



**ALVIN AILEY** AMERICAN DANCE THEATER  
GRADES 6-8



## INTRODUCTION

### Great American Dance Learning Guide

The goal of the ***Great American Dance Learning Guide*** is to help students engage fully with the dance performances featured in the Lincoln Center at the Movies inaugural season. It is suitable for those who are already dance lovers and those who have no previous dance experience. Each guide enables educators to engage students in experiencing the thrill of the artistic process, and in understanding how artists think as they develop their work, how they face artistic challenges and make important choices before they present the world with their creations.

The guide has been created by LCE Teaching Artists who work in pre-K–12 and Higher Education classrooms throughout New York City and the tristate area, and are mindful of the learner of any age. In the guide, you will find information about dance and different takes on the performances in film, books, and other media. There are three lessons with activities and discussion questions that prepare students for the performance they will see on film, and a lesson that makes them reflect on the performance with a wholly different point of view after they've seen it. These lessons are flexible, so teachers can adapt them to specific grade levels and student populations in-school and out-of-school. Most important, the lessons have been designed for anyone curious about the art of dance.



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

GRADES 6-8



## INTRODUCTION

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from a now-fabled performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Led by Alvin Ailey and a group of young African-American modern dancers, that performance changed forever the perception of American dance. The Ailey company has gone on to perform for an estimated 25 million people at theaters in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents—and has reached millions more online and through television broadcasts. In 2008 a U.S. Congressional resolution designated the Company as “a vital American cultural ambassador to the world” that celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage. When Mr. Ailey began creating dances, he drew upon his “blood memories” of Texas, the blues, spirituals, and gospel as inspiration, which resulted in the creation of his most popular and critically acclaimed work, *Revelations*. Although he created 79 ballets over his lifetime, Mr. Ailey maintained that his company was not exclusively a repository for his own work. Today the Company continues Mr. Ailey’s mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones. In all more than 235 works by more than 90 choreographers have been part of the Ailey company’s repertory. Before his untimely death in 1989, Mr. Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and over the next 21 years she brought the Company to unprecedented success. Ms. Jamison, in turn, personally selected Robert Battle to succeed her in 2011, and *The New York Times* declared he “has injected the company with new life.”

### Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs

In fulfillment of Alvin Ailey’s long-standing dictum, “dance is for everybody,” the Ailey organization is committed to bringing dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people throughout the world. Its innovative Arts In Education programs include special performances, lecture/demonstrations, technique classes, and curriculum-based residencies which use dance to teach academic subjects in a unique way. Each program is designed to develop self-respect, confidence, discipline, and creativity while fostering an appreciation for the joy of dance.

For information about Ailey’s Arts In Education programs visit the Ailey website:  
[www.alvinailey.org/about/company/ailey-arts-education-community-programs](http://www.alvinailey.org/about/company/ailey-arts-education-community-programs)



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# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

GRADES 6-8



## WELCOME

Welcome to the Great American Dance Learning Guide for middle school students, grades 6-8. This guide is composed of four lesson plans designed around Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performances of *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey: three "before the performance" lessons and one "after the performance" lesson.

We strongly encourage you to read through each lesson before sharing it with your students, so that you can familiarize yourself with the pace of the activities, the discussion questions, and the suggestions for online resources should you wish to include them. Additional resources on dance and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are listed in "Continue Your Exploration" at the end of this guide.




**Questioning** is an essential component of this guide. We have constructed it in a way that empowers you and your students to ask questions, and through them, make discoveries and find new understanding. On the next page, you will find a suggested "Line of Inquiry" — a theme that can help you focus your questioning. Remember: there are no small or big questions, no good or bad questions. Questions are a great learning tool. So allow them to inspire you as you explore *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey.

You now have front row seats to a Lincoln Center performance. Enjoy the show!

Let us know what you think! Send us your comments at [LCE@lincolncenter.org](mailto:LCE@lincolncenter.org).

If you have photos of your students' work that you would like to share, please do! You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

### Description of symbols used in this guide:

-  Indicates a section to be read aloud
-  Indicates a question to be asked
-  Indicates an optional resource for further exploration



## LINE OF INQUIRY

In Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's *Grace*, *Chroma*, *Takademe*, and *Revelations*, how do choreographers Ronald K. Brown, Wayne McGregor, Robert Battle, and Alvin Ailey use buoyant and weighted movements to convey images of ease and effort in the human existence?

