

Artsource

The Music Center's Study Guide
to the Performing Arts

TRADITIONAL

CLASSICAL

CONTEMPORARY

EXPERIMENTAL

MULTI-MEDIA

ARTISTIC PROCESSES

1. CREATING (Cr)

2. PERFORMING, PRESENTING, PRODUCING (Pr)

3. RESPONDING (Re)

4. CONNECTING (Cn)

TRANSFORMATION

ENDURING
VALUESFREEDOM &
OPPRESSIONTHE POWER
OF NATURETHE HUMAN
FAMILY

Title of Work:

Lamentation - Performed by Janet Eilber

Satyric Festival Song - Performed by Janet Eilber

Creator:

Choreographer: Martha Graham 1894-1991

Background Information:

Martha Graham was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1894. When she was four years old, her father caught her lying. "Don't you know when you do something like this I always know? No matter what you say, you reveal yourself --- you make fists, your back gets very straight, you shuffle your feet, your eyelids drop. Movement does not lie." Her father's response carried an important message for Martha. She invented a new way of communicating through the body, by expressing emotion through dance. Martha was first exposed to dance at the age of fourteen when her family moved to Santa Barbara, California, in 1908. There, she saw a highly elaborate pageant performed by the legendary Ruth St. Denis. Graham developed into a popular and highly paid performer, but what she really wanted was to forge a new approach to dance. Her vision inspired a uniquely expressive dance form. Out of her artistry, an original technique evolved enabling her to train dancers to perform her work. Upon seeing a canvas by the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky that featured a splash of red against a field of blue, she said, "I will dance like that." Graham gave a landmark performance on April 18, 1926, with her own dance company, but her pieces were not always well received. She was said to be "violent, distorted, oppressive, and obscure." Despite, or perhaps because of, the controversy she generated, Martha Graham continued to choreograph great dances and train dancers for more than seventy years.

About the Artwork:

During the years 1926-30, Martha composed over sixty new dances. One of the most haunting pieces she created during this time was *Lamentation*. Inspired by sculpture, it represents the essence of grief. The dancer is encased in a tube of stretch jersey, with only her hands, feet, and face visible. The movement is created through the changing forms of the costume manipulated by the knees, legs, head and arms underneath. *Satyric Festival Song* displays the opposite emotions from those in *Lamentation*, expressing laughter, teasing wit and self-mocking humor. The idea came from the clowns of American Pueblo Indians who mocked their own sacred rituals. In the same way, Graham uses *Satyric Festival Song* to make fun of her own serious works.

Creative Process of the Artist or Culture:

When an inventor starts to do something new, it is a matter of experiment and perseverance. The essence of Graham's material included psychology, emotion, and physical aesthetics. Graham based her movement system on the contraction, or folding in of the torso that happens when you sob or laugh. Movement originated in the torso and progressed outward to the extremities.



Photo: Chris Alexander

"The instrument through which the dance speaks is also the instrument through which life is lived . . . the human body."

Martha Graham



Discussion Questions:

After the video has been viewed:

Lamentation:

- What were your thoughts about this dance?
- How do the movements represent sadness or grief?
- How does the dancer manipulate the costume to make the different shapes?
- What emotions do you feel as you watch the dance?

Satyric Festival Song:

- Do you see movements that represent laughter? What movements do you do when you laugh?
- Describe some moments in the dance that you thought were funny.

Compare both dances:

- In which dance does the dancer relate to the audience and in which one is she in a world of her own?

Multidisciplinary Options:

- Have the class look up the word ‘pioneer.’ What does it mean to be a ‘pioneer?’ In what way is Graham a ‘pioneer?’
- What is language? How did it start and then develop into standard forms throughout many cultures and peoples? What other forms of language are there other than verbal? Describe similarities in Graham’s development of a new language for dance.

