



Division of Educational Services Instructional Services



Cultural Tapestry Arts Lesson: From the film “West Side Story”



[“West Side Story - Opening Scenes”](#)

A musical in which a modern day Romeo and Juliet are involved in New York street gangs. On the harsh streets of the upper west side two gangs battle for control of the turf. The situation becomes complicated when a gang member falls in love with a rival's sister.

Notes:

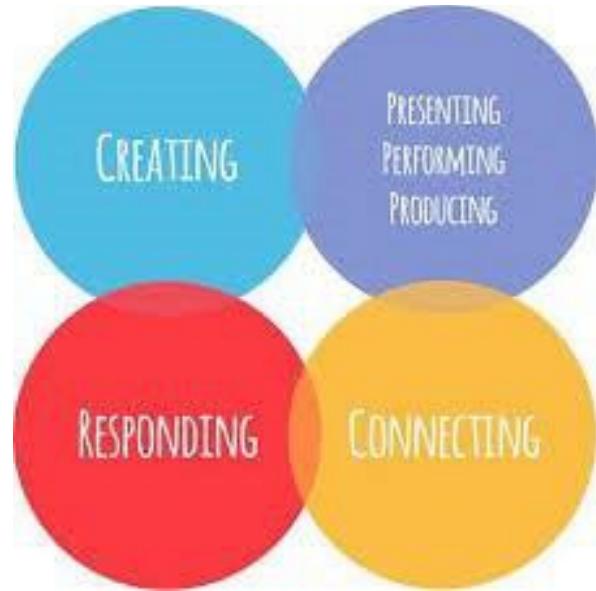
Let's Explore

Spend some time reading the summary of the movie, and then watch the video clip.

- *What do you notice?*
 - *Who are the dancers and why was the screenwriter/choreographer inspired to feature them?*
 - *What do you learn about the dancers?*
 - *Where might this be taking place, and when?*
 - *What makes these dancers different or special?*
- *What do you wonder?*
 - *What is going on? What surrounds the dancers?*
 - *What happened before the time of the dance, and what might come next?*
 - *Are there different ways to see the situation, or is it clear what is happening?*
 - *Have you ever seen someone or something like the dance scene? If you have, where did you see them or it?*
- *How does it make you feel?*
 - *If the dance describes an action, would you ever do something similar?*
 - *Do you see yourself in the dance? In what way?*
 - *Do things or feelings in the dance remind you of anything?*
 - *Do the names of the gangs affect how you feel about it?*

Write down your thoughts and share with family and friends...

The Four Artistic Processes



RESPOND: Explore and Understand

- What dance moves have impact? Why do you think the choreographer chose them?
- What do you notice about patterns, levels, tempo and mood in the dance?

CONNECT: Relate to the artwork

- How does the dance make you feel? Why?
- If you could interview the choreographer or one of the dancers, what questions would you ask?
- What do you think the dancers are feeling? Do you feel an emotion in the dance, such as anxiety, tension, or restlessness?

CREATE: Make your own art

- Write a poem or short essay reflecting on the way the dance makes you feel, or a subject similar to that depicted by the dance.
- Draw or paint an artwork or take a photograph that has a subject similar to that depicted by the dance.
- Imagine you are the choreographer who created the dance. Write what they might say to describe their reason for choreographing the dance, from their point of view.

PRESENT: Share your artwork

- Share your creation with family or friends.
- Take a moment to share what you have discovered in the process.