

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

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**Teacher Observations**  
**Edwin Brathwaite, Dance Educator**  
**Intermediate School 285, Meyer Levin**

**A**s a full time dance and science teacher in a middle school setting, I teach both general education students as well as special needs students in grades sixth (6th) through eighth (8th). Each class consists of approximately thirty (30) students in a dedicated dance space – consisting of a ballet barre and mirrors. This room is self contained as it provides changing rooms for both male and female students. The class is heterogeneously grouped, comprising of sixth (6th), seventh (7th), and eighth (8th) grade students. The student population is rich in Caribbean culture spanning across the Windward and Leeward islands.

The purpose of these lessons is to explore movement leading to student dance making based on the idea that we are all a part of a wider community. It is a great introductory unit because it gets students moving as they learn about others in the class and seeks to build a safe and tolerant classroom atmosphere. Students become aware of the role each play in the development of the atmosphere of the classroom. These lessons force students and the teacher alike to analyze themselves through writing and movement, develop self awareness and identify the roles that both teacher and student will play in the development and maintenance of a supportive classroom community. The hope and expectations of these lessons is that the classroom conduct will be transferred to the school and home environment. This unit also seeks to incorporate Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) which was created by Rudolf Laban. It is based on movement that occurs naturally that can be used in dance making. It is categorized by: Body (what), Effort (how), Space (where), and Relationship (with whom). The Language of Dance (LOD) ideas created by Ann Hutchinson Guest are also introduced in this unit.

The level of dance ability varies across the classroom, from students who have danced with private neighborhood dance studios to those who have experienced dance in elementary school. On the other end of the spectrum, there are those students who enjoy dancing, but have never had the opportunity to take a class. Therefore, this unit seeks to highlight student ability as well as level the playing field as students are introduced to new ideas and concepts.

The context in which this unit was developed is for grades sixth (6th) through eighth (8th), ages eleven to fourteen, in a public school setting. Even though the unit targets these age groups, it can be modified for different age groups and ability levels. The length of the class is forty five (45) minutes and students are seen on a daily basis – five days a week – for the entire school year. The materials that will be utilized during this unit include iPod, sound system, handouts, music for warming-up and/or cooling down, *Blueprint*, Laban Movement Analysis chart, Language of Dance Motif symbols, research materials, chart paper, markers, a cow bell and drumstick.

This unit can generate great student work and build up the classroom community. I have seen students who have been shy the first several days of school, and who cowered when it came time to do their autobiographical poem, bloom into beautiful classroom flowers. This is further reinforced by both teacher and student positive feedback in the form of applause and comments. It is these moments of affirmation that serve as great community building exercise.

The assessment in this unit varies from lesson to lesson and from activity to activity. Students are assessed on both individual and group activities using rubrics, writing prompts, written and performance task tests. Students are given an opportunity to assess themselves and each other using self — in the form of writing — and peer assessment by feedback either in a one on one, grouped or whole group setting. This type of assessment utilized in this unit validates student work and fosters a community atmosphere in the classroom.

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Overview

**Teacher:**

Edwin Brathwaite

**School:**

Intermediate  
School 285,  
Meyer Levin

**Grade Level:**

8th Grade

**Sessions:**

10 – 15;  
45 minutes each

### Big Ideas of this Unit

- Dance is community...community is dance. Just like it takes multiple dots to print a letter on a page it takes people to create a community and each person plays a vital part in the community.

### Project Description

**What will students do in this unit? (one to three brief sentences)**

- Students will gather insight into self and community through improvisation and dance making.
- Students will create a dance that addresses the concepts of awareness to self and others: Address – others and different body parts; Nearness – relationship to others; Connect – making connections; and Support – the push and pull in the way we interact with others.

### Instructional Goal

- To provide students with the opportunity to self-reflect, reflect on their environment, and reflect on the role they play in their community.
- To use the essential elements of LOD and LMA discussed in this unit to create a dance that reflects their journey.