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the lessons in this guide, students will be able to:

- Create movements and shapes with particular focus on the use of the head, feet and spine;
- Understand how the movement qualities of buoyancy and weightiness can convey meaning;
- Identify movements of Extension, Contraction and Undulation;
- Create movement phrases in collaboration with their peers;
- Make connections to moments of ease and effort in their personal history and in the larger context of history that surrounds them, specifically African American History



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

## Buoyant and Weighted Movement

#### Materials needed for this lesson:

- Large glass bowl or glass vase filled with water
- Index cards and pens for each student, (3x5 or 4x6)
- One index card (3x5 or 4x6) (Object 1)
- A small rock (Object 2)
- A ruler
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Buoyancy / Weight Image from:  
[http://www.wired.com/images\\_blogs/wired-science/2013/12/fall\\_13\\_sketcheskey3.jpg](http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/wired-science/2013/12/fall_13_sketcheskey3.jpg)
- Optional: journals

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

*In Lesson I, students will be introduced to the qualities of buoyancy and weight. Through observations of inanimate objects, interpretation of images and embodiment of the qualities in their own walking movement, students will experience expressive elements of movement seen in performances by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.*

#### OPENING ACTIVITY:

### OBSERVING BUOYANCY AND WEIGHT

Have students surround a glass bowl or glass vase filled with water.

Place one index card (Object One) in the water. Gently poke it with a ruler to demonstrate its buoyancy.

Have students notice the shape of the object and what it does in the water.

Record what the students observe on chart paper in one column labeled "Buoyant".

Possible observations might include rectangular, light, floating.

Next, place a rock or other dense object (Object Two) in the water. Gently push it with a ruler to demonstrate its weight.

Have students notice the shape of the object and what it does in the water.

Record what the students observe on chart paper in a second column labeled "Weighted".

Possible observations might include round, heavy, sinking.

Show image of buoyancy and weight from Rhett Allain's article for *WIRED*, "Should Dwarves stand up in Floating Barrels".<sup>1</sup>

[http://www.wired.com/images\\_blogs/wiredscience/2013/12/fall\\_13\\_sketcheskey3.jpg](http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/wiredscience/2013/12/fall_13_sketcheskey3.jpg)

 10 minutes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wired.com/2013/12/should-dwarves-stand-up-in-floating-barrels/>



## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

### Buoyant and Weighted Movement

*(continued)*

## SHARE THESE TERMS WITH YOUR STUDENTS!<sup>2</sup>



**Buoyant** (adjective): ability or tendency to float.

**Weighted** (adjective): held in place or made heavy.

### ACTIVITY 1

## PERSONIFICATION OF THE ROCK AND PAPER

Hand out index cards and pens to each student.

Have your students look again at the rock and the index card in water.

Ask your students:

- *What images come to mind when you look at the objects in water?*
- *How do the objects' qualities of buoyancy and weight support your images?*

10 minutes

<sup>2</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/>

## SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!<sup>2</sup>



**Personification:** the attribution of human nature or character to animals, inanimate objects, or abstract notions, especially as a rhetorical figure.

On one side of an index card, have your students write any words that come to mind when looking at the paper in water.

- *What attributes of human nature or character remind you of the paper floating in water?*

On the other side of the index card, have your students write any words that come to mind when looking at the rock in water.

- *What attributes of human nature or character remind you of the rock sunk in water?*

### ACTIVITY 2:

## EXPLORATION IN THE BODY

15 minutes

Convene your students into a standing circle. (They should leave their index cards behind.)





### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

## Buoyant and Weighted Movement

*(continued)*

Have students walk in place. (They will not leave their spot in the circle.)

Ask your students to make their steps heavier as if their body is being filled with cement.

Allow them to exaggerate their steps in order to explore a range of movement ideas.

Ask your students:

- *How has your walk changed by adding weight to your steps? Is it slower or faster, louder or softer?*
- *How has the rest of your body changed?*

Now, have your students make their steps lighter as if their body is being filled with air. Ask them to imagine that they are walking on clouds.

Allow them to exaggerate their steps in order to explore a range of movement ideas.

Ask your students:

- *How has your walk changed by taking lighter steps? Is it slower or faster, louder or softer?*
- *How has the rest of your body changed?*

Divide the circle into two groups: Group A and Group B.

Have Group A demonstrate their **“weighted”** walks while Group B observes.

Now switch turns. Have Group B demonstrate their **“buoyant”** walks while Group A observes.

Ask your students:

- *What images come to mind when you observe these weighted and buoyant walks?*
- *What characters do you see emerging from these stylized walks?*
- *What narrative or story might you tell to describe the characters you see?*

Position your students around the room so they have enough space to move their arms without touching their neighbor.



