



# MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

*Applause Series* CURRICULUM GUIDE  
CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES

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March 4, 2011



## Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of *The Martha Graham Dance Company*. As a dancer and choreographer, Martha Graham pushed the limits, broke the rules, and in doing so, created a uniquely American style of dance. The resulting impact she made on generations of artists is immeasurable. Today, her company continues her legacy by sharing her iconic works

and embracing her legendary spirit of creativity, passion, and artistry. To see them perform is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

We thank you for sharing this very special experience with your students and hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a wide variety of discussion questions and activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs. We have indicated grade level ranges on each of the included Activities and Discussion sections, but you should also feel free to adapt any of the activities in this study guide as you feel will be appropriate and meaningful for your students.

See you at the theater,

Civic Center Education Team

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## GUIDE CONTENTS

**About the Civic Center**  
Page 3

**Going to the Theater and Theater Etiquette**  
Page 4

**Civic Center Field Trip Information for Teachers**  
Page 5

**About the Performance**  
Page 6

**About the Company and Founder, Martha Graham**  
Page 7

**About the People Behind a Dance Production**  
Page 8

**About the Art of Dance**  
Page 9

**Modern Dance and the Graham Technique**  
Page 10

***I am a Dancer: Excerpt from Martha Graham's Autobiography***  
Page 11

**Spotlight on *Appalachian Spring***  
Pages 12-15

**Vocabulary**  
Page 16

**Dance in the Classroom**  
Page 17

**Activities and Discussion**  
Grades 4-12: Pages 18-19  
Grades 9-12: Page 20

**Resources and Sources**  
Page 21

This study guide was compiled and written by Karoline Myers; edited by Michelle McDonald and Eric Olmscheid. Adapted from study guide materials by the Martha Graham Dance Company and the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

# ABOUT THE CIVIC CENTER



The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines is a cultural landmark of central Iowa and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities. The Civic Center has achieved a national reputation for excellence as a performing arts center and belongs to several national organizations, including The Broadway League, the Independent Presenters Network, International Performing Arts for Youth, and Theater for Young Audiences/USA.

Five performing arts series currently comprise the season— the Willis Broadway Series, Prairie Meadows Temple Theater Series, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Family Series, the Dance Series, and the Applause Series. The Civic Center is also the performance home for the Des Moines Symphony and Stage West.

The Civic Center is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. Through its education programs, the Civic Center strives to engage patrons in arts experiences that extend beyond the stage. Master classes bring professional and local artists together to share their art form and craft, while pre-performance lectures and post-performance Q&A sessions with company members offer ticket holders the opportunity to explore each show as a living, evolving piece of art.

Through the Applause Series— curriculum-connected performances for school audiences— students are encouraged to discover the rich, diverse world of performing arts. During the 2010-2011 season, the Civic Center will welcome more than 37,000 students and educators to 12 professional productions for young audiences.

**Want an inside look? Request a tour.**

Group tours can be arranged for performance and non-performance dates for groups grades 3 and above.

Call 515-246-2355 or visit [civiccenter.org/education](http://civiccenter.org/education) to check on availability or book your visit.

## DID YOU KNOW?

More than 250,000 patrons visit the Civic Center each year.

The Civic Center opened in 1979.

The Civic Center has three theater spaces:

- *Main Hall, 2745 seats*
- *Stoner Studio, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Main Hall.

Nollen Plaza, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a park and amphitheater that is also part of the Civic Center complex. The space features the Brenton Waterfall and Reflection Pool and the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for the 15th anniversary season!

# GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



## YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

## THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage—they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

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\*GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.



# CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



**Thank you for choosing the Applause Series at the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.**

## ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP

- Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
- After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your **invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.**
- Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. **Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks** prior to the date of the performance.
- The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
- Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
- Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
- Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

## DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

- Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Turn onto 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and head south.
- Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
- Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
- Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with the Civic Center Education staff.

## ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. You may enter the building through the East or West lobbies; a Civic Center staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you.
- Civic Center staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
- Seating in the theater is general admission. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may determine a group's specific location in the hall.
- We request that an **adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group**; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.

## IN THE THEATER

- In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Main Hall performances.
- We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to their bus(es).
- If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

### QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Education department at 515.246.2355 or [education@civiccenter.org](mailto:education@civiccenter.org). Thank you!

## THE REPERTOIRE... ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



Katherine Crockett and Blakely White-McGuire in Martha Graham's "Diversion of Angels." Photo by Sara D. Davis.

In this 60-minute performance for school audiences, the Martha Graham Dance Company will lead students in a brief introduction to Martha Graham and her technique. During the performance, they will share from four different works performed or created by Martha Graham. Review the following descriptions about the four featured pieces prior to seeing the performance. What seems to be at the center of each piece?

### **SERENATA MORISCA**

Choreographed by Ted Shawn  
Reconstructed by Martha Graham  
First Performance – 1916  
Performed by Martha Graham 1921-1925

*Serenata Morisca* is a strong example of early American modern dance. Graham immediately attracted attention in the early 1920s while dancing this solo in her first professional appearances. In this dance, the dancer portrays a girl who is a favorite of a king of Shah.

### **LAMENTATION**

Choreographed by Martha Graham  
First Performance – 1930

Graham described this four-minute solo as a dance of sorrows. All movement is generated from the torso while the dancer remains seated on a low bench. The dancer is encased in a tube of stretchy, knitted fabric. The diagonals and tensions formed by the dancer's body struggling within the material create a moving sculpture, which presents the very essence of grief. The figure in this dance is neither human nor animal, neither male nor female: it is grief itself.