### Indicators of Student Learning

**Students will know:**

- Who they are and the role they presently play in their community
- Selected LOD concepts and LMA motif symbols
- Two (2) ways of documenting life experiences – life map and autobiographical poem

**Students will be able to:**

- Gather insight into self and community through improvisation
- Explore choreography and perform complete work
- Identify and write motif symbols
- Connect personal life experiences to movement
- Document personal life experiences through artwork and poetry

**Students will understand that:**

- Each person plays a unique role in their community
- We are all a part of a bigger picture

### Pre-Assessment/Planning

**What activities can I do to assess students before teaching this unit?**

- Improvisation activities that allow students to explore their bodies and environment. Through observation and a movement exercise, teacher can assess students' background and dance vocabulary.

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

*Overview continued*

## **Have I taught these students before?**

- This is an introductory unit to get students moving and manipulating their environment, and to build a trusting classroom environment.

## **What do students already know and understand about this area of Dance Making?**

Students may have a varied background in the area so the teacher may need to guide them through the process emphasizing the following:

- Varying movement phrases by changing rhythm, tempo, dynamics and use of space
- Clearly expressing the intent of the theme of dance
- Recalling and reproducing complex movement phrases and special formations

## **What skills related to this unit have students already developed?**

- How to use choreographic devices
- Creating dance phrases

## **How will the students' needs be addressed?**

- The students' needs will be addressed on an individual and grade level using a variety of modalities. Accommodations will be made for those students who need extra time to complete assignments.

## **Unit Assessment Strategies: What is the evidence of student learning?**

### **Self-Assessment**

- Journal entries
- Self reflection - Mapping ones journey

### **Peer Assessment**

- Pair-share
- Peer evaluation and observation

### **Teacher Assessment**

- Lesson task checklist
- Performance task checklist
- Test – Motif symbols

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Overview *continued*

## Teacher Self-Assessment Strategies:

### What is working well? How do I know this?

- The layout of the lesson, and the execution of the way in which the lesson unfolded worked extremely well. This was evident in the classroom atmosphere as students began to see each other both as individuals and part of a wider community.

### What should be changed? How do I know this?

- One thing that should be changed is the amount of time allotted to complete the assignments. A good indicator for timing assignments is your students. They will tell you if you are moving too slowly or too quickly.

## Learning Experiences

	<i>making</i>	<i>literacy</i>	<i>connections</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>careers</i>
■ Self-reflection, built into all class activities			◆		
■ Creating a personal Life Map			◆		
■ Daily warm-up	◆	◆			
■ Writing an autobiographical poem			◆		
■ Drawing a self portrait related to the poem			◆		
■ Improvising with LMA concepts of Body Shapes and Levels	◆	◆			
■ Improvising with LOD concepts of Awareness, Address, Nearness, Contact, and Support. and learning the LOD symbols for these	◆	◆			
■ Converting a piece of the Life Map into a Dance Map – the beginnings of dance scoring with motif symbols		◆	◆		
■ Creating a dance inspired by an autographical poem	◆	◆	◆		
■ Creating a dance using the LOD concepts explored in the improvisation	◆	◆			
■ Observing, responding, reflecting upon and analyzing dances created by peers		◆	◆		
■ Drawing inferences about Community from the work explored in dance class and the class experiences			◆		

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson One

### Warm-Up:

- General class warm-up

### Introduction of Theme:

- *How well do you know yourself? How well do you know your body? What role do you play in your community? These are some of the questions that we will explore during this unit. I want you to honestly challenge yourself and your body as we explore these and many more questions through movement.*

### Exploration:

- *Find your own space anywhere in the room.*
- Explore the following ideas with the class: Awareness – self, environment & others, move around your own space reaching, stretching, pushing, turning, twisting; Address – others using different body parts; Nearness – to a person or an object; Contact/touch – touch another person's elbow using your elbow, connect your knee to another person's knee, connect your back to another part of your partner; Support/carrying – find interesting ways to connect to and support your partner, and for them to support you.

### Development / Elaboration:

- Chart the components used in the exploration using words and LOD symbols. Give students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the symbols associated with the forms of relating which include awareness; addressing; nearness; contact/touch; and support/carrying.
- Students will be separated into groups of four and assigned a space in the dance studio. Each group will be given all five motifs (representing forms of relating) to manipulate.

