

## Make a Mini Dance

### Parent Guide

Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

#### SUMMARY

In this activity children will watch two very short videos online, then create their own mini dances.

#### WHY

This activity will get children thinking about the ways their bodies move. They will think about how movements can represent shapes, such as letters in a word.

#### TIME

- 10–20 minutes

#### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

#### GET READY

- Read *Ballet for Martha: Making Appalachian Spring* together. *Ballet for Martha* tells the story of three artists who worked together to make a treasured work of American art. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/dance/dance\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/dance/dance_reading.pdf)).
- Read the Step Back in Time sheets.

#### YOU NEED

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- *Ballet for Martha* book (*optional*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- ThinkAbout sheet (*attached*)
- Open space to move
- Video camera (*optional*)
- Computer with Internet and speakers/headphones

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/>.

## Make a Mini Dance

*Directions*, page 1 of 2

*For adults and kids to follow together.*

1. On May 11, 2011, the Internet search company Google celebrated Martha Graham's birthday with a special "Google Doodle," which spelled out G-o-o-g-l-e using a dancer's movements. Take a look at the video (<http://www.google.com/logos/2011/graham.html>).

**Tip** To find out more about Google Doodles, visit the Google Page "Doodle History" (<http://www.google.com/doodle4google/history.html>). You can also see all of the 700 doodles ever made at <http://www.google.com/logos>.

2. Watch the video again. This time, look for how each letter is made. Look at the movements that the dancer makes. Which body parts are used to make the letters? Add your notes to the ThinkAbout sheet.
3. Next, watch a video of a dancer from the Martha Graham Company as she performs each of the movements for the artist to draw (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxiFPsSl4fY>). Can you see which movements are which letters?
4. Now it's your turn to be the choreographer! Think of a word that you would like to represent through dance. It could be your name, just your initials, or another word you think would be interesting. Spell the word in the "It's Your Turn" area of the ThinkAbout sheet.
5. Use the ideas on the ThinkAbout sheet to help you create your dance. Then, practice a few times.

## Make a Mini Dance

*Directions, page 2 of 2*

6. Perform for an audience. Tell your family, friends, or classmates about what your dance spells, and then show them your dance.

**Tip** To make your dance even more expressive, consider planning your costume, music, or lighting.

To watch your dance in motion, ask one of your audience members to record it on a video camera.

7. (*optional*) If you are working on this project in a group, get the audience involved. After one child performs his/her dance, have other children try to copy the entire thing or a favorite movement from the dance. Also, consider asking students present, compare, and contrast their solutions for creating the same letters. For example, ask all of the students representing the letter “e” to perform one after the other.

For more activities about Martha Graham and performing arts, visit [OurStory: An American Story in Dance and Music](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/) (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/>).

## Make a Mini Dance

### *Step Back in Time*, page 1 of 2

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/>.

**M**artha Graham (1894-1991) was a dancer and **choreographer** who had a big impact on modern dance. She performed dance for over 60 years and **choreographed** more than 180 works. In fact, she was 75 years old when she danced in her last performance!

People did not always enjoy Miss Graham's dances, since she often told stories about people that weren't happy and her dances were more about telling stories than about being pretty to watch. But by the end of her career, many important people from around the world gave her awards.

For Martha Graham, dance was a way to share the feelings that have been a part of stories from many different cultures. Through her dances, she told stories about America, ancient Greece, and the Bible. But she tried not to tell these stories through **mime**, and instead focused on sharing the feelings of the characters. This idea of showing feelings through **abstract** shapes was important to many sculptors, painters, and other artists whose art is considered "modern."

Martha Graham's **collaboration** with other artists, such as sculptor Isamu Noguchi and composer Aaron Copland, showed her interest in using many kinds of art to tell a story, not just using one kind of art as a decoration for another.

Miss Graham was an especially important leader in modern dance because she made a way to describe her dance style so it could be taught to students. Many of the students she worked with became famous later on and many dancers still study her style today.



Martha Graham and her partner Erick Hawkins, posing in costume and on a set piece from *Appalachian Spring* [Library of Congress]

## Make a Mini Dance

*Step Back in Time, page 2 of 2*

Her dance style focused on the idea of breathing, with breathing in (contraction) and breathing out (release) as the two important opposites in the ways our bodies move. Her style is powerful, sharp, and sometimes sudden, instead of being soft and flowing like some dance.

She was also interested in American **folkdance** and traditional American Indian dances and used ideas from those dances to tell her stories. Miss Graham once said, "We must look to America to bring forth an art as powerful as America itself." At the same time Miss Graham was thinking about American traditions for her art, other artists were also inspired by the idea of using traditional American art styles and themes, with examples like Grandma Moses' paintings and musical theater by Rogers and Hammerstein.

These are some very simple ways of comparing ballet and modern dance.

	<b>Ballet</b>	<b>Modern Dance</b>
When?	Started around 1600s	Started around 1920s and 1930s
Where?	Mostly developed in Europe	Mostly developed in America
For Example?	<i>The Nutcracker</i>	<i>Appalachian Spring</i>

**Abstract:** using elements of form (as color, line, or texture) with little or no attempt at creating a realistic picture

**Choreography:** the art of arranging dances (A choreographer is an artist who arranges dances.)

**Collaboration:** working with others

**Folkdance:** a traditional dance that was started by common people from specific a region or country

**Mime:** acting out the movements and gestures used by a person in a specific situation or while doing a specific thing



## Make a Mini Dance

### ThinkAbout

Google Doodle

	Body part(s)	When does the dancer make the letter's shape?
G		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
o		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
o		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
g		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
l		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
e	head and shoulders	<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in motion

It's Your Turn!

	Body part(s)	When does the dancer make the letter's shape?
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input type="checkbox"/> in motion
		<input type="checkbox"/> frozen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in motion

*Body Parts: head, shoulders, arms, hands, legs, feet, back side, whole body*

- Even the dancer in the video didn't do all of the moves smoothly in a row. Don't worry if you need to take a little break in the middle to get your balance or start the next movement.
- If you're stuck on your dance, think about . . .
  - spelling backwards. The Google Doodle spelled G-o-o-g-l-e backwards, starting with the "e."
  - using lowercase or uppercase letters. Don't be afraid to mix them up!
  - the most interesting part about the letter. The Google Doodle just focused on the top part of the "e," and skipped the bottom part.
  - making two letters at the same time. The Google Doodle did both "o's" at the same time.

## Make a Mini Dance

### Teacher Guide

Read the “Directions” and “Parent Guide” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Identify and create abstract shapes (letters) using movement.
- Use kinesthetic awareness, concentration, and focus in performing movement skills.

#### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Accurately records the movements within the Google Doodle.
- Creatively plans the movements in his or her own dance.
- Performs dance with focus.

#### STANDARDS

##### *NCHS History Standards*

##### *K-4 Historical Thinking Standards*

- 2H. Draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings.

##### *National Standards for Arts Education (K-4)*

*Dance, Standard 1:* Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance

*Dance, Standard 2:* Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures

*Dance, Standard 3:* Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning

##### *21st-Century Skills*

##### *Learning and Innovation Skills*

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/>.