### **DIVERSION OF ANGELS**

Choreographed by Martha Graham  
First Performance – 1948

*Diversion of Angels* is about the joys and occasional pains of being in love. The dance shows three couples, each one representing a stage of love – flirtatious love, passionate love, and mature love. It does not tell a story but instead communicates the "interior landscape of the heart."

### **APPALACHIAN SPRING SUITE**

Choreographed by Martha Graham  
First Performance – 1944

*Appalachian Spring* introduces a young pioneer couple in the mid-1800s who are beginning their married life by settling the land and building a home on the vast American frontier. The dance can be seen simply as a story about a young couple taking on the future together. It can also be seen as a reflection of the American pioneer spirit – hopeful, independent, and determined – supported by the American dream (as represented by the Pioneering Woman) and American faith (represented by the Preacher and his Followers).

*Appalachian Spring* is regarded as one of Martha Graham's most iconic works. It was scored by Aaron Copland, and the set was designed by Isamu Noguchi. To learn more specifically about *Appalachian Spring*, see pages 12-15 of this guide.

THE ARTISTS...

## ABOUT THE COMPANY & FOUNDER, MARTHA GRAHAM



Martha Graham and *Mirror (Torso)* (detail) by Noguchi, from *Hérodias*, 1944-45. Photograph by Cris Alexander.

### MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

**Founded in:** 1926

**Number of Dancers:** 20

The Martha Graham Dance Company has been a leader in contemporary dance since its founding in 1926. Founded by pioneering dancer and choreographer Martha Graham, the Company brings to life a timeless and uniquely American style of dance that has influenced generations of artists and continues to captivate audiences around the world.

**“The body never lies.”**

**-Martha Graham**

### MARTHA GRAHAM

Born in 1894 in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Martha Graham is recognized as one of the most influential artists of the 20th Century. She single-handedly defined contemporary dance as a uniquely American art form and created a dance technique that has been compared to ballet in its scope and magnitude.

In developing her technique, she experimented endlessly with basic human movement, beginning with the most elemental movements of contraction and release. Using these principles as a foundation, she built a vocabulary of movement that would “increase the emotional activity of the dancer’s body.” Her dancing and choreography exposed the depths of human emotion through movements that were sharp, angular, jagged, and direct.

During her long career, Graham created 181 masterpiece dance compositions and collaborated with and commissioned work from the leading visual artists, musicians, sculptors, and fashion designers of her day. Her work

also influenced generations of choreographers and dancers, including Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp. Graham strongly believed that dance reveals the spirit of the country from which it comes, and her choreography is tied to the rhythm of American life and focuses on the themes of human emotion, frailty, and perseverance. Her work also addressed challenging social, political, and emotional issues—making her work relevant for audiences both past and present.

Graham was the first dancer to perform at the White House and was later granted the United States’ highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1998, *TIME Magazine* named her the “Dancer of the Century.”

She died of pneumonia in 1991 at the age of 97. Graham continued to choreograph up until the end of her life. At the time of her death, she was in the process of choreographing a piece for the Olympics in Barcelona. Today, her legacy lives on through her wonderful Company and internationally acclaimed School.

## THE TEAM...

# ABOUT THE PEOPLE BEHIND A DANCE PRODUCTION



Tadej Brdnik, James A. Pierce III, Maurizio Nardi, and Fang-Yi Sheu in "Pagarlava Variation" by Bulareyaung Pagarlava. Photo by Costas.

A ballet is a theatrical piece of dance which requires many different components—ranging from the first concepts for the piece to the actual performance. To bring these different components together, many people must work behind the scenes in order to create the final product you see on stage.

### CHOREOGRAPHER

The choreographer is the person who creates the steps and who will rehearse the dancers in the specific parts they will dance on stage. The idea for a ballet may be taken from a book, play, painting, piece of music, personal experience or other inspiration.

### REHEARSAL DIRECTOR

The rehearsal director will catalog the steps and rehearse the dancers once the choreographer has finished the work.

### DANCERS

Professional dancers train for years. Once they are accepted into a company, dancers must learn all of the choreography of the company's repertoire. After learning each piece, they must continue to practice to keep the piece as strong as it was originally intended to be.

### COSTUME DESIGNER

The costume designer will design costumes that reflect the mood and ideas of the choreographer. Costumes must be solid and durable, but lightweight and completely unrestrictive. They must also maintain their original shape and color and be able to withstand cleaning. In modern and ballet, costumes are often form-fitting, allowing the audience to see the detailed shapes made by the dancer's body.

### SET DESIGNER

If the choreographer wishes to have a set built for the ballet, a set designer will be called in. He or she will help create a mood for the ballet through color, line, and form. The set designer must take into consideration the size of the stage, offstage space, sightlines from the audience, and how much time there is to make a scenery change.

### LIGHTING DESIGNER

The lighting designer is in charge of designing the lights that will set the mood for the ballet. In most theaters, there will be between 50 to 200 lighting instruments that can be set from levels 0% (darkest) to 100% (brightest) on a computerized lighting board.

### PRODUCTION MANAGER

The production manager oversees all aspects of moving the production into the theater. This involves lining up a technical crew to load in all the lighting equipment, sets, costumes, props, and sound equipment.