### Task:

- Create a movement sentence utilizing the motif symbols as you see fit. You may arrange them in any order. You are expected to use all five of the symbols.
- Begin in a shape

Place the five motif symbols in order of performance.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

STOP! Did you include levels (high, middle, low)? Did you use space (curved, straight, zigzag)?

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

*Lesson One continued*

## **Culmination / Sharing;**

Each group will be given an opportunity to present their work for the entire class. Observers will be encouraged to give positive feedback to their performing peers.

## **Respond/Reflect & Analysis**

- *What did you learn about yourself today as a result of doing this assignment?*

## **Cool Down:**

- Students will be directed to melt from their final shape to the floor taking slow breaths.

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Two

### Warm-Up:

- General class warm-up

### Introduction of Theme:

- *In the previous lesson, we gained some insight into self and community when we explored the terms Awareness, Address, Nearness, Contact and Support. We also learned the symbols associated with those terms. Today we will further explore our theme incorporating the actions and motif symbols associated with the terms Stillness, Flexion, Extension, and Any Traveling.*

### Exploration:

- In a guided improvisation, student will explore stillness, flexion, extension and traveling in a variety of levels, qualities, timings and relationships.
- After the guided improv instruct students to come up to the mirrors and collect a sheet of blank paper and a marker.
- *Now that you have collected the materials, you are going to draw a map of your personal journey. This map should reflect your life's journey. Think about your achievements and accomplishments so far and consider them when drawing your map. I have a copy of my life's journey on the easel. You are welcome to use my life's map as an example or a form of inspiration for creating your own map. You will have five minutes to draw your life's map.*

### Development / Elaboration:

- *Now that you have drawn your map, I want you to choose a favorite part your map and use it as a pathway for a dance phrase. But before we do that, I am going to introduce you to four additional motif symbols. Who remembers the symbols that we explored yesterday? Can you point to those symbols and tell me what each stands for?*
- The teacher will introduce the four new motif symbols. The teacher can hold the symbols as he or she talks about each or have them on chart paper. The four symbols being introduced are:



- Display the four motif symbols around the room with the action so that students can become familiar with the symbols and their meanings.
- Model, using your own map, the expectations for the assignment so that students will have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- Choosing your favorite pathway, highlight it in any way you see fit. Once the chosen pathway has been highlighted, place each of the four motif symbols along the chosen path.

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Lesson Two *continued*

## **Task: 2**

- Select your favorite part of your map. You may draw that chosen pathway on a new sheet of blank paper.
- Place each of the four motif symbols along the pathway that you drew.
- Remember, we begin and end in stillness.

## **Culmination / Sharing;**

- Students will pair and share with their partners their chosen pathway map and the way they sequenced the four symbols on their map.

## **Respond/Reflect & Analysis**

- On a sheet of paper splash four (4) words and four (4) phrases that describes today's experience for you. (One (1) minute)

## **Cool Down:**

- *Stand in stillness. See the symbol flash across your mind. Take a deep breath in, which causes your rib cage to expand or extend. See the extension symbol flash across your mind. Breathe out or flex as you exhale. See the flexion symbol flash across your mind. Walk slowly around the room. As you walk see the travelling symbol flash across your mind. Stop where you are, and when you are ready you may depart from the space quietly.*

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Three

### Warm-Up:

- General class warm-up

### Introduction of Theme:

- *When we think of shapes what kinds of visions come to mind?*
- Allow students the opportunity to articulate their responses.
- *Do you think that it is possible to create shapes with our bodies? Why or why not?*
- *Today we are first going to explore creating shapes with our bodies, and then use shapes in our assignment.*

- This is the motif symbol for



a shape

Show students the symbol.

Can you make this symbol using your body?

Show me. Very good!

- Revisit previous day's symbols for



flexion,



extension,



stillness,



any traveling.

- *Let us further explore these symbols.*

### Exploration:

- In a guided improvisation, students will explore stillness, flexion, extension shapes, and traveling in a variety of directions, levels, qualities, timings and relationships.
- Using the teacher's map, the teacher will guide students through more improvisation reflective of the chosen pathway and the sequencing of the four (4) motif symbols studied in the previous lesson.

