

Living History- A Timeline Performance of Circus Through the Ages

The arts are constantly serving as a source of inspiration for other areas within the discipline. For instance, a choreographer may use a piece of music or the colors of a painting to inspire the movements for a dance, or a painter may use audible rhythms to inspire their paint strokes. Whatever the source, inspiration is everywhere!

In this project, the music of the circus will serve as inspiration for a dynamic timeline. Selected dates and personalities will be acted out through dance, mime, narration, etc. to present a dramatic history of the evolution of the circus. This timeline may extend all the way from circus beginnings through today, or it may focus on a select period in history. The performance can showcase significant events, or focus on types of acts, or famous personalities. The possibilities are endless.

This project could certainly be carried out from design to performance by one class or content area, but it is a great opportunity to work collaboratively with classes from other disciplines. For instance:

- Theatre and Visual Arts classes could work on set design and construction, backdrops, lighting, and props.
- Dance and Theatre classes could choreograph and perform the numbers.
- Social Studies classes could research the history of the circus and the impact it has had on American society and create a timeline to work from.
- Language Arts classes could create characters- both interpretive and historically accurate- and write scripts and narration for the performance.
- Technology classes could construct sets and props (building-oriented classes) and create websites and advertising materials to promote the performance (computer-oriented classes).
- Music classes could select and/or perform the score.
- Human Services classes could design and/or sew costumes.

Once the collaborating teachers, classes, and students have been assembled a little planning will help to divide up the tasks, especially if the creative (design, writing, directorial) responsibilities are being shared. This will ensure consistency throughout the event.

The following worksheets will assist in the organization, brainstorming, and overall planning of your performance. There is a set for you to use now as well as an extra set that you can take back for use in your classroom.

Since this is a musically-inspired event, don't forget to play the melodies you'll be using in order to help get the ideas flowing!



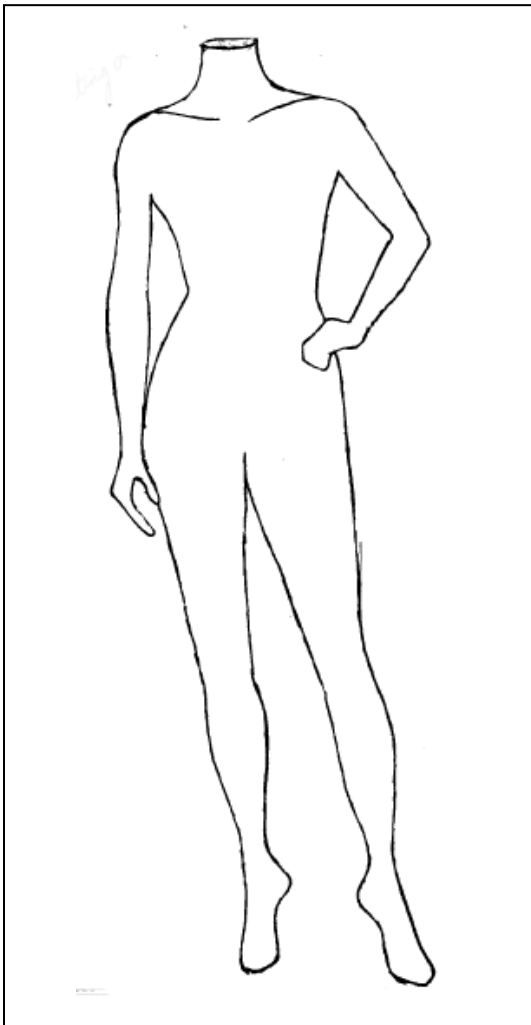
Creating Character

Listen to the music being played and focus on the emotions it stirs. Let these feelings form the basis of a character you will conceptualize from scratch- either fictional or historically based.

List the emotions that make up your character's basic temperament:

Decide on the physical attributes of your character. In the space below compose a poem in any style that details these features:

Design your character's costume:



Sketch patterns and/or accessories appropriate for your character's clothing:

List the props your character will use:

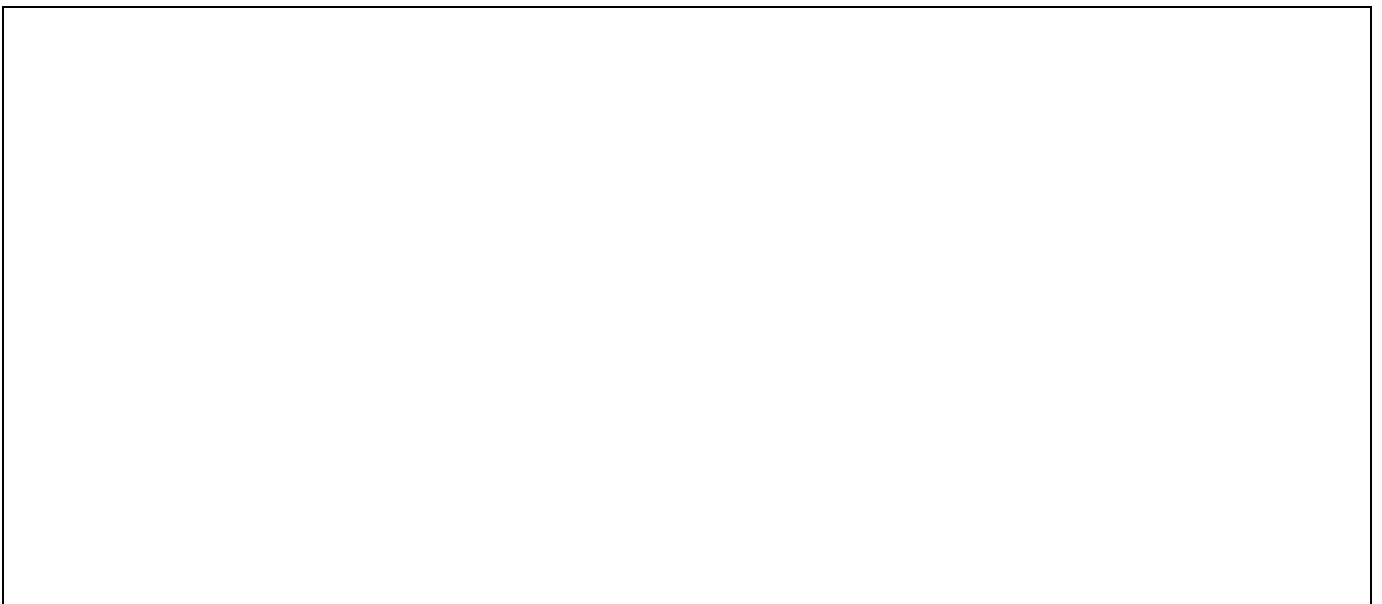
Character's name: _____

Quiet on the Set

Create a drawing or painting that can be translated into a performance backdrop. Focus on the flow of the music and let it inspire your creation:



