



## REPERTORY DANCE THEATRE

### Ruth St. Denis Scarf lesson plan

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Grades: 7-12

#### Utah Standards:

##### CREATE

L1.D.CR.2: Explore a variety of stimuli to develop an improvisational or choreographed dance study; identify personal movement preferences and strengths.

##### CONNECT

7-8.D.CO.3: Analyze and discuss how dances from a variety of cultures, societies, historical periods, or communities reveal the ideas and perspectives of the people.

L2.D.CO.1: Analyze dances with a variety of contents and contexts; explain how personal perspectives may affect one's interpretation.

##### PERFORM

L1.D.P.1: Sculpt the body in space and design body shapes in relation to other dancers, objects and environment; use complex floor and air patterns with direct and indirect pathways while maintaining a sense of spatial design and relationship.

#### RUTH ST DENIS AND DENISHAWN

The kind of dancing that looks quaint to us now was formerly the newest and freshest dancing in the world. It was called "aesthetic", or "interpretive", or "barefoot" dance, and it embodied a yearning for freedom and a return to the natural. A fashionable solo performer named Ruth St. Denis began re-creating exotic ethnic dances from the far east and inspiring young women to explore the frontiers of self-awareness.

In 1915, Ruth St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn formed a company and school that trained the next generation of dancers...the MODERN DANCERS. The company was called DENISHAWN and was the first American dance institution. It opened in Los Angeles in 1915 and offered an eclectic variety of instruction in all styles of dance, meditation, breathing, and music visualization, movement that tried to reflect the structure and quality of the accompaniment. It was a technique that helped inspire the beginning of Modern Dance.

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## **SCARF EXERCISES:**

**Using pure silk, make long scarves about 12 inches wide and 12 ft long.**

MUSIC VISUALIZATION was a movement that tried to reflect the structure and quality of the accompaniment. It was a technique that helped inspire the beginning of Modern Dance.

Explore space using scarves to help find a way to get the body to move fully.

### **Ways to use the scarf to explore and design space:**

Running, turning, vertical zig-zag, horizontal zig-zag, Pin-wheel, rainbow, toss and catch. Design your own trick.

MUSIC VISUALIZATION: Select music to support and improvisation. St Denis used the music of Chopin: Waltz in D major for her Scarf Exercises.

## **RUTH ST DENIS: BIOGRAPHY**

Born in 1878, Ruthie Dennis grew up on a farm in New Jersey, a rural environment filled with amateur theatricals. Ruthie went to dancing school, as all well-mannered children of the day did. She also took some ballet and showed great natural ability to do stunts, splits, and cartwheels. Ruthie was a natural dancer.

Ruthie's career was launched in 1896 when she became a vaudeville dancer. Vaudeville had a great influence on American culture. It offered a program of variety acts intended for family consumption. Vaudeville was the only stage where solo dancers could practice their art.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the public became fascinated with the ancient cultures of the East, with Egypt, Japan and Syria. Middle Eastern and Asian paraphernalia became chic. Middle Eastern and Asian culture became a focus for Ruthie Denis. The use of costumes, props and stage sets were incorporated into her art.

Ruthie's mother decided it was time to glamorize the name of her daughter and marked the tags on her suitcases with "St. Denis" ...Ruth St. Denis.

The folks in the vaudeville houses went to see St. Denis and came away convinced they had touched culture. She cloaked the meaning of her dances in rich regalia. Ruth St. Denis knew how to entertain.

She danced in Europe for two years and studied Egyptian and Oriental lore in the libraries and museums of Berlin. When she returned to the U.S. in 1909, she was at the height of her solo career. In 1910, people flocked to see Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Maud Allen, and Ruth St. Denis. Each embodied some features of Art Nouveau, and they all showed how dancing could reflect an individual rather than a set of formal rules.

In 1914, ballroom dancing became fashionable. Ruth St. Denis thought she needed to hire a dancing partner. An ex-divinity student and aspiring performer auditioned. St. Denis wound up with a partner and a husband. He was 14 years younger than Ruth. Together they formed a company and school that trained the next generation of dancers...the MODERN DANCERS.

The company was called DENISHAWN and was the first American dance institution. It opened in Los Angeles in 1915 and offered an eclectic variety of instruction in all styles of dance, meditation, breathing, and music visualization.

During the 1920's, Denishawn toured in the United States and spent over a year abroad traveling from Japan to India, China, and the Philippines. dancing in every style imaginable. It brought to thousands of Americans far from the big cities the first art dancing they had ever seen. Denishawn gave audiences popular entertainment on an elevated plane. But the greatest contribution of the Denishawn company was to be through three daring and gifted choreographers who were to break away to discover their own dance. Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman.