# Dance detours

Stage 2 Creative arts unit

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## Content overview

The understanding that cultural and historic dances have a purpose or intent is clearly developed in this lesson unit.

An appreciation focus ensures that the dances the students perform are contextualised. Students are provided with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learned in performance to their own compositions (lessons 2 and 4).

### Lessons 1 and 2 - Australian bush dance

This unit draws upon appreciation experiences in the visual arts to establish the historical context for the dance activity.

#### Lesson 1

Drawing on visual arts experiences, this lesson establishes the context for the study of Australian bush dance. Students learn a simple bush dance, the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’, and recall similar dances they may be familiar with.

#### Lesson 2

This lesson builds on the characteristics identified in the first lesson of this series, with students engaged in a simple composition activity. Students record the results of their work in a dance journal.

### Lessons 3 and 4 - Torres Strait Islander dance

Torres Strait Islander dance is studied within its cultural context and links to appreciating experiences in visual arts. In addition to performing opportunities, the set dance also provides the basis for composition and appreciation.

Using artworks as a stimulus, students explore the role of dance in the culture of Torres Strait Islander people. The ‘banana dance’ is introduced as a set dance, once the students have been involved in developing their own composition. The concept of a dance narrative is introduced as the storytelling aspect to the ‘banana dance’ is explored.

## Outcomes and indicators

In the lesson programs, a sample indicator is sometimes applicable to two outcomes e.g. Performing (P), Composing (C) or Appreciating (A). The double-coding (such as P, A) is used to show the integral relationship between the outcomes. Lesson numbers are referred to as L then the number of the specific lesson for example, lesson 1 is L1.

Outcomes and other syllabus material referenced in this document are from:

* [Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus](http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/creative-arts-k-6-syllabus) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2006

### Creative arts

**Performing DAS2.1** – The student:

* performs dances from a range of contexts, demonstrating movement skills, expressive qualities and an understanding of the elements of dance.

Students might:

* learn the ‘heel and toe polka’, and perform as a group, keeping time with the music (L1)
* use the correct terminology to describe movement sequences used in bush dances (including swing your partner, advance and retire) (L2)
* learn and confidently perform a traditional Torres Strait Islander dance (L3).

**Composing DAS2.2** –The student:

* explores movement in response to stimulus to express ideas, feelings or moods
* explores, selects and combines movement using the elements of dance to communicate ideas, feelings and moods.

Students might:

* make choices based on an understanding of the characteristics of bush dance to compose a simple sequence of movements (L2)
* work effectively in small groups to develop a simple dance composition (L3)
* follow directions and use their experience to compose a dance (L4)
* explore new ways of moving and making sound (L4)
* create a context for their composition work (L4)
* vary movement sequences using direction, level and movement quality (L4)
* improvise to select and sequence movement to tell a story (L4).

**Appreciating DAS2.3** – The student gives personal opinions about the use of elements and meaning in their own and others’ dances.

Students might:

* describe the cultural, historical and social setting for the bush dance, the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’, and develop an awareness of links between the past and the present (L1)
* identify the characteristics and movement sequences of Australian bush dance (L1)
* compare their compositions with other examples of bush dance (L2)
* vary the structure of the dance and reflect on these variations (L3)
* respond to and describe dances from different cultures, focusing on their purpose, costumes, patterns and groupings (L3)
* create a context for their composition work (L4)
* learn and confidently perform a traditional Torres Strait Islander dance (L3)
* discuss how movement can be used to tell a story (L4)
* view and discuss different approaches to developing a narrative through dance (L4).

## Lesson 1 - Australian bush dance

### Sample indicators

Students might:

* describe the cultural, historical and social setting for the bush dance, the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’, and develop an awareness of links between the past and the present (A)
* learn the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’, and perform as a group, keeping time with the music (P)
* identify characteristics and movement sequences of Australian bush dance (A)
* compare and practise basic movements of dance.

### Resources

Suggested resources include:

* pictures of early Australian artworks (from books, posters or online)
* Bushwhackers’ dance album or YouTube may provide additional examples of other bush dances
* dance journal
* Recording or footage of the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’ (or similar)

### Language

Bush dance, characteristics, partner, couples, lines, sets, crossover, arches, swing your partner, advance and retire, top couple, bow, curtsy.

