

thewashingtonballet

JULIE KENT, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

THE Nutcracker

Learning Guide



The Nutcracker Learning Guide

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This guide is designed to help you:

- Introduce the story and artistry of *The Nutcracker* to students.
- Explore the art of classical ballet and music in a fun and engaging way.
- Prepare students to see a live ballet and reflect on the performance.

Table of Contents

About The Nutcracker Ballet	
Artistic & Production Team.....	3
The Nutcracker Story	4
The Nutcracker Creators.....	5
TWB's Production.....	6-9
Learning Activities	
Exploring Music through Movement	10-11
Exploring Fairytales	13
Writing Prompts	12
Cultural Perspective Research Projects	12—13
Word Search	14
How to Draw a Nutcracker.....	15
National Arts & Common Core ELA Standards of Learning.....	16

Community Engagement Mission

Intrinsic to The Washington Ballet's mission to bring the joy and artistry of dance to the nation's capital, our community engagement programs provide a variety of opportunities to connect children and adults of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to the art of dance. Through live performances, audience enrichment programs, and the highest caliber of dance training and educational events, we aspire to spark and enhance a love for dance, celebrate our history and cultural diversity, and enrich the lives of our community

members. To learn more visit: www.washingtonballet.org

The Washington Ballet's Community Engagement programs are supported by:

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
John Edward Fowler Memorial Foundation
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The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation
The Harman Family Foundation
The Morningstar Foundation
Public Welfare Foundation
Barbara Epstein Foundation
Betty and Wes Foster Family Foundation
George Preston Marshall Foundation
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Julie Kent, artistic director

ARTISTIC & PRODUCTION TEAM

Julie Kent, Artistic Director



Victor Barbee, Associate Artistic Director

Elaine Kudo, *Ballet Master*

Rubén Martín Cintas, *Ballet Master*

Choreographer: Septime Webre

Artistic Operations

Andrés Holder, *General Manager*

Catherine Eby, *Company Manager*

Clayton Willis, *Artistic Coordinator*

Glenn Sales, *Music Supervisor*

Kyle Grant, *Production Manager*

Karen Storms, *Assistant Production Manager*

Susan Kilbourne, *Assistant Stage Manager*

Monica Leland, *Wardrobe Supervisor*

Carolynn Hawthorne, *Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor*

Noelle Greata, *Wardrobe Assistant*

Christopher R. M. Insley, *Production Carpenter*

C.C. Gould, *Production Electrician*

Noah Guthman, *Properties Manager*

The Company Dancers

Katherine Barkman, Nardia Boodoo, Adelaide Clauss, Kateryna Derechyna, Nicole Graniero, Esmiana Jani, Sona Kharatian, Ayano Kimura, Alex Kramer, Tamás Krizsa, Corey Landolt, Eun Won Lee, Olivia Lipnick, Ariel Martinez, Tamako Miyazaki, Javier Morera, Ashley Murphy-Wilson, Andile Ndlovu, Maki Onuki, Alexandros Pappajohn, Gian Carlo Perez, Daniel Roberge, Oscar Sanchez, Rolando Sarabia, Stephanie Sorota, Sarah Steele, Brittany Stone

Apprentices: Victoria Arrea, Kimberly Cilento, Gilles Delellio, Stephen Nakagawa, Lucy Nevin, Samara Rittinger, Masanori Takiguchi

The Studio Company Dancers

Andrea Allmon, Peyton Anderson, Rafael Bejarano, Nicholas Cowden, Jessy Dick, Abigail Granlund, Lope Lim, Audrey Malek, Aurora Mostacci, Helga Paris– Morales, Alexa Torres

The Nutcracker Plot Synopsis

It's Christmas Eve in 1882 in a Georgetown mansion. Clara and her family prepare for a holiday celebration. As the guests arrive, Clara's mysterious godfather, Mr. Drosselmeyer, enters with his handsome young nephew, who greets Clara with a kiss on her hand. Mr. Drosselmeyer entertains the guests with a puppet show and dancing dolls and presents Clara with a special gift—a nutcracker. Jealous of his sister's present, Fritz seizes the nutcracker and breaks it. As the party ends, Clara sadly places the nutcracker under the Christmas tree. Later that night, after everyone has gone to bed, Clara tiptoes downstairs to retrieve her nutcracker. Eventually, Clara falls asleep and begins to dream. When the clock strikes midnight, Drosselmeyer's magic begins.



