BALLET STORYTIME
Grades CD–2

Objectives:
- Students will perform movement skills and techniques.
- Students will evaluate and critique key literary elements that enhance and deepen meaning within and across texts.
- Students will learn about ballet as a means of expression and storytelling.

Materials:
- Copy of the "Ballet Storytime" script (click here)
- Copy of *The Nutcracker* by New York City Ballet (read aloud here)

Directions:
- Begin the lesson by discussing how there are multiple variations of *The Nutcracker*, but the original one was called *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* and was written by E.T.A Hoffmann in 1816. Today we are going to read an adaptation called *The Nutcracker* by New York City Ballet. When you come to the Gaillard, you are going to see the Dance Conservatory of Charleston's rendition of *The Nutcracker*, which is very similar to the New York City Ballet's.
- Read *The Nutcracker*, pointing out words that lend themselves to movement.
- Today we are going to use our bodies to retell the story of *The Nutcracker*.
- Begin with a warm-up by learning plié and tendu.
- Teach students first, second and third positions in ballet as a warm-up. Once they have reviewed each position, challenge students to switch between the positions in random order.
- Go across the floor with music from *The Nutcracker* practice ballet walks (pointing feet, gentle arms).
- Practice jumps in first and second positions.
- Tell the students that what you are doing is using physical movements to aid in storytelling, similarly to how ballets do!
- Next, go through the different movements that the students will encounter throughout the Ballet Storytime script.
- Once they are familiar with each movement, highlight the importance of working as an ensemble unit in ballet. Encourage the students to focus on togetherness during the activity, and ask their suggestions for how to move as one (count in your head, use a signal, etc).
- Once the students are ready, begin retelling the story of *The Nutcracker* by using the Ballet Storytime script. As you reach keywords, make sure to have

the students transition to their different dance poses, holding each choreographed posture until the next keyword is reached.
- Conclusion: When you come to see *The Nutcracker*, you are going to notice that the ballet is mostly silent minus the narrator. Notice how the dancers work together to portray the different characters by means of their facial expressions, movements, and interactions with other dancers.

SC Academic Standards:
Dance Anchor Standard 4 - I can perform movement skills and techniques
ELA.AOR.1 - Evaluate and critique key literary elements that enhance and deepen meaning within and across texts.

Bibliography:

Classics for Kids. “Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.” Accessed June 1, 2026. https://www.classicsforkids.com/composer/piotr-ilyich-tchaikovsky/.