The Nutcracker

Animal Costume Social Narrative

When I watch The Nutcracker, I may see toys come to life and dancing animals.

Dancers use costumes and movement to tell the story.

Some dancers wear masks or costume heads that cover their faces.

Even when I can't see the dancer's face, I can remember there is a person inside the costume.



Houston Ballet performers in Stanton Welch's The Nutcracker.
Photo by Amitava Sarkar.

The Joker

At the very beginning of Act I, I may see Clara playing with dolls that come to life.
I can look for the Joker and Teddy. The Joker's mask covers part of the dancer's face.



Joker mask off



Joker mask on

Teddy

Teddy is one of Clara's dolls.

A dancer puts on a bear costume to play Teddy.



Teddy bear costume head off



Teddy bear costume head on

The Dancing Dolls

At the party in Act I, I may see more toys come to life.

The Dancing Dolls perform for the children and families at the party.

Here I can see the dancers' faces as they hold their doll costume heads.









Dancers holding their doll costume heads

The Monkey

This dancer plays the monkey.

I can see the dancer's face when the costume head is off.

When the costume head is on, the dancer can still see, hear, move, and dance.



Costume head off



Costume head on

The Rat King and the Rats

In Act I, I may see dancers dressed as the Rat King and other rats.

They act out a battle with the Nutcracker.

I can see part of the dancers' faces under the rat masks.







Houston Ballet performers in Stanton Welch's The Nutcracker. Photos by Alana Campbell.

The Snow Penguin

I may see the Snow Penguin with the Snow Queen.

The beak is part of the costume head.

When the dancer puts it on, it covers their face.



Costume head off



Costume head on

The Polar Bear Guard

I may see the Polar Bear Guard with the Snow Queen.

In Act II, polar bears come with the Russian Ambassadors, who bring gifts to the Kingdom of Sweets.

The big nose and teeth are part of the costume.



Costume head off



Costume head on

The Royal Cat Guards

In Act II, I may see the Royal Cat Guards holding candy canes in the Kingdom of Sweets.

The dancers wear cat costume heads like masks.

I can see their eyes through the openings.



Costume head off



Costume head on

Onstage in the Kingdom of Sweets

In Act II, I can look for the Royal Cat Guards with their candy canes.

I may also see dancers dressed as a frog or as bees.







Bees in the Kingdom of Sweets

Houston Ballet performers in Stanton Welch's The Nutcracker. Left photo by Amitava Sarkar. Right photos by Alana Campbell.

What I Can Do During the Show

Some costumes might surprise me.

I might feel curious, worried, or scared.

It is okay to feel that way.

I can remember

I will see other animal characters during the show. Even when I can't see their faces, I can remember that there are dancers inside the costumes.
They can still see, hear, and dance.

I can look away

I can look at my lap or let the person with me know how I feel.

I can take a break

I can step out with the person who came with me. We can come back when I am ready.