

Integrating Chinese Dance into

# Social Studies and Humanities Curriculum

**Grade Levels:** 5 – 8

**Duration:** Five weeks, 3 days per week.

**Ohio Dance Standards:**

***Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts:***

Students understand dance forms and styles from a diverse range of cultural environments of past and present society. They know the contributions of significant choreographers, dancers and dance organizations to dance heritage. Students analyze the philosophical beliefs, social systems, and movement norms that influence the function and role of dance in the lives of people.

Benchmark A: Perform and describe the dances from various cultures and historical periods with emphasis on cultures addressed in social studies.

Benchmark B: Explain the social and historical contexts that influence the development of dance in a culture.

Benchmark C: Explain a recognized contributor to dance, (e.g. choreographer, dancer, or educator) and trace the development of the individual's work to its historical and cultural influences.

***Creative Expression and Communication:***

Students create, interpret and perform dances to demonstrate understanding of choreographic principles, processes and structures. They understand how to use dance and movement to express ideas and to make meaning of their world.

Benchmark A: Perform basic body movements, body positions and spatial patterns from one or more dance forms, styles or traditions.

Benchmark C: Perform a full dance for a peer audience that demonstrates artistic expressions and performance skill.

***Analyzing and Responding:***

Students express orally, and in writing, their interpretations and evaluations of dances they observe and perform. They understand and use the vocabulary of art (dance) criticism to discuss their responses to a variety of dance forms and styles.

Benchmark B: Analyze how dance elements are used to convey concepts or themes in dance performances.

***Valuing the Arts (Aesthetic Reflection):***

Students inquire about the nature and experience of dance in their lives. They reflect on the significance and value of dances they observe and perform. Students present points of view about dance and respond thoughtfully to others' point of view.

Benchmark B: Demonstrate reasoning skills when engaging in inquiry about dance.

**Lesson Purpose:**

In this lesson, students learn introductory history and cultural purposes of selected Chinese classical and folk dances. Specifically, students analyze the philosophical beliefs, social systems, and movement norms that influence the function and role of Chinese dance in the lives of its people. Students learn and perform dances representative of national and regional traditions, past and present. Students deepen their understanding of how Chinese classical and folk dance makes meaning and expresses ideas in the lives of its people.

**Essential Questions:**

1. What are functions, forms and styles of Chinese dance?
2. What are the characteristics of Chinese classical and folk dance?
3. Why is Chinese classical and folk dance taught and performed?
4. How does Chinese classical and folk dance reflect the beliefs and lives of its people?
5. Why learn Chinese classical and folk dance?

**Materials:**

Journals, pens, pencils, colored pencils; paper maché, newspaper, cardboard, red, black, white, yellow, green, paint, fur, pom-poms, gold, silver, red, green and yellow ribbon; computers for Internet research of Chinese classical and folk dance, music CDs and DVDs of selected Chinese classical and folk dances, props including long sleeves, swords, ribbons, fans, and umbrellas; Chinese classical and folk dance instructional DVDs found on the Internet, e.g., Chinese

Children's Dance, Cheuk Yi-Ting Nationalities Dance, Children's Folk Dance: Drum Girls  
Children's Dance from Hai-Wa Dance Group, Dance Performance Xiao He Feng Cai, Double  
Fans Fitness Dance

Mulan Scurff: Double Fans, Teaching Chinese Children's Dances

[http://www.chinesetapes.com/chinese\\_dance/](http://www.chinesetapes.com/chinese_dance/)

### **Lesson Activities:**

## **Session One: Introduction and Orientation to Chinese Dance: Classical, Folk, Ballet, and Contemporary**

1. Through class discussion, ask: What do you already know about Chinese dance? Write responses on chart paper for all to see and refer to through the lesson.

2. Show short video/DVD clips on a wide range of Chinese dance. Include examples of classical/court, folk, ethnic, minority, ballet and contemporary modern and hip hop.

3. Engage a second discussion with the class, ask: What else can we add to our chart to show

what we now know about Chinese dance? Record the responses on a second chart paper. 4. Place both lists next to one another and ask, Who gets to dance? What kinds of dance?

Why? Why not? Where do the dances take place? How do you learn the dances? Who

teaches the dances? What do the dances mean to the Chinese people? Why are they

important to learn? Chinese people? Us?

4. Tell students to maintain journals throughout the lesson.

5. Ask students to record the information gathered on the charts in their journals.

## **Session Two: Brief History of Chinese Dance**

1. 5,000 years old

2. Closely linked to and reflective of life experience and concerns. For example, Chinese ballets often about nationalism and depict varying wars and struggles of its peoples in varying time periods and dynasties; Chinese modern dance reflects the Tiananmen

Square massacre; The Tibetan Rice dance is learned by children in preparation for going on to another level of dance.

3. May be viewed from four (4) distinct strands:
  - a. Ceremonial: For praying to the gods for bountiful harvests
  - b. Dramatic: for reporting and commemorating historical events
  - c. Martial: for demonstrating fight techniques
  - d. Agricultural: for celebrating nature and work.
4. In China, like the United States, is a nation of many different nationalities. Each has its own

history, language and tradition. Each nationality maintains its own distinct customs and style of dress. The Han make up the majority of China's population. Some of the larger groups are the Mongols, the Dai and the Miao.

