

STUDY GUIDE

DISCIPLINE:
DANCE

ARTIST:
STUTI MUKHERJEE

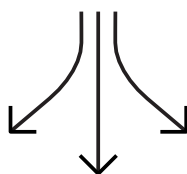


The following package is provided as a supplemental resource to enhance and support the artist’s visit.

It includes curricular connections, assessment strategies, and suggested classroom extensions. All materials are intended for use at the teacher’s discretion and may be adapted as necessary to suit the specific needs of the students.

THIS STUDY GUIDE

Discipline / Artist Example:



**Curriculum
Connections**



Suggested Classroom Extensions



**Assessment
Strategies**

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STUDY GUIDE: DANCE

INDIAN DANCE PERFORMANCE: BHARATANATYAM

Program Overview

Artist Name: Stuti Mukherjee

Artist Bio: Stuti is a Bharatanatyam artist based in Ottawa with rigorous training since age 5. She earned her Diploma from Kalamandalam, Kolkata, and further trained under Guru Amarnath Ghosh in Chennai. Stuti also studied Kuchipudi and Nattuvangam. She runs Kalagriha School of Performing Arts in Kanata, teaching Bharatanatyam to children, youth, and adults in the South-Asian community.

Program Description: Bharatanatyam is a primary Indian classical dance form that originated in southern India. This dance form is noted for its remarkable facial expressions, rhythmic footwork in squatted legs, and, most importantly, postures highlighting ancient Indian sculptures found in temples, transporting the audience to India's history and rich culture. Through every dance performance, Stuti will narrate mythological stories revealing India's culture, traditions and rich heritage through this beautiful dance form- "Bharatanatyam."

Artistic Discipline: Dance

Recommended Grade Levels: K - 12



Session Logistics: In person or online

Cultural Context: South Asian Culture

Vocab bank/glossary: [Click here](#)



INDIAN DANCE PERFORMANCE: BHARATANATYAM

Curriculum Connections

Learning Themes:

- Strand A – Creating and Presenting
 - Learn and apply basic to advanced movement vocabulary (adavus, mudras, posture).
 - Experiment with choreographic choices while respecting traditional structure.
 - Developing stage presence and performance confidence.
- Strand B – Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing
 - Observe and describe gestures, expressions, and movements.
 - Identify how music, rhythm, and staging support meaning.
 - Compare performances and discuss artistic intent.
- Strand C: Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts
 - Recognize the role of the Natya Shastra in shaping dance elements.
 - Explore costume, music and cultural symbolism.
 - Examine the role of diaspora and cultural preservation in contemporary performance.

INDIAN DANCE PERFORMANCE: BHARATANATYAM

Extend the Learning (Discussion Prompts)

Here are optional discussion prompts to extend the artist session in the classroom. These are recommended and are not mandatory. Please use what is best for your classroom. You can also find suggested activities in the additional resources package.

GRADES K-3

Pre

- Where do you think this dance comes from?
- What do you think the dance will look like?

During

- What do you notice about the costume and jewellery?
- What movement reminds you of something in real life?

Post

- How is this dance different from others you've seen?
- What part made you smile or feel curious?

GRADES 4-6

Pre

- What clues do costumes give you about the story?
- Why do you think people danced like this in temples?

During

- How do the dancer's gestures help you understand the story?
- What do you hear in the music that matches the movement?

Post

- Which moment told the story the clearest?
- Why is it important to share this dance in Canada today?

GRADES
7-8

Pre

- What do you already know about Indian classical dance?
- How does music help you follow the dance?

During

- How has Bharatanatyam changed over time?
- How does expression (abhinaya) change the meaning of a movement?

Post

- How can learning this dance help preserve culture?
- What would you tell the dancer they did well?

GRADES
9-12

Pre

- How might migration influence traditional dance?
- How might cultural background affect how we interpret a performance?

During

- How does Bharatanatyam in Canada differ from in India?
- How do staging and costume affect the meaning of a piece?

Post

- How can Bharatanatyam be used as a tool for cultural dialogue or social commentary?
- How can you evaluate Bharatanatyam using its own traditions instead of Western criteria?

DANCE OVERVIEW

Dance is a powerful form of cultural expression that celebrates diversity, fosters connection, and supports healing. By exploring various dance forms, students build empathy, challenge stereotypes, and gain global awareness. Dance promotes physical literacy and mental well-being through movement, creativity, and emotional release.

The creative and critical analysis process helps students generate, refine, interpret movement, encourage collaboration, resilience, and emotional intelligence. When used to complement artist-led sessions, these frameworks guide students to become thoughtful creators, reflective learners, and active participants in building a more just and connected world.

Dance also supports cross-curricular learning. It brings stories to life in language arts, explores cultural traditions in social studies, and connects to science through anatomy and body mechanics. These interdisciplinary links highlight the dynamic role of dance in education and deepen student engagement across subjects.



APPENDIX

Vocabulary bank/glossary:

- **Adavu:** A basic step or movement sequence in Bharatanatyam that combines footwork, posture, and hand gestures.
- **Abhinaya:** The art of expression in Indian classical dance, using face, eyes, and body to convey emotion and story.
- **Mudra:** A symbolic hand gesture used to represent objects, emotions, animals, or ideas.
- **Rasa:** The “flavour” or emotional essence that a performance aims to evoke in the audience (e.g., joy, anger, devotion).
- **Tala:** The rhythmic cycle or beat pattern that guides the dancer and musicians.
- **Nritta:** Pure dance movements that focus on rhythm and technique, without storytelling.
- **Nritya:** Expressive dance that combines movement with abhinaya to tell a story.
- **Natyam:** Dance-drama performance combining nritta, nritya, and abhinaya.
- **Kauthuvam:** A traditional invocatory dance item, often in praise of a deity.
- **Varnam:** A central piece in a Bharatanatyam performance that blends pure dance and storytelling.
- **Jathi:** A rhythmic sequence performed with footwork, often in between storytelling sections.
- **Nattuvangam:** The practice of keeping rhythm with cymbals while reciting dance syllables (spoken by the dance master).
- **Araimandi:** The half-sitting posture that is the foundational stance of Bharatanatyam.
- **Alarippu:** The opening dance item in a performance, meant to warm up and symbolically “blossom” the dancer.
- **Carnatic Music:** The classical music tradition of South India, which accompanies Bharatanatyam.
- **Salangai / Ghungroo:** Anklet bells worn by dancers to emphasize footwork rhythms.

- **Banī:** A stylistic school or lineage of Bharatanatyam, each with unique interpretation and movement qualities.
- **Navarasas:** The nine main emotions in Indian performance tradition: love, laughter, compassion, anger, courage, fear, disgust, wonder, and peace.

Student Health and Well-Being

How did today's activity make you feel (body and mind)?

- Choose a colour to describe that feeling. Use one word to describe how your energy changed after the activity.

Mini-Activity: Feelings Freeze Frame (Tableau)

- Ask students to create a freeze-frame (tableau) that shows how they're feeling right after the activity.
- Then, they can:
 - Share it with a partner or small group
 - Draw their freeze-frame in a journal
 - Write or talk about what made them feel that way

Additional Resources

- Assessment Guide
- Cultural Protocol/Sensitivity Guide
- Evaluation Document
- Resource Database for Further Learning