The Story of Swan Lake

HISTORY CURRICULUM GUIDE

• The story of Swan Lake takes place in a fictional kingdom, ruled by a king and queen. This kind of government is called a “monarchy,” defined as an undivided rule by a single person. There are a few places today that still have absolute monarchies, though most have evolved.
• Here’s a brief article on royalty. Other forms of government include constitutional monarchies (as in Canada), democracies, dictatorships, and constitutional republics, such as the United States.
• Read this article from Scholastic to learn more about forms of government.
• Have fun exploring Ben’s Guide to U. S. Government which teaches about our form of government. Different levels of information and activities assure understanding by all ages.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Here is a list of picture books (fictional and nonfictional) about kings and queens. And you might enjoy this book from Usborne (amazon.com).
• The Medieval time period was one known for its royalty, castles, and peasants. Find out more about this time period with these books (amazon.com)

ACTIVITIES

• Check out this word list from Enchanted Learning. All of these are related to castles, kings and queens. Choose ten that you don’t know and look them up in the dictionary. Make a word search or crossword puzzle with these words.
• Choose one or more of these great kings and queens from history and write a report: King Tut (Egypt), Alexander the Great (Roman
Empire), Catherine the Great (Russia), Henry VIII (England) and Queen Elizabeth II (England).

- Check out this website with king and queen paper dolls to print and create

**BALLET**

- King Louis the 14th of France - King Louis was a dancer himself and established the first ballet school, employing Italian-born composer Jean-Baptiste Lully. Lully was the first influential composer of French opera, as well as being King Louis’ favorite composer and his pick for ballet works. Lully is, sadly, famous for stabbing his foot while conducting, an injury which later caused his death due to gangrenous infection.
- Here is a biography of Lully with a list of his compositions and here are a couple of paintings of Lully. Quite the hairdo, isn’t it? (Probably a wig, like most men in the royal court wore). See the music section for excerpts from Lully’s ballets.
- Louis XIV was known as the Sun King, the nickname coming from his role as Apollo in a court ballet. The King danced in many ballets in his time. Here are some portraits of Louis XIV. Royalty often hired artists to paint them in various events and poses. From the artwork you can see how richly Louis lived!
LET’S LEARN ABOUT SWANS!

- Swans are big beautiful white birds with black bills and feet. Learn about tundra swans at this website and trumpeter swans here.
- Did you ever wonder how birds can fly? We know they have feathers, which no other animals have, and hollow bones, which make them light. But the true secret to birds’ ability to fly is a concept called “The Bernoulli Principle”, which has to do with air movement and air pressure. Watch this quick video to see something air pressure can do with a ping-pong ball, and this video explanation of the Bernoulli Principle.

ACTIVITIES

- Here is a pdf lesson plan that explains the Bernoulli principle and includes an experiment and project. Here’s another experiment you can do to demonstrate this principle.
- Here’s a fun project that demonstrates air pressure with a balloon hovercraft.

CROSSBOWS

- In our story, the prince gets a crossbow for a gift and goes out to hunt with it. Crossbows were a huge step up in weaponry when they were first invented in China. Watch this video to find out more about crossbows.
- Leonardo da Vinci designed a giant crossbow to be used in wars. Take a look at this picture! Could you imagine if one of those were ever made and used? Learn a bit about Leonardo da Vinci here.

ACTIVITIES

- Make your own crossbow with household objects. Follow the directions on this website or this one. Set up small targets in the backyard and see how you do! Make sure you use safety procedures so no one gets hurt.
• Design your own invention, label it, and share with it your class, teacher or family. Explain what it would be used for, and who would use it.

FITNESS & NUTRITION
• Ballet dancers must be in excellent physical shape. They are very conscious of their diet and nutrition, as well as the importance of keeping physically fit. Ballet takes a lot of energy, hard work and practice! Let’s learn about fitness and nutrition...
• Nutrition- what we eat is important to maintain a healthy body. Here are some games, websites, and coloring pages to teach you more about how to eat well: coloring pages; Blast off; Nutrition games; Food Pyramid- explore how to eat healthy!
• Keeping fit with exercise is the other piece to the healthy body puzzle. Explore these places to learn more about keeping fit: Kidnetic is a great website with tons to explore related to fitness for kids!
• The Presidential active lifestyle challenge.
GEography CURRICULUM GUIDE

(Here’s an interactive mapmaker page to use for all of your geography work!)

RUSSIA
• Russia, the home of composer Piotr Illyich Tchaikovsky, lies partly in Europe and partly in Asia. It is the largest country in the world.
• Enchanted Learning has plenty of activities and projects including map work, flags, and language.
• Here’s a lesson on the Russian language, which uses a Cyrillic alphabet.
• Older children can explore this timeline of Russian culture.
• Learn more about the Kremlin, the historic central fortified complex in Moscow. Explore this website and then draw pictures of some of these interesting structures.
• Here is a list of children’s books about Russia from Amazon.

FRANCE
• Ballet is a French form of dance formalized during the time of King Louis XIV. Let’s learn about France! You can start by visiting this website.
• Find out more about King Louis XIV’s enormous residence, the Palace of Versailles, at this website. The Interactive Map on the right sidebar is especially interesting!