5. In old China, dancers belonged to the slave class and their chief function was to perform in the courts for royalty and the nobles.
6. During the Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.), the famous Silk Road was often traveled by Indians, Persians and others who came to trade silk.
7. Buddhism thus found its way to China and had an enormous impact on Chinese culture.
8. The *Flying Apsara*, a minor deity, plays music and is pictured in many murals from this period. The unique poses of the dancers represented on these murals influenced Chinese classical dance. e.g. Lotus hands, long sleeve dances, walking/running from outside to whole foot and breath are characteristics of this genre of dance.

### **Sessions Three and Four: Classical or Court Dance – Movement Classes**

9. Purpose and History

10. Use of breath, movement sequences- characteristics: lotus hands, eye focus, breathing into the movements, long sleeve dance technique, walking then running on outsides of feet; leaping, jumping, poses from wall murals of the Tang Dynasty.

11. Sequencing of movement patterns based on this genre of dance.
12. Practice.
13. Share.
14. Discuss.
15. Write in journals.

### **Sessions Five, Six and Seven: Folk Dance – Movement Class**

16. Purpose and History

17. Use of props: Fans, umbrellas, scarves, and ribbons.

18. Learn a Chinese Ribbon Dance.

19. Learn a Chinese Folk dance with scarves.

20. Learn a Chinese folk dance with fans.

21. Practice each dance for style and accuracy.

22. Share dances with one another.

23. Discuss the dances and the performance of the dances.

24. Write in journals.

### **Sessions Eight, Nine and Ten: Making the Lion and Dragon Dance costumes.**

25. Purpose of History of these two dances.

26. Make both heads from paper Mache, cardboard and newspaper.

27. Paint and adorn with fur, pom-poms etc. Use red, green, yellow, gold, silver paint. Green is the main color to symbolize great harvest; yellow to symbolize the solemn empire, gold or silver to symbolize prosperity; red to symbolize excitement. Make the "pearl", a round ball to tease the dragon...

28. Make the body covering: Lion Dance (solo or duets) and Dragon Dance (group) up to 46 different sections.

### **Sessions Eleven and Twelve: Recreational Dances – The Lion Dance and The Dragon Dance**

29. Purpose and History

30. Learn The Lion Dance

31. Learn the Dragon Dance:

Dragon symbolizes the emperors of ancient China. Dragon is also the emblem of Imperial

Authority. Dragon gives people a feeling of great respect. It symbolizes supernatural power, goodness fertility, vigilance and dignity.

Today it symbolizes the bringing of good luck and prosperity in the year to come for all the human beings on earth.

32. This dance was learned while learning martial arts during the Chun Chiu Period In their spare time, martial artists learned the dragon dance to provide more encouragement.

Specific movement vocabulary and patterns of movement for the Dragon Dance include:

Cloud Cave, Whirlpool, Tai Chi pattern. Threading the money, looking for pearl, dragon

vomiting the pearl, dragon encircle the pillar, etc.

The movement, chasing the pearl, shows that the dragon is continually in the pursuit of wisdom.

33. Record facts in journal.

### **Sessions Thirteen and Fourteen: Martial Arts— Kung Fu Movement Classes**

Purpose: Preparation for Military

Use of Breath

34. Introduce four to five basic Kung Fu movements with name and explanation of movement form.

35. Practice sequence for accurately bodily knowledge and execution of style.

36. Coordinate breath.

37. Maintain journal. Prompt: How is kung fu different from the various Chinese dance forms you studied to date?

### **Sessions Fifteen and Sixteen: Marital Arts – Tai Chi Movement Class**

38. Introduce four to six basic Tai Chi movements with name and purpose of movement form.

39. Practice sequence for accurate bodily knowledge and execute of style.

40. Coordinate breath.

41. Maintain journal. Prompt: Why would you want to study both movement forms?

### **Sessions Seventeen through Twenty: Prepare Final Presentation**

42. Practice and or prepare final presentation.

Be sure to practice the oral portion of the presentation for fluidity and engaging delivery style.

### **Session Twenty-One: Final Project Sharing**

43. Provide time for presentation set up and practice.

44. Share final presentations.

45. Assess according to criteria previous set up in rubric. (This varies and dependent on grade level and desired learning outcome).
46. Reflect on your experience with this project and think about the learning that took place. In the journal, write your thoughts.
47. Now formalize your reflections into a written paper of no less than 3 typed, 12 –14 font pages. Be sure to write in full sentences and paragraphs. Use standard grammar including but not limited to- verb tense, capitalization and punctuation.

Writing Tips: Respond to the overarching purpose of this study– to learn about the history and cultural purposes of selected Chinese classical and folk dances; to analyze the philosophical beliefs, social systems, and movement norms that influence the function and role of Chinese dance in the lives of its people; to learn and perform dances representative of national and regional traditions, past and present and deepen his/her understanding of how Chinese classical and folk dance makes making and expresses ideas in the lives of its people.

- What is the purpose of Chinese classical and folk dance to its people?
- What are the characteristics of Chinese classical and folk dance?
- How does Chinese classical and folk dance reflect the beliefs and lives of its

people?