

thewashingtonballet

Julie Kent, artistic director

The Sleeping Beauty

Learning Guide



The Sleeping Beauty Learning Guide

Created by Vanessa Hope, Director of Community Engagement

This guide is designed to help you:

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

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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, 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: <https://www.washingtonballet.org>

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The Sleeping Beauty Ballet

SYNOPSIS

The Prologue—*an introductory section of a literary or musical work*

King Florestan and his Queen have invited all the Fairies to attend the christening of their beloved only child, the Princess Aurora. As Aurora's godmothers, they present their gifts. Unfortunately no one has remembered to invite the ill-natured Fairy Carabosse. She arrives in a fury and, presenting a spindle as her gift, foretells that Aurora will one day prick her finger and die. The whole court is in despair, but happily the Lilac Fairy has not yet bestowed her gift. Though she cannot remove Carabosse's curse, she can change it. Princess Aurora will not die. Instead she will sleep for a hundred years and then be awakened by the kiss of a handsome prince.

Act I—The Spell

It is the celebration of Princess Aurora's sixteenth birthday and Princes from the four corners of the world have come hoping to win her hand. A nurse approaches and gives Aurora a small bouquet of flowers. As she dances around, Aurora throws the flowers to her friends and pricks her finger on the spindle concealed in the bouquet. Everyone is aghast as Aurora falls, apparently lifeless. The nurse reveals herself as Carabosse and vanishes. Now the Lilac Fairy appears and casts a spell so that the whole court falls asleep while a magic forest grows up around the castle to keep it safe for a hundred years.

Act II—The Vision

It is a hundred years later and Prince Florimund heads a hunting party. But he has no heart for the sport and dismisses his retinue to meditate alone on his longing for an ideal love. The Lilac Fairy enters and shows him a vision of Princess Aurora. Enraptured, he begs the Fairy to lead him to this beautiful vision and together they travel through changing landscapes and seasons until they reach the hidden castle where he awakens the Princess Aurora with a kiss. This breaks the spell and causes the defeated Carabosse to disappear forever.



Misty Copeland as the Lilac Fairy

Act III The Wedding

Fairy-tale characters come to the wedding celebrations of the Prince and Aurora. They pay their respects to the bride and bridegroom, and then the whole assembly joins in a general dance. In a final apotheosis, the Lilac Fairy appears to bless the marriage.

The Sleeping Beauty Characters

The Washington Ballet Company will perform Act III of *The Sleeping Beauty* for the student matinee. Act III is the wedding celebration of Princess Aurora and Prince Désiré. You will see many familiar fairy tale characters as wedding guests.



The Fairies



Princess Aurora



Prince Désiré



Carabosse, The Evil Fairy

The Sleeping Beauty Characters

**The White Cat
&
Puss in Boots**



**Little Red Riding Hood
&
The Gray Wolf**

**Princess Florine
&
The Blue Bird**



The Sleeping Beauty Creators

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

Charles Perrault (1628—1703) A French author who started the literary genre of fairy tales. A few of his best known fairy tales are Little Red Riding Hood, Puss in Boots and The Sleeping Beauty In The Wood, which he published in 1697. The ballet is based on this version and many of his fairy tale characters from other stories appear in Act III.



The original **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. His father was a dancer, and Petipa began dancing in his father's travelling company when he nine years old. At the age of 16 he joined Théâtre Nantes, where he created a number of ballets. He went on to work as a dancer throughout France. In 1847 he made his debut as principal dancer and ballet master of the Mariinsky Ballet in Russia. He became famous as a choreographer in 1859 with his production of *The Pharaoh's Daughter*. He went on to choreograph many world famous ballets that are still performed today. Petipa's ballets were grand spectacles that made magnificent use of the corps de ballet and placed the lead ballerina centre stage. The Mariinsky Ballet Company and school became a model for all ballet around the globe throughout the 20th century.

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, 3 ballets and over 100 songs.



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

Tchaikovsky and Petipa worked very closely to create *The Sleeping Beauty* Ballet in 1890, *The Nutcracker* in 1892 and *Swan Lake* in 1895. These ballet's are some of the best known classical ballets in the world.

What is Classical Ballet?

Classical ballet is a system of dance based on formally specified movements and positions of the arms, feet, and body designed to enable the dancer to move with the greatest possible agility, control, speed, lightness, and grace. Movements are generally graceful and flowing and dancers create defined lines and shapes with their bodies. Elements of classical ballet technique include dancing from a turned-out position of the legs, pointe work, high leg extensions, dynamic turns and intricate footwork.