### Learning experiences

1. View artworks from early Australian artists (such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Charles Conder)

* class discussion of artworks
* establish the place of bush dances in a cultural context
  + purpose
  + place in culture
  + why they have survived

**Teaching notes** – Discuss:

* What was life like?
* How was living different in the city and the bush?
* What do landscape paintings tell you about life in that time period?
* What did the early settlers do in their leisure time?
* How did people travel?
* What do works like ‘shearing the rams’ or ‘bailed up’ (Tom Roberts) tell you about life in those times

1. Teach the ‘Heel and Toe Polka’ or similar folk dance using either a school recording or YouTube to assist and accompany the students

**Teaching notes** – Working with a partner in a circle or line formation

1. Identify and discuss characteristics of the dance. Explain that these characteristics are common to all bush dances.

* Brainstorm other known dances (for example, ‘Pride of Erin’, ‘Stockyard’, ‘Strip the Willow’).
* Add any additional characteristics identified from the dances to the list (for example, ‘Do-si-do’ and ‘Swing your partner’).
* Students record the characteristics noted in their dance journals for reference in future lessons

**Teaching notes** – The characteristics that could be discussed include:

* partner interaction
* line interaction
* musical correlation: actions and beats (number of repetitions)
* advance and retire action

**Extension** – If students are familiar with bush dancing, teachers may wish to provide a more challenging dance to learn, such as the ‘Oxo Reel’

### Elements of dance

Action:

* locomotor actions - wing and gallop
* non-locomotor actions - bow, curtsy and arched arms

Space:

* perform along pathways
* perform in sets (line formations)

Time:

* move to a regular beat

Relationships:

* perform with a partner in sets of six
* maintain a time relationship: keeping in time with the group

Structure:

* repetition of sequencing

### Assessment

Were the students able to:

* perform the bush dance?
* describe life in Australia in the late 1800s?
* describe the characteristics of bush dances?

## Lesson 2 - Australian bush dance (interpretation)

### Sample indicators

Students might:

* use the correct terminology to describe movement sequences used in bush dances (such as swing your partner, advance and retire) (P, A)
* make choices based on an understanding of the characteristics of bush dance to compose a simple sequence of movements (C)
* compare their compositions with other examples of bush dance (A).

### Resources

Suggested resources include:

* bush dance/folk music
* dance journals.

### Language

Characteristics, style formation, circle line, sets, partner, crossover, advance and retire, swing, two-handed swing, do-si-do by right, do-si-do by left.

### Learning experiences

1. Use a game to quickly revise the characteristics of bush dances discussed in the previous lesson:

* in groups of four, students recall as many characteristics as possible
* students use the characteristics from a list in the dance journals to perform mirrored actions.
* as a whole class, compose a bush dance based on the style characteristics. For example:
  + formation – partners side by side in a large circle.
  + sequence – 4 steps in, swing your partner, 4 steps out, 4 steps around the circle to a new partner
* perform the sequence as a whole class.

**Teaching notes** – To successfully involve the students in composition tasks the teacher should set limitations and provide clear instructions for the students. For example:

* determine the formation to be used in the composition.
* limit the sequence to 32 beats.
* discuss the list of characteristics and discuss the movements, actions and relationships to be used in the composition.

1. Practise the sequence as a whole class, experimenting with the students’ different movement suggestions before making final decisions about the movement content of the class dance:

* discuss how the dance should be performed in order to demonstrate the ‘mood’ of a bush dance
* discuss how the dance composed by the class meets the style criteria for a bush dance
* students use graphic notation in their journals to record the final dance sequence.

**Teaching notes** – To successfully involve the students in composition tasks the teacher should set limitations and provide clear instructions for the students.

For example:

* determine the formation to be used in the composition.
* limit the sequence to 32 beats.
* discuss the list of characteristics and discuss the movements, actions and relationships to be used in the composition

1. Practise the sequence as a whole class, experimenting with the students’ different movement suggestions before making final decisions about the movement content of the class dance:

* discuss how the dance should be performed in order to demonstrate the ‘mood’ of a bush dance
* discuss how the dance composed by the class meets the style criteria for a bush dance
* students use graphic notation in their journals to record the final dance sequence.