### STAGE MANAGER

The stage manager will use a headset to call the lighting cues, instruct the crew members when sets should be moved, call the dancers to the stage for their entrances, and help set the dancers in their places prior to the curtain going up.

### THE AUDIENCE

That's right! There can be no performance without you, the audience. You are a collaborator in the performance just like the dancers, creative team, and backstage crew.

### Discussion Questions for Before the Performance

What is dance?  
Who dances?  
Why do we dance?

Page adapted from "Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance: Port Washington Teacher Guide."



# AN INTRODUCTION... ABOUT THE ART OF DANCE



Oliver Tobin, James A. Pierce, Lloyd Knight, and Kerville Jackin Martha Graham's "Clytemnestra." Photo by Costas.

## THE NATURE OF DANCE

Before there was a word for dance, people were moving their bodies in rhythmic patterns. Dance is often used as a way to express how one is feeling and to socially connect with others. People around the world use dance to mourn, celebrate, worship, honor, heal, demonstrate power, and to entertain. Dance can be a window into the nuances of cultures and time periods.

Dance and rhythmic movement can often be used as a nonverbal way of communicating with other human beings on a social level. Dance can be used to communicate a story to an audience, it may have a purpose, message or specific idea, or it could simply be communicating a visual effect.

Performed as a solo, duet, or group, dance can be improvised, choreographed or a combination of both. Movement that is created spontaneously or within the moment that it is being performed is improvised. Choreographed dances are a planned sequence of movements that utilize the form and structure of dance.

## ELEMENTS OF DANCE

Dance is the movement of the human body through space in time using energy. Dancers use movement to express emotions, stories, ideas, and beliefs. The five elements of dance include: body, action, space, time, and energy. It is important to understand each element as they come together to create the whole.

**BODY** refers to the awareness of specific body parts and how they can be moved in isolation and combination.

**ACTION** refers to locomotor movement and non-locomotor movement.

Locomotor action includes movement that travels through space such as walking, running, jumping, and leaping.

Non-locomotor or axial action refers to movement with body parts while the main part of the body stays planted in one space. Examples of non-locomotor action are swaying, shaking, stretching, and twisting.

**SPACE** refers to the space the dancer's body moves through, the shape of the dancer's body, the direction of the body movements, and the shapes, levels and movement patterns of a group of dancers.

**TIME** is applied as both a musical and dance element which includes beat, tempo, accent, and duration.

**ENERGY** refers to the force applied to dance to accentuate the weight, attack, strength, and flow of a dancer's movement.

Explore ACTION, TIME, and SPACE by using the 'Dance in the Classroom' exercises on page 17.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

1. Set some collective rules of behavior while the group is moving. These can include keeping hands and feet to yourself, etc.
2. Start each part of the activity by demonstrating a movement before asking students to participate.

Page adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts' "Understanding Dance" materials.

DIGGING DEEPER...

# MODERN DANCE AND THE GRAHAM TECHNIQUE



Jennifer DePalo in Martha Graham's "Sketches from 'Chronicle.'" Photo by Costas.

## WHAT IS MODERN DANCE?

During the early twentieth century, dancers and choreographers began to rebel against the strict rules of traditional ballet. They wanted more freedom to express emotions and ideas. Two of the first American dancers to do this were Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis in the 1920s. Their unique approaches to dance began a new era, in which dancers created works about personal experiences, using their own gestures rather than the steps of ballet.

Modern dancers use dancing to express their innermost emotions. Before creating a dance, the modern dancer decides which emotions to try to convey to the audience. Many modern dancers choose a subject near and dear to their hearts, such as a lost love or a personal failure.

### Characteristics of modern and contemporary dance:

- Bare feet
- Floor work
- Emphasis on gravity
- Emotional expression

## GRAHAM TECHNIQUE

Martha Graham developed a unique technique based upon the expressive capacity of the human body. The movement language of Martha Graham is based on the following key ideas:

- The body has a natural way of expressing itself and "The body never lies."
- The way we move reveals what we are really thinking and feeling.
- Emotion is revealed by the breath – like when we laugh or cry – and all Graham movement (like all emotion) emanates from the center of your body.
- The key to movements are contraction and release – which are based on the mechanics of breathing.
- The physical and the emotional are deeply connected. To truly communicate, a movement must have both.
- Graham's technique is a system of communication. It is not simply impressive technical feats nor is it simply interesting designs in space.

## CONTRACTION

*Exhalation motivates the torso*

A sob, laugh or sigh, each is really just a big exhale, where the body folds in on itself – a contraction. These exhales may be short and sharp (like a laugh or shout), long and slow (like a sigh), or full (like a sob).

## RELEASE

*The body expands and the energy is released or projected out.*

Inhalation motivates many different types of releases, depending on what you are trying to communicate. The body fills, expands, and projects energy. If a contraction is like the recoiling of a snake, the release is when the snake strikes.



All Graham technique is based on contraction and release. Image courtesy of voiceofdance.com.

Page adapted from "Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance: Port Washington Teacher Guide."

## IN HER OWN WORDS...

# I AM A DANCER by Martha Graham

I am a dancer. I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which comes shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit. One becomes in some area an athlete of God.

To practice means to perform, in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired.

I think the reason dance has held such an ageless magic for the world is that it has been the symbol of the performance of living. Even as I write, time has begun to make today yesterday – the past. The most brilliant scientific discoveries will in time change and perhaps grow obsolete, as new scientific manifestations emerge. But art is eternal, for it reveals the inner landscape, which is the soul of man.