ACTIVITIES & GAMES
• Print out this map of France. Get out an atlas and label the capital (Paris), the neighboring countries, major rivers and bodies of water, and geographical features that are important.
• France is also on the continent of Europe. Purchase and play the game “10 Days in Europe” to learn more about, and practice, your European Geography. You can also play this free online game to test your European Geography knowledge.
• Here is a French game called Petanque. Play it with your friends!
• Print out the flag and color it in. France has red, white and blue in their flag just like we do. Read about the meaning of the colors in this article. Not everyone agrees what the colors mean!
• France is famous for its elegant and creative cuisine. Explore this website and find a couple of recipes to try. Make a full French meal, including appetizer, main course, and dessert. Listen to Debussy or Ravel CDs while you eat!
• Here is a list of children’s books set in France including When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit- a wonderful chapter book about a German Jewish family that has to escape Hitler’s rule. They eventually end up in France and learn the language and culture
Swan Maidens appear in differing forms and with different labels in fairy tales and legends from around the world. Usually in these stories they are “shape-shifters” and can change back and forth from swan to human form, though they are often limited as to when they can change, just like in “Swan Lake”.

This is a link to swan maiden stories from around the world, including Sweden, Romania and Japan.

ACTIVITIES

• Make up a story about a king and queen and something that happens in their kingdom. Maybe there is a dragon terrorizing their land, or a terrible wizard casts a spell on the princess or prince.
• Write a play to go along with the story; dress up, make a set, and perform the play for your class, family or friends.
• Make puppets and put on a puppet show of the story you wrote.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Rent The Swan Princess, an animated movie version of Swan Lake.
• Read aloud The Trumpet of the Swan by E.B White, it’s a classic! (amazon.com)
• Read the story of The Ugly Duckling. (amazon.com)
ART CURRICULUM GUIDE

• Edgar Degas is perhaps most famous for painting ballerinas in performances and rehearsals. He painted many other subjects, but his ballet works have always been his most popular. Here are two websites to explore and learn more about Degas and his ballet paintings, go here to learn about Degas’ sculpture “Little Dancer, Age 14”.

• Henri Matisse was a French artist who also created some paintings of dancers (see them here and here). What words would you use to describe each artist’s rendering of dancers? Compare and contrast them using your observations of colors, style, composition, etc.

ACTIVITIES

• Later in life, Matisse turned to cutting and collage to create art due to failing health. Here are two lesson plans for art projects inspired by Matisse’s collage art: Deep Space Sparkle and Art House

• Ballet has five basic foot positions. You can find them here and try them out yourself! Some require great flexibility and balance!

• Here are some swan coloring pages and a basic watercolor project of a ballerina to try on your own!
MUSIC CURRICULUM GUIDE

BALLET MUSIC
• Read a little about Jean-Baptiste Lully, King Louis XIV’s favorite court composer, in the history curriculum guide. He was a master of the French Baroque style, even though he was originally from Italy. Watch this excerpt from “Entree d’Apollon” (Entrance of Apollo) which is a section of dance that would have been performed by Louis XIV.
• In addition to Swan Lake another of Tchaikovsky’s ballets is the Nutcracker, perhaps the most well loved ballet of all time. Tchaikovsky himself did not like his music all that much; he was his own worst critic! Learn about the Nutcracker and Tchaikovsky here.
• Try to find a performance of the Nutcracker in your town at Christmas time. Often they will have shortened educational shows appropriate in length, even for young children. Here’s an article with tips on bringing a child to the ballet.

ACTIVITY
• Here are a few other musical excerpts from ballets by different composers. Which do you like best? Are there any you don’t like at all? Why or why not?
• Ravel, “Bolero”
• Stravinsky, “The Rite of Spring” Can you imagine dancing to this? Stravinsky was very cutting edge and pushed the boundaries of music and dance.
• Copland, “Appalachian Spring”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
• NYC BALLET
MATH CURRICULUM GUIDE

Royal balls were very big, important events. There would have been a lot of people gathered to hear the prince announce his choice for a bride!

QUESTIONS

• If there were 500 people at the ball and 30% of them were single women hoping to be chosen, 40% of them were older noblemen and women, 15% of them were servants, and the rest were young men of the kingdom, how many of each group were there?
• If each guest had 19 appetizers and at the end of the ball there were 125 left, how many did the chef make overall?
• If the ball began at 3:30 p.m. and the last guest left at 1:20 a.m. the next morning, how long did the party last?

GAMES

• Castle Defense game at Cool Math 4 Kids
• Computation Castle game
• Castle Destroyer geometry game
• Multiplication castle fact practice
• Learn to play chess- a game of kings and queens, conquest and surrender. And great for the mind! Here is an online chess game.
• Chess for Kids (This link includes rules of play and printable, make-your-own chess board and pieces.)

Answers to above math problems: 150 single women, 200 older men and women, 75 servants, 75 young men; 9625 appetizers made overall; the ball was 9 hours and 50 minutes long.