

Dance: *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman

The student will:

1. understand the following components of dance:
 - a.) elements, including body, action (non-locomotor/axial and locomotor), space (shape, level, direction, size pathway, relationship)
 - e.) choreographic structures, such as theme and variation
5. express and communicate ideas using the components of dance
7. make and explain artistic choices in creating and performing dance

Classroom Level Learning Goals:

1. use the elements of body, action, and space to express and communicate images from a cutting of *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman
2. use the choreographic structure of theme and variation to create a sequence of movements that communicate and express selected images from a cutting of *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman
3. explain artistic choices in creating and performing the sequence of movements to express selected images from a cutting of *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman

Dance Perform: *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman

The Students will:

5. Select a shape (circle, square, triangle) and working alone or in pairs make selected shape using whole and body parts to practice elements of dance including body, action and space
6. Use ***Dance Elements Worksheet*** to identify elements they used in the shape activity
7. Work with partner to identify prior knowledge about Walt Whitman, his historical context and writing using ***Context and Content*** sheet; share information in large group and add new information to context notes

Select

The Students will:

4. Listen and read along as a cutting about grass from the poem, ***Song of Myself*** is read aloud. List metaphorical images of grass on ***Context and Content*** sheet
5. Use the ***Context and Content*** Sheet and work with 2 or 3 other people. Select one person to read the cutting aloud again and listeners identify additional metaphorical images of grass they hear on the second reading. Share lists of images.
6. Use the ***Grass and Death Small Group Discussion Sheet*** to focus an analysis of the cutting.

Analyze

In small groups the Students will:

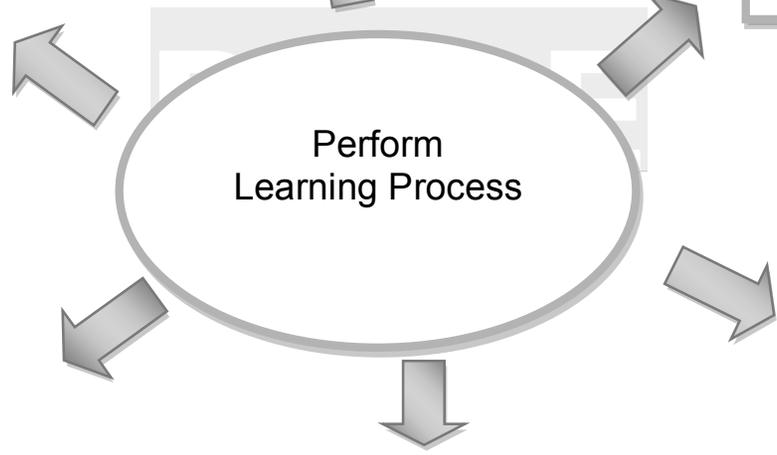
7. Select images to interpret in movement and create a reoccurring movement to tie the images together using the ***Generating a Sequence of Movements*** sheet.
8. Record artistic decisions as they create their sequence of movements on the ***Artistic Choices Recording Sheet***.
9. Using the ***Generating a Sequence of Movements*** sheet, determine mood/tone changes and turning point in the sequence of movements based on the pattern established in the cutting of ***Song of Myself*** or some other structure

Interpret

In small groups the Students will:

8. rehearse and finalize movement sequence using the directions on ***Generating a Sequence of Movements*** sheet
9. decide to use lines of poem or music to accompany performance. If a reader is selected, coach the reader on appropriate interpretation and rate of speed for reading of lines to correspond to movements of the performance
10. identify the most significant artistic choices from ***Artistic Choices Recording Sheet*** to share with audience immediately after performance

Rehearse/Evaluate/Refine



The Students will:

15. share responses to each group's performance when all groups have completed performing
16. groups may respond to questions and share what they believe was a strength about their performance or interpretation and why how it was an interpretation and translation of Whitman's images

Reflect/Refine

In small groups the Students will:

13. perform sequence of movements for large group and share most significant artistic choices and why they were significant
14. generate responses to each performance they watch using the ***Performance Viewing Response Sheet***.

Present/Perform

Dance Elements Worksheet

Directions: With your partner discuss and circle the elements you used in the shape activity you just completed.