Many times I hear the phrase “the dance of life.” It is an expression that touches me deeply, for the instrument through which the dance speaks is also the instrument through which life is lived — the human body. It is the instrument by which all the primaries of life are made manifest. It holds in its memory all matters of life and death and love. Dancing appears glamorous, easy, delightful. But the path to the paradise of the achievement is not easier than any other. There is fatigue so great that the body cries, even in its sleep. There are times of complete frustration, there are daily small deaths. Then I need all the comfort that practice has stored in my memory, a tenacity of faith.

It takes about ten years to make a mature dancer. The training is twofold. First comes the study and practice of the craft which is the school where you are working in order to strengthen the muscular structure of the body. The body is shaped, disciplined, honored, and in time, trusted. The movement becomes clean, precise, eloquent, truthful. Movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul's weather to all who can read it. This might be called the law of the dancer's life — the law which governs its outer aspects.

Then comes the cultivation of the being from which whatever you have to say comes. It doesn't just come out of nowhere, it comes out of a great curiosity. The main thing, of course, always is the fact that there is only one of you in the world, just one, and if that is not fulfilled then something has been lost. Ambition is not enough; necessity is everything. It is through this that the legends of the soul's journey are retold with all their tragedy and their bitterness and sweetness of living. It is at this point that the sweep of life catches up with the mere personality of the performer, and while the individual becomes greater, the personal becomes less personal. And there is grace. I mean the grace resulting from faith — faith in life, in love, in people, in the act of dancing. All this is necessary to any performance in life which is magnetic, powerful, rich in meaning.

In a dancer, there is a reverence for such forgotten things as the miracle of the small beautiful bones and their delicate strength. In a thinker, there is a reverence for the beauty of the alert and directed and lucid mind. In all of us who perform there is an awareness of the smile which is part of the equipment, or gift, of the acrobat. We have all walked the high wire of circumstance at times. We recognize the gravity pull of the earth as he does. The smile is there because he is practicing living at that instant of danger. He does not choose to fall.

At times I fear walking that tightrope. I fear the venture into the unknown. But that is part of the act of creating and the act of performing. That is what a dancer does.



From Martha Graham's autobiography, [Blood Memory](#), as appears on [marthagraham.org](#).

## SPOTLIGHT ON...

# APPALACHIAN SPRING, pg. 1



Virginie Mécène in Martha Graham's "Appalachian Spring." Photo by John Deane.

*Appalachian Spring* introduces a young pioneer couple in the mid-1800s that are about to begin their married life by settling the land and building a home on the vast American frontier. The dance can be seen simply as a story of the young couple taking on the future together. It can also be seen as a reflection of the American pioneer spirit – hopeful, independent, determined, and supported by the American dream (the Pioneer Woman) and American faith (the Preacher and his Followers).

In the following pages, read more about Martha Graham's motivations for creating *Appalachian Spring*, the characters in the dance and their relationship to American history, and about the collaborators Aaron Copland (music) and Isamu Noguchi (set) whose contributions helped make *Appalachian Spring* one of the most iconic works in the history of dance in America.

## MARTHA GRAHAM'S MOTIVATIONS FOR CREATING APPALACHIAN SPRING

### Historical Motivations

This dance was created in 1944 in the midst of the raw and destructive days near the end of World War II. During wartime, artists often respond using their art in various ways to focus on the events at hand. Some use their art as a protest. Others use their art as a way to help people hold onto hope and to remind them that the world could be different and better. *Appalachian Spring* was Martha Graham, Aaron Copland, and Isamu Noguchi's artistic statement confirming the winning strength of the American spirit. Their message focused on the fact that despite difficult adversity, the future holds the pioneering courage that has always defined the builders of this country as eager and ready to go forward to face and conquer the unknown.

### Personal Motivations

*Appalachian Spring* was created at a time in Martha Graham's personal development when she was committed to exploring her own heritage as a third generation American looking for her roots. In the dance itself, the character of the Pioneer Woman was based on her own pioneering grandmother. Martha cast herself as the bride because at that time in her life, she was just discovering herself in a deeply rewarding relationship with the original dancer who played the Husband, Erick Hawkins.

**Although it did not last, Graham went on to marry Erick Hawkins in 1948. Together, they originated the roles of Bride and Husband when *Appalachian Spring* premiered in 1944.**

Page adapted from "Martha Graham and the American Experience."



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

# APPALACHIAN SPRING, pg. 2



Katherine Crockett in Martha Graham's "Appalachian Spring." Photo by John Deane.

## CHARACTERS

### Husband-

strong, practical, determined, full of plans for the future, proud of his home, ready for new experiences

### Bride-

joyous, hopeful, eager to begin her new life, not afraid to go forward into the unknown

### Pioneer Woman-

wise and maternal, reassuring, supporting the dreams of the couple, blessing the enthusiasm of the Preacher and Followers

### Revivalist Preacher-

self-assured, righteous, inspiring devotion and fear, warning his congregation about evils and sin

### Followers-

reverent and awe-struck, spellbound by the preacher, eager to do the right thing and stay in line, conforming to what is expected

## THEIR HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

### Revivalist Preachers

Revivalist Preachers began their methods of conversion around 1735. They were able to convert large numbers of people by instilling fear, joy, or hope within their congregations through preaching and using repetitive music. The idea of using a similar form to the prayer service and repetitive music allowed the congregation to make subconscious connections to their previous religious experience where they had heard the music before, and to maintain an open state of mind while receiving the preaching. Through his forceful movement, the Revivalist Preacher in *Appalachian Spring* is successful in his approach to his Followers.