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

## Buoyant and Weighted Movement

*(continued)*

Have your students look around the room while standing in place. Allow them about 30 seconds to explore the different ways they can move their head.

Next, ask your students to imagine that their heads are getting heavy, like a bowling ball. Allow them another 30 seconds to explore this idea.

Now ask your students to imagine that their heads are getting lighter. Allow them additional time to explore this idea.

Remember to let your students exaggerate their movements, so that they can explore a range of movement ideas.

Tell your students to return to their groups.

Have Group A demonstrate their **“weighted”** walks incorporating the heavy head movements they just created. Group B observes.

Now switch turns. Have Group B demonstrate their **“buoyant”** walks incorporating the light head movements they just created. Group A observes.

Ask your students:

- *What images come to mind when you observe these new walks?*
- *Have your characters changed in any way? How?*
- *What new stories could you tell based on what you have just seen?*

Have your students read the index cards they wrote on earlier in the lesson.

- *What observations did you make when you looked at the rock and the paper in water?*
- *Have your observations changed after participating in this movement exercise? How?*
- *Have your observations stayed the same? Explain.*
- *What do you know now about buoyancy and weight that you didn't know before?*



## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

### Buoyant and Weighted Movement

*(continued)*

#### ACTIVITY 3: COOL DOWN

Convene your students back into a standing circle.

Explain that this activity will serve as a cool down for the body and will incorporate some of the movement ideas you explored in today's lesson.

Let your head slowly roll down forward. Continue lowering your head down towards the floor as if YOU are the rock that is sinking to the bottom of a bucket of the water. Allow your arms, torso and knees to fall forward too, leading with the weight of your head. Take a moment to sink all the way to the floor.

Students may go all the way down to the floor. They may also curl up into a ball. Allow them to interpret your instructions in whatever way makes sense to them.

Now imagine that you are the index card floating all the way up to the surface of the bucket of water by unfolding yourself and coming back into a standing position.

*Time permitting, repeat this cool down exercise and slow down the actions of "rolling forward" and "floating up".*

#### CLOSING ACTIVITY: REFLECTION

Students can talk with a partner or journal a response to the following questions:

- *In your own life, has there ever been a time or a situation in which you felt weighted like the rock and buoyant like the paper?*
- *What emotions did you feel?*

 5 minutes



 5 minutes



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

## Making Choices about Movement

#### Materials needed for this lesson:

- Pens or pencils
- Journals
- Photo of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Vernard J. Gilmore in an extension  
<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=-502060f829371a7548000083&fid=50228a-5f29371a6e51000a90>

### INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHER:

*In Lesson II, students will continue to explore movement, specifically the use of extension and contraction along with the qualities of buoyancy and weight. Students will identify moments in their own lives that feel easy or effortful, and then use these personal connections to make movement choices and experience the act of choreography.*

#### OPENING ACTIVITY:

### EXTENSION AND CONTRACTION

 7 minutes

Convene your students into a standing circle.

Ask your students:

- *What does it feel like to float in a swimming pool?*
- *What shape does your body make?*

Have students describe or demonstrate the shape.

- *What does it feel like to sink in a swimming pool?*
- *What shape does your body make?*

Have students describe or demonstrate the shape.

Place your hands over your heart and have students follow your lead.

Define the heart as the center and proceed into the next movement exercise.

Reach your arms, legs, head and feet away from your heart center to find **extension** in the body. Imagine that you are floating in a swimming pool. Now pull your arms, legs, head and feet into your heart center to find contraction in the body. Imagine you are sinking in a swimming pool.



Repeat this exercise a couple of times and allow for different ideas to take hold on what it means to extend and what it means to contract.



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

## Making Choices about Movement

*(continued)*

### SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!



**Extension:** the state of being extended, lengthened, or stretched out.<sup>3</sup>

Show the photo of an Alvin Ailey dancer in extension.

<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=50228a5f29371a6e51000a90>

Tell your students that this photo is an example of a dancer in a full extension.

▶ *What would the opposite of this pose look like?*

Select a student volunteer to demonstrate their idea.

### SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!



**Contraction:** the quality or state of being contracted, or the state of being drawn together; reduced in compass or size; made smaller; shrunken.<sup>5</sup>

#### ACTIVITY 1:

### JOURNAL WRITING

Have students take out their journals.

Pose each question below and ask students to write a brief response. No question should take longer than 1.5 minutes to answer.

Describe a time when you experienced a sense of ease in your life—a time that felt happy, relaxed.