Body:

Body Parts: head, face (ears, eyes, eyelashes, eyebrows, nose, tongue, cheeks, forehead, chin) neck, shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, fingers, ribcage, torso, hips, thighs, knees, calves, ankles, feet, toes

Action:

Non-locomotor/axial: stretch, twist, bend, circle or rotate, rise, fall, swing, sway, shake, suspend, collapse, tip, spin, turn in place, rock

Locomotor (steps): walk, run, hop, skip, jump, leap, roll, slide, crawl, cartwheel, dive

Space:

Shape: rounded, flat, twisted, angles, horizontal, vertical, variations on symmetry and asymmetry

Level: high, middle, low

Direction: Forward, backward, sideways, turning, diagonally, up, down

Size and dimension: big, little, narrow, wide, short, long

Pathway (air and floor): curved, straight, angled

Relationship: above, below, beside, far, near, behind, in front of, toward, away from

Walt Whitman *Song of Myself*
Context and Content Sheet

Context (Prior Knowledge):

- 1. When was Whitman writing and what do you know about him?**

(Share at least one piece of information you know about Whitman to help establish common knowledge in the group concerning Whitman's life and work.)

Content:

- 2. A.) Whitman uses grass metaphors to create images (mind pictures). List as of many of the metaphorical images of grass as you can remember from hearing the poem read aloud the first time.**

B.) Read the poem aloud in a small group of four people and identify as many grass metaphorical images in the cutting as you can.

From Song of Myself **by** Walt Whitman

A child said *What is the grass?* Fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see
and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon
Out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken
soon out of their laps.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait
at the end to arrest it,
All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier.

"Kanuck"—French Canadian; "Tuckahoe"—tidewater Virginian who eats tuckahoe, a brown fungus; "Cuff"—a black person

Generating a Sequence of Movements

You may want to use these steps as a guide to creating movement to interpret Whitman's poem or you may want to create the movements through an organic, group process.

Important: remember to record you group's artistic choices as you work through these steps or any organic process your group uses to complete the ASSIGNMENT AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE.

1. Return to **Context and Content Sheet** and individually select the metaphorical images of grass that speak most eloquently to you personally.
2. Share your selections within your small group. Your group may want to begin to explore movements around some of the images at this point. Use your **Dance Elements Sheet** to remind the group of possible movements using **Body, Action and Space to represent or interpret the images**. At some point in this process (probably within the next two steps) your group will need to select 3 or 4 images which you will interpret in movement. Experiment with translating an image more effectively by changing the **body** shapes and use of whole or parts of the body. Also experiment with different types of **action** and use of **space** to see how the changes create different moods/tones. Experimenting may help you build the theme and variations you need in the next steps.
3. Whitman uses reoccurring images and references to grass to tie the poem together but with many variations. Experiment with and develop a reoccurring movement(s) your group can use to tie together the various images you are interpreting in movement.
4. Do you want your series of images to "turn" as Whitman's poem does? What mood or tone are you trying to communicate? Do you want your dance to follow Whitman's pattern for mood/tone? What mood/tone do you want to end your series of movements? What choices from the **Dance Elements Sheet** will help to express changes in tone/mood in movement?
5. Finalize the movements your group will use to communicate your interpretation of selected images of Whitman's poem. Determine the movements you will use to tie your images together. Continue to practice as time allows.
6. Decide if you want someone to read lines from the poem or if you want to have musical accompaniment.
7. **YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** Create a sequence of movements using the choreographic structure of theme and variation to communicate an interpretation of selected images from the cutting of Walt Whitman's **Song of Myself**. Select at least two SIGNIFICANT artistic choices from a list your group records and explain why those choices were significant when your performance is completed.

Artistic Choices Recording Sheet

Use this sheet to track and record the artistic choices your group makes as you work through the process of creating a sequence of movements using the cutting from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*. This sheet should help you decide which choices were most significant had the most impact on determining the shape of your final performance.

The choices we made and why (you may use the reverse side if you make more than 12 choices):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.



Performance Viewing Response Sheet

(Use this sheet to take notes for each performance you watch so you can respond orally at the end of each performance.)

1. The performance of your interpretation & translation of Walt Whitman's Song of Myself cutting reminds me of the images and tone/mood of the poem because:

First performance:

Second performance:

Third performance:

2. One strength in the performance was:

First performance:

Second performance:



Third performance:

3. One question I have about the performance or the artistic choices that went into creating the performance is:

First performance:

Second performance:

Third performance:

Instructor Directions for Select Activity for Dance Elements:

Ask participants to choose shape: circle, square or triangle:

Make and share these shapes with your partner:

1. Make smallest shape you can with any part(s) of your body.
2. Use a different part of your body to make another small shape.
3. Make a larger shape using your whole body.
4. Work with your partner and using both bodies make the largest shape possible.
5. With your partner or individually make your shape close to the floor.
6. With your partner or individually make your shape far away from the floor as possible.
7. Lie on the floor and make your shape facing the ceiling.
8. With your partner or individually make your shape on a pathway across the floor
9. With your partner or individually make your shape on a pathway across the floor backward or sideways.
10. With your partner make your shape using whole bodies side by side, in front and behind each other.