Audio-Visual Materials:

- *Artsource*® video excerpts: *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song*, introduced and performed by Janet Eilber. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Dance Foundation with permission from the Martha Graham Center for Contemporary Dance. *Lamentation* footage from "Weeping Women in Dance" concert (1994). *Satyric Festival Song* from "Heart of Woman" concert (1996).
- These lessons have been produced with permission and approval of the Martha Graham Center for Contemporary Dance. Music for *Lamentation*: “Klavierstuecke, Op. 3 #2 by Zoltan Kodaly. Music for *Satyric Festival Song*: “Minuta Perversa” by Fernando Palacios.

Additional References:

- Graham, Martha. *Blood Memory*. Doubleday. New York. 1991.
- De Mille, Agnes. *Martha*. Vintage Books. New York. 1991.

Sample Experiences:

Level I

- Take an everyday object. Wrap it in fabric and use the expressive qualities of the fabric to magnify, accent or transform its shape and perhaps its function.
- Look for geometric shapes and the kinds of opposing “pulls” of energy that Graham uses in her work. Create geometric shapes alone and with a partner with “pulls.”
- * • Make a simple sequence of four movements, such as walk, turn, fall and rise. Do these same movements feeling sad and then happy.

Level II

- Make a new musical score for *Lamentation*. Turn down the sound on the video. Watch *Lamentation* in segments. Using musical and found instruments, drums or voice, create sounds that the movement inspires. Record these sounds. Play back the recording with the video.
- Explore at least four different types of laughs you have heard. Try to interpret each one without sound, using different types of movement. Become aware of the energy and tension they produce in your body.
- * • Sit in a comfortable position and concentrate on your own breathing. As you inhale open your arms outward and as you exhale close your arms across your chest. Try to match the breath rhythm to the movement. After you have explored the contraction and release movements that happen with breathing, make a dance based on closing and opening movements aligned with breath.

Level III

- Play the video of *Lamentation* in a series of short sequences. Watch a short segment (10-20 seconds). Stop the video. Write words or phrases that come to mind based on what you saw conveyed in the movement. Repeat until you reach the end of the dance. Use these words and phrases to write a poem or a short story.
- * • *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song* were created by Graham to represent the essence of grief and laughter. The performer in *Lamentation* dances her inner thoughts, unaware of the audience. In *Satyric Festival Song* she connects to the audience. Write one poem as if you were speaking to the audience. Write the other poem as if you were speaking to yourself, reflecting your own private thoughts. Make up dances, gestures or body movements to illustrate your poems.

- * Indicates sample lessons

EMOTIONS EXPRESSED THROUGH DANCE

THE HUMAN FAMILY

LEVEL I Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Emotions are a universal aspect of being human. Through our emotions we express sadness, fear, anger, boredom, jealousy, excitement and happiness. A healthy individual is able to express the full gamut of human emotions. Although emotions are very personal, there are universal body postures and energies that accompany them. When people hide their emotions, it is usually because they feel that it is unsafe to express them or that they must control them.



Martha Graham in 'Heretic' (1929)

Photo: Soichi Sunami

Once, after seeing the dance *Lamentation*, a woman came to Martha Graham backstage, weeping bitterly. Some months before the woman had witnessed her child killed by a car. She had been unable to shed a tear. *Lamentation* released the terrible restraints she had placed upon herself to remain strong and not cry. "I realized," she told Martha, "that grief was a dignified and valid emotion and that I could yield to it without shame."

This lesson is a simple one that allows students to express different emotions in a safe environment and helps them understand that the body responds in different ways to different emotions. Emotions impact the way we use time, space and energy. For example, when people feel happy they may use lots of space, move quickly in time and jump up and down with lots of energy. When they feel sad, they usually use a small amount of space, move slowly in time and have little energy.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Express the emotions of sadness and happiness through movement, gesture and postures. (Connecting & Creating & Performing)
- Explore individual ways of moving to express these emotions as they perform a simple walk, turn, fall and rise. (Connecting & Creating & Performing)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (Responding & Connecting)

MATERIALS:

- *Artsource*® video excerpts of *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song*.
- Drum or percussion instrument. Music is optional.