- ▶ *What activity were you doing?*
- ▶ *Were you with someone? Who were you with?*
- ▶ *Where were you?*

 **10 minutes**

<sup>3</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/>

<sup>4</sup><http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?%20id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=50228a5f29371a6e510%200a90>

<sup>5</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/>



## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

### Making Choices about Movement

(continued)

› *Can you describe how you felt?*

Describe a time when you experienced a sense of great effort in your life—a time that felt sad or difficult.

› *What activity were you doing?*

› *Were you with someone? Who were you with?*

› *Where were you?*

› *Can you describe how you felt?*

#### ACTIVITY 2:

### INTENTION AND MOVEMENT

Convene students back into a standing circle.

Have students repeat the movements of extension and contraction, but this time they will layer in the ideas they wrote about in their journals.

Think about that time of great ease you wrote about and begin to extend your body. Show me what you were feeling in that moment. Explore the different ways you can extend your body.

› *How does this memory affect your extension?*

› *What other movement choices can you make?*

› *Does the image of the index card in water support your movement ideas? How?*

Think about that time of great effort you wrote about and begin to contract your body. Show me what you were feeling in that moment. Explore the different ways you can contract your body.

› *How does this memory affect your contraction?*

› *What other movement choices can you make?*

 10 minutes



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

## Making Choices about Movement

*(continued)*

› *Does the image of the rock in water support your movement ideas? How?*

Reverse these concepts.

› *Thinking about the experience of ease, how might you contract the body?*

› *What new choices are you making that you hadn't explored previously?*

› *Thinking about the experience of effort, how might you extend the body?*

› *What new choices are you making that you hadn't explored previously?*

Allow time for students to explore their ideas. Encourage them to exaggerate their movement choices.



### SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

**Intention:** a mental state that represents a commitment to carrying out an action or actions in the future. Intention involves mental activities such as planning and forethought.<sup>6</sup>

#### ACTIVITY 3:

### MOVING WITH INTENTION

Pair each student up with a partner.

Have each pair decide if they are going to focus on the subject of ease or effort. Students will create a 4-movement sequence they can dance together.

Students should be encouraged to use:

› *the movements of extension and contraction*

› *the qualities of weight and buoyancy*

› *the emotions and memories associated with ease and effort*

The idea is to have students use their whole bodies to express their ideas.

 **10 minutes**

<sup>6</sup>Bratman, M. (1987). *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

### Making Choices about Movement

*(continued)*

## SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

**Choreography:** the art or practice of designing sequences of movements of physical bodies (or their depictions) in which motion, form, or both are specified.<sup>7</sup>

### CLOSING ACTIVITY:

#### PAIR SHARE

Choose one pair of students to share their movement sequence or choreography in front of the class.

Class Discussion:

- *How did the choreographers use contraction and extension?*
- *How did they use the qualities of buoyancy and weight?*
- *What story or narrative came to mind when you observed your classmates' choreography?*

Time permitting, have other pairs share their work in front of the class.



 5 minutes

<sup>7</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>





### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

## Traveling Across the Floor

#### Materials needed for this lesson:

- Journals
- Image of the 4 curves of the spine included in Lesson III, Slide 9
- Shakara by Fela Kuti & Africa 70 included in Lesson III, Slide 3  
Wade in the Water included in Lesson III, Slide 12  
Come Sunday, by Duke Ellington, included in Lesson III, Slide 16  
I Wanna Be Ready included in Lesson III, Slide 19

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

*In Lesson III, students will travel across the room in groups using their movement ideas. This lesson will support their movement explorations with music that is used in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Grace by choreographer Ronald K. Brown, and Revelations by choreographer Alvin Ailey.*

#### OPENING ACTIVITY:

### RIDING A RHYTHM

 5 minutes

Convene students into a standing circle.

Have students bounce their knees along to the rhythm of *Shakara* by Fela Kuti & Africa 70 included in Lesson III, Slide 3.

This music is used in Ronald K. Brown's Grace.

Have them continue bouncing their knees and add a walk in place. Demonstrate for your students how they can play with tempo by bouncing/ walking fast and slow.

➤ *If we were to have the rest of our bodies respond to the rhythm, what choices might we make?*

➤ *What elements of buoyancy might we use?*

### SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!



Tempo: the rate of speed of a musical piece or passage indicated by one of a series of directions (as largo, presto, or allegro) and often by an exact metronome marking.<sup>8</sup>

#### ACTIVITY 1:

### UNDULATING THE SPINE

 15 minutes

Show the class this image of the 4 curves of the spine included in Lesson III, Slide 9.

