

Swan Lake

Ballet Talk/Behind The Scenes

TEKS &
Learning Outcomes



Artists of Houston Ballet
in Stanton Welch's *Swan Lake*.
Photo by Amitava Sarkar (2023)



HoustonBallet

Learning Outcomes

Students will explore how *Swan Lake* uses movement, music, character, and design to communicate a story about choice, consequence, love, deception, and transformation.

Students will consider how ballet can communicate **ideas and emotions without spoken words**, and how choreographers, dancers, musicians, designers, and performers work together to create meaning.



Artists of Houston Ballet
in Stanton Welch's *Swan Lake*.
Photo by Amitava Sarkar (2023)

TEKS ALIGNMENT & LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Kindergarten–Grade 2

Focus: Discovering Story Through Movement

Current TEKS	Learning Connection	Examples & Learning Opportunities
ELA & Reading 110.2–110.4 Listening, speaking, discussing, and responding to stories	Students listen to and discuss the story of Swan Lake, identifying characters, setting, events, and feelings.	Retell the story using beginning, middle, and end. Identify Odette, Siegfried, Odile, and Rothbart. Describe how a character feels using words, pictures, or movement.
Fine Arts – Music 117.103, 117.106, 117.109 Responding to music through movement and identifying musical characteristics	Students experience how Tchaikovsky's music helps communicate mood, character, and action.	Move to music that sounds soft, strong, slow, or fast. Identify how the music makes them feel. Notice when music changes during the story.
Fine Arts – Theatre 117.104, 117.107, 117.110 Character, movement, expression, and dramatic play	Students observe how dancers communicate characters and emotions without spoken dialogue.	Use facial expressions, gestures, poses, or movement to show a character's feelings. Create a frozen picture of a scene from the ballet.
Fine Arts – Art 117.102, 117.105, 117.108 Responding to and creating visual representations	Students observe how costumes, scenery, and color help establish characters and setting.	Draw a swan, character, costume, or setting from the ballet. Identify colors or visual details that create a particular mood.
Fine Arts – Audience & Response	Students practice observing, responding to, and reflecting on a live performance.	Identify a favorite moment. Share what they noticed about the dancers, music, costumes, or scenery. Demonstrate respectful audience behavior.

Students discover that a story can be communicated through **movement, music, expression, and design—even without words.**

TEKS ALIGNMENT & LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Grades 3–5

Focus: Exploring Meaning & Artistic Choices

Current TEKS	Learning Connection	Examples & Learning Opportunities
ELA & Reading §110.5–§110.7 Comprehension, response, characterization, theme, and text evidence	Students analyze Swan Lake as a story and use details from the performance to explain characters, events, and themes.	Sequence major events. Describe character motivations and relationships. Identify themes such as trust, deception, love, and choice. Support an idea with an example from the performance.
Fine Arts – Music §117.112, §117.115, §117.118 Musical elements, expression, and response	Students explore how music contributes to the emotional world of the ballet.	Compare musical moments that feel joyful, mysterious, threatening, or sad. Describe how tempo, dynamics, or instrumentation affect a scene.
Fine Arts – Theatre §117.113, §117.116, §117.119 Characterization, dramatic action, and expressive movement	Students examine how dancers communicate character, relationships, and conflict without dialogue.	Compare Odette and Odile. Identify how gesture, posture, facial expression, or movement quality reveals character.
Fine Arts – Art §117.111, §117.114, §117.117 Visual elements, design, and artistic response	Students investigate how costumes, scenery, lighting, and visual design establish setting, mood, and character.	Observe light/dark, color, shape, line, and costume. Explain how a design choice changes the feeling of a scene.
Social Studies / Culture §113.14–§113.16 Culture, historical context, and the ways people create and share traditions	Students consider ballet as a cultural art form and explore how stories can be interpreted and retold through different artistic traditions.	Discuss how Swan Lake has been performed, adapted, and reinterpreted. Explore how artists from different times and places can tell a familiar story in new ways.

