

Embodied Expressions: Exploring Paul Taylor's Dance Masterpiece, Promethean Fire

Art Form: Dance • Other: Math

DESCRIPTION:

This lesson is a movement exploration inspired by the choreographic work Promethean Fire by Paul Taylor Dance. As a modern dance choreographer, Paul Taylor utilized a variety of movement styles that were joyful, athletic, and lyrical and like contemporary visual art, focused on shape, form, and expression. Using improvisation and the elements of dance, you will explore abstract shape and contrast dynamics to create a movement phrase that exemplifies the unique and dynamic style of Paul Taylor Dance.



RECOMMENDED AGE(S):

Grades 4th-12th

TIME TO COMPLETE:

20-30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ▶ Open space
- ▶ Internet Access

Link: youtu.be/OECjfV_eu7U

Music: Opus Number: 116

Music: J.S. Bach

WHAT YOU DO:

Activity: Movement Search

Promethean Fire encompasses all the dance elements: body, energy, action, space, and time. Using the link provided, watch the clip of Paul Taylor Dance performing Promethean Fire. Look for movements that resemble the following:

- ▶ Power
- ▶ Flight
- ▶ Courage
- ▶ Disaster
- ▶ Progress
- ▶ Hope

Pay attention to, or write down the time stamp on the video, so that you can go back and view the movement again if needed. Notice how the emotion or theme is expressed by the dancers through their bodies. Log the movement you find for each word by drawing, writing, or trying it out at home. You can choose as many movements as you like.

Where a dancer travels in space is an important design element. Just like math, *pathways* are used in dance to create patterns in the air or on the floor. These can be straight lines, zig-zags, circles, figure eights, and spirals.

Shapes can be curved, straight, angular, twisted, wide, narrow, symmetrical, or asymmetrical. They can be geometric designs, such as circles or diagonals, or literal shapes such as tree branches or bird wings.

Record your findings, drawing the pathway or shape.

If describing your movement with words, pay attention to the conceptual or abstract shapes that represent an idea such as, courage, sadness, strength. What does the shape or movement resemble?

Example: "Prometheus powerfully sprang into the air with his arms outstretched in opposite directions, like a bird taking flight."

If you record yourself trying out the movement, remember to focus on creating the shapes you see and use contrasting dynamics.



Example:

- ▶ A curved torso versus a straight torso
- ▶ Fluid arms versus angular, stiff arms
- ▶ An open shape versus a closed shape
- ▶ Symmetry versus asymmetry
- ▶ Grounded, heavy movement versus light, springy movement

Next, create a movement phrase of your own, inspired by Promethean Fire, for each of the following:

- ▶ An 8 count phrase about *power*
- ▶ An 8 count phrase about *disaster*
- ▶ An 8 count phrase about *hope*
- ▶ An 8 count phrase about *progress*

You can experiment with the elements of dance, changing the level, time, space, and energy.

Questions to ask yourself:

What does it look like to speed up your phrase? Slow it down? Perform it facing a different direction? Try it backwards, or just use the upper or lower half of your body. As you experiment with the movement, consider how you can transition from one phrase to the next phrase, so they all tie together. Give your movement a beginning and an end.

Optional: When you have choreographed your 32-count phrase, upload your video. Scan the code or use the following link: <https://bit.ly/48zXUO3>

**HOW YOU CAN SHARE:**

Remember to take a pic of your creation and share it via our social media, which is at the bottom of this page, and tag it **#artworksanywhere**.

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▶ StarTech.com ▶ Sara Roberts Foundation