### Followers

Led by the Preacher, the four women in blue portray the conflicting ideas of freedom and conformity. Though their goal is freedom, the women are uncomfortable without a sense of conformity, and without someone to follow. This obedient dedication became a common theme of ultimate devotion towards religious leaders rising out of the immigration to America. Through the followers, Graham shows how much community and conformity were valued in the early religious societies of America.

### The Pioneer Woman

The Pioneer Woman maintains a sense of individuality in her movement and in her character. The Pioneer Woman represents a maternal and welcoming figure for the new couple. Dressed in red, her movement gives comfort and reassurance to the other characters and often contrasts both the Preacher and his followers. By creating a conflict between characters, Graham gives the new couple two obvious choices, conformity or individuality.

Page adapted from "Martha Graham and the American Experience."

## SPOTLIGHT ON...

# APPALACHIAN SPRING, pg. 3



Tadej Brdnik in Martha Graham's "Appalachian Spring." Photo by John Deane.

## THE MUSIC OF AARON COPLAND

Graham received a commission to create two new dances to be premiered at the Library of Congress. Part of the commission included funds for Graham to select composers to write the scores. Graham selected Aaron Copland to compose the music for *Appalachian Spring*.

When she approached him about writing the score for her new ballet, all Copland knew was that the ballet would deal with pioneering American themes. While writing, he simply called his score "Ballet for Martha." It was not until much of the score was written, that Martha Graham suggested to call it *Appalachian Spring*— a line she found in a poem called "The Bridge" by Hart Crane.

Copland's score "captures the essence of an ideal America, one of open fields and endless possibilities" (NPR). The score for *Appalachian Spring* was so notable and inspiring, that it received the Pulitzer Prize in music as an outstanding tribute to the American spirit.

## "SIMPLE GIFTS"

At the core of *Appalachian Spring* is a wonderful musical folk theme which the composer, Aaron Copland, borrowed from the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts." The Shakers were a religious group that lived a very strict lifestyle. They dedicated their "hearts to God and hands to man" and displayed an astounding work ethic. "Simple Gifts" was a work hymn written in 1848.

Copland introduces the theme of "Simple Gifts" and then repeats it several times to highlight the folk nature underlying the entire dance. Although the words are not actually sung during the performance of *Appalachian Spring*, the lyrics (see right) of contain sentiments that relate to the image of the American spirit, past and present.

**Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was born in Brooklyn, New York. His musical compositions are performed throughout the world, and he is widely regarded as the quintessential composer of American music.**

### Refrain

*Tis the gift to be simple,  
Tis the gift to be free,  
Tis the gift to come down where  
we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the  
place just right,  
It will be in the valley of love and  
delight.*

### Verse 1

*When true simplicity is gained,  
To bow and to bend, we shall not  
be ashamed  
To turn, turn, will be our delight,  
'Til by turning, turning we come  
round right.*

### Verse 2

*Tis the gift to be loved and that  
love to return,  
Tis the gift to be taught and a rich-  
er gift to learn,  
And when we expect of others  
what we try to live each day,  
Then we'll all live together and  
we'll all learn to say,*

### Verse 3

*Tis the gift to have friends and a  
true friend to be,  
Tis the gift to think of others not to  
only think of me,  
And when we hear what others  
really think and really feel,  
Then we'll all live together with a  
love that is real.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON...