Notice with your students how the curves of the spine are very similar to an ocean wave.



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

## Traveling Across the Floor

(continued)

### SHARE THIS TERM WITH YOUR STUDENTS!



**Undulation:** 1. a rising and falling in waves; 2. a wavy appearance, outline, or form.<sup>8</sup>

Have students walk around the room freely.

After about 30 seconds, give them the following direction:

As you continue to walk around the room, think about **undulating your spine** by exaggerating the four curves you saw in the image.



Play *Wade in the Water* while they experiment with undulations, included in Lesson III, Slide 12.

A version of this piece is used in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.

Ask students to play with tempo moving from slow to fast to slow again.

Pause music after a couple of minutes have passed.

Divide students into groups of 4-5.

Select one student from each group to be the leader. The rest of the students in the group will follow or shadow the leader's movements.

Replay the music.

Leaders will continue making undulating motions in their bodies as they walk in place. The rest of the group will follow their lead.

Encourage leaders to add other parts of the body, like their arms, hands and head.

Encourage leaders to play with tempo.

Select one group at a time to travel across the room with their undulating movements.

Choose a new leader in each group and continue the exercise. Try introducing a new music track, such as *Come Sunday*, by Duke Ellington, included in Lesson III, Slide 16.

<sup>8</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/>



### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

## Traveling Across the Floor

(continued)

Have students sit in a large circle. You can also choose to have them sit at their desks.

Ask your students:

- › *What movement choices did you make that remind you of the buoyant paper?*
- › *The weighted rock?*
- › *Did you or your classmates use expansion? Explain.*
- › *Did you or your classmates use contraction? Explain.*

### ACTIVITY 2

## WALKING TO MUSIC

 15 minutes

Divide students back into their groups.

Select one student from each group to be the leader. The rest of the students in the group will follow or shadow the leader's movements.

Leaders will interpret the following instruction:

Create a walk that is very heavy and low to the ground. Walk across the floor with the feeling that you are being pulled down into the earth.



Play *I Wanna Be Ready* included in Lesson III, Slide 19

A version of this piece is used in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.

Pause the music and select a new leader in each group. Have the new leaders incorporate other parts of the body into their walk, such as the torso, arms or head.

Ask your students:

- › *What is the tempo of this music?*
- › *How does it affect your walk across the floor?*
- › *Does your walk make it difficult to cross the room? Explain.*



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

### Traveling Across the Floor

*(continued)*

Have students sit in a large circle. You can also choose to have them sit at their desks.

Ask your students:

- *What emotions do you feel when you listen to this music?*
- *What emotions do you feel when you walk heavily across the floor?*
- *Do any images come up for you?*

#### CLOSING ACTIVITY: CLASS DISCUSSION

Students should journal their responses to the following questions:

- *What stories or images come to mind when traveling across the floor in a group?*
- *Did you find the walk across the floor to be challenging? Explain why.*

Describe a scenario in which you might find yourself or others walking in this way.

When we view the performance by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, pay close attention to the movement choices you see in the choreography. Notice what the dancers are doing and think about what their intentions might be. Be prepared to share any stories or images that come to mind.

 10 minutes



**View Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey**



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## AFTER THE PERFORMANCE LESSON IV

### Reflections in Life and in Movement

#### Materials needed for this lesson:

- Journals
- Markers
- Lesson Printables

## INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

*In Lesson IV, students will reflect on the work of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. They will make connections to images expressed in the work and the movement choices that conveyed them. Students will also link their observations of African American history with their own personal life experiences.*

### OPENING ACTIVITY:

#### WARM UP

 10 minutes

Convene your students into a standing circle.

Explain that we are going to repeat the cool down activity from Lesson I as a warm-up.

Ask your students to recall something they remember from the performance and to think about this memory throughout the warm-up.

Let your head slowly roll down forward. Continue lowering your head down towards the floor as if you are a rock that is sinking to the bottom of a bucket of water. Allow your arms, torso and knees to fall forward too, leading with the weight of your head. Take a few brief moments to sink all the way to the floor.



Students may go all the way down to the floor. They may also curl up into a ball. Allow them to interpret your instructions in whatever way makes sense to them.

Now imagine that you are an index card floating all the way up to the surface of a bucket of water by unfolding yourself and coming back into a standing position. Come into a standing position feeling light and buoyant. Bounce the knees a couple of times. Extend the arms and legs out into an "X" shape.



