

## CULTURAL DANCE- Polynesian 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.



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

Most well-known Polynesian dances are from the islands of Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand and Samoa. Where in the world are these islands found? The most commonly known form of Polynesian dance is from the island of Hawaii. Hula is actually the Hawaiian term for “dance,” and is usually characterized by its slow and graceful hips and hands. The fast, high-energy dancing with drumbeats is from the island of Tahiti. The islands of New Zealand have several dances performed through chants and implements. Finally, from the islands of Samoa, there are many exciting and high-energy dances, or siva as they are known in Samoan. The Siva Afi, or fireknife dance, is a dance performed by spinning a knife that has been set on fire, and is often a highlight for most luaus.

**Materials:** Speaker or amplifier, Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwRv3HJoHD8>

**Opening Activity:** Life in the Polynesian and Asian-Pacific Islands is really driven by the waves! Let’s make a big class wave line: everyone stand in a big circle and hold hands, and let students know that you will be generating the wave and sending it around the circle. Whether the wave starts LARGE or SMALL, it will get smaller and smaller as it travels around the circle back to you.

**Core Activity:** Dances of the Polynesian island have a few similarities, notably the back and forth movement of the hips. This can only be generated from softened, bent knees and a slightly lowered, yet upright posture: demonstrate this with the students, almost like they are about to sit down in a chair! This dance is a Hawaiian style dance. The feet will remain the same for the entire dance: step, point-touch; step, point-touch; step, together, step, point-touch, and then repeat: step, point-touch; step, point-touch; step, point-touch; step, together, step, point-touch. The real variation and response to music comes from the arm movements. Let’s learn the finger wave: holding your hands flat, scrunch up at the palm/knuckles and wave out toward the fingers. This movement might be a challenge, do your best! You can finger wave to the side, to the upper diagonal, lower diagonal for each two step. For the three step, roll your arms above your head. Young men can keep their hands in fists at their waist or flattened arms to elbows in front of the chest. Also, mimic the lyrics, looking out to the horizon as your dance as indicated in the song.

**Reflection:** So far, a lot of the dances we’ve learned have been the result of the mixing and blending of different cultures as people migrate- moving across the globe. The culture of the Polynesian islands has not really changed or blended with other cultures but instead persists throughout the years, often resisting outside elements. Why do you think that is? Most well-known Polynesian dances are from the

islands of Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand and Samoa. Where in the world are these islands found? Do you think the distance between these islands has anything to do with their cultural evolution?