

Kaitlyn Hardiman | Session 4:

Diggin' Up the Roots: Irish Dance (Lecture)

List of Required Supplies:

- Screen for PowerPoint/videos
- Sound for videos
- Students computers or worksheets
- Pencils (if using worksheets)

Additional Links :

PowerPoint example:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAE7Sez9bkc/Q1djzoXELLhpG2qaa3NcsA/edit?utm_content=DAE7Sez9bkc&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

Space/Facility Requirements: Tables and chairs would be ideal for this lesson plan, but students can also sit on floor during lecture if in dance room

Student Time Required: 45 minutes

Step-by-step Instructions:

1. Before this class students should know/be able to:
 - a. Explain and understand what social dance is
2. Introduction to Lesson 4: [Diggin' up the Roots, Irish Dance](#)
 - a. Ask the class to reflect and answer: What role did Irish dance play in the creation of tap?
 - i. Guided answer: Irish indentured servants worked alongside the enslaved African people, and they began learning each other's cultural traditions. Irish step dancing was the specific Irish form of dance that influenced tap dance.
 - b. Ask the class to share what they know: What do you think Irish dance is?

- i. Answer: Irish is a traditional dance form that can be done as a soloist or in groups. In today's era, this dance form is used for social dance, for competitions, and in performance.
- c. Origin of Irish Dance:
 - i. Irish dance dates back to 500 B.C. when the Celts/Druids moved to what we now Ireland.
 - ii. The Druids were an educated and religious group who used their dancing as a form of religious worship and for ceremonies.
- d. Show an example of Irish dance (about 2 minutes)
 - i. Observations: After the video is finished, have the class discuss the following:
 - 1. What types of body movement did you see? (Consider the elements of dance.)
 - 2. How was their body positioned?
 - 3. How was their body alignment different from what we learned about African dance?
- e. Movement quality:
 - i. Irish dance is usually done with high energy and is performed at a lifted, high level.
 - ii. Upper body remains straight with arms usually straight by the dancer's side.
 - iii. Leg movements are rapid and foot movements are very quick with rhythmic precision.
 - iv. Uniformity and formations are a key component when dancing in groups
 - v. It is said that there are three thoughts as to why Irish dance is performed with a stiff upper body:
 - 1. It was a way to prove to other countries that the people of Ireland were dignified and worthy of respect.
 - 2. The places that they would dance in would be small and crowded, leaving no room for arm movements.

3. Dancing was prohibited in their country at a time when it was being invaded, as a tactic to eliminate Irish culture. The only way Irish people could preserve their culture was to continue to dance but only using their feet. That way, when people looked in their windows, it would not give the appearance of dancing.
 - a. Ask and reflect:
 - i. What other culture turned to dance as a way to preserve their cultural heritage?
 - ii. In what ways were the African and Irish cultures' attempts to preserve their heritage through dance the same? In what ways were they different?
 - f. Irish dance attire:
 - i. There are two types of shoes worn in Irish dance—soft shoes and hard shoes.
 1. Soft shoes
 - a. In Irish soft shoe dance, women wear ghillies, which are leather shoes with laces. Some would compare these shoes to ballet shoes.
 - b. Men will traditionally wear a reel shoe, which are also made of leather, but includes a heel to let the dancer click for effect. Some would say these shoes resemble modern jazz shoes.
 - c. Show a 1-2 minute of an example of an Irish soft shoe dance.
 2. Hard shoes
 - a. Irish hard shoe dance is performed in heavier shoes, often called jig shoes or heavies. These were traditionally made of leather and wood in the toe and heel to help dancers produce loud, tapping sounds.

iv. Watch:

1. Watch another 1-2 minute example of Irish dance and have students identify the strains of when dancers begin a phrase on their right and then repeat on the left.

v. Instruments:

1. Identify the different types of instruments used in Irish dance
 - a. Bodhran
 - i. A Bodhran is a shallow Irish drum that can be played with a two-headed drumstick. The drummer has their hand on the inside of the drumhead to control the pitch.
 - b. Tin whistle
 - i. A small, flute-like instrument that has six finger holes to control pitch and is made of metal.
 - c. Flute
 - i. Similar to the modern flute but is made of wood.
 - d. Harp
 - i. A stringed instrument that is played by plucking with the fingers.
 - e. Fiddle
 - i. A bowed string instrument, also known as a violin. The term fiddle is used more in folk music.
 - f. Uilleann pipes
 - i. A traditional Irish form of bagpipes.
2. Watch a video example of Irish instrumentation and answer the following questions as a class:

- a. How is the music in Irish dance different than that played in African dance?
 - b. Describe how each instrument is played differently. How are the drums in Irish played differently than what was seen in African?
 - c. Count the beats of the music out loud as a class. Afterwards, describe the rhythm. How was this rhythm different than what you experienced during African?
- h. Exit ticket: Have the students answer the following on their own before the end of class:
- i. Describe isometric and strains in Irish music. How does that translate into their dancing?
 - ii. What do the movements of Irish dance reflect?
 - iii. What is the movement quality of Irish dance?
 - iv. Describe the role that the instruments play in this dance form.
 - v. Describe the clothing the dancers wear.