

Lesson Plan: What does it mean to be a Citizen Mover?

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Unit/Lesson Concept: *What does it mean to be a Citizen Mover? Case Study: Josephine Baker*

Essential Questions:

1. *Who was Josephine Baker?*
2. *What was Josephine's movement vocabulary?*
3. *What was Josephine's signature movement language?*
4. *What made Josephine such a historically significant dance icon and creative visionary?*
5. *How did Josephine use movement to subvert societal limitations?*
6. *How did Josephine use unpleasant emotions like anger and fear to fuel her creative work?*

Standards:

NC Essential Standard P.CP.1: Use choreographic principles, structures, and processes to create dances that communicate feelings, and images.

Clarifying Objective P.CP.1.1: Create dances using selected dance elements, choreographic principles, structures, processes, and production elements to fulfill choreographic intent and meet aesthetic criteria.

NC Essential Standard P.DM.1 Understand how to use movement skills in dance.

NC Clarifying Objective P.DM.1.2 Discriminate between qualities of space, time, weight, and flow in dance sequences.

NC Essential Standard P.C.1: Understand cultural, historical, and interdisciplinary connections with dance.

NC Clarifying Objective P.C.1.1 Understand the role of dance in US history.

NC Clarifying Objective P.C.1.2 Interpret dances from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

Objectives:

- ✓ Students will learn about the life and contributions of historically significant dance icon Josephine Baker
- ✓ Students will learn movements from her signature movement vocabulary
- ✓ Students will analyze her unique movement style through the Laban BESSR framework and embody their findings
- ✓ Students will discuss the ways that Josephine subverted societal limitations through movement and generate their own subversion choreographies
- ✓ Students will discuss the ways Josephine used fear and anger to fuel her creativity and experience through group improvisation exercises

Assessments:

- *Formative assessments: Verbal-* Who is Josephine Baker? What did her movement look like? Why is she famous? What is subversion and how can it be used in dance as a form of protest?
- *Summative assessments: Verbal-* Who is Josephine Baker? Why is she famous? *Written-* What is subversion and how can this be applied to dance? How did Josephine use subversion? Why? *Observation-* Show how you would embody her signature movement style.

Vocabulary:

- **Movement Vocabulary-** Vocabulary are the specific movements associated with a style
- **Movement Style-** A style is a system of movement that can be attributed to a particular choreographer, dancer, or genre of dance

- **BESSR**- Laban framework for analyzing movement that includes BODY, ENERGY, SPACE, SHAPE, and RELATIONSHIP
- **Subversion**- When values and principles are contradicted. An attempt to change social order.
- **Embody**- Expression of ideas or concepts using the body
- **Motif**- A repeated image

21st Century Skills:

- **Communication and collaboration**- Students will communicate with each other when analyzing the text for juxtaposing verbs. They will collaborate during improvisation when they embody these words and use them as inspiration for choreography.
- **Creating and innovation**- Students will spontaneously create during improvisation activities.

Bloom's Taxonomy:

- **Understand**- Students will understand who Josephine Baker is and how to analyze her movement style through the BESSR framework
- **Apply**- Students will apply their understanding of subversion to take part in the associated improvisation activities
- **Create**- Students will create anger dances inspired by the way Josephine Baker used unpleasant emotions to fuel her creativity

Prior Knowledge and skills:

- Students should be able to:
 - Follow a warm up
 - Analyze video based on the Laban BESSR Framework
 - Improvise individually
 - Choreograph in small groups

Prior To Class:

- ✓ Write Agenda:
 - I. Introduction: Who is Josephine Baker
 - II. Warm up: Vocabulary from her signature movement style
 - III. Video: Analyzing Josephine through the elements of dance
 - IV. Subversion: Discuss, Embody, Improvise
 - V. Anger Dance: Write, Improvise
 - VI. Reflection: Josephine as an icon

1. Introduction: Who is Josephine Baker?

- a. **Bio:** Josephine Baker was an iconic African American performer and activist who was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1906. She was particularly active during the “Jazz Age” of the 1920s and is known for her comedic and provocative performances that integrated singing, dance, and theatricality. In 1925, Josephine moved to Paris, France where she was greeted with open arms. The French people adored her and her performance career took off. Josephine was touring night clubs and concert halls however she was just as much a political activist as she was a performer. During WWII Josephine worked as a spy for the French resistance, earning her the highest honor, the Légion D’Honneur and later became involved in the American Civil Rights Movement. She married and adopted twelve children from different countries to “show the world that racial hatred [was] unnatural.” Josephine fell upon hard times had some very serious financial issues. At 67, she performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City and was applauded with a standing ovation. Sadly, she died later that evening. Josephine will always be remembered for her vivacious spirit, her creativity, and the way she used performance to both captivate audiences and challenge social injustices.