# APPALACHIAN SPRING, pg. 4

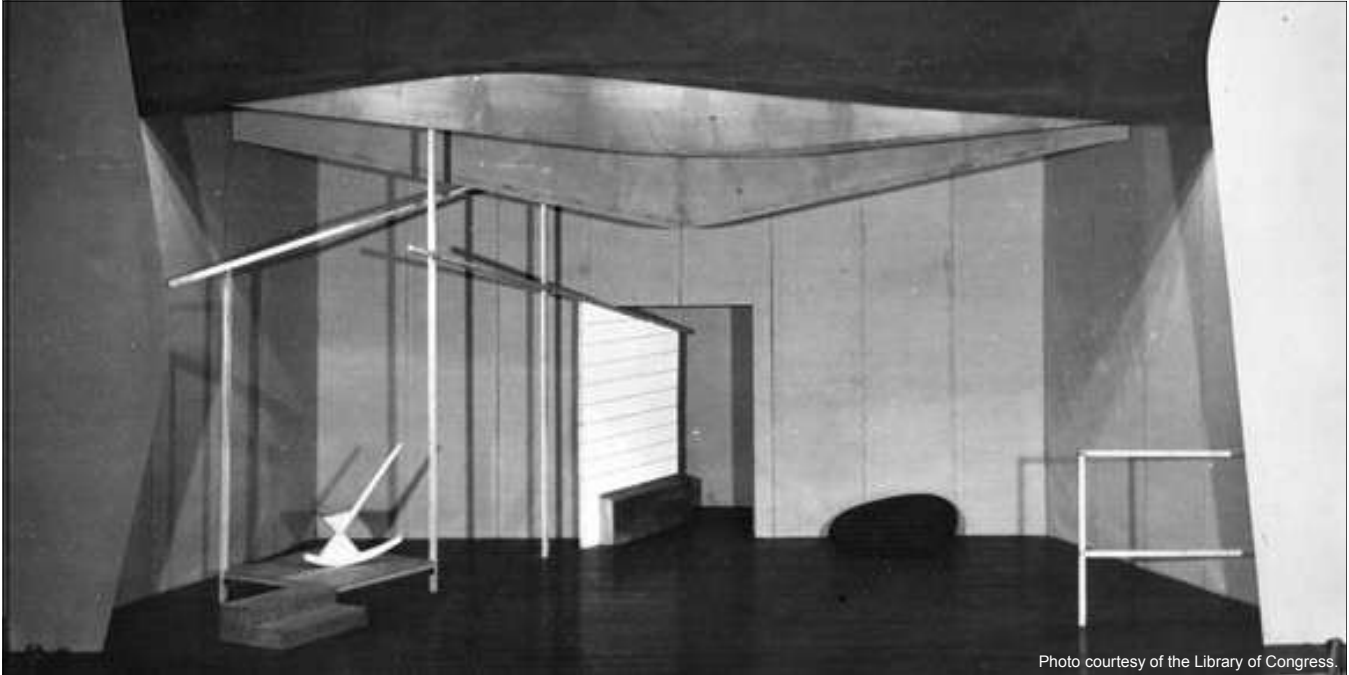


Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## THE SET OF ISAMU NOGUCHI

Martha Graham and sculptor Isamu Noguchi were close collaborators throughout their careers. Together, they revolutionized the art of set design for dance by replacing two-dimensional backdrops with the inclusion of three-dimensional sculpture objects.

Like most of his set design for Graham's dances, Isamu Noguchi's set for *Appalachian Spring* is sparse. It consists of:

- The suggestion of a house (a wide-open frame with one exterior wall)
- A bench along the wall
- Two steps up to a platform
- A rocking chair on the platform
- A large boulder
- A section of fence rail

## NOTES ON THE SET PIECES

### THE BENCH

Sitting on the bench is an illusion! The bench is only about six inches wide and has a distinct slant downward that can cause the dancer to slide off. To stay seated, the dancer must grip the bench with the thighs. This kind of "sitting" can be very exhausting.

### THE ROCKING CHAIR

The rocking chair designed by Noguchi also resembles a plow- a familiar sight on the frontier and a tool that was essential to America's westward expansion.

### THE FENCE RAIL

The fence rail suggests the boundary from the familiar to the vast unsettled land. The dancers expand the space created by Noguchi's set by gazing across the fence to the distant horizon – the frontier.

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## ABOUT NOGUCHI

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was born in Los Angeles. In his early childhood, Noguchi's mother took him to Japan to receive his primary education. At the age of fourteen, he returned to the United States to finish school. Many sources credit Noguchi's childhood for his incredible perception. Torn between two parents, two nationalities, and worlds, Noguchi learned to appreciate balance and conflict at a young age, which is visible within his sculpture and artwork. During his career, Noguchi created more than twenty sets for Martha Graham—each described as intercultural and abstract.

Page adapted from ARTSEEDGE "A Dancer's Journal: Martha Graham."

# VOCABULARY



Martin Lofsnes and Katherine Crockett in Martha Graham's "Acts of Light." Photo by John Deane.

**ballet:** a classical form of dance marked by grace, precision, and fluidity. Modern dance was created when dancers in the 20th century began to reject the strict rules of traditional ballet.

**choreographer:** an artist who creates the concept for a dance, composes the steps, and teaches the movement to the dancers.

**choreography:** the arrangement of movement in space and time. A series of moves usually set to music.

**commission:** to place an order for a new work of art. An individual or organization may choose to commission a musician, dancer, or other artist to create a new original work for a specific purpose or event.

**contraction:** an exhalation which motivates the torso, causing the body to fold in on itself.

**duet:** a dance performed by two dancers.

**energy:** the intensity, amount or force of the movement. Adjectives, such as explosive, smooth, free, restrained, wild, etc., describe some different types of energy that dancers can exhibit.

**floor work:** a sequence of exercises done at the beginning of a class or before a performance in sitting and lying positions on the floor in order to stretch and warm up the body

**improvisation:** the act of creating movement spontaneously or in the moment

**locomotor movement:** movement where the body travels through space such as walking, running, jumping, and leaping

**modern dance:** genre of dance that rejects the strict rules of ballet. Modern dance is rooted in the expression of emotion and ideas.

**non-locomotor movement:** movement of body parts while the main part of the body stays in one space. Examples of non-locomotor action include swaying, shaking, stretching, and twisting

**release:** an inhalation which fills the body and causes a projection of energy

**score:** the written music or sound that may be used for a dance.

**shape:** a formation or design created by the dancers with the lines of their bodies.

**space:** the whole design and use of the area in which a dance unfolds.

**solo:** a dance performed by a single dancer

**tempo:** the time, speed, or rhythm of the beats of a piece of music or the pace of any movement or activity.

**time:** a measurable period in which movement of dance occurs. Time is indicated in dance in many ways, ranging from complex rhythm patterns to long, unbroken stillness.

**unison:** the same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one dancer.

Vocabulary adapted from "Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance: Port Washington Teacher Guide."