*Time permitting, repeat this warm up exercise two more times and slow down the actions of "rolling forward" and "floating up".*

Articulate the curves of your spine as you undulate from your lower back all the way up into your upper back and down again. Do this a few times to warm up the spine. Feel like your torso is creating ocean waves. Allow this movement to extend into your arms and legs. Feel fluid and open in the body. Come back to standing.





# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## INTRODUCTION

### ACTIVITY 1: REFLECTION

 10 minutes

Have your students return to their desks.

Post the blank sheet of chart paper in front of the classroom.

*You'll save the **Repertory** and **Movement Toolbox** chart paper for later in the lesson.*

### DID YOU KNOW?



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was formed in 1958 by dancer, choreographer and visionary Alvin Ailey. Alvin Ailey was one of the leading American Modern Dance choreographers credited with bringing **African American Cultural Expression** to the World.<sup>9</sup>

Students will journal responses to the following questions:

- *When you think about **African American Culture**, what historical reference comes to mind?*
- *Does your historical reference describe a sense of ease or effort? Explain.*
- *What news stories come to mind?*
- *Does your news story describe a sense of ease or effort? Explain.*

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.alvinailey.org/about/company/>

Ask the following questions and record student responses on the blank sheet of chart paper under **COLUMN ONE: Expressions of Ease and Effort**

- *What images or stories did you see in the dance works performed by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater?*
- *What emotions did you see?*
- *Can you describe a few examples from the performance of when you saw ease and when you saw effort?*



### INTRODUCTION

### DID YOU KNOW?



Another part of Ailey's mission as an artist and choreographer was to use modern dance as a way of communicating the physical and emotional in an expressive and artistic way.

› *Which of the movements that we studied did you notice in the performance?*

Have students describe in detail the movements they saw. Record student responses under **COLUMN TWO: Movement Choices**.

Post the **Repertory** and **Movement Toolbox** chart paper in front of the classroom.

Circle any terms that are similar in **COLUMN TWO: Movement Choices** and **COLUMN TWO: Movement Toolbox**.

### ACTIVITY 2

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

 10 minutes

Ask students to look back in their journal and read what they wrote prior to seeing the performance.

Ask your students:

› *What movement choices did you see in the performance that might help support some of what you wrote about? Explain.*

› *Any new thoughts on the concepts of ease and effort?*

› *How are these concepts expressed through dance?*

Divide students into groups of 4-5.

Each group will decide on a set of ideas that were recorded in **COLUMN ONE: Expressions of Ease and Effort**, **COLUMN TWO: Movement Choices** and **COLUMN TWO: Movement Toolbox**.



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

GRADES 6-8



## INTRODUCTION

Have students create a movement sequence of about 4-5 movements that express the ideas they chose as a group.

Give the class about 5-7 minutes to create this movement sequence.

Have 1-2 groups share the movement sequence they created.

Lead a brief class discussion with the students that are observing.

- *Which ideas do you see presented in the group?*
- *What do you think their intention might be?*

Have one person from each performing group describe their creative process for the class.

## CLOSING ACTIVITY:

### FINAL REFLECTION/ DISCUSSION

In 1958, Alvin Ailey founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to carry out his vision of a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience. Today, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is one of the most beloved and influential multi-racial dance companies in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Looking at COLUMN ONE: Images of Ease and Effort, lead a class discussion:

- *Why do you think it is important to express the human condition?*
- *What do you think about dance as a form of expression?*
- *As citizens of the world, how and where do we share similar experiences of ease and effort?*
- *What has the performance of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater made you curious about?*
- *What other questions do you have about dance or about the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater?*

 10 minutes

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.alvinailey.org/about>





## Common Core Standards Addressed in this Guide

### Common Core Standard for Speaking and Listening, Grades 6-12

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own idea clearly and persuasively.

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

### Common Core Anchor Standards for Language, Grades 6-12

5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

## National Core Arts Standards Addressed in this Guide

### Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work

**Anchor Standard #1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

**Anchor Standard #2:** Organize and Develop artistic ideas and work.

### Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

**Anchor Standard #7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work

**Anchor Standard #8:** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work



## Capacities for Imaginative Thinking Addressed in this Guide

At Lincoln Center Education (LCE), we value not only what is learned but how it is learned and believe that the people best prepared to perform in our dynamic world are those who think like artists. Artists solve problems, collaborate, communicate, imagine, persevere, and create. The *Capacities for Imaginative Thinking* is a learning framework designed to help learners interact meaningfully with a work of art and to develop habits of mind to enable them to think like artists.  
*(for the full list and definitions, see the next page.)*

