesson Number

A minimum of three classes

State Dance and/or Physical Education (Dance Arts) Standards 2020

Virginia Department of Education: Dance Arts Standards of Learning

History, Culture, and Citizenship

6.6 The student will explore historical and cultural influences of dance.

a) Identify similarities and differences in dance styles from various historical periods.

b) Compare and contrast observable elements (e.g., body, action, space, time, energy) that characterize the dance arts of various cultures.

6.7 The student will identify and explore the functions of dance, including the use of dance as a form of expression, communication, ceremony, and entertainment.

National Dance Society *National Dance Education Standards Framework*

Strand 5

Standard 5.2 Cultural dance knowledge and performance

Performance Indicator (6-8) interpret, refine, and describe several cultural dance characteristics (movements, styles, and formations) in the context of cultural traditions and society.

Learner Objectives or Outcomes (must include one “real world” objective or outcome for assessment)

Psychomotor: Students will learn the steps associated with each of the dances

Cognitive: Students will understand the cultural significance of the dance and associated movements

Affective: The student will enjoy performing the cultural dances within a group

Rubric	Exceptional (4)	Accomplished (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Psychomotor	Students will execute the movements from three cultural dances, <i>Yanvalou</i> , <i>Congo</i> , <i>Ibo</i> , in a combination that can be performed informally or formally in a concert.	Students will execute the movements from two cultural dances, <i>Yanvalou</i> , <i>Congo</i> , <i>Ibo</i> , in a combination that can be performed informally or formally in a concert.	Students will execute the movements from one of the cultural dances, <i>Yanvalou</i> , <i>Congo</i> , <i>Ibo</i> , in a combination that can be performed informally.	Students will execute the movements from one of the cultural dances, <i>Yanvalou</i> , <i>Congo</i> , <i>Ibo</i> , that can be performed informally.

Cognitive	The student will demonstrate a cultural understanding of the dance by identifying the deity associated with the dance and describe, verbally or written, how the movements mimic the characteristics of that deity.	The student knows from which culture the dances come from, that they are associated with a deity, but cannot describe the characteristic of the deity and dance.	The student knows where the dances come from, but does not know of their cultural significance.	The student does not know where the dances come from or of their cultural significance.
Affective or social and emotional learning	The student can perform all three cultural dances within a group in either an informal or formal setting.	The student can perform two of the cultural dances within a group in either an informal or formal setting.	The student can perform one cultural dance within a group in an informal setting.	The student cannot perform any of the cultural dances.

Materials, Resources, Space Requirements, and Suggested Music

Suggested Music:

Katherine Dunham: Drum Rhythms of Haiti

Boukman Eksperyans: Vodou Adjae

Vocabulary terms (with definitions—see *NDS National Dance Education Standards Framework* for additional vocabulary terms)

Movement Characteristics – movements that are commonly found in a particular culture, genre, or style as in the Haitian folkloric material: bent or pliant knees, torso slightly inclined forward, undulating spine, isolations of one or more body parts, syncopated or polyrhythmic percussive movement

Danced Religion – where dance is used in the majority of worship or in a form of worship (i.e., liturgical dance)

Deity (*lwa*) – spiritual emissaries such as the saints in Catholicism; each deity has a specific function, ancestral connection, personality, rhythms, songs, dress, food and drink

Haiti – small country in the Caribbean (approximately 700 miles southeast of Florida) which shares the Western side of the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic

Ritual – a repeated sequence of events to celebrate or mark important life events generally in connection to religion (i.e., baptism, wedding, funeral, Catholic Feast Days or Saints Days)

Ibo step: a basic paddle step (in a loose third position, with the front foot flat and the back foot on the ball of the foot, the feet will make a rhythmic patten of flat-ball, flat-ball, flat-ball on the counts 1 +, 2 +, 3 + and so on).

‘zéapules – a quick shaking of the shoulders or shimmy

Umfundalai – a codified contemporary African technique founded by Kariamou Welsh designed to categorize African dance by movement characteristics

Dance Lesson Instruction Timing of each dance lesson section is determined by the teacher.

Introduction/Warmup

Management: Warm-up could be a short Dunham barre (presses into the barre, body rolls, heel press, attitude swings); Centre floor isolations, or Brain Dance.

Transition: Transition to progressing across the floor.

Teaching Processes: All steps below are performed as progressions across the dance floor, however if you are creating a movement study to be performed, you can combine the steps in any order.

Teaching Points or Cues: (technique or musical) Dunham technique and Haitian dance is generally performed in bare feet. However, based upon your classroom and teaching situation, you might need to adjust accordingly.

Exploratory Experiences (time)

Management: Most likely none.

Teaching Points or Cues: (technique or musical) Speak about the *Vaudoun* or *vaudou* as a bona fide religion in Haiti that has its roots in African religion as well as Catholicism. It is considered a “dance” religion in that the devotees perform dances for the deities or *lwa*. Each *lwa* have their own personality, characteristic, benevolent power, rhythms, songs, and dances that are performed during the religious ceremony.

New Material (time)

Management: Basic *Yanvalou*: 6/8 time

Feet – step-together-step forward in plié

Pelvis rolls forward, which reverberates through the entire spine (twice on the 6/8) each time you step forward. Feet will alternate each step-together-step.

Body is facing opposite wall in the direction one is moving.

Alternate 1: Still facing the direction one is traveling in and still using the step-together-step, torso is resting on the thighs in a deep demi plié. Both shoulders will roll backwards twice on the 6/8. Feet will alternate each 6/8.