Teaching notes – Experimentation could focus on:

* varying formations (circles, sets, lines)
* making the dance progressive
* varying the actions
* incorporating ‘modern movement’ (such as replacing a curtsy with a modern greeting such as a handshake or a head nod).

This provides a model for small-group composition in future lessons.

1. Extension:

* divide students into groups of six. Students work with the whole-class dance composition and apply the following rules to compose a new piece:
* the set of six may not be in two straight lines or a circle.
* you must change partners at least once.
* you must incorporate two separate levels into each movement when interacting with a partner.
* one of the movements must be performed with a different part of the body.
* you must include a swing your partner.
* you must incorporate specific locomotor actions (e.g. a roll, leap or turn).
* following the criteria given, the students select and refine their movement choices to vary the original composition
* Teacher notes – Students can develop a set of symbols (a key) to describe the actions they are using in the dance. The teacher may model this by listing the actions on the board and encouraging students to develop a symbol for each:
* groups perform their variations for the rest of the class.
* While watching the variations, students identify and record in their dance journals:
  + write down or draw the levels of the dance
  + count the number of leaps and turns
  + draw the shapes of the formation chosen by the group
  + draw the body part used to ‘swing your partner’
* identify the timing of the roll, leap, turn, at the beginning, middle or end of the sequence.

### Elements of dance

Action:

* perform locomotor actions
* perform non-locomotor actions

Space:

* explore pathways and formations

Time:

* maintain beat
* keep in time with the group

Dynamics:

* identify movement qualities that suit the ‘mood’ of a bush dance

Relationships:

* perform and compose using lines, partners, couples, sets, in a circle with a partner

## Lesson 3 - Torres Strait Islander dance

### Sample indicators

Students might:

* learn and confidently perform a traditional Torres Strait Islander dance (P,A)
* vary movement sequences using direction, level and movement quality (C)
* discuss how movement can be used to tell a story (A)
* imitate dance movements used in different cultures.

### Resources

Suggested resources include:

* Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artwork that tells a story
* Banana dance recording or YouTube
* Dance journals.

### Language

Banana pickers, body parts, storytelling, body percussion.

### Learning experiences

1. Show students an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artwork that tells a story. Discuss how the story is told through the artwork.
2. Learn the ‘Banana dance’:

* clap for 10 counts
* crank (left hand) forward, 4 counts, crank back, 4 counts
* position 1, 2 counts, bounce hands, 4 counts, clap, 2 counts
* position 2, 2 counts, bounce hands, 4 counts, clap, 2 counts

Banana dance legend:

* Clap (Cl), Crank (Cr), Left hand (Lh), Forward (F), Right Hand (Rh), Back (B), Position 1 (Pos 1), Position 2 (Pos 2), Wave (W), Pat (pat)

Teacher notes – The ‘Banana dance’ has been reprinted from the source, ‘Children’s Songs of the Torres Strait Islands’ however there are numerous YouTube links to learning the ‘Banana dance’.

* Clap in the normal way unless indicated otherwise.
* Cranking: Hands are in fists, one above the other, slightly apart. Thumbs are uppermost. Each crank is a vertical half circle with the hands changing positions. The upper hand is indicated in the instruction. Crank left hand forward, means the left hand is uppermost and initially moves away from the body while the right hand simultaneously moves towards the body. When the crank is finished, the right hand will be uppermost. The movement is decisive, with the change of hand position occurring on the beat of the music. Therefore each crank is a kind of punctuation of the beat, akin to a light hammering with the leading (upper) fist.
* Position 1 – Hands are open. The left hand is at the left shoulder, palm forward. The right hand is extended in front and slightly to the left, palm up. Hands are open. The right hand is at the right shoulder, palm forward. The left hand is extended in front and slightly to the left, palm up. Hand is open. Make small circles (Rh W clockwise with right hand, Lh W anticlockwise with the left hand) moving across front of body from Positions 1& 2.
* Strike the top of the thigh with an open hand.
* These instructions are for the children. Teachers need to lead the movements in mirror image. The text is untranslatable but the dance movements represent planting banana palms.

1. Discuss the purpose of this dance (storytelling) for banana pickers. Discuss how successfully the dance describes the processes involved in banana picking.