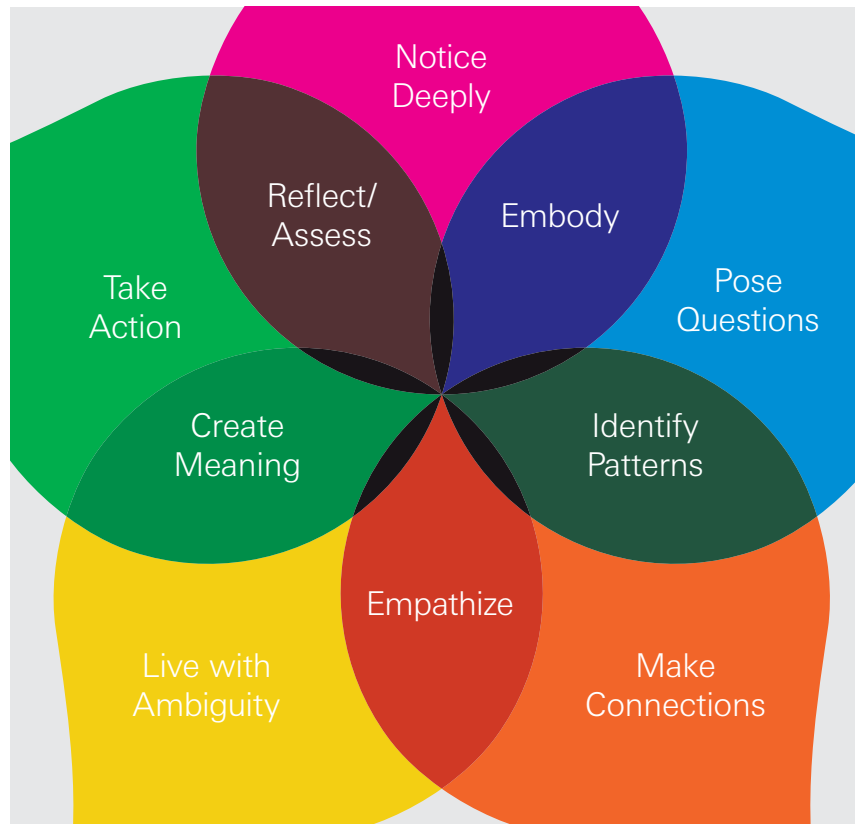
**Make Connections:** How is this like something else? Make personal, textual, and wider connections.

**Embody:** Use your body to explore your ideas. Try it out.

**Create Meaning:** Bring together what you've thought so far. What new interpretations can you make?



### Helping young minds perform in a dynamic world



**NOTICE DEEPLY**

How many layers of detail can you identify if you take the time? Can you go deeper?

**EMBODY**

Use your body to explore your ideas. Try it out.

**POSE QUESTIONS**

What do you wonder?

**IDENTIFY PATTERNS**

How might different details relate? Analyze them.

**MAKE CONNECTIONS**

How is this like something else? Make personal, textual, and wider connections.

**EMPATHIZE**

Can you understand how others think and feel? What are their perspectives?

**LIVE WITH AMBIGUITY**

What if there is not just one answer? Be patient with complexity.

**CREATE MEANING**

Bring together what you've thought so far. What new interpretations can you make?

**TAKE ACTION**

What will you choose to do with your ideas? Put them into practice.

**REFLECT/ASSESS**

Look back on what you've experienced. What have you learned? What's next?



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

GRADES 6-8



## CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

### Modern, African and Brazilian Dance

Modern Dance

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern\\_dance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_dance)

History of Modern Dance Student Handout

<http://www.balletaustin.org/education/documents/HistoryofModernDanceStudentHandout.pdf>

Common Ground / 5 Modern Techniques for the 21st Century  
*Dunham, Limón, Horton, Graham, and Cunningham demystified*

By Lisa Traiger for Dance Magazine (March-April 2008 Volume 13 Issue 2)

<http://www.dancestudiolife.com/common-ground-5-modern-techniques-for-the-21st-century/>

African Dance

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/african\\_dance](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/african_dance)

Five(ish) Minute Dance Lesson: African Dance: Lesson 1: Dinhe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3W-YloW8Bw>

Katherine Dunham: Library of Congress Collection, includes tutorials of Dunham technique

<http://www.loc.gov/collections/katherine-dunham/>

Katherine Dunham Biography

<http://kdcah.org/katherine-dunham-biography/>

Lester Horton Technique Description and History

[http://www.dancespirit.com/2009/04/Horton\\_Technique/](http://www.dancespirit.com/2009/04/Horton_Technique/)