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Three *continued*

### Development / Elaboration:

- *We have just explored my chosen pathway and the sequencing of the symbols that I used. You are now going to do the same thing. You are going to create a movement sentence based on your own map and the way you sequenced the four (4) motif symbols on the map. You will have five (5) minutes to practice your dance.*



- Introduce students to the motif symbol for shape. any Still Shape
- After the five (5) minutes are up, instruct students to pair up with the previous day's partner.
- *Here is your task for today! You and your partner are going to create a place and a moment where your map and your partner's map will connect. Where both pathways connect, decide on what movement you will both do together at that point. For example, after Tamika discussed it with Dylan, they decided to connect their pathways in the middle. So they took their two maps and made them into one. Are there any questions? Well get to it! You will have ten (10) minutes to combine your maps and figure out what moves you will do together when you get to the point where the two maps intersect.*

### Task: 3

- Create a dance phrase along a personal pathway, based on the sequence of the motif symbols you used.
- Merge your pathway with that of your partner. Where the two pathways intersect create a movement that you do together.
- Record your new "shape" motif symbol where the two pathways intersect.

### Culmination / Sharing;

- Two sets of paired students will perform their dance phrase at the same time.

### Respond/Reflect & Analysis

- On a sheet of paper splash four (4) words and four (4) phrases that describes today's experience for you. (One (1) minute)

### Cool Down:

- *Stand in stillness. See the symbol flash across your mind. Take a deep breath in, which causes your rib cage to expand or extend. See the extension symbol flash across your mind. Breathe out or flex as you exhale. See the flexion symbol flash across your mind. Walk slowly around the room. As you walk see the traveling symbol flash across your mind. Stop where you are, and when you are ready you may depart from the space quietly.*

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Four

### Warm-Up:

- General class warm-up

### Introduction of Theme:

- *Good morning/afternoon, students. Today we are going to create our own autobiographical poem. We will then use our autobiographical poem to create a dance.*
- *Take a look at the chart paper. It has a prescribed recipe that we will use to write our autobiographical poem. Let us go through the recipe to understand the steps you will take to write your autobiographical poem.*
- *Line one (1) - write your first name; Line two (2) – write three (3) adjectives that describe you; Line three (3) – three (3) things you like/enjoy doing;; Line four (4) – three (3) choreographers that inspire you; Line five (5) – three (3) fears; Line six (6) – three (3) favorite subjects; Line seven (7) – two (2) things you wish to accomplish in dance class; and your last name on line eight (8).*
- *After you create your poem, draw a small self-portrait in the box provided that expresses the essence of your poem as a visual image.*

### Exploration:

- Give each student a copy of the handout. Allow students the opportunity to write their autobiographical poem. Approximately 8 – 10 minutes to complete the autobiographical poem.
- *Now that you have completed your autobiographical poem and drawn your self portrait, you will have four minutes to create a dance inspired by your autobiographical poem. Be sure to explore the rich essence of your poem. Exploring the use of space and levels in your dance will give you more movement choices and enhance your movement expression.*

### Development / Elaboration:

- Each student will be instructed to create a five (5) minute dance inspired by their autobiographical poem as music is being played in the background. Students are informed that when the music has finished that signifies the completion of the five minutes and the assignment.
- Students will be instructed as followed: *Now that you have created your dance inspired by your autobiographical poem, you are going to try to repeat the dance exactly as when you did it to music. Now I want you to do the same dance without music. You will have the same amount of time as you had the first time – five (5) minutes. Remember to try to recreate the dance as closely as possible to the original.*
- After the five minutes are up continue to scaffold the lesson by instructing students as follows: *Now you are going to repeat the dance again with music. However, this time you are going to condense your dance to two (2) minutes.*
- Upon completion of the previous assignment students will then be instructed to condense the dance even more to 30 seconds.
- Once students have condensed their dance to thirty (30) seconds, instruct them to condense their dance to ten (10) seconds, which are ten counts.
- *Now create a beginning shape for the beginning of the dance and an ending shape that you will end in that will finalize your dance. Begin by saying your first name when you begin the dance; choose one word from your autobiographical poem to verbalize or say anytime during your dance and say your last name when you hit your final shape.*

