



Bill T. Jones Video Dance Lesson

Middle School/High School

Brief Description

Students will use the life and work of Bill T. Jones as a take-off point to respond to dance, identify movement and transition ideas, research a specific period of Western modern dance history, and use the video as a template to create a video dance virtually - either alone or with others. Identity, gesture, accumulation

Enduring Understanding - Choreographers use many inspirations for dances. We are connected through space and time. As dance is experienced, all personal experiences, knowledge, and contexts are integrated and synthesized to interpret meaning.

Essential Question - How can we create connection? How does our personal identity influence our dances?

MN Standards

Respond/Connect/Create

Choreographic Overview

- Create a study based in response to your knowledge of Bill T. Jones
- Collaborate to decide on a theme inspired by your research on Bill T. themes and your personal identity work
- Use photos, research, and Bill T. inspired shapes and devices
- Practice your study, perform, and give and receive feedback.

Choreographic Task

- Choose a common theme from the list of Bill T. Jones themes based on identity location work or research
- Use at least three "Bill T." shapes from the photo board
- Optional - use a recurring Bill T. device - canon, accumulation, or personal text
- Create an opening and closing

Process / Steps

Step 1 (Respond Standard)

Watch video - Bill T. Jones' "D-Man in the Waters" at least four times:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZg_q3CDNOM



Answer the following reflection questions:

- What stood out to you?
- Identify movement qualities.
- What did you notice? What did it remind you of?
- The choreographer is using the ideas of choreographic concepts - sequencing, canon, gesture, and repetition. Where do you see these?
- What are your ideas on these concepts?

Step 2 (Create/Perform Standard)

Do a “Name Game” gesture warm up.

Each student creates a gesture for their name.

All students repeat the gesture.

Do it in sequence. Place students in small groups. Do it in canons.

Repeat this later with accumulation exercise.

Step 3 (Connect Standard)

Research Bill T. Jones.

Who is he? Where did he study? Where is he based?

What is his work about? What controversies surround his work? (Find an artist statement by the choreographer for this)

Cite your sources.

Step 4 (Create Standard)

Introduce the choreographic devices of accumulation and de-accumulation.

Identify gestures/shapes from the accompanying dance photos.

In small groups, students can create a study using these shapes/gestures by demonstrating accumulation, de-accumulation/sequencing/canon.

Step 5 (Connect)

Read this article or excerpts of the article (depending on grade level):

<https://newyorklivearts.org/download/engage-licensing-baldwin-on-DMan.pdf>

Students reflect:

- What did you notice?
- What was a major influence on Bill T. Jones’ choreography at the time of “D-Man in the Waters”?
- What other topics influenced his work over the years?



Read the overview of his most recent piece referenced below. Use this link to read about other works, or share this overview of his most recent work:

<https://newyorklivearts.org/btj-az-company/past-repertory/>

Students create a list of topics that influence their own work.

Step 6 (Create and Connect)

Create your own “Bill T.” inspired video dance with a small group in the class.

Use a theme related to your life from a list of topics generated in the step above.

Use gesture and sequencing.

Use accumulation, de-accumulation, and repetition.

Use chat or Google Hangout to discuss your options.

Questions to ponder:

How will we connect visually? How will we upload? Edit? How will we make decisions? What does artistic success look like in this video? What is our theme?

Step 7 (Create)

Share with another group and teacher online. Use the chat function for feedback. All students must respond to at least two other video dances.

Step 8

Incorporate feedback. Draft a statement regarding feedback use.

Step 9

Revise. Draft artist statement. Share.

Reflection Questions for Step 1

- *What did you notice?*
- *Briefly describe the dance - how many dancers, where was it performed, what were they wearing? What was the sound? What were the design elements?*
- *Describe the movement and choreographic ideas.*
- *What did it remind you of?*



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Assessment Criteria:

Complete responses
Use of dance language
Accurate research on choreographer
Innovative ideas for video dance
Draft of dance using gesture, accumulation, etc.
Respectful feedback for other dances
Justification for use or non-use of feedback
Revision
Artist statement

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Please contact Mary Harding at Mary.harding@pcae.k12.mn.us with questions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

tra-mon-tane adjective \trə-'män-,tān, ,tra-mən-' \ 1. *traveling to, situated on, or living on the other side of a mountain; latin transmontanus "beyond the mountains"*

Analogy/Dora: Tramontane is the first installment in a trilogy titled *The Analogy Trilogy*. The work is based on an oral history Bill T. Jones conducted with 95-year old Dora Amelan, a French Jewish nurse and social worker around 2002. Amelan's harrowing, touching and inspirational story is broken into approximately 25 episodes that become the basis for choreography and songs. These episodes chronicle her early life in Belgium, her mother's death as the Germans were marching into Belgium, and her experiences working at an underground Jewish organization in Vichy, France's internment camps Gurs and Rivesaltes. Here is a portrait of the ability to persevere and survive.

Conceived and Directed by Bill T. Jones

Choreography by Bill T. Jones with Janet Wong and the Company

Text based on an oral history conducted by Bill T. Jones with Dora Amelan