You can add a pivot backward turn, pushing off the right foot four times, pivot back right, roll right shoulder only four times to two measures of 6/8.

Alternate 2: Torso will complete a full body-roll, initiated by the head dropping back, the chest leading forward until the chest rests on the thigh and then roll up, the head the last to arrive. Feet – step right in a deep demi pli   and then step-together for the 6/8. Take 6/8 to roll down with one step-together and one 6/8 to roll-up with one step-together. Body is facing flat to the front to progress sideways across the floor.

Alternate 3: Body is still facing flat to the front to progress sideways across the floor. In demi pli  , toes and heels will alternately come in and out (like the Charleston). Arms are in second position and move in a wave-like fashion as the torso contracts and releases.

Congo – girls hold edges of skirts; boys have fists on their hips.

The step is similar to the bachta (or push- step) from the Dominion Republic except you are falling (tomb  ) onto the front foot and allowing the back foot to come off the floor. Traveling to stage right, facing downstage, fall on to the right foot. As the left foot lifts off the floor the left hip will lift upward. Girls will flick their skirt upward, right hand, left hand (1 +, 2+, 3+, 4+). It can be done both directions.

Alternative 1: travel forward, with the same step, leading with right hip for four counts, and then change to the left hip for four counts. Both arms circle forward from low-back to front-middle, palms flexed, arms parallel for each four counts.

Alternate 2: girls hold edges of skirts; boys have fists on their hips

Jump out to parallel second, right , left (+ 1) knees soft, hip “bumps” (1, 2); Jump back to parallel first, right , left (+ 1) knees soft, hip “bumps” (1, 2); Torso lifts upward when the feet are out in second (sight hyperflexion or high release).

Alternative 3: girls hold edges of skirts; boys have fists on their hips.

Paddle turn    turn to right corner on 4 counts (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +) and then reverse    turn to left to end facing left corner. You can do    turn right,    turn left, and then full turn right. Reverse whole pattern to the left.

Torso is in a forward tilt and initiate the    turn by spiraling (rotation) the torso.

Ibo – the basic Ibo step is a paddle step (flat, ball, flat, ball) alternating flat on the right foot, ball on the left foot. Fists are on the hips. You can add shoulder movement, usually a shimmy or up and down (‘z  apules).

Alternative – paddle 4 times on the right; 4 times on the left.

A more complex Ibo step is similar to a Pas de Basque in Ballet, but performed from a parallel first. In pli  , step back on the right foot (about 6”), step forward on the left foot (about 6”), drag

the right foot back to parallel first. Counts + 1, 2. Repeat on the left. You can add shoulder movement ('zéapules).

Teaching Process: Let the spine undulate in a serpentine or wave like fashion. This dance is for the serpent deity and for the ocean deity.

You can have the students play both the male and female parts, facing one another, traveling the same direction.

You can have the students play both the male and female parts, facing one another, traveling the same direction, one facing backward and traveling back, one facing forward, and traveling forward. One will start in the out position (second) with the torso in hyperextension, and one will start in the in position (parallel first) with the torso in a forward tilt. The torsos will work in tandem, leaning forward and back over one another.

Teaching Points or Cues: *Yanvalou* is a serpentine dance that is performed in 6/8 rhythm for the deity, *Damballa*, the oldest and wisest deity to arrive from Africa. The Catholic iconography to represent him is that of St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland. It is also performed for Agwe, deity of the sea.

Congo is the dance performed for *Erzulie*, the deity of "Love." The Catholic saint she is associated with is the Virgin Mary. She wears white and pink, loves gold rings and champagne. She is much more human than the Virgin Mary and her dances are flirtatious.

Ibo and *Nago* are the dances performed for Ogun, God of war, iron, fire and thunder.

Recap of Learning and Cool Down (time)

Management: Review the name of the dance, the deity that it is associated with, and the characteristics of the deity that are demonstrated in the movement.

Teaching Points or Cues: Remind students that these are religious dance forms and that we should honor and respect the culture.

Closure and Assessment (time)

Management: The Umfundalai closing: step forward on left foot to a parallel forth position: right hand comes to the heart because it is still beating; right hand touches the earth because it provides the ground to dance on; right hand comes back to the heart because it is still beating; right hand reaches up to the heaven to thank the higher powers, ancestors, sky, or whatever you believe in for giving you the opportunity to dance; right hand comes back to the heart because it is still beating; right hand gestures to everyone in the class because you would not have the same shared experience without everyone in the room.

If you have live drummers, you would make a line and touch the ground before each drummer (Dobale).

You can do a general short cool-down, breathing in and out bringing the arms up over the head and then reverse; roll-down and hang, demi pli , roll-up; repeat.

In East Indian classic dance forms, it is described as Namaskaram, a greeting of respect or salutation. In Bharatanatyam, a short sequence of gestures and postures performed as a ritual of obeisance before and after dancing.

Assessment: See rubric and review for informal assessment or use the rubric for formal formative assessment.

Extensions (Interdisciplinary topics, special populations such as Gifted and Talented, Inclusion of individuals with disabilities)

There are many more *Yanvalou*, *Congo*, and *Ibo* steps. The students could research them on-line and bring them in. For more advanced students, more complex choreography may be given.

Lesson Reflection and Next Teaching Steps

It is difficult to describe non-Western dance forms in a language that is intended for Western dance forms. I believe the Dunham Technique may be the best way to describe and understand Haitian dance forms.

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