

Ballet for Martha: MAKING APPALACHIAN SPRING

A RIF GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Themes: Dance, Collaboration, Community

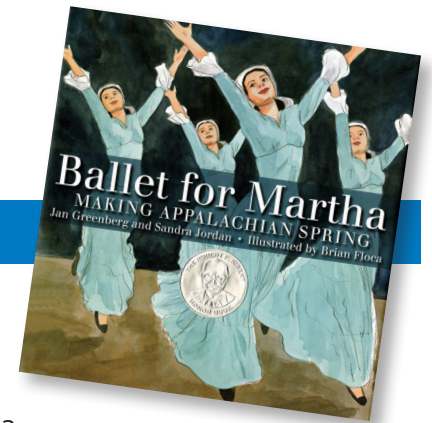
Book Brief: This book tells the story of three people who worked together to create the ballet *Appalachian Spring*. Take a behind-the-scenes look at how this ballet went from an idea to an American classic.

Authors:

Jan Greenberg
and Sandra Jordan

Illustrator: Brian Floca

Content Connections: Art, Social Studies, Science



TIME TO READ!

BEFORE WE READ, LET'S LOOK AT...

The Cover: Have any students ever heard of *Appalachian Spring*? Where is Appalachia? Find it on a

map. What do students know about ballet? Do the women on the cover look like typical ballerinas?

The Pictures: Flip briefly through the pictures. Do the illustrations give any clues about when the story is set? When the ballet is set?

Prior Knowledge: Discuss *collaboration*. Show the class an age-appropriate music video featuring

dancing. What was involved in making this video? A script? Music? Dance choreography? Set design? Costumes? Would the video have been as good without any one of these elements? Then, show students scenes from *Appalachian Spring* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmgaKGSxQVw) to contextualize the story.

Vocabulary: choreographer, composer, pioneer, tableau

Purpose for Reading: As we read, think about the story within the story—*Appalachian Spring*. Pay attention to what Martha Graham wants her ballet to be about, and how she and her collaborators work to tell a story without words.

WHILE WE READ

MONITORING COMPREHENSION

- ◆ What makes Martha Graham's style of dance unique?
- ◆ Where does Aaron Copland get his musical inspiration?

- ◆ How does Isamu Noguchi work with Martha to design the set?
- ◆ Why is the set so simple?
- ◆ How does the audience react to the ballet?
- ◆ How is *Appalachian Spring* Martha's "dance of hope"?

LET'S THINK ABOUT

Our Purpose: What is *Appalachian Spring* about? How do Martha, Aaron, and Isamu tell this story without using any words? What is their process for working together?

Extending Our Thinking: The Shakers are a Christian religious group that believes in hard work and simplicity. Why do you think Aaron used a Shaker hymn for the music? Think of the words—"It's a gift to be simple, it's a gift to be free." Do those fit with the plot and theme of *Appalachian Spring*? Explain.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

- ◆ Extension Activities for Educators also available.
- ◆ Vocabulary Scaffolding Sheet also available.



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