PROGRESSION:

- Have the class sit in a small, informal group. Ask the students to do a word web on emotions. Ask them to list all the emotions they can think of. Highlight the emotions of sadness or grief and happiness or humor.
 - View the video excerpt of *Lamentation* and discuss the emotions that students think were being expressed. Ask them to give movement clues, gestures or reasons why they felt a particular emotion was being expressed. Discuss their responses to the fabric of the costume and how it was used. (See “Discussion Questions” on page 2.)
 - Have the students show the emotion of ‘sadness’ in their faces, backs, hands and whole body as they are sitting. Ask them to show the specific emotion in a sitting shape, changing shapes slowly several times, exploring different ways to feel and to express the emotion.
 - Ask students to stand up and walk showing the emotion of ‘sadness.’ Ask them about the speed they are using (slow), the weight of their bodies (heavy), the way their feet are moving (dragging) and where their focus is (down or inward). After they have explored walking, have them try turning and also moving from standing to sitting.
 - After they have explored sadness. Have them view the video of *Satyric Festival Song*. Ask them to tell the emotions they felt were being expressed. Encourage them to give reasons why and to describe how the dancer moved and how the costume influenced what was communicated.
 - Again, have them show the feeling of humor and laughter in their faces, hands, backs and feet. Encourage them to find different shapes that capture the emotions expressed by the dancer. Ask them to change their shapes quickly, one to another, and to freeze each one.
 - Explore each emotion by combining four basic movements together in a sequence. Use walking, turning, descending and rising. Say each word, giving students about 4-8 counts to explore ways that they can express each emotion within the limitations of each movement. Example: sad - walking sadly, descending sadly, rising sadly and ending in a ‘sad shape.’ Repeat the sequence two or three times so they can really explore the emotional states as they perform the movements.
 - Do the same idea with feeling happy and humorous - walking happily, turning happily, descending happily and rising happily, finally freezing in a ‘happy shape.’ Repeat the sequence several times. Have half the class perform and half of the class observe. Have observers discuss what they saw. Switch roles.
- Task:** Select the emotion of sadness or humor and laughter and create four movements to express the feeling. Repeat your sequence.

Suggested Criteria for Dance:

- Clear focus
- Emotion clearly expressed
- Four different movements or shapes
- Smooth transitions
- Clear beginning, middle and end

EXTENSIONS:

- Explore other emotions such as fear, jealousy, rage, turmoil or excitement using the above ideas. Think of other movement words and develop a new sequence of ideas.
- Think of a simple story that is about a character that is sad and becomes happy or vice versa.

VOCABULARY: emotions, lamentation, shapes

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Describe the ways you moved your body when you were expressing sadness, then happiness.

DISCUSS: Discuss the type of energy or tension you felt in your body when you were motivated by sadness and then by happiness.

ANALYZE: Discuss the differences you observed in others when they moved in a sad way and then in a happy way. What did you notice about the way they used space, time and energy?

CONNECT: Discuss other emotions and when someone might feel them (loneliness, jealousy, fear, anger).

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking

THE BREATH EMPOWERS MOVEMENT

THE HUMAN FAMILY

LEVEL II Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Martha Graham believed that all emotion and movement start in the torso. She felt that where there is breath, there is life. The muscles in the diaphragm - the ones used in laughing or crying were used by Graham to initiate gesture. It has been said that in her early technique, an intake of breath could be seen at the back of the theater.

She would ask her students to say “sssssssss” as they let out the whole breath. Then she would ask them to find out what the other parts of the body did during this exhalation - what do your shoulders do? Your hips? Your spine? Her movements all began in the center of the body with a spasm of breath and progressed to the movement in the extremities.

In her book, *Martha*, Agnes de Mille refers to Graham’s 1974 speech: “... the body can do two things, breathe in and breathe out and this involves the whole body.” Ms. De Mille goes on to say that “Martha used breath for dynamics, certainly, but also for rhythm. She never would permit her dancers to count their music, insisting rather that they move on breath rhythm and inner pulse.” She called these breath movements *contraction and release*.



