Dancing Storytellers
Indian Mythology and Me

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE
Bharata Natyam is one of several forms of Indian Classical Dance and is highlighted in the video. The dance style was traditionally a solo dance form performed by women, either within the temple precincts as a part of the daily ritual or in courts as entertainment for kings and courtiers. The roots of the word Bharata in Bharata Natyam are bhavam, which means expression and ragam, meaning music, Thalam means rhythm and natyam means dance. The dance form has two main components: Nritta, or “pure dance” and Nritya, or “expressive dance.” The coming together of both the technical aspects of dancing (nritta) and the expressive aspects of dancing (nritya) create Natya which is the full performance of dance, theater and music.

In most solo performances, Bharata Natyam involves many split characters that are depicted by the dancer. The dancer will take on numerous characters by switching roles, creating a storyline that can be easily followed by the skill of one individual performer.

THINK ABOUT IT
If you could meet one of the characters from the story, which character would you choose? Why?
If you could ask them anything, what would it be? What do you think their answer might be?
How do you use gestures to communicate in your everyday life?
Show examples like waving hello, pointing, etc.

DIG DEEPER
To experience another storytelling duo that incorporates movement with elements of music, rhythmic dialogue, poses, and comic facial gestures, check out The Music Center’s Artsource Curriculum, “Eth-Noh-Tec.”
www.musiccenter.org/education/Teacher-Resources/Artsource-Curriculum/Available-ArtSource-Units/Eth-Noh-Tec/

TRY THIS CHALLENGE
Define “gesture” and then explore everyday hand gestures. Collect these gestures (such as the sign for “okay,” or “thumbs up,” or “stop,” “come here,” or “I don’t know”). Compare these to the gestures you learned in the video. Explore how the Indian dance mudras (gestures) could also have been created out of everyday gestures and then stylized for performance.