The Christmas tree grows and a battle ensues between a brigade of toy soldiers led by a life-sized nutcracker against the Rat King and his menacing rats. As the Rat King nears victory, Clara distracts him, enabling the nutcracker to kill him. Suddenly, the nutcracker is turned into a handsome prince. He leads Clara through the enchanted winter to a glorious springtime.

Clara and her Nutcracker Prince travel to Springtime, where the cherry blossoms are in full bloom. They are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy, her Cavalier and her attendants: butterflies, mushrooms and other woodland creatures. When the Prince tells them how Clara saved his life, the Sugar Plum Fairy summons her subjects to entertain them with wonderful dances—Spanish and Chinese dances, a duet for an Anacostian brave and maiden. Brilliant red cardinals frolic with a Tom Cat; an American frontiersman dances with frontier girls; Mother Barnum dances with her circus clowns; and the waltz of the Cherry Blossoms is led by the Dew Drop Fairy. The celebration comes to a spectacular climax when the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier perform a grand pas de deux. Just before the curtain falls, we see Clara asleep with her nutcracker, marking an end to her magical journey.



The Nutcracker Creators

The original **Author**— *The writer of a literary work.*

E.T. A. Hoffman (1776—1882) was a very influential German, Romantic author, composer and artist. He wrote "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" in 1816. It's the story of a young German girl who dreams of a Nutcracker Prince and a fierce battle against a Mouse King with seven heads.



Adaptation is the rewriting of a literary source (e.g. a novel, short story, poem) in a different medium, such as a film or stage play. It can also involve rewriting in the same medium for a different purpose or audience. For example, adapting a play to work with a smaller cast or adapting a story for children.



Alexandre Dumas (1802—1870) is one of the most widely read French authors in the world. He started out writing plays and went on to write famous classic novels including *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He adapted Hoffman's novella into a children's tale titled "The Nutcracker of Nuremberg." This is the version of the story that Tchaikovsky and Petipa's Ballet is based

The original **Nutcracker Ballet** was created by three famous collaborators in 1892

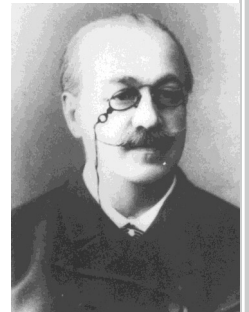
Collaborators—*People who work together and cooperate to create a work of art.*

Choreographer— *A person who creates dance compositions by planning and arranging movements and patterns for dances, especially ballets.*



Marius Petipa (1818—1910) was one of the most influential figures of classical ballet. Petipa was born in Marseilles, France. Petipa began dancing in his father's travelling company when he nine years old. Marius Petipa is known for his long career as the first Ballet Master and principal choreographer of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theater, known today as the Mariinsky Ballet. Petipa created over 50 ballets including Act I of *The Nutcracker*.

Lev Ivanov (1834 -1901) was a Russian ballet dancer and choreographer. He studied with Marius Petipa and eventually became the Second Ballet Master of the Imperial Ballet. He worked along side Marius Petipa as his health declined and choreographed Act II of *The Nutcracker*.



The Composer—*A person who writes music.*



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840—1893) is one of the most popular Russian composers of all time. He lived and composed during the 19th century which is called the Romantic period because artists, writers and musicians focused on feelings and passions more than any other theme. It was popular during this time to compose music that told a story and Tchaikovsky's ballet's are often called story ballets. Tchaikovsky's compositions include 11 operas, three ballets and over 100 songs.

What's unique about The Washington Ballet's Nutcracker?

