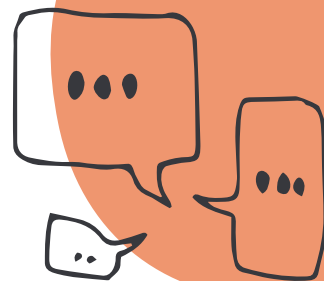# UNIT PLAN BRAINSTORM

Ghosts of Dancers Past (Dance, History)

All great dancers follow in the footsteps of those who came before them, literally! Get inspired by some iconic dancers to help kids create moves of their own. Some renowned dance pioneers (and a great place to start) are Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey and Bill Robinson. Once you and your kids have chosen a dance icon, visit a local library or find reputable online resources to research that dancer's biography and learn about who they were and what they stood for. For example, Alvin Ailey was a pioneer in modern dance who advocated for social justice, LGBTQ+ rights and racial equality. Next, take a look at videos and pictures to get a sense of their style, how they moved and what types of shapes they made with their body, especially noticing the styles and qualities they're known for. Choose three or four key elements that stand out to you, and have your kids replicate those movements. Then, invite your kids to put their own spin on those moves. Ask your class to create original choreography that connects the movements together to create a new, unique phrase. Afterwards, reflect on how the moves created—and actions taken—by these legendary choreographers inspire, live on and evolve throughout space and time.

The Dance Laboratory (Dance, Science)

The scientific method is a technique used to better understand the world around us, and so is dance! Take a page out of your science textbook and head into the dance laboratory by experimenting with all the different ways your group can move their bodies. First, review the different steps of the scientific method. Typically, this includes asking an essential question, crafting a hypothesis, experimenting, collecting data and sharing the results. Next, prompt each kid to think of a question they have about movement, knowing they'll be answering it not with equations, but with dance! This could be something literal like: *How many spins can I do?* or *What's the slowest I can move my elbow?* or something imaginative: *What would it look like if a 12-foot-tall praying mantis tried to dance tango?* Once kids have their questions, ask if they can think of a hypothesis, or proposed answer, and challenge them to express it through a dance phrase. Ask them to experiment with their "dance hypothesis," using different movement qualities, like speed, levels, weight, etc. After each experiment, prompt your kids to collect data by seeing how the steps felt in their bodies and if they need to add, edit or alter their dance phrase at all to better answer their question. Once everyone has finished experimenting and fine-tuning their dance phrase, end the unit by having each class share their "findings." Make sure kids not only present their dance work, but share how their choreographic process in the "lab" bubbled to fruition!

Dancing Through Life (Dance, History, Social Studies)

Let's do the time warp! Pick an era in history that your kids are curious about, knowing that you'll create a dance piece that explores your findings. From Ancient Greece to the Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age, as a class, research your chosen historical era. Investigate with prompts like: *What was the world like back then? What problems were people facing and how were they trying to solve them?* and *How was society similar to or different from today?* Once you feel that you've gathered enough information, task your kids with physicalizing this era in history. You may prompt your class to think symbolically, creating movement based on how people at the time might have felt, or literally, looking at a historical photo and embodying what they see. Your kids may even want to look up videos that show how people walked, talked and dressed. To culminate, use your movements to create a dance routine representative of the historic era you chose. For bonus points, perform your scene to another class or teacher and ask them to guess which era they thought it was and why!

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