Lesson: Partners on the Dance Floor

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students will practice writing, listening and discussion skills as they follow two young competitive dancers on their journey to the European championship. Through their story, students will explore the benefits and sacrifices that come with making early career choices and examine the complexity that cultural differences add to their experience.

Video clips provided with this lesson are from the film *Dance For Me*. In *Dance for Me*, 15-year-old Russian performer Egor leaves home and family to team up with 14-year-old Mie, one of Denmark’s most promising young dancers. Strikingly different, Egor and Mie bond over their passion for Latin dance — and for winning. As they head to the championships, so much is at stake: emotional bonds, career and the future. *Dance for Me* is a poetic coming-of-age story, with a global twist and thrilling dance moves.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Get started by joining our [Community Network](#).

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, students will:
- examine the dancers’ evolving partnership, on and off the dance floor.
- explore the benefits and sacrifices of early career choices.
- discuss the ways the dancers transcend cultural differences and work toward mutual understanding.

GRADE LEVELS
7-12

SUBJECT AREAS
Multicultural Education
World Cultures
Dance/Performing Arts
Foreign Languages

MATERIALS
- Internet access and equipment to show the class online video
- Blank paper and markers

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED
One 50-minute class period

FILM CLIPS
Clip 1: The Partnership (Length: 8:30)
The clip begins at 0:50 with Egor’s mother discussing his new opportunity in Denmark. It ends at 9:20 with Egor and Mie discussing Egor’s adjustment to Denmark.

Clip 2: The Championship (Length: 8:15)
The clip begins at 15:12 with the German Open, Egor and Mie’s first competition together. It ends at 23:27 with Egor and Mie reflecting on the championship results and the dynamics of their partnership.

ACTIVITIES
1. Pursuing Dreams
   - Invite students to identify things they’ve always wanted to accomplish or dreams they’d like to pursue (i.e., a career or lifelong goal). Distribute blank paper and invite students to write their dreams in the center of the paper (using markers). Ask students to brainstorm three ways they are working toward their goals (on the left side of their papers), and three new things they can do to continue working toward their goals moving forward (on the right).
   - Ask each student to find a partner and instruct the partners to share their goals with each other. Invite each student to write one thing he or she learned from his or her partner that he or she could use in pursuing his or her own dream.
   (10 mins.)

2. Career Exploration
   Show Clip 1. Ask students to discuss the following:
   - How does choosing a career at such a young age affect Mie, Egor and their families? What sacrifices do they have to make in order to pursue their dreams?
   - What are the benefits of choosing a profession so early in life? Do these benefits outweigh the sacrifices?
   - What career would you choose right now?
   - Create a timeline for your career. What challenges might you face as a young person in this profession? What are the advantages of embarking on this career goal now?
   (15 mins.)

3. Cultural Exchange
   Show Clip 2. Ask students to consider Egor and Mie’s first championship.
   - What challenges are Egor and Mie facing? What can they learn from each other?
• What further decisions and sacrifices have to be made when a child’s chosen career takes him or her out of his or her country and family’s home?
• How does this affect Egor and Mie’s partnership and the way they respond to the stress of competition? How do language barriers and cultural differences factor into their relationship?

(15 mins.)

4. Commitment
Mie and Egor are committed to pursuing their dreams and must consistently work hard to achieve their goals. Ask students to think about how committed they are to their own dreams. Invite students to discuss what inspires them to continue to work toward their dreams. Ask students to share songs and famous quotes that motivate them to stay committed to their goals and to name people who do the same.
(10 mins.)

EXTENSION
Study Abroad
Many students study abroad during college or graduate school. Ask students to research study abroad programs relating to their own fields of interest. Ask them to select programs in places where they do not speak the national language.
Invite each student to write a one-page reflection describing the following:
• The study abroad program’s focus
• The location
• What is most interesting about the program
• How the student would need to adjust to the language, food, culture and/or religion in this part of the world

RESOURCES

Dance For Me
The official website for the film includes the trailer and more information about the film.

POV
www.pbs.org/pov/danceforme
The POV site for the film includes a more comprehensive discussion guide with additional discussion prompts and activity suggestions.

The Atlantic: “When Did Competitive Sports Take Over American Childhood?”
http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/09/when-did-competitive-sports-take-over-american-childhood/279868/
In this September 20, 2013 article, Hillary Levey Friedman discusses the evolution of competitive sports in America and how competition affects young
athletes. Students can use the piece to compare and contrast competitive sports with competitive dance.

**Backstage: “Dance Training for Children and Teens”**
In this March 23, 2011 article, Lisa Jo Sagolla explores the professional development of young dancers from preschool onward.

**NBC10.com: “Pa. Student Dances Her Way Onto Reality TV Show”**
This August 30, 2013 article focuses on 13-year-old professional dancer Gianna Newborg.

**STANDARDS**

**Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**
(http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

**SL. 9-10.1, 11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL. 9-10.1.D**
Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**SL. 9-10.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

**SL. 11-12.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

**SL. 9-10.3** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

**SL. 11-12.3** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis and tone used.
L. 9-10.3, L. 11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

R.I. 11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

McREL ([www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/)) a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Thinking and Reasoning, Standard 3: Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Stephanie Joy Tisdale is an educator and the associate editor of The Liberator Magazine. She has spent the last 10 years teaching elementary, middle and high school students. She now works as a curriculum writer and consultant.