Satyric Festival Song
Choreography by Martha Graham
Performed by Janet Eilber
Photo: Yumiko Norikane

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Discuss how breathing in different ways makes them feel. (**Connecting**)
- Demonstrate their awareness and understanding of the coordination of the breath with movement by designing a dance study based on opening movements (inhale) and closing movements (exhale). (**Creating & Performing & Responding & Connecting**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Responding & Connecting**)

MATERIALS:

- *Artsource*® video excerpts of *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song*.
- Drum or percussion instrument. Music is optional.

PROGRESSION:

- Have the class sit in a small, informal group. Ask the students to breathe in slowly through their noses and out very slowly through their noses or mouths. Have them place their hands on their ribcage. As they breathe in, ask them to try to expand their ribcage and as they breathe out to contract their ribcage. Practice this several times, first with the eyes open and then with the eyes closed. Also, ask them to be aware that when they breathe out fully, their abdominal (stomach) muscles will contract or tighten.
- To feel the deep contraction of their abdominal muscles, have students do some of the following exercises:
 - Breathe in (inhale) four counts and out (exhale) eight counts. Do this several times.
 - Breathe in deeply and then count only the exhale, trying to make it last for ten full counts. Do this several times.
 - Breathe in deeply and open both arms out to the side in the same timing as the breath. As they breathe out, have them close their arms in the same 'breath timing' as they exhale
- View the video excerpts of *Lamentation* or *Satyric Festival Song*. Ask them to pay particular attention to the dancer's movements that open and close (expand and contract). Watch for movements that look like sobbing or laughing and think about how these movements are related to the dancer's breathing.
- Use the questions on page 2 of the unit to help increase each person's perception of how breath and movement work together and to help them make connections to their own breath and movement.
- Direct them to explore different ways to let their breath **initiate** the movement that opens their arms and full body. Ask them to try it slowly, then quickly, and finally to combine slow breathing with quick breathing. For example:
 - Breathe in slowly (4-8 counts) and open the body outward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe out slowly (4-8 counts) and close the body inward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe in quickly (2 counts) and open the body outward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe out quickly (1-2 counts) and close the body inward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe in slowly (4-8 counts) and open the body outward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe out quickly (1-2 counts) and close the body inward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe in quickly (1-2 counts) and open the body outward to match the rhythm of the breath.
 - Breathe out slowly (4-8 counts) and close the body inward to match the rhythm of the breath.
- Discuss with the students what they experienced in the above exercises and how breathing in and out in different ways made them feel.
- Direct students to explore four different ways of opening and closing with breath. Encourage them to change level, add turns, travel through space and to vary the rhythm of their breathing including holding their breath and movement for a couple of counts.
- Have half the class observe the other half performing their ideas, then switch roles.
- Divide the class into small groups of four to five people. Give them the following task:

Task and Criteria for the Dance:

Create a dance that shows three to five different ways to open and close.

Have a clear beginning, middle and end.

Show at least one change of level.

Have at least one idea that travels through space.

Vary the timing (tempo) of the ideas.

Work to let the breath begin the movement.

Work cooperatively with your group to achieve unity.

- After they have had about ten to fifteen minutes to work, have each group perform their idea or several groups show their work at once, while others watch. Discuss what the observers saw and what they liked about the dances.

EXTENSIONS:

- Working with a partner, have one person lead simple movements of lifting and dropping or opening and closing while the other person tries to follow both the breathing rhythm and the movement.
- Study animals and observe how they breathe. For example, dogs pant, fish may hover while moving their gills, etc.

VOCABULARY: breath, inhale and exhale, contraction and release

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Describe what you observed about the breath and how it affected the movements of the dancer in the dance you viewed on video.

DISCUSS: Discuss what you learned by being more aware of your breath and how you can control it in different ways.

ANALYZE: Discuss the differences between moving without working to coordinate the breath with your movement and working to have the breath start the impulse for the movement.

