

## Visual Imagery in Real Time

**Museum Connection:** Art and Enlightenment

**Purpose:** In this lesson students will familiarize themselves with the conditions of slaves on ships during the middle passage. Students will create movement that is inspired by their interpretation of verbal and visual cues collected from a guided museum tour or research done on at least two web sites.

**Alternative to field trip:** Students will read resource sheets and research at least two websites to investigate the passage of slaves from Africa to North America.

**Course:** Dance III, IV, and Company

**Time Frame:** One 90-minute class period (or two-45 minute periods). Add additional time to visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum or to go to the Computer Lab for students to use the internet.

**Correlation to State Standards:**

**Dance Indicators:**

The student will discuss the ways in which interpretations of dance may vary according to experience and environment. (DO I. Expectation B. Indicator 3)

The student will improvise dance phrases using a variety of stimuli, including ideas, feelings and emotions. (DO III. Expectation A. Indicator 1)

The student will improvise movement patterns/dance phrases individually and in groups. (DO III. Expectation A. Indicator 3)

The student will translate an idea into a theme, applying skills and knowledge from the language of dance into a compositional form (simple compositional form- ABA; variation forms- theme and variations; modern forms- introspective) (DO III. Expectation B. Indicator 1)

The student will apply aesthetic criteria when participating in the assessment of peer performance. (DO IV. Expectation A. Indicator 5)

**Objective(s):**

Students will analyze printed and spoken images found during a visit to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture in order to create a group movement using B.E.S.T Principles in dance.

**Vocabulary and Concepts:**

(Word or Concept)	(Definition)
Middle Passage	the journey from western Africa across the Atlantic to the Caribbean or the Americas, formerly undertaken by many slave ships
Visual Imagery	the images that are evoked by phrasing that includes descriptive word usage enabling the listener to paint a picture of the mind
Introspective Movement	movement based upon internal thoughts or feelings from the dancers perspective
Shackle	a round metal band that can be opened or locked in order to hold the wrist or ankle of a captive, usually attached by chains in pairs or fours
Lower passage	area of slave ship where the slaves were kept
Quarry	somebody or something that is chased or hunted by another
Interceptor	somebody or something that prevents people or objects from reaching their destination or target by stopping, diverting, or seizing them.
Heave to	to pull, push, lift, or throw something heavy by exerting great physical effort, especially in a concentrated or concerted burst with exertion.
Visage	somebody's facial expression.
Manacles	handcuffs or leg shackles; chains.
Fetters	shackles, chains, restraints, irons.
Aperture	opening, hole, gap, space.
Torpid	lacking physical or mental energy.
Ostentatious	marked by a flamboyant display designed to

	impress people.
BEST Principles	Principles for the elements of dance, Body, Energy, Space, and Time; all dances use these elements.

**Materials:**

**For the Teacher:**

Teacher Resource Sheet 1: "Aboard a Slave Ship, 1829," Eye Witness to History, [www.eyewitnesstohistory.com](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com) (2000).

Teacher Resource Sheet 2: Movement/Choreography Grading Rubric

**For the Student:**

Student Resource Sheet 1: "Aboard a Slave Ship, 1829," Eye Witness to History, [www.eyewitnesstohistory.com](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com) (2000).

Student Resource Sheet 2: Elements of Movement B.E.S.T. Principles

Student Resource Sheet 3: BEST Principles

Student Resource Sheet 4: Movement/Choreography Grading Rubric

**Web Sites:**

[www.eyewitnesstohistory.com](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com)

[http://americanabolitionist.liberalarts.iupui.edu/plantation\\_life.html](http://americanabolitionist.liberalarts.iupui.edu/plantation_life.html)

**Historical Background:**

Slave ships were the only form of transportation for early settlers to bring over slave laborers in the early 1800's. In 1807 the British Parliament passed a bill prohibiting the slave trade. In January of the following year, the United States followed suit by outlawing the importation of slaves. Although the acts did nothing to curtail the trade of slaves within the nation's borders, they ended the overseas slave trade. To enforce these laws, Britain and the United States jointly patrolled the seas off the coast of Africa, stopping suspected slave traders, and confiscating ships when slaves were found. The human cargo was then transported back to Africa.