# DANCE IN THE CLASSROOM: *before or after the performance, all ages*

## The Dancing Mirror

**Description:** Introduction to ACTION, one of the basic elements of dance through exploration of locomotor and non-locomotor movements.

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes

### Goals:

- Identify locomotor and non-locomotor action
- Develop basic dance vocabulary
- Practice types of action

### Materials:

- Students
- Open area
- Chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers

### Activity:

1. Write 'locomotor movement' and 'non-locomotor movement' on the board and read the descriptions of each from the elements of dance ACTION section on page 9.
2. Read through the examples of each type of action as a group and ask students to generate additional examples of each that can be listed on the board underneath the title of each type of action.
3. Ask the students to stand up and form a circle with you. Explain to students that they are to be your mirror image. If your hand moves, their hand moves. If your body sways, their body sways, etc.
4. Demonstrate a number of examples of action from the board and ask students to name whether the action is locomotor or non-locomotor movement as they mirror the action.
5. Ask students to form pairs and each take turns being the leader and the follower using both locomotor and non-locomotor actions.

### Discussion:

1. Describe how it felt to perform locomotor action.
2. Describe how it felt to perform non-locomotor action.
3. What was it like to lead your partner?
4. What was it like to follow your partner?
5. What did your movements remind you of, if anything?

## Grooving to the Beat

**Description:** Introduction to TIME and SPACE, two of the basic elements of dance, through beat creation and movement through space.

**Duration:** 30-45 minutes

### Objectives:

- Identify and create a beat
- Change tempo of beat and movements
- Move through Space to beat

### Materials:

- Students
- Open area

### Activity:

1. Ask the students to create a circle and clap 8 count beats while counting out loud: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
2. Explore variations in tempo by asking students to insert a word after each number such as 'Mississippi' for a slow tempo, 'art' for a fast tempo, or 'dancer' for a medium tempo. I.e. "one, Mississippi, two," etc.
3. Ask students to divide into two groups: A and B.
4. Ask group "A" to clap a beat using one of the tempo prompts from the previous step, while group "B" moves through the space by stepping on each beat. To give the walking purpose and character, you may want to ask students to move like a certain kind of animal as they walk, or as if walking on the moon, through water, etc.
5. Students in group "A" can experiment with different tempos, prompted by you, as students in group "B" change their movement to the beat.
6. Ask the two groups to switch roles.

### Discussion:

1. Describe the difference between moving to the beat and creating the beat by clapping. Was one more challenging for you? Why?
2. How did changing the tempo of the beat affect your group's movement?
3. Describe some of the ways that everyone moved through the space (stepping, high or low levels, etc.). What are some other ways that you might move through space to a beat?

\*DANCE IN THE CLASSROOM activities are adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

# ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION: Grades 4-12

## OVERVIEW

**Goal:** To learn more about the life of a dancer and collaboration between Martha Graham and other artists

**Curriculum Connections:** Social Studies, Literacy, 21st Century Skills

**Explanation:** In the following activities, students will conduct research related to Martha Graham and make connections to their own lives.

## BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

1. Have students visit the Kennedy Center's interactive website *A Dancer's Journal: Martha Graham* to learn more about the life and work of Martha Graham. There, students will learn about specific dances through the journals of Jordy Kandinsky, a (fictional) new member of the Martha Graham Dance Company. Jordy's journals contain letters, newspaper articles, checklists, photographs, video clips, and music that illuminate various aspects of the dances Jordy is learning. Provide students with 30-45 minutes to explore the website on their own. You may consider using the worksheet on page 19 to help guide their exploration and focus. After students have finished exploring the website, invite them to write a letter to Jordy about what they've learned, what questions they still have, or about their own dreams and how they plan to achieve them.

**Website:** <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/multimedia/series/AEMicrosites/martha-graham.aspx>

2. One of Martha Graham's motivations for creating *Appalachian Spring* was that she wanted to learn more about her heritage. She based the character of the Pioneer Woman on her grandmother as a way to honor her grandmother's experiences and spirit as a pioneer. Ask students to interview a relative about their own heritage. They may speak to a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, or any other family member. Questions they may consider asking include: Where did the family originate? If the family immigrated, when did they come to America? Do they know any stories about the journey or their new life? Are there ways the family stays connected to their heritage?, etc. After the interviews are completed, have students create a piece of art, a song, or a dance inspired by what they learned.

## AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

1. As a class define the term "collaboration." What does it mean to collaborate? What are the advantages of collaborating? What can be difficult about collaborating? Ask students to think of a specific example from their own lives when they have collaborated with a partner or team. When students have had a chance to reflect, review the information on pages 12-15 of this guide about Martha Graham's collaborative efforts with Aaron Copland and Isamu Noguchi. Thinking back to the performance, how did the collaboration between Martha Graham and Isamu Noguchi affect the dance *Appalachian Spring*? How did the collaboration between Martha Graham and Aaron Copland complement each other?

2. Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of the Martha Graham Dance Company's Performance to inform others about what they experienced. In the review they should describe with detail: what they saw; what they heard; how the dance performance made them feel; what the dance performance reminded them of; and what their favorite part was and why. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it as vividly as possible.

3. Emotion is at the center of modern dance. Ask students to pick an emotion they felt while watching the performance. Allow students to draw or write about the emotion using the following questions to guide their exploration:

- What does \_\_\_\_\_ look like?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ sound like?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ feel like?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ smell like?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ taste like?