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Lesson 4 *continued*

## Culmination / Sharing;

- *Now find your personal space in the studio. Get into your beginning shape and when the music begins, you will begin your ten (10) count dance. Remember to begin by saying your first name when you begin the dance; choose one word from your autobiographical poem to verbalize or say anytime during your dance and your last name when you hit your final shape.*

## Respond/Reflect & Analysis

- *What motif symbols would you use to record the movements in your dance? Draw them vertically on a blank sheet of paper in the order in which you performed them, starting at the bottom of the page and moving toward the top of the page.*
- *Write four (4) sentences that sum up today's experience for you.*

## Cool Down:

- *Students will be directed to melt slowly from their final shape to the floor and take deep breaths in and out.*
- *Turn to the person next to, in front of or behind you and share with them your autobiographical poem.*

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Five

### Warm-Up:

- General class warm-up

### Introduction of Theme:

- *Over the past several lessons, we have we learned about ourselves, our community and the role we play in our community. You have explored answers to these questions through movement, motif symbols, poetry, visual arts – map and self portrait picture. Today you will work in groups and combine a variety of what we explored over the past several lessons to create a dance.*

### Exploration:

*Create a dance that addresses the following:*

- Awareness – solos based on autobiographical poem and map
- Addressing – acknowledging the existence of others in your group
- Nearness – moving closer to others
- Connecting – create interesting ways to connect with each other.
- Supporting – create interesting ways to support each other.

### Development / Elaboration:

- Explore one of the following choreographic devices: Canon, ABA, Rondo,

### Culmination / Sharing;

*In a round robin format, each group will perform their dance. Respond/Reflect & Analysis:*

- *What dance elements did you notice in the dances performed by your peers? What movement choices were used? How was space used? What kinds of relationships between the dancers were used? Which choreographic device(s) did each group use?*
- *How did their use of the elements we have explored – awareness, addressing, nearness, connecting and supporting – communicate meaning to you? (be specific)*
- *How is what you have experienced in this unit applicable to other areas of your life?*
- *Do you feel that we accomplished our goal of creating a dance community? Why or why not?*

### Cool Down:

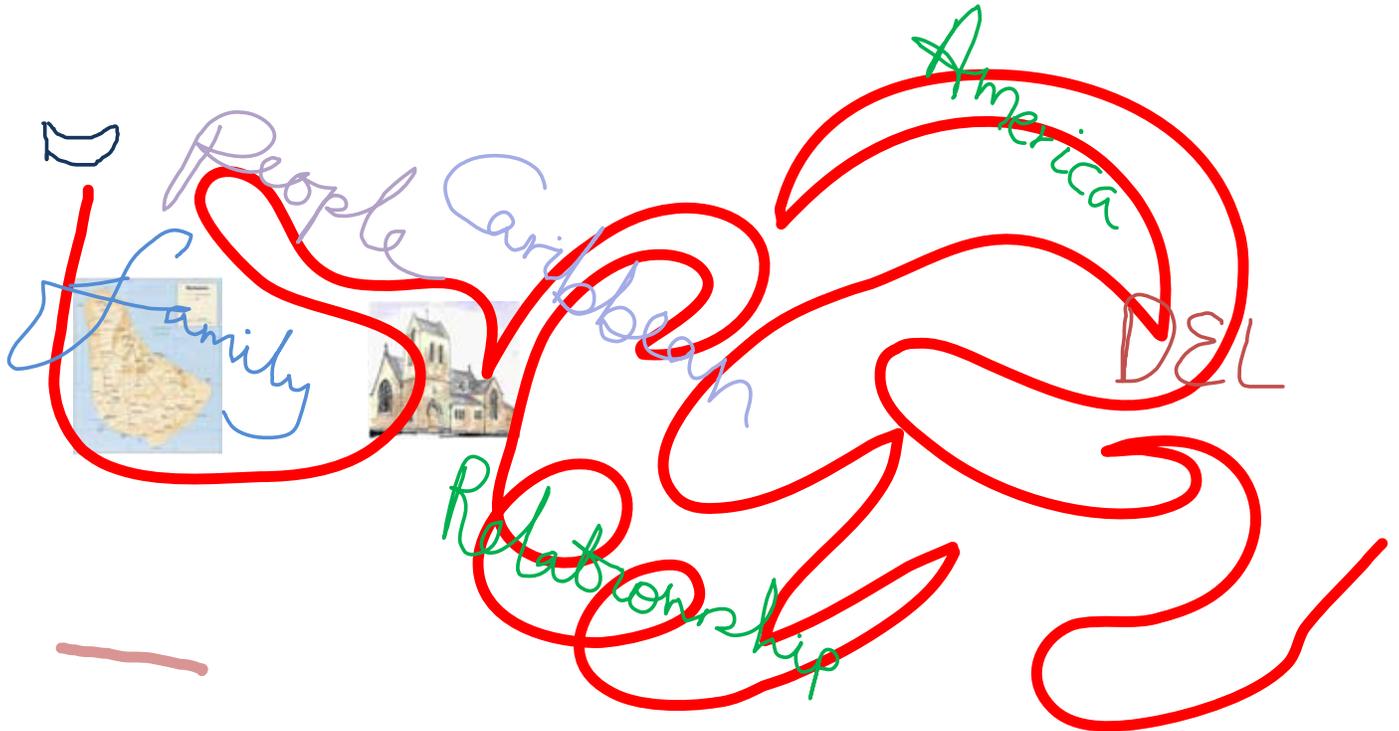
- Students will be directed to melt slowly from their final shape to the floor and take deep breaths in and out.
- *Turn to the person next to, in front of or behind you and share with them what you learned from this unit.*