Conditions aboard the slave ships were wretched. Men, women and children crammed into every available space, denied adequate room, food, or breathing space. The stench was appalling - the atmosphere inhumane to say the least. The Reverend Robert Walsh served aboard one of the ships assigned to intercept the slavers off the African coast. On the morning of May 22, 1829, a suspected slaver was sighted and the naval vessel gave chase. The next day, a favorable wind allowed the interceptor to gain on its quarry and approach close enough to fire two shots across her bow. The slaver heaved to and an armed party from the interceptor scrambled aboard her. We join Reverend Walsh's account as he boards the slave ship:

The first object that struck us was an enormous gun, turning on a swivel, on deck - the constant appendage of a pirate; and the next were large kettles for cooking, on the bows - the usual apparatus of a slaver. Our boat was now hoisted out, and I went on board with the officers. When we mounted her decks we found her full of slaves. She was called the *Feloz*, commanded by Captain Jose' Barbosa, bound to Bahia. She was a very broad-decked ship, with a mainmast, schooner rigged, and behind her foremast was that large, formidable gun, which turned on a broad circle of iron, on deck, and which enabled her to act as a pirate if her slaving speculation failed. She had taken in, on the coast of Africa, 336 males and 226 females, making in all 562, and had been out seventeen days, during which she had thrown overboard 55. The slaves were all enclosed under grated hatchways between decks. The space was so low that they sat between each other's legs and [were] stowed so close together that there was no possibility of their lying down or at all changing their position by night or day. As they belonged to and were shipped on account of different individuals, they were all branded like sheep with the owner's marks of different forms. These were impressed under their breasts or on their arms, and, as the mate informed me with perfect indifference 'burnt with the red-hot iron.' Over the hatchway stood a ferocious-looking fellow with a scourge of many twisted thongs in his hand, who was the slave driver of the ship, and whenever he heard the slightest noise below, he shook it over them and seemed eager to exercise it. I was quite pleased to take this hateful badge out of his hand, and I have kept it ever since as a horrid memorial of reality, should I ever be disposed to forget the scene I witnessed...

But the circumstance which struck us most forcibly was how it was possible for such a number of human beings to exist, packed up and wedged together as tight as they could cram, in low cells three feet high, the greater part of which, except that immediately under the grated hatchways, was shut out from light or air, and this when the thermometer, exposed to the open sky, was standing in the shade, on our deck, at 89'. The space between decks was divided into two compartments 3 feet 3 inches high; the size of one was 16 feet by 18 and of the other 40 by 21; into the first were crammed the women and girls, into the second the men and boys: 226 fellow creatures were thus thrust into one space 288 feet square and 336 into another space 800 feet square, giving to the whole an average Of 23 inches and to each of the women not more than 13 inches. We also found manacles and fetters of different kinds, but it appears that they had all been taken off before we boarded...

While expressing my horror at what I saw and exclaiming against the state of this vessel for conveying human beings, I was informed by my friends, who had passed so long a time on the coast of Africa and visited so many ships, that this was one of the best they had seen. The height sometimes between decks was only eighteen inches, so that the unfortunate beings could not turn round or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs...

### **References:**

Walsh, Robert. *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829* (1831).

<http://archive.org/stream/noticesofbrazili02wals#page/n7/mode/2up>

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/slaveship.htm>

## Lesson Development:

### *Motivation:*

#### At the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture:

1. Students will tour the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in order to write their reflections of visual and audio images as they experience them (key words, stories, quotes, and facts that they acquire while on the tour). If unable to visit the museum, students will use images from text, video, and/or the internet.
2. Students will compile these reflective thoughts into one workable written vocabulary and eventually use them in a phrase of movement.

#### In the classroom/studio:

1. Since this is a dance composition lesson that involves synthesis in the final product, the content is already strong. What might help to strengthen the lesson for teachers is to include strategies for guiding students through the process of study development. Example: Teacher will guide students through a movement exploration of the word “shackled,” with analysis of the elements of Body, Energy, Space, and Time (BEST).
2. Students will choose at least three words that stand out from their museum visit or their reading assignment. They will apply these words to a group movement and create a 40 count phrase /study based on the images from early slave life.

Example words to get them started:

Stacked sleeping quarters/shackled ankles/ cramped living quarters/ struggling for freedom, hunger, thirst etc.

3. Students will read historical background from **Student Resource Sheet 1: “Aboard a Slave Ship, 1829,” Eye Witness to History** and use descriptions, as well as their own interpretations, to help them in creating choreography with respect to specific visual and verbal cues.
4. Students will use **Student Resource Sheet 2: Elements of**

**Movement B.E.S.T. Principles** as a resource in helping them to fill-out **Student Resource Sheet 3: BEST Principles** chart in order to analyze and describe their movement choices.

***Assessment:***

Students will perform a group study for their peers in order to receive feedback and complete **Student Resource Sheet 4: Movement/Choreography Grading Rubric.**

***Closure:***

Lead a discussion on the assignment that includes students' reactions to the dances they see their peers creating and performing as well as what it was like to experience the vocabulary and concepts as a performer. What words did you choose? Why? What words did you see performed in which groups? How did it feel to interpret these words and concepts in your own body? How would you describe the movement quality of these interpretations? How can dance be used to express social issues? What types of issues would you like to explore through movement in the future? Ask students to write a reflection based on the above questions.