The Washington Ballet's Swan Lake Misty Copeland and Brooklyn Mack. Photo: Theo Kossen

Classical ballets usually tell a story and have themes focused on expressing emotions and passions. They often include a supernatural world of spirits and magic

What's the point of pointe shoes?



Ballerinas dance on **pointe shoes** to create an illusion of lightness and a sense of floating on air.

Before pointe shoes were invented, ballerinas were sometimes suspended on wires to allow them to skim the floor on their toes or rise into the air. In the early 1800s, dancers began rising to their toes on their own. The first pointe shoes were simply flat slippers, lightly reinforced by the dancer with darning around the toes. With such light support, the earliest pointe work consisted merely of brief rises to pointe. Over the course of two centuries of ballerinas, ballet technique and shoemakers innovations have produced the more supportive shoes used today.

Pointe shoes provide support while allowing articulation of the foot. Dancer's have to develop and use their own strength to dance on pointe.

Why do ballerinas wear tutus?

Tutus allow ballerinas to move freely and gracefully onstage, and they allow the audience to see the artistry of the choreography and the dancer's technique. Tutus are complex costumes built so they will not droop below a dancer's waist and to hold their shape, often with 9—12 layers of tulle. There are several variations on the Classical tutu. One called the pancake tutu is supported by a hoop inside the fabric, and sits on the dancer's hip. The platter tutu is similar, but it sits on the dancer's waist instead. One more called the powderpuff tutu is light and fluffy, so it doesn't need a hoop to support itself.



The Washington Ballet's The Nutcracker, Maki Onuki as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Photo: Theo Kossen

Classroom Activities

What is a fairytale?



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 and can take place in a magical or faraway land. 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 crazy problem has to be solved. Once the problem is solved, everyone lives “happily ever after”. A fairy tale often teaches the reader a lesson.

Writing Prompts:

- 1) Based on this description, how do we know *The Sleeping Beauty* is a fairytale?
- 2) The fairies in *The Sleeping Beauty* give Princess Aurora the gifts of strength, song, honesty, beauty, and wisdom. If you were a fairy invited to the banquet what special gift would you give to Princess Aurora? Why?
- 3) Fairy tales often begin “Once upon a time, a long time ago.” Imagine what life will be like in the future. Write a story beginning with *Sleeping Beauty* waking up 100 years from today. Describe how the world looks different. What is the Prince wearing? Where would the celebration be? What kind of music and food would be at their wedding celebration?

Research & Writing Activity: Cultural Perspective

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 wrote the first version of *The Sleeping Beauty*. If a Native American or a person in ancient Egypt had written a version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, 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 *The Sleeping Beauty* that is set in that culture. As the storyteller, use words, references and pictures that would make sense to children of this culture

Music & Movement Activity

The Waltz of The Garland



Pytor Tchaikovsky's most well known melody from *The Sleeping Beauty* is The Waltz of the Garland from Act I. It's the same melody used in the song *Once Upon A Dream* from Disney's movie version of *Sleeping Beauty*.



- 1) Have students listen to *The Waltz of The Garland* by Pytor Tchaikovsky.
- 2) Ask them if they recognize the melody? Have they heard it before?
- 3) Ask student to share how the music makes them feel? What emotions do they think the music is trying to convey?
- 4) Have students move around the room to the music.
- 5) How did the music make you want to move?

Recommended Books

The Sleeping Beauty: My First Ballet Book, by Jennifer Adams

Ella Bella Ballerina and The Sleeping Beauty, by James Mayhew

The Sleeping Beauty, by New York City Ballet

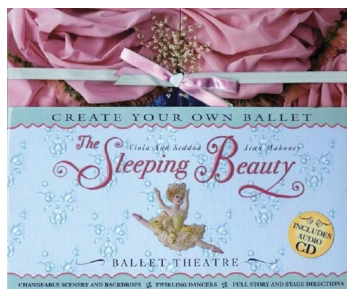
The Story Orchestra: The Sleeping Beauty, by Katy Flint

A Coloring Book of the Sleeping Beauty Ballet, by Laurence Senelick

Behind the Scenes at the Ballet: Rehearsing and Performing

The Sleeping Beauty, by Leslie E. Spatt

The Sleeping Beauty Ballet Theatre by Jean Mahoney and Viola Anne Seddon



Common Core ELA-Literacy Standards 6th – 8th Grade

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.

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.

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

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.

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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.