How to: Horton Technique

<https://vimeo.com/71110456>

Anna Sokolow Dance Foundation

<http://www.annasokolow.org/>

Capoeira class at The Ailey Extension

<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/29730425>



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

GRADES 6-8



## CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

West African class at The Ailey Extension  
<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/10725616>

Horton Technique class at The Ailey Extension  
<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/10725553>

Ronald K. Brown teaches a master class at Harvard:  
<http://youtu.be/gm1kHuNcg7w>

Katherine Dunham's influence on American modern dance:  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200003839/default.html>

Lester Horton biography:  
[http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/horton\\_essay\\_prevots.pdf](http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/horton_essay_prevots.pdf)

Katherine Dunham:  
<http://www.danceheritage.org/dunham.html>

### **Alvin Ailey and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Website  
<http://www.alvinailey.org/>

Alvin Ailey Biography  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvin\\_Ailey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvin_Ailey)

History and Timeline  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/exhibition-items.html>

Documentary: *Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*  
Order at: <http://www.aileyshop.com/cd-dvds.html>

Book: *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*.  
Jennifer Dunning. New York, NY: De Capo Press. 1998.

Book: *Alvin Ailey*.  
Andrea Davis Pinkney. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. 1993.



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

### Revelations by Alvin Ailey

Music from *Revelations: Revelations Audio Cd*  
Order at: <http://www.aileyshop.com/cd-dvds.html>  
Includes an 11-minute interview with Judith Jameson

Book: *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey*.  
Alvin Ailey and A. Peter Bailey. Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press. 1995.

Book: *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture*  
By DeFrantz, Thomas

*New York Times*: Ailey dancers describe their experience of performing the different sections of *Revelations*  
By Gia Kourlas, November 29, 2010  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/arts/dance/30revelations.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/arts/dance/30revelations.html?_r=0)

Spirituals Brief History  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual\\_%28music%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_%28music%29)

Comprehensive Guide to the History of Spirituals  
<http://www.negrospirituals.com/index.html>

### Video Clips of Modern Dance Choreographers

Anna Sokolow  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWivJg7T1sw>

Martha Graham  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb4-kpClZns>

Lester Horton  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq--drAx11s>

Katherine Dunham  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FetuMAGOzBc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FetuMAGOzBc)  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/ibas.200003869>



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

### Additional Resources

My Story, My Dance: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey

<http://www.amazon.com/My-Story-Dance-Battles-Journey/dp/1481422219>

Dance & Democracy: Politics & Protest, World War I Through the Cold War

[http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=5611](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5611)

*This recorded lecture from the Library of Congress contextualizes Alvin Ailey's work alongside other modern dance luminaries*

"Making Rich Tales of Diaspora Take Flight," *New York Times* February 12, 2008

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/arts/dance/12brow.html>

Choreographer, Ronald K. Brown

<http://www.evidencedance.com/#ronald-k-brown/cb08>

Choreographer, Robert Battle

<http://www.alvinailey.org/about/people/robert-battle>

Choreographer, Wayne McGregor

[http://www.randomdance.org/wayne\\_mcgregor/biography](http://www.randomdance.org/wayne_mcgregor/biography)



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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## Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Lincoln Center, the world's foremost performing arts center, is a private non-profit organization. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts presents over 350 performances annually through its different performance series, and administers educational and community outreach programs.

The mission of Lincoln Center is fourfold: 1) to celebrate the performing arts with a dazzling array of programming, performed by an international roster of virtuoso artists; 2) to engage thousands of schoolchildren in active learning through its arts-in-education organization, Lincoln Center Education; 3) to extend the range of the performing arts presented at Lincoln Center, complementing the extraordinary offerings of the eleven other Lincoln Center Resident Companies, all of which are flagship institutions in the world of the arts; and 4) to provide support and services for the Resident Companies and the 16-acre Lincoln Center campus, which together make up the world's leading performing arts center.

## Lincoln Center Education

Lincoln Center Education (LCE) is the educational cornerstone of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Founded in 1975 as Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, LCE enriches the lives of students, educators and lifelong learners by providing opportunities for engagement with the highest-quality arts on the stage, in the classroom, digitally, and within the community. For four decades, LCE has offered unparalleled school and community partnerships, professional development workshops, consulting services, and its very own repertory of music, dance, theater and visual arts. LCE's work has reached more than 20 million students, teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, teaching artists, pre-service teachers, university professors and artists in New York City, across the nation and around the world.





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