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Life Map

MR. E. Brathwaite Life Map

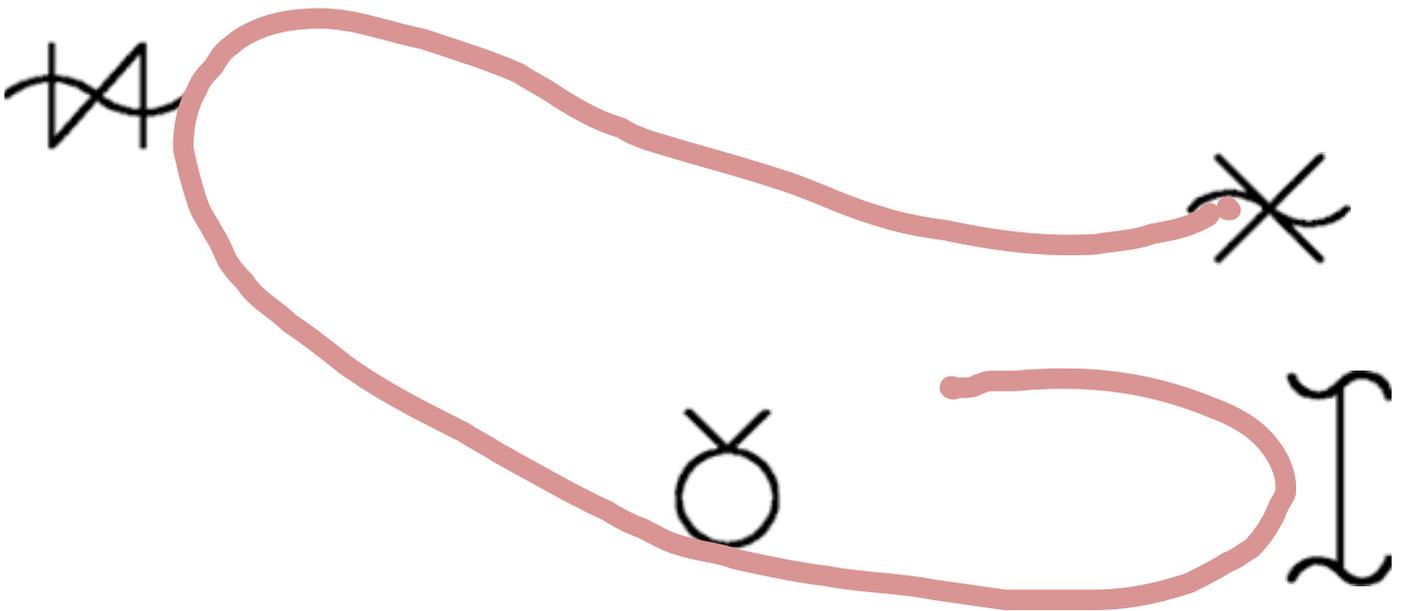


Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

*Life Map continued*

## Mr. E. Brathwaite's Favorite Part of His Life Map



### Task # 1:

Create a movement sentence utilizing the motif symbols as you see fit. You may arrange them in any order. You are expected to use all four of the symbols.

- Begin in a shape
- Place the four motif symbols in order of performance.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

STOP! Did you include levels (high, middle, low)? Did you use space (curve, straight, zigzag)?

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Live Map *continued*

## Task # 2:

Select your favorite part of your map. You may draw that chosen pathway on a new sheet of blank paper.

- Place each of the four motif symbols along the pathway that you drew.
- Remember, we begin and end in stillness.

STOP! Did you include levels (high, middle, low)?

## Task # 3:

### Part I

- Revisit your life map.
- Draw your favorite part of the map on blank paper placing the motif symbols as you see fit along the map.
- Practice the pathway of your map, incorporating the actions associated with the motif symbols.

### Part II

- Now that you are familiar with the movement associated with your pathway, merge your pathway with that of your partner. Where the two pathways intersect create two movements

that you both do together ending in a final



- Record your new motif symbol where the two pathways intersect.

STOP! Did you include levels (high, middle, low)?

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

Autobiographical Poem

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

Write your autobiographical poem and create a dance reflective of your poem. Movement must explore: Flexion, Extension, Travelling, Shape and Stillness. At the beginning of your dance say your first name, and say your last name at the end.

**Draw a  
self-portrait**

Line 1	First Name:
Line 2	3 adjectives that describe you
Line 3	3 things you like/enjoy doing
Line 4	3 favorite choreographers
Line 5	3 fears
Line 6	3 favorite subjects
Line 7	2 things to accomplish in dance
Line 8	Last Name

Unit:

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Self Portrait in My Community

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Test # 1 Motif Symbols

Write the terms associated with each of the symbols:

1. 	
2. 	
3. 	
4. 	
5. 	
6. 	

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Lesson Task(s) Checklist

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson/Grade	CRITERIA
Lesson 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Submitted and completed Lesson One (1) task sheet</li><li>Worked cooperatively with peers</li><li>Performed movement task with commitment and accurately followed the prescribed recipe</li></ul>
Lesson 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Submitted and completed Lesson Two (2) task sheet</li><li>Compiled journey map</li><li>Appropriate use of motif symbols</li><li>Working and interacting with peers</li></ul>
Lesson 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Created dance phrase based on favorite pathway including motif symbols, merged favorite pathway with partner</li><li>Create movement and shape where pathways intersect</li><li>Recorded motif symbols on new map; reflection submitted</li></ul>
Lesson 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Completed autobiographical poem and self-portrait</li><li>Created a 10 count movement phrase - shape, first name, dance, shape, last name</li></ul>

4/√+	Exemplary	3/√	Accomplished
2/√-	Developing	1/-	Beginning

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit:

# Dance is Community... Community is Dance

## Performance Task Grade Sheet

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Grade	• CRITERIA
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Clear beginning shape(s)</li><li>■ Clear articulation of the first and last names</li></ul>
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Awareness, Address, Nearness, Contact, and Support into shape clearly evident</li><li>■ Evidence of community building - self community</li></ul>
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Impactful performance with clear intent and movement fully embodied</li><li>■ Performed with commitment, honesty and focus</li></ul>
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Fluid execution of LOD and LMA concepts discussed</li></ul>
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Accurately uses motif symbols to convey the essential idea; written clearly; reader-friendly</li></ul>
▼	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Reflection assignment was submitted on time; neat; clean; typed; thorough</li></ul>
➡	• OVERALL GRADE (100 - 55 range)

4	Exemplary	3	Accomplished
2	Developing	1	Beginning