



# Telling Stories Through Movement

**Grade Level:**

6th–12th Grade (adaptable)

**Duration:**

One class period (45–60 min), expandable to two days

**Dance Genre Focus:**

Creative Movement / Modern / Contemporary Foundations

**Essential Understanding:**

Dance can be used to express stories, emotions, and ideas. Through gesture, rhythm, and choreography, students will explore how movement communicates meaning.

**TEKS Alignment – Middle School Dance (Fine Arts 117.212–117.214):***Foundations: Interpersonal and Social Development*

- (1)(B) Demonstrate kinesthetic awareness and proper use of body
- (2)(A) Demonstrate appropriate movement combinations using elements of dance: body, space, time, and energy
- (3)(C) Express ideas and emotions through movement

*Creative Expression: Performance and Production*

- (4)(B) Create movement based on original ideas, themes, or stories
- (5)(A) Create and perform original phrases or dances

*Historical and Cultural Relevance*

- (6)(A) Identify the historical and cultural significance of dance
- (6)(B) Perform and reflect on dances from various cultures and eras

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

- Learn and apply foundational movement elements
- Use a written story excerpt as inspiration for choreography
- Collaboratively create and perform a short original dance phrase
- Reflect on how movement can tell a story or convey an idea

### **Materials Needed:**

- Short printed or projected excerpt from *Magnolia Flower* by Zora Neale Hurston (children's version recommended)
- Open space for movement
- Optional: Journal or writing materials for reflection

### **Lesson Sequence:**

#### **1. Opening Prompt (5–10 min)**

- Written or verbal response:  
 “What kinds of stories can be told without using words?”  
 “Have you ever danced something that felt like a memory or idea?”

#### **2. Warm-Up (10 min)**

- Breath work and grounded movement
- Gentle isolations and gesture-based movement (reach, open, circle, contract)
- Emphasis on repetition and emotional intention

#### **3. Across-the-Floor Movement (10–15 min)**

Phrase 1:

- Traveling step with level change (e.g., chasse with arm sweep, lunge with upper body curve)  
Phrase 2:
- Rhythmic walking pattern or directional turns using weight shift and pause  
Focus on weight, tempo, and spatial awareness

#### **4. Choreography Prompt: “Blooming Through Resistance” (15–20 min)**

- Read or summarize a short excerpt from *Magnolia Flower*  
Suggested line: “*She bloomed while others were still trying to break through the soil.*”
- In groups of 3–4, students will:
  - Use 3 movement elements learned in class
  - Add 1 gesture inspired by the story’s imagery or emotion
  - Consider using space, tempo, repetition, and shape

#### **5. Group Share and Reflection (10 min)**

- Each group performs their short phrase
- Audience responds to prompts:  
“What story or feeling did you sense?”  
“What was a moment that stood out?”

#### **6. Personal Reflection or Exit Ticket (5–10 min)**

- Written or verbal:  
“How did movement help you express something from the story?”  
“What did you learn about choreography today?”

#### **Assessment:**

- Participation in group work and movement exercises
- Creative use of movement tools (gesture, repetition, space, tempo)
- Thoughtful engagement in performance and reflection

**Extensions / Adaptations:**

- Use a different short story or poem as inspiration
- Invite students to choose a personal story or memory for solo work
- Connect movement to visual or spoken word projects
- Build toward a class showcase of story-based pieces