

Lesson Plan for The Nutcracker Ballet

Discussion:

Tell students that the Nutcracker Ballet is now an annual holiday event in communities across the country. Ask whether any child has ever seen the ballet performed or whether they know anyone who has danced in a performance.

Read:

Read the “Tale of The Nutcracker and the History of the Ballet” from page 2. Ask if anyone has ever had a dream. Can they remember their dream?

Listen and Participate:

Using a CD, play a portion of The Waltz of the Flowers from Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite. Have the children close their eyes and listen carefully to the music. Then ask them to move their hands in time to the music.

Dance and Pretend:

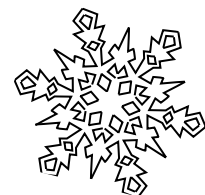
Play portions of the music again and have the children move around the room pretending that they are flowers. Show them a basic waltz step as they move in time to the music. Encourage them to twirl and hold their arms out like ballet dancers.

Make a Craft:

Have each class member make a Miniature Pine Cone Tree and decorate it as described on page 3. If available, arrange small figures to represent the nutcracker and the sugar plum fairy or family members around the tree.

Reflect:

Ask what the children liked best about the music. Ask if they would sometime like to dance in a ballet troop if there is a performance of the Nutcracker Ballet in your area.





The Tale of *The Nutcracker* and the History of the Ballet

The tale of the Nutcracker was the source for a ballet set to Tchaikovsky's music in 1892. A short version of the ballet was first performed in the United States in 1940, but the full version, the one so familiar to millions of Americans, was first staged in 1954. It is now an annual holiday event in communities across the country.

The Nutcracker Ballet tells the story of a little girl named Clara who, at her family's annual Christmas Eve party, is given a doll, a prince, by her beloved godfather, Drosselmeier. The doll is made from a nutcracker and Clara loves it so much that after everyone has gone to bed, she sneaks back down to the Christmas tree to look at it. She falls asleep and begins to dream.

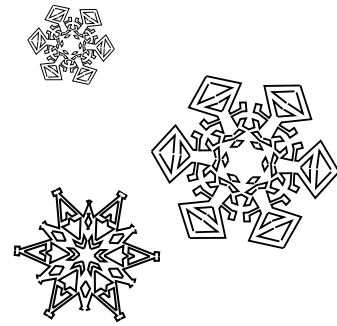
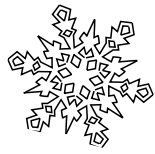
In her dream she finds her Prince, the Nutcracker, who comes to save her from an army of mice and their King, who tries to kidnap her to his kingdom. The Mouse King nearly defeats the Nutcracker, but at the last moment Clara throws her shoe at the Mouse King and that is the end of him. The Nutcracker Prince then leads Clara off

to visit his palace. On the way they pass first through the magical land of the Snow Queen and her Snowflakes, and then the Land of Sweets, where they are met by the Sugar Plum Fairy, who stages a series of dances for them, ending with the Waltz of the Flowers.

But all wonderful dreams must end, and Clara awakens under her Christmas tree on Christmas morning surrounded by friends and family.

Miniature Pine Cone Tree above:
Instructions and materials list is on page 3.

Nutcracker and Sugar Plum Fairy Dolls:
Instructions and a list of materials for making the clothespin dolls is published by FunLessonPlans.com in the e-booklet, *Winter Wonder Theme Week*



How to Make the Miniature Pine Cone Tree for Nutcracker and Sugar Plum Fairy Dolls



Tree: Fill a 1-1/2" lid from a large juice bottle with modeling clay of the kind that never dries. Turn a pine cone upside down and stick it firmly upright into the modeling clay.

Decorations: Squeeze white glue out and allow it to grow tacky. Use a toothpick to put glue on the tips of the pine cone. Add sparkly beads and sequins, or sprinkle with glitter.

Frosting: Pine Cone Trees can also be frosted with a mixture of aerosol shaving cream and white glue mixed in equal parts. The mixture will dry with a smooth glossy finish.

Dolls: If available, arrange small figures to represent the nutcracker and the sugar plum fairy or family members around the tree.

Materials for Tree: Pine cones, lids, modeling clay, glue, toothpicks, beads, glitter, or aerosol shaving cream mixed with white glue.