Interpretation is the act of drawing out and communicating underlying meaning from a creative work or script. Through careful and comprehensive interpretation, central themes and values can be illuminated by the director, choreographer, and designers through the production concept.

The **production concept** is the unifying creative vision for the design of the world on stage. It is made up of all the design elements including costumes, set design, and lighting to support the director or choreographer's interpretation.

Collaboration is the act of a group of people working together to create a work of art, albeit a ballet, a play, a musical, or a symphony.

Every ballet or theatrical production has been produced with a unique interpretation by an artistic team. This process is part of what makes theatre and dance collaborative art forms. Even though the title of a ballet may be the same, such as *The Nutcracker* or *Swan Lake*, every company's production is unique in its production concept and design and every dancer is unique. You'll never see the same ballet twice. Some ballets even change the characters and the end of the story. Our production was directed by Septime Webre, Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet, 1999-2016.

The Washington Ballet's Production Concept for *The Nutcracker* Washington, DC in 1882

Our *Nutcracker* ballet takes place on Christmas Eve at Clara's home in Georgetown in 1882. The set is designed to look like a snowy night in Georgetown. It transforms into the mansion of the Von Stahlbaum home for Act I. You will see a lot of unique interpretations of the set and characters inspired by this production concept. We've shared a few examples in the following pages.



The Washington Ballet's Production Concept for *The Nutcracker* Washington, DC in 1882

The Nutcracker costume looks like George Washington



The Rat King's costume is looks like
King George III of England and the
Mice are costumed to look like British Red
Coat Soldiers.



The Toy Soldiers look like
American Revolutionary Soldiers.



The Washington Ballet's Production Concept for *The Nutcracker*

Act II takes us to the Land of Sweets

What is traditionally the Russian Dance is the Dance of the American Frontiersmen and women:



Coffee, which is traditionally an Arabian Dance, is the Dance of the Anacostian Native American:



The Dance of the Mirlitons is the Dance of the Cardinals, Virginia's state bird, and the Tom Cat:



Mother Ginger and all her children are Mother Barnum and all her clowns in our production:



The Washington Ballet's Production Concept for *The Nutcracker*

Washington, DC in 1882

The Waltz of the Flowers takes place on the banks of the Potomac River
and the dancing flowers are Cherry Blossoms:



The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.
Performed by Ashley Murphy-Wilson and Javier Morera:



Exploring Movements of The Nutcracker Suite

A **movement** is a self-contained part of a musical composition.



The Overture

- 1) Define Overture: the instrumental introduction to a ballet or opera and it typically sets the mood. It comes from the French word meaning opening.
- 2) Have students listen to *The Nutcracker Overture* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky.
- 3) Ask them if they recognize it. Have they heard it before? Do they associate anything with it?
- 4) Ask students how the music makes them feel. What mood does it set?
- 5) Ask if it makes them want to move or dance.
- 6) Have students move around the room while listening to the music. Encourage them to move however the music makes them feel.
- 7) Return to sitting and reflect: How did the music make you move? How did the music make you feel? What kind of story will this be?

March of the Toys

- 1) Have students listen to the March of the Toys by Pyotr Tchaikovsky.
- 2) Have students walk around the room pretending they are their favorite toy.
- 3) Then have student move around the room as if they were a toy soldier.

Play the music and have students march around the room to the music while pretending to be toy soldiers

Comparing & Contrasting Movements Coffee (Arabian Dance) and Tea (Chinese Dance)

- 1) Have students listen to the Coffee and Tea movements by Pyotr Tchaikovsky.
- 2) Ask them to share how they are different? Do they hear different instruments? How is the tempo different?
- 3) Have students listen again and draw pictures of what they see while listening to each movement. Invite volunteers to share their drawings.
- 4) Have students move around the room while listening to each movement. Encourage them to move however the music makes them feel.