2. Warm up: What was Josephine's movement vocabulary?

(Note: This would not all be taught on the first day, but rather, would be taught as an accumulation.)

Music: "Bang Bang" by will.i.am

- a) Hang loose
- b) Face muscles
- c) Eye exercises
- d) Finger dance
- e) Head isolations & funky chicken
- f) Itch
- g) Mess Around
- h) Monkey
- i) Crazy Legs
- j) Bounce Squats
- k) Turns with finger
- l) Hopping lunges
- m) Leg circles with kicks (Rond de jambe en l'air battement a la second)
- n) Charleston
- o) Kid and Play

3. What was Josephine's signature movement language?

a. Video: Analyzing Josephine through BESSR

- i. *Josephine Baker, Zouzou, Dances With Her Shadow:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVPJD3kaKRQ>
- ii. *La Revue des Revues:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H46uf5-Way0>
- iii. *Josephine Baker Dancing the Original Charleston:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEH6eDpigRw>

b. BESSR:

- i. BODY
 1. Activity-- Twisting, Shaking/wiggle, Falling, Swinging, Jumping (low)
 2. Body Parts-- Eyes leading, Emphasizing shoulders, bottom, and hips
 3. Organization-- Sequential
- ii. EFFORT
 1. Quality--Indirect (Multi focused), Free
 2. Opposing efforts-- Flipping the move
 3. Upper lower body free & bound flow and quick & sustained time
- iii. SPACE
 1. Levels-- Low, Middle, High-- Drastic level changes
 2. Extensions-- Near reach, Far reach
- iv. SHAPE
 1. Shape Forms-- Mostly Ball, Pin, Twisted, Asymmetrical
 2. Modes of Shape Change-- Mostly Directional
- v. RELATIONSHIP
 1. Situations-- Action/response, Toward and Away Magnets, Mirrors, Models and Shadows
- vi. SUMMARY: Josephine's movement is diverse in that she rapidly cycles through various states of being. She may be in a low lunge and abruptly move to a high level pin shape, then change to a squatting wall with a head isolation. Whatever the state of being, the movement is distinct; there is a strong sense of shape and character. She improvises in relationship to the audience and musicians and is tailoring her actions to get people to focus on her.

4. How did Josephine use movement to subvert the societal limitations?

a. Discuss: *What is subversion? How did Josephine use subversion in her movement to make political statements?*

- i. Subversion is when values and principles are contradicted; an attempt to change social order.
- ii. Josephine was politically active and used her platform as an entertainer to speak out against social injustices. She spied for France during WWII and became an outspoken member of the American Civil Rights Movement. However, she did not address these issues explicitly in her performances, rather, she used subversive movement to subtly challenge societal expectations about the ways in which African Americans were expected to move and behave. As a subtle act of resistance, Josephine took up space; she danced feverishly fast, accentuating her hips, she made extreme shapes, and used her eyes and focus comedically. As the French would say, Josephine was a *provocateuse*. She challenged rules by making fun of them; humor and irony were her weapons of choice. Josephine had many limitations in her life, but rather than being defined by her limitations, she used her artistry to subvert them.

b. Analyzing the text: Assign students chapters or passages from the book that have juxtaposing verbs. Ask students to choose verbs that demonstrate: 1) *How society was dictating that Josephine behave/move* and 2) *What she chose to do instead* and 3) *Why Josephine chose to do this*. Connect these moments with the concept of subversion- that at times artists don't follow the rules as a way to covertly challenge social injustices. Examples:

- i. "Mama washed laundry. For other people. Tumpy scrubbed alongside Mama. And Tumpy danced. She flung her arms, she flung her legs, like she flung her heart and soul, cause dancing makes you happy when nothing else will."
 1. Societal: Scrub
 2. Individual: Fling
- ii. "Josephine saw colored people fleeing their homes. Fear grasped hold of her heart, anger heated and boiled in a place deep in her soul. Later she'd let that steam out in little poofs. POOF! A funny face that used to be fear. POOF! She'd mock a gesture that used to be anger and turn it into a dance. Ahh, very witty."
 1. Societal: Flee, Boil
 2. Individual: Mock, Redirect
- iii. "Josephine and the Dixie Steppers took the train down the Mississippi, down to New Orleans, dancing, singing, and partying all the way through the land of the Ku Klux Klan, where a white person wouldn't sell you a cup of coffee because you were a negro."
 1. Societal: Shrink, Hide, Flee
 2. Individual: Expand, Take space, Move loosely
- iv. "Josephine's volcanic core heated, but the comic in her got funnier. POOF. The chorus kicked forward, she kicked backward. POP. They strutted. Josephine shimmed instead. The hoofers in the chorus scowled but the audience laughed."
 1. Societal: Burst, Strut, Kick forward
 2. Individual: Cool, Shimmy, Kick backward (Change directions)
- v. "Josephine stepped in front of the audience. At the end of the chorus line, she stumbled off balance on elastic legs- on purpose- looked up in surprise, dropped her elbows like limp washcloths, crossed her eyes, flashed a smile, and the audience laughed. The reviews raved: A BORN COMIC."
 1. Societal: Stand tall, Kick high, Smile
 2. Individual: Stumble, Drop, Cross eyes

c. Improvisation #1: Embodying Subversion

- i. After the students identify the juxtaposing actions, the students will generate a master list of opposing actions. The teacher will read each word and have students embody each action. The teacher may also

prompt students to transpose the movement to a different body part, on a different level, connect with a partner, etc. Ex) Scrub/Fling, Flee/Mock, Boil/Redirect, Shrink/Expand, Hide/Take up space

d. **Improvisation #2: Building and Breaking**

- i. Students will be placed in small groups. A student will propose an action. Other students will add in one by one, building upon that action to create a movement motif. Once the motif is established, a student will choose to break the motif and propose an action he or she views as the opposite. The rest of the group will now build around the new action. Once that motif is established, a different group member will break the motif and propose an action he or she perceives as opposite. Etc.
- ii. Reflection question: Which part of this activity was your favorite? The building or the breaking? How did each role make you feel? At what point did you decide to break the motif? Why?

5. How did Josephine use negative emotion like fear and anger to fuel creativity?

- a. **Intro:** Josephine used her fear and anger to fuel her performances and more often than not, this fear and anger was turned into humor. It was a great source of creativity for Josephine. We all experience things in our lives that cause us great stress and even anger. This is an unpleasant part of life. However, we can learn to channel these unpleasant emotions in a positive and productive way, and in a way that fuels our creativity.
- b. **Anger Dance:**
 - i. **Writing prompt:** *What has been on your mind lately? Is there something in your life that is causing you stress, anxiety, or frustration? Focus on a personal issue. Write a paragraph describing that issue and how it makes you feel and want to act.*
 - ii. **Improvisation exercise #1:** Find a place to stand in the room with your paper. Read your paragraph to yourself. Now embody the anger or frustration. Where does it reside in your body? Let it start small, then let it get bigger and bigger until the emotion has completely taken over your body. Act out everything this scenario makes you want to do. Now make the movement as big as possible. Make it travel. Freeze the shape. Make the movement go high and make it go low. Place the movement in just one body part. Let the movement ripple through one body part to the next to the next. Now make it into another shape. Find someone in the room and connect shapes.
 - iii. **Improvisation exercise #2:** Now find another duet to connect with. Keeping your original story in mind, make another shape inspired by the feeling and connect it with the other three dancers. Now connect with another group.

6. Reflect: What made Josephine such a historically significant dance icon and creative visionary? How can we use movement as a tool for social change?

Resources:

- *The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* by Patricia Hruby Powell
- Jazz from A to Z: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbteWH-3QIY>
- *Josephine Baker, Zouzou, Dances With Her Shadow*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVPJD3kaKRQ>
- *La Revue des Revues*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H46uf5-Way0>
- *Josephine Baker Dancing the Original Charleston*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEH6eDpjpgRw>
- Laban Framework BESSR (Body, Effort, Space, Shape, Relationship)
- Prezi by Isabelle Collazo: <https://prezi.com/view/K3sQpeT1MSwtZOpKjouH/>

daCi Day of Dance

Consider organizing a daCi Day of dance in your area! These local one-day dance festivals are eligible for financial support from daCi USA. Check the website at <http://daciusa.org/pages/dayofdance.htm> for further information. Help share the daCi Vision!