

1. Your Name/Cooperating Teacher's Name: Alyssa Casamassa

Grade/Age/Level of Students: 9th-11th/14-16/Intermediate

Lesson # 2 of 6

Student Helpers (IF APPLICABLE): N/A

2.LESSON TITLE: Ballet & Cultural Expression: Día de los Muertos

DATE: 2/13/26

UNIT OF STUDY: Ballet Technique & Performance

Main Theme of Unit: Applying ballet technique to choreograph and perform a themed dance piece

3. MAIN THEME OF LESSON: *Using ballet technique to express cultural meaning and emotion in a Día de los Muertos–inspired dance*

4.ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

How can ballet technique be used to communicate cultural themes and emotional storytelling?

In what ways can dynamics, port de bras, and spatial design express remembrance, celebration, and honor?

1. Learning Objectives: (Students will be able to..by/through...)

Demonstrate proper ballet alignment, turnout, and port de bras during barre and center work.

Analyze how dynamics (light vs. strong, sustained vs. sharp) influence emotional meaning in choreography.

Contribute creatively to a Día de los Muertos ballet phrase by suggesting spatial, dynamic, or expressive choices.

Dance Standards Addressed

DA:Cr1.1 – Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Students contribute ideas that shape the expressive quality of the choreography.

DA:Cr2.1 – Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Students refine ballet technique and apply it within structured choreography.

DA:Re8.1 – Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Students reflect on how ballet movement communicates cultural symbolism.

6. New York State Teaching and Learning Standards:

Knowledge of Students and Student Learning

Students connect cultural understanding with physical technique and expressive movement.

Instructional Practice

Students engage in technique, discussion, and choreographic development.

Assessment for Student Learning

Ongoing observation of technique, musicality, and expressive intent.

7. BluePrints for Teaching and Learning in Dance

Dance Making

Students rehearse and refine ballet choreography grounded in theme.

Developing Dance Literacy

Students use vocabulary such as port de bras, epaulement, adagio, allegro, dynamics.

Making Connections

Students connect cultural traditions of Día de los Muertos to expressive performance choices.

8. COMMON CORE AND/OR CROSS-CURRICULAR STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Common Core ELA – Speaking & Listening

Students discuss symbolism and contribute ideas respectfully.

Social Studies Connection

Understanding cultural traditions and honoring heritage through art.

9. DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC VOCABULARY:

Port de bras

Epaulement

Turnout

Adagio

Allegro

Dynamics

Spatial pathways

Symbolism

Remembrance

Celebration

10. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGIES

(materials used in research, planning and/or instruction)

MATERIALS:

- **Texts, Music:** Music inspired by Día de los Muertos (instrumental, orchestral, possibly Spanish guitar or cinematic ballet music)
- Speaker
- White board
- Optional visuals of Día de los Muertos imagery

11. DEVELOPMENTAL INFORMATION:

Alignment

Balance

Artistic expression

Cultural awareness

Collaboration

Musicality

12. INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS:

DE models combinations slowly before increasing tempo.

Counts and terminology are reinforced verbally and visually.

Students are encouraged to mark before full-out performance.

DE circulates to give corrections on posture, turnout, and expressive quality.

LEARNING SEQUENCE

13. PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Students have prior ballet training including barre structure, port de bras, and center combinations. They understand alignment, turnout, and musical phrasing.

14. INTRODUCTION:

●—**Motivation:**

DE begins with a short discussion:

“What is Día de los Muertos? What emotions do you associate with it?”

De clarifies that it is not about fear, but remembrance, honoring loved ones, and celebration of life.

Students brainstorm 3 words that describe the emotional tone (ex: reverent, joyful, nostalgic, peaceful).

DE explains that today we are using ballet technique to embody those emotions.

15. WARM-UP/INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY:

Full structured ballet barre with intentional focus on theme:

- Pliés – grounded and reflective (honoring)
- Tendus – precise and intentional
- Rond de jambe – circular motion symbolizing life cycle
- Adagio développés – sustained like reaching upward (memory)
- Grand battement – celebratory energy

During barre, DE prompts:

“How does your port de bras change if you imagine offering a flower?”

“What does your upper body communicate?”

16. EXPLORATION:

Expressive Port de Bras Exercise

Students perform a simple adagio phrase across the floor.

Round 1: Neutral technique

Round 2: Perform as if honoring someone

Round 3: Perform as a celebration of life

Students briefly discuss:

What changed? Was it your dynamics? Focus? Breath?

! This helps them see technique and intention !

17. DEVELOPMENT:

DE teaches the next section of the Día de los Muertos ballet piece.

Instead of just drilling steps:

- Pause and ask students what dynamic quality fits best.
- Have them vote between sharp or sustained arms.
- Experiment with spacing (tight cluster vs. diagonal pathway).

Mini Activity:

In small groups of 3–4, students adjust 8 counts of choreography to emphasize either remembrance (soft, sustained) or celebration (lighter, lifted).

Groups show and explain their choices.

Then DE sets the final choreographed version.

18. SHARING:

Full run-through with music.

First run: Focus on counts & spacing

Second run: Focus on expressive intention

Third run (if time): Performance quality

DE gives specific corrections on:

Posture

Epaulement

Musicality

Facial expression

19. CONCLUSION:

(If time allows) Student's stand in a circle around the room, DE asks reflection questions:

1. How did ballet technique help you communicate emotion?
2. Did your movement feel different when you changed intention?
3. What part of today's choreography felt most meaningful?

DE reinforces that ballet is not just technical precision, but storytelling.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES**FORMATIVE & SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:****20. Type of assessment:**

3 Category Rubric

- 1. Ballet Technique**
 - 4 – Strong alignment, turnout, control, clear port de bras
 - 3 – Mostly strong technique with minor corrections needed
 - 2 – Inconsistent alignment or control
 - 1 – Limited technical awareness
- 2. Expressive Intention**
 - 4 – Clear emotional storytelling through dynamics
 - 3 – Some expressive clarity
 - 2 – Limited emotional intention
 - 1 – Minimal performance quality
- 3. Musicality & Performance Quality**
 - 4 – Strong timing, confident presence, full commitment
 - 3 – Mostly accurate timing

- 2 – Some timing issues
- 1 – Lacks preparation or focus

Criteria:

- *Did the student use ballet technique (alignment, turnout, port de bras, epaulement) clearly and consistently while learning and performing the choreography?*
- *To what degree did the student apply choreographic/performance choices (dynamics, tempo/musicality, levels, pathways/spatial patterns, focus) to communicate the intended Día de los Muertos mood (remembrance vs celebration)?*
- *Did the student demonstrate understanding of the theme by explaining how their movement quality and artistic choices supported the emotional meaning of the dance?*

21. Teacher Skill Development: DE is focusing on giving clear explanations when having a culminating activity on a unit. The teacher is also working on using proper counts and dance terminology when doing the phrase all together. DE is working on balancing technique and artistry in one lesson. Also focusing on clear ballet terminology and pacing choreography instruction.

22. Revisions for Re-implementation: Next time, allow more time for small group expressive exploration before setting final choreography. Possibly incorporate costume elements (flowers or scarves) to deepen connection to theme.

23. Reminder to do: For next class, continue building choreography and begin cleaning transitions and formations.