Exploring Movements of The Nutcracker Suite

Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy

- 1) Have students listen to or watch a video of the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy.
- 2) Ask student to listen for the special instrument called a celesta.
- 3) What does the instrument sound like?
- 4) What type of instrument do you think the celesta is (string, woodwind, brass, percussion, keyboard)?
- 5) Why do you think Tchaikovsky choose this instrument for a fairy dancer?
- 6) Which family of instruments is the celeste from?
- 7) What other tone colors or instrument sounds can be heard in the piece?



8) Following the discussion, reveal that the **celesta** is a struck idiophone operated by a keyboard. It looks similar to an upright piano but it has smaller keys and a much smaller cabinet. The celeste has a soft, delicate bell sound and subtle timbre. This sound quality gave it the name celesta, which means heavenly in French. The Dance of The Sugar Plum Fairy is one of the most famous movements that uses a celesta.



Audience Etiquette

The phrase “**audience etiquette**” refers to the behavior that is expected of audiences when attending a performance. It is important to remember that the dancers on stage can see and hear you, just as you can see them. Please be respectful to the dancers and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing these guidelines:

- 1) Turn off your cell phone and music devices during the ballet so the sound and light are not distracting to anyone.
- 2) Applaud for the Conductor of the orchestra when they come out.
- 3) Honest reactions to what is happening onstage are encouraged! We hope you will laugh, gasp, applaud and enjoy the performance.
- 4) Please do not talk during the ballet.
- 5) Please do not bring food or drinks into the theatre.



Classroom Activities



Exploring Fairy Tales

There are many different kinds of stories. We can sort stories into groups or categories with similar characteristics. These groups are called genres of literature. A fairy tale is a fictional story with magical beings such as mermaids, dwarves, elves, goblins or witches. Fairy tales come from oral tradition and were told by one generation to the next until someone finally wrote it down. Fairy tales have good and evil characters and usually royalty. Something magical always happens, such as a spell, and during the story a problem has to be solved. A fairy tale often teaches the reader a lesson.

***The Nutcracker* Writing Prompts:**

- 1) Based on this description, is *The Nutcracker* a fairy tale? Why or why not?
- 2) Clara's Godfather gives her a the special gift of *The Nutcracker*. Do you think he knew it was magical? If you were going to give someone you love a magical gift, what would it be?
- 3) Clara visits the Land of the Sweets where she meets many kinds of characters including thee Sugar Plum Fairy. What do you imagine the land of sweets looks like? What kind of characters do you imagine live there?
- 4) Do you think Clara's journey on Christmas Eve was real or just a dream? Explain why.
- 5) Have students write a short story about giving or receiving a magical gift

Cultural Perspectives Research Project

The fairy tale is a literary genre in many different cultures. Two famous storytellers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm who lived in Germany in the early 1800s compiled folk tales passed down through oral tradition and are credited with writing many of the first versions of famous fairy tales including *Cinderella* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. E.T.A. Hoffman was also a German writer who wrote the fairy tale of *The Nutcracker*. If a Native American or a person in ancient Egypt had written a version of *The Nutcracker*, the setting and characters would probably reflect the people and places most familiar to them. Choose a culture you'd like to learn more about. Research the geography, architecture, clothing and customs of that culture. Write a new version of *The Nutcracker* that is set in that culture. As the storyteller, use words, references and pictures that would make sense to children of this culture.

Cultural Perspectives Research Project

How is Christmas celebrated around the world?

Choose a culture you'd like to learn more about. Research the geography, architecture, clothing, music, foods and customs of that culture. Write an essay explaining how people from that culture celebrate Christmas. Learn how to say "Merry Christmas" in their language. Make a traditional Christmas recipe from this culture. Have all the students bring in the recipes they made and present what they've learned to one another.