**Teaching notes** – YouTube footage may be of assistance in exploring banana picking processes.

1. In pairs, students develop a spoken text that narrates the banana story. The narrative should be performed simultaneously by both participants.

**Teacher notes** – Encourage students to incorporate at least one of the Torres Strait Islander movements into their sequence. Encourage students to apply one or two of the elements of dance in their compositions. Students may record the spoken text in their dance journals.

1. For each sentence students devise movements that match or contrast the spoken text, working one sentence at a time.

Extension:

* In addition to the words, students may incorporate sounds or body percussion into their composition.

**Teaching notes** – You should encourage students to find interpretative or abstracted movement, rather than choosing representational movement that tells the story like mime. For example:

* Is the sequence performed at the same level all the way through?
* Does the entire performance face the same direction?
* Does the sequence stay ‘on the spot’ in the performance space?
* How is the movement performed: fast or slow, strongly, lightly, gently?
* What type of movement has been used - large or small, contrasting or complementary?

1. Refine and practise the narrative, performing the spoken narrative and movement together.

**Teaching notes** – Links to literacy are important here

1. Several pairs perform their movement sequences together, while the rest of the class observes. Perform the sequences with and without the spoken narrative

**Teaching notes** – Creating and connecting sequences may take some time and practise.

1. Discuss the compositions and how effectively the movement has been used in the storytelling.

**Teaching notes** – Encourage pairs to describe the meaning of sections of their compositions

### Elements of dance

Action:

* perform non-locomotor actions - gesture

Space:

* vary movement using level, focus and direction

Dynamics:

* explore varying movement qualities: fast or slow, strong, light

Relationships:

* perform in pairs

Structure:

* sequence movement using narrative, contrasting actions and/or complementary actions

### Assessment

Were the students able to:

* perform the ‘Banana dance’ confidently?
* create and perform a narrative incorporating movement and spoken text?
* discuss the meaning of the movements they have created?

## Lesson 4: Torres Strait Islander dance (interpretation)

### Sample indicators

Students might:

* improvise to select and sequence movement to tell a story (C)
* view and discuss different approaches to developing a narrative through dance (A)

### Resources

Suggested resources include:

* activity cards (optional).

### Language

* improvise

### Learning experiences

1. Individually, students improvise as many different foot actions as they can. Use questioning to guide students’ exploration:

* Can your movement be performed backwards, upside down, bigger, smaller, faster, slower, with strength, gently, firmly, shakily, at a high, low or medium level?
* Choose students to demonstrate their ideas, emphasising the variety of actions possible

**Teaching notes** – Examples could include - slide, stamp, hop, scurry, point, twist, trudge, drag, shuffle.

Provide a series of activity cards (or model an example of breaking down a task into its various components) if students are having difficulty with ideas.

1. Students choose five distinctly different foot movements. They organise and arrange these into a sequence.

**Teaching notes** – Observe student progress

1. In pairs, students develop a story based on a common chore or activity they are familiar with. Students can use their dance journals to record their ideas

**Teaching notes** – Work with students who need assistance.

1. Students improvise foot movements relevant to their story, sequence the foot movements to relate the story and notate the foot movements into the written text (story).

**Teaching notes** – Encourage students to use interpretive rather than representational or mimed movement.

* Direct students to develop smooth transitions between the movements in each section of the story.
* Students may develop sequences using different body parts.
* Each pair may work on a sequence that focuses on a different body part. Pairs may combine to form groups of four to create sequences that use different body parts within the same sequence.

1. They refine and practise the duet, which may or may not include spoken text.

**Extension** – Pairs may combine to form groups of four and join their sequences to make longer sequences.

**Teaching notes** – Choose appropriate students to participate in the extension activities.

1. Several pairs perform their stories for the rest of the group. Discuss the presentations, providing students with the opportunity to describe how and why they selected their movement content.

**Teaching notes** – Discuss audience behaviours and appreciation.

### Elements of dance

Action:

* perform a range of foot movements
* perform actions that tell a story

Space:

* explore a range of levels

Time:

* explore tempo

Dynamics:

* explore a range of movement qualities of foot actions using weight and force

Relationships:

* work with a partner

Structure:

* use a narrative to structure movement

### Assessment

Were the students able to:

* use improvisation to explore a wide range of foot actions?
* use movement to tell a story?
* discuss their composition?