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# A DANCER'S JOURNAL WORKSHEET

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For use with the Kennedy Center's interactive website *A Dancer's Journal: Martha Graham*, available at: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/multimedia/series/AEMicrosites/martha-graham.aspx>

## Martha Graham's Style

1. What did Martha Graham want to show in her new type of dance? How was breathing related to this?

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2. One of the articles tells you that Martha Graham's choreography "welcomes gravity and works with it." What do you think that means?

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## The Life of a Dancer

1. What are two ways dancers prepare for every role?

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2. What did you learn about the life of a dancer? How is it challenging?

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3. What questions would you like to ask Jordy?

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## The Dances

Choose one of the dances featured in Jordy's journals and answer the following questions.

**Dance:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What might have inspired Martha Graham to create this dance? What might be the dance's "message"?

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2. How do the choices of instruments, rhythms, and melodies in the music help communicate the dance's emotions?

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## Your Take

1. What were your favorite video or audio clips? Why?

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2. What experiences in your own life could be used as inspiration for a dance in the style of Martha Graham? What do you imagine it would look like?

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# ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION: Grades 9-12

## OVERVIEW

**Goal:** To explore dancers' influences and inspiration— both artistically and within a wider historical context

**Curriculum Connections:** Social Studies, Literacy

**Explanation:** Through research, writing, and discussion, students will explore key figures in the creation of modern dance and/or the historical context which influenced Martha Graham's creative process.

## BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Explain to students that modern dance was created in America when dancers and choreographers began to rebel against the strict rules of traditional ballet. They wanted more freedom to express emotions and ideas. A new movement in the world of dance was born. Divide students into small groups and assign them one of the following people who made major contributions to the development of modern dance:

Loie Fuller; Isadora Duncan; Ruth St. Denis; Martha Graham; Doris Humphrey; Ted Shawn; Louis Horst; Erick Hawkins; Paul Taylor; Merce Cunningham.

For their assigned dancer, have students conduct online research on: the individual's contributions to modern dance; who they were influenced by; whom they in turn influenced. Ask students to write a brief report about their assigned dancer. After reporting back to the entire class, have the class work together to create a timeline or chart mapping out the different dancers' connections to one another and their various contributions to modern dance.

2. Explain to students that Martha Graham's choreography often arose out of social, political, or historical issues. She used dance to respond to those different contexts. Either individually or in small groups, have students choose a piece by Martha Graham and conduct online research about its creation. Have students write a brief article about the piece that could appear in a playbill for a performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company. In the article, they should include information about when the piece was created, what it is about, and what was occurring in the wider world at the time that likely influenced Martha Graham during her creative process.

## AFTER THE SHOW

1. Modern dance is about conveying emotion, both through the body and through other elements such as costume, set, and lighting. Lead a class discussion about the mood of each piece that students experienced. What emotions was the Company trying to portray? How did they achieve this? Specifically, what types of movements did students see? What other elements of the design contributed to the mood of the piece?

2. Dance was at the core of Martha Graham's very being. In her autobiography, *Blood Memory*, Graham articulates what the identity of dancer means to her. Have students read "I Am a Dancer," found on page 11. Lead a class discussion on the piece. Guiding questions may include:

- What is practice? In terms of dance? In terms of living? How does this relate to your life and pursuits?
- Why has dance always been a part of the human experience?
- To Graham, what is the connection between the physical and the spirit? How does dance connect those two elements?
- What do you think of when you hear the phrase "the dance of life"?
- What does Graham mean by "movement never lies"?
- What is reverence? What does a dancer revere? A thinker?
- What is Graham trying to tell us about risk?
- Do Graham's musings in "I Am a Dancer" mean more to you after seeing the company perform? If so, how? Which aspects of the performance does it bring to mind?



# RESOURCES AND SOURCES



Gary Galbraith in Martha Graham's "Appalachian Spring." Photo by John Deane.

## CLASSROOM RESOURCES

### Print Materials

Garfunkel, Trudy. *Letter to the World: The Life and Dances of Martha Graham*. Collindale, PA: Diane Publishing Company, 1999.

Morgan, Barbara. *Martha Graham, Sixteen Dances in Photographs*. New York: Morgan and Morgan, Inc., 1980.

### Websites:

ARTSEEDGE: "A Dancer's Journal: Martha Graham."  
*ARTSEEDGE is a program of the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.*  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/marthagraham/shell.htm>

Martha Graham Dance Company  
<http://marthagraham.org/center>

The Noguchi Museum  
*Learn more about the sculptor who collaborated with Martha Graham on over 20 dances.*  
[www.noguchi.org](http://www.noguchi.org)

## STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

### Print Materials:

"Martha Graham and the American Experience"  
*Provided by the Martha Graham Dance Company*

"Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance: Port Washington Teacher Guide"  
*Provided by the Martha Graham Dance Company*

"The Martha Graham School Outreach: Student Information and Activities"  
*Provided by the Martha Graham Dance Company*

### Websites:

ARTSEEDGE: "A Dancer's Journal: Martha Graham."  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/marthagraham/shell.htm>

PBS. American Masters. "Martha Graham: About the Dancer."  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/martha-graham/about-the-dancer/497>

Martha Graham Dance Company  
<http://marthagraham.org/center>

NPR's Performance Today: "Appalachian Spring"  
<http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/milestones/991027.motm.apspring.html>

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts: Dance Study Guide Materials  
<http://www.ordway.org/>