Name _____

Class _____

Nutcracker Word Search



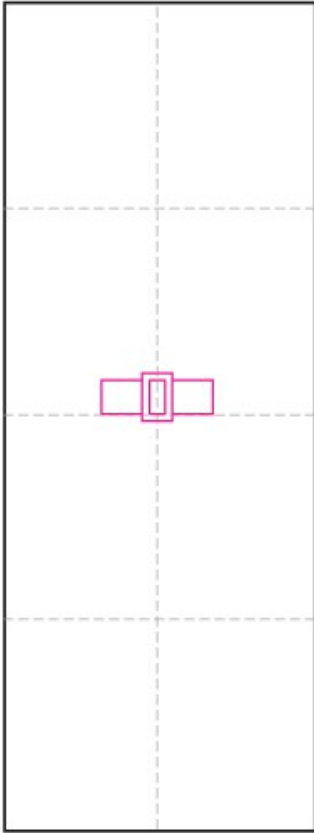
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R	J	M	O	U	S	E	K	I	N	G	Q	S	X	P
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Q	A	R	A	B	I	A	N	R	U	S	S	I	A	N
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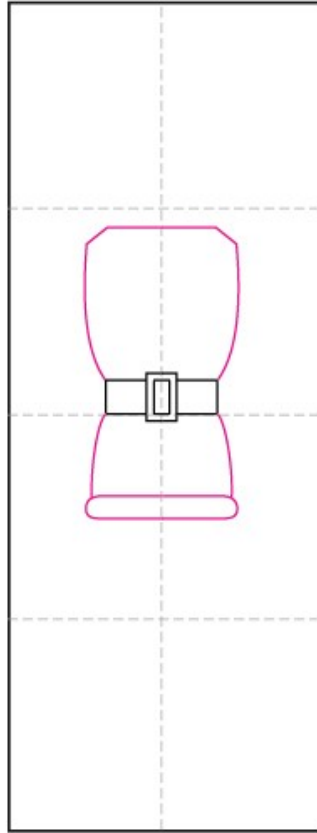
ARABIAN
BALLET
CHINESE
CLARA
DROSSELMAYER
FRITZ
FLOWERS

MOUSE KING
NUTCRACKER
RUSSIAN
SPANISH
SUGAR PLUM FAIRY
TCHAIKOVSKY
TOY SOLDIERS

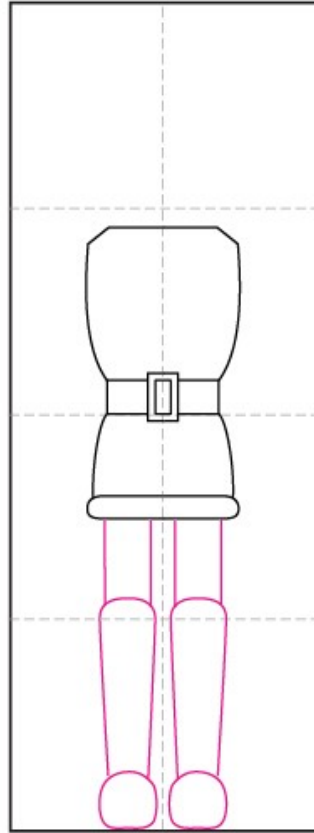
How To Draw A Nutcracker



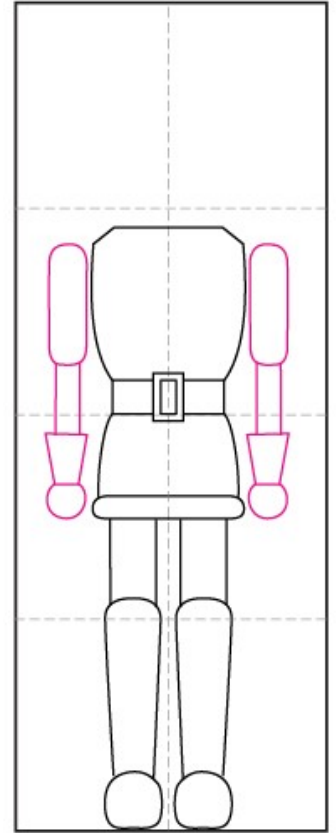
1. Make guide lines, draw belt.