Students explore how **artistic choices** help an audience understand characters, emotions, relationships, and story.

TEKS ALIGNMENT & LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Grades 6–8

Focus: Analyzing Performance & Production

Current TEKS	Learning Connection	Examples & Learning Opportunities
Dance – §117.205–§117.207 Perception, creative expression, historical/cultural relevance, and critical evaluation	Students analyze how dancers use movement elements, choreographic structure, and performance choices to communicate meaning.	Identify movement qualities, patterns, formations, levels, and spatial relationships. Analyze how choreography communicates character, emotion, conflict, or relationships.
ELA & Reading §110.22–§110.24 Analysis, interpretation, evidence, and response	Students interpret Swan Lake as a complex narrative and support their ideas with evidence from the performance.	Analyze character motivations. Explain how a specific scene develops a theme. Compare interpretations of Odette and Odile using evidence.
Fine Arts – Music §117.208–§117.210 Musical elements, performance, response, and connections	Students examine how Tchaikovsky's score interacts with choreography to create mood, tension, and meaning.	Identify moments where music and movement reinforce or contrast one another. Explain how changes in musical qualities affect interpretation.
Fine Arts – Theatre §117.211–§117.213 Characterization, dramatic structure, and theatrical elements	Students examine how dancers communicate conflict, relationships, and character without spoken language.	Analyze gesture, pantomime, expression, and physical relationships between characters. Identify how conflict is communicated through performance.
Fine Arts – Production / Design	Students investigate how production elements work together to create the world of Swan Lake.	Examine how costume, scenery, lighting, and props establish setting, distinguish characters, and create mood.
Social Studies / Culture §113.18–§113.20 Culture, historical context, and connections across societies	Students consider ballet within its cultural and historical context and explore how artistic works change across time.	Research the origins of Swan Lake. Discuss how different productions may emphasize different themes, characters, or cultural perspectives.

Students analyze how **choreography, performance, music, and production design work together** to communicate character, conflict, and meaning.

TEKS ALIGNMENT & LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Grades 9–12

FOCUS: Critiquing Artistry & Cultural Impact

Current TEKS	Learning Connection	Examples & Learning Opportunities
Dance – §117.306–§117.309 Creative expression, choreography, historical/cultural relevance, and critical evaluation	Students critically evaluate how choreographic and performance choices construct meaning and influence audience interpretation.	Analyze choreographic structure, movement vocabulary, dynamics, spatial relationships, and performance quality. Evaluate how effectively movement communicates an artistic intention.
ELA & Reading §110.36–§110.39 Analysis, interpretation, argument, and evidence	Students develop and defend interpretations of Swan Lake using specific evidence from the performance.	Construct a critical response or argument about a character, theme, choreographic choice, or interpretation. Compare different interpretations of the ballet.
Fine Arts – Music §117.302–§117.305 / Music course TEKS Musical analysis, interpretation, and artistic response	Students analyze how Tchaikovsky's score functions as an essential storytelling partner to choreography.	Evaluate how tempo, dynamics, orchestration, recurring musical ideas, and contrast shape the audience's understanding of a scene or character.
Fine Arts – Theatre §117.302–§117.305 / Theatre course TEKS Characterization, dramatic structure, design, and critique	Students examine Swan Lake as a theatrical work in which movement, performance, and design construct a narrative world.	Evaluate how characterization, conflict, symbolism, staging, and design contribute to the overall interpretation.
Cultural / Historical Context	Students investigate how Swan Lake reflects its historical origins while continuing to be reinterpreted by artists and companies today.	Explore the ballet's historical context, adaptations, and evolving interpretations. Consider how changing artistic choices can alter the meaning of a familiar story.
Artistic Critique & Response	Students develop informed opinions about artistic effectiveness and communicate those opinions using evidence and appropriate vocabulary.	Write or discuss a critical response evaluating choreography, performance, music, design, or interpretation. Defend an artistic judgment with specific observations.

Students critically examine how **artistic choices, historical context, and interpretation** shape the meaning and impact of a ballet.