

## CULTURAL DANCE- Afro Haitian Dance

K-5

**Objective:** Students will be exploring global culture through dance, and will be able to demonstrate an expanding interest and knowledge of cultural art forms originating with indigenous traditions around the world.

**Topics & Keywords for Discussion:**

**Choreograph:** to design a series of movements for a dance.



**Opening Discussion: USE A MAP or a GLOBE!**

Haiti was the only nation in the western hemisphere to end slavery as part of its declaration of independence (1803) — therefore ensuring true independence for all people. Part of the island Hispaniola, Haiti is a Caribbean island nation that is considered part of the African diaspora, which means the people of Haiti are considered part of the spread of African people across the globe. Enslaved Africans, brought to the islands to work on vast plantations, carried customs and drumming traditions with them. Over time, customs blended and became new music and dance. These dances are often polyrhythmic, which means dancers move to multiple competing rhythms in the music. The dances are sometimes polycentric, with different parts of the body moving at the same time. As important as music is to the Haitian people, dance is a vital way for Haitians to express, heal, evoke, and celebrate life.

**Materials:** Speaker or amplifier, Afro-Haitian drumbeat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8BxFVZ45v8> (1:30) or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgCQq37yyHI> (2:10)

**Opening Activity:** BUILD a Stretch Sequence- have students stand in a circle, and have each student demonstrate their favorite stretch. Notice if there are ANY parts of the body left out, and demonstrate 1 or two stretches that fill in for getting that body part ready for dance. Then, reorder students in the circle to create a sequence of stretches incorporating each student's favorite stretch, and have EVERYONE go through the sequence and repeat each stretch, in order, in time together as a group. Run through the sequence 2 times.

**Core Activity:** Demonstrate 4 steps of Afro Haitian Dance: 1. Two Step 2. Two Step with Turn. 3. Wave Body Step. 4. Sideways Cross step (High and Low). After teaching students these steps, divide students into 4 small groups and instruct them that they will be creating a choreography that uses all 4 of these steps to the drumbeat. They can choreograph the movements in any order they like, and each student can add 1 step of their own at the end. Give groups 10-20 minutes to design their choreography and then let each group perform 1 at a time. Make sure all students practice appropriate audience techniques while watching their fellow members perform.

**Reflection:** What challenges did you face in designing the group choreography? Is it easier to choreograph for just yourself- why or why not?