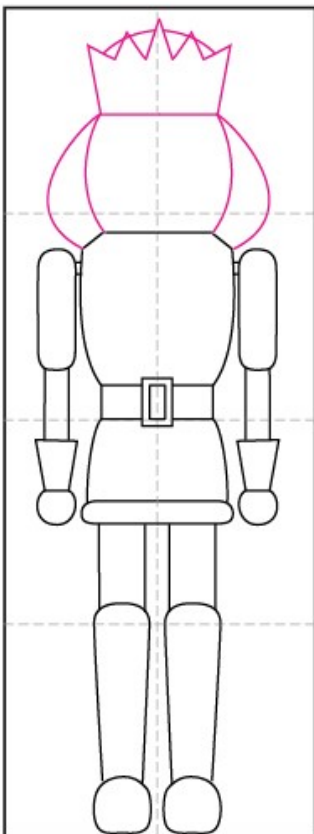
2. Draw jacket.



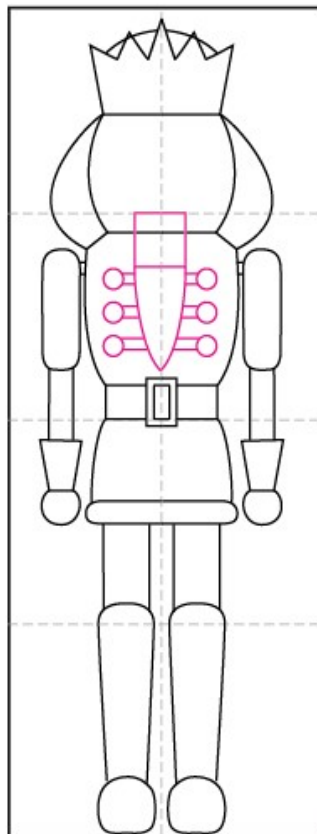
3. Draw legs and boots.



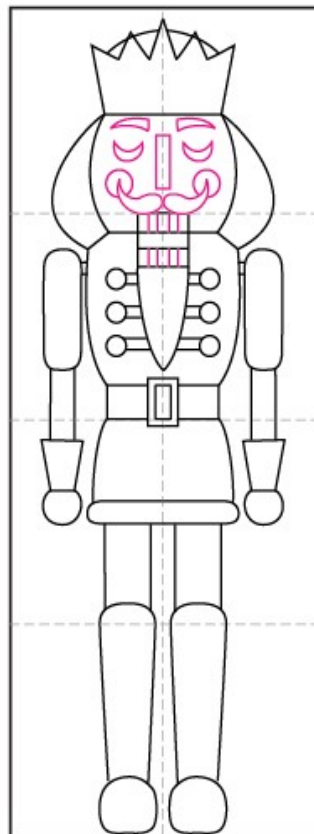
4. Add arms with gloves.



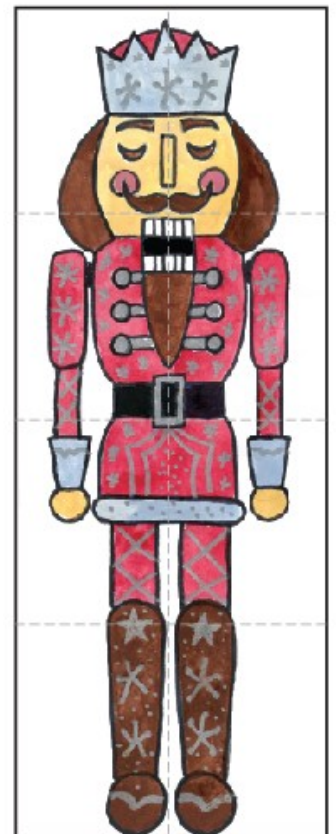
5. Draw head and crown.



6. Add mouth, beard, buttons.



7. Add face and teeth.



Paint, black and silver marker.

National Arts Standards

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Common Core ELA-Literacy Standards 3rd—5th

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons. a. Introduce the topic or text they are writing.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Common Core ELA-Literacy Standards 6th—8th

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.