**Thoughtful Application(s):**

- This lesson could be used as an extension of Social Studies content exploration, related to the time of slavery.
- The lesson could be used to explore the elements of composition including the use of the written word as an impetus for choreography.
- The lesson could be used as a springboard for more in-depth work exploring social injustices and a means of expression. Dance as a means of expressing objection to social and political injustices/art as a means of personal expression.

**Lesson Extension(s):**

- Students may use peer feedback as well as teacher feedback to revise their choreography, and present it again.

- As homework, students may be asked to choose a new visualization, related to a social injustice or otherwise, to analyze, and to use as inspiration for choreography.

## Teacher Resource Sheet 1

### “Aboard a Slave Ship, 1829,” Eye Witness to History

Slave ships were the only form of transportation for early settlers to bring over slave laborers in the early 1800's. In 1807 the British Parliament passed a bill prohibiting the slave trade. In January of the following year, the United States followed suit by outlawing the importation of slaves. Although the acts did nothing to curtail the trade of slaves within the nation's borders, they ended the overseas commerce of them. To enforce these laws, Britain and the United States jointly patrolled the seas off the coast of Africa, stopping suspected slave traders, and confiscating ships when slaves were found. The human cargo was then transported back to Africa.

Conditions aboard the slave ships were wretched. Men, women and children crammed into every available space, denied adequate room, food, or breathing space. The stench was appalling - the atmosphere inhumane to say the least. The Reverend Robert Walsh served aboard one of the ships assigned to intercept the slavers off the African coast. On the morning of May 22, 1829, a suspected slaver was sighted and the naval vessel gave chase. The next day, a favorable wind allowed the interceptor to gain on its quarry and approach close enough to fire two shots across her bow. The slaver heaved to and an armed party from the interceptor scrambled aboard her. We join Reverend Walsh's account as he boards the slave ship:

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But the circumstance which struck us most forcibly was how it was possible for such a number of human beings to exist, packed up and wedged together as tight as they could cram, in low cells three feet high, the greater part of which, except that immediately under the grated hatchways, was shut out from light or air, and this when the thermometer, exposed to the open sky, was standing in the shade, on our deck, at 89°. The space between decks was divided into two compartments 3 feet 3 inches high; the size of one was 16 feet by 18 and of the other 40 by 21; into the first were crammed the women and girls, into the second the men and boys: 226 fellow creatures were thus thrust into one space 288 feet square and 336 into another space 800 feet square, giving to the whole an average of 23 inches and to each of the women not more than 13 inches. We also found manacles and fetters of different kinds, but it appears that they had all been taken off before we boarded...

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## Teacher Resource Sheet 2

### Movement/Choreography Grading Rubric

Movement/Choreography	Possible Points	Self Evaluation	Teacher Comment
Creation of Original Movement	5 points		
Clear Portrayal of message, Inclusion of visual image from tour	5 points		
Professionalism and focus	5 points		
Preparation for performance	5 points		
Clear explanation of motivation behind movement during discussion	5 points		
TOTAL	25 points		

**Key:**

5 Points	The work demonstrates a <b>clear</b> understanding of action and concepts
4-3 Points	The work demonstrates a <b>basic</b> understanding of action and concepts
2-1 Points	The work demonstrates <b>little evidence</b> of understanding and concepts

## Student Resource Sheet 1

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## **Student Resource Sheet 2**

### **Elements of Movement B.E.S.T. Principles (Body, Energy, Space and Time)**

#### **BODY**

Shapes: Angular, Curved

#### **ENERGY**

Force and Quality of Movement

Sustained: smooth, continuous  
traces an arc or curve

Percussive: explosive, sharp  
defying gravity

Vibratory: trembling, shaking  
energy

Swinging: movement

Suspended: hovering,

Collapsing: release of

#### **SPACE**

Levels: high, medium, low

Direction: pathways through space

Exits and Entrances

#### **TIME**

Tempo: fast or slow

Beat: moving with the beat or against the beat

Accent: making one movement stronger or larger

## Student Resource Sheet 3

### BEST Principles

Write the words that you have chosen for your movement study in the left hand column. Describe how you are using the BEST Principles in your composition related to Body, Energy, Space, and Time in the appropriate spaces.

Vocabulary Word	Body	Energy	Space	Time

## Student Resource Sheet 4

### Movement/Choreography Grading Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Movement/Choreography	Possible Points	Self Evaluation	Teacher Comment
Creation of Original Movement	5 points		
Clear Portrayal of message, Inclusion of visual image from tour	5 points		
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**Key:**

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