CONNECT: Think of other jobs, sports or activities where proper breathing is essential. (scuba diving, swimming, yoga, running, mountain climbing, etc.)

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

THE HUMAN FAMILY

LEVEL III Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

“We read to know that we are not alone.”

C. S. Lewis.

Artists often share their private thoughts and emotions in order for others to know that the human experience is both personal and universal. There are artistic works that entertain and there are artistic works that are intended to make us think about our own personal experiences. *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song* were created by Graham to represent the essence of grief and laughter. The performer in *Lamentation* dances her inner thoughts, unaware of the audience. In *Satyric Festival Song* she connects to the audience.



OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Identify when a performer is projecting outwardly to an audience or is letting an audience see him or her express inward, private emotions. (Responding & Connecting)
- Identify the difference between a performance piece that speaks directly to an audience and one that reflects private thoughts. (Responding & Connecting)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (Responding & Connecting)

MATERIALS:

- Artsource® video excerpts of *Lamentation* and *Satyric Festival Song*.
- Pencil and/or drawing utensils and paper.

PROGRESSION:

- Write two concepts on the board -- “Inner World” (private) and “Outer World” (public). Have the class brainstorm emotions and experiences that connect to each world.

Lamentation,
Choreography by Martha Graham
Performed by Janet Eilber
Photo: Max Waldman®

Example:

Private/Inner World

Reading to yourself
Playing a game by yourself
Writing a poem
Humming to yourself
Having a 'time out'

Public/Outer World

Reading a story out loud to others
Being at a birthday party
Performing in a play
Singing for an audience
Playing a game with friends

- Have students sit down quietly and think of their own inner worlds. Ask them to write down words or phrases that reflect emotions or experiences that they wanted to keep to themselves (Private/Inner World). Then, ask them to cup their hands in front of their mouth and whisper all the words they have written on their paper, as well as others that come to mind.
- Ask students to stand or sit up tall. Instruct them to think of words or phrases that reflect emotions or experiences they wanted to share with others (Public/Outer World). Write them down. As a class, stand up and everyone say those words out loud at the same time. Briefly ask them to discuss the differences.
- Have students think of a time when they wanted to be alone and write or draw a picture about it.
- Have students think of a time when they had a good time being, or sharing, with others. Write or draw a picture about it.
- Have students discuss what they learned about their inner (private) and outer (public) worlds.
- Give students the following assignment:

Task #1 Write two poems

Write two short poems, one that speaks to an audience and the other poem as if you were speaking to yourself, reflecting your own inner, private thoughts.

Criteria:

Each poem must reflect clearly either an inner or outer experience (world), not both.

Incorporate words and phrases that were spoken earlier. Other people should be able to recognize which is being represented.

Use adjectives that describe how you felt when you were whispering words from your inner world.

Use adjectives that describe how you felt when you were saying your phrases out loud in the outer world.

EXTENSIONS:

Task #2

- In small groups, select one poem to dance. Exaggerating body language, create a dance study that illustrates either an inner, private world or a outer, public world. Remember that an inner world is one that expresses private feelings or activities and is danced with little awareness of the audience. A dance that illustrates an outer world is one in which the performers connect directly to the audience.

Criteria:

Maintain focus and concentration.
Exaggerate 'body language' movements.
Show at least three different body shapes or movements.
Use at least one change of level.
Show changes in tension or energy.
Have a clear beginning, middle and end.

- Have each group perform their poem. The audience must recognize which 'world' the dance is representing.

VOCABULARY: public, private, inner, outer

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Describe your body language when you were whispering your "inner poem." Describe your body language when you were reciting your "outer poem."

DISCUSS: Discuss the differences between a private world and a public world.

ANALYZE: Discuss which character in the two dances you viewed was portraying a private world and which was relating to the audience in a public way.

CONNECT: Think of stories that you have read that reflect an inner world and ones that reflect an outer world. (e.g. "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening," by Robert Frost represents an inner world poem and "Casey at the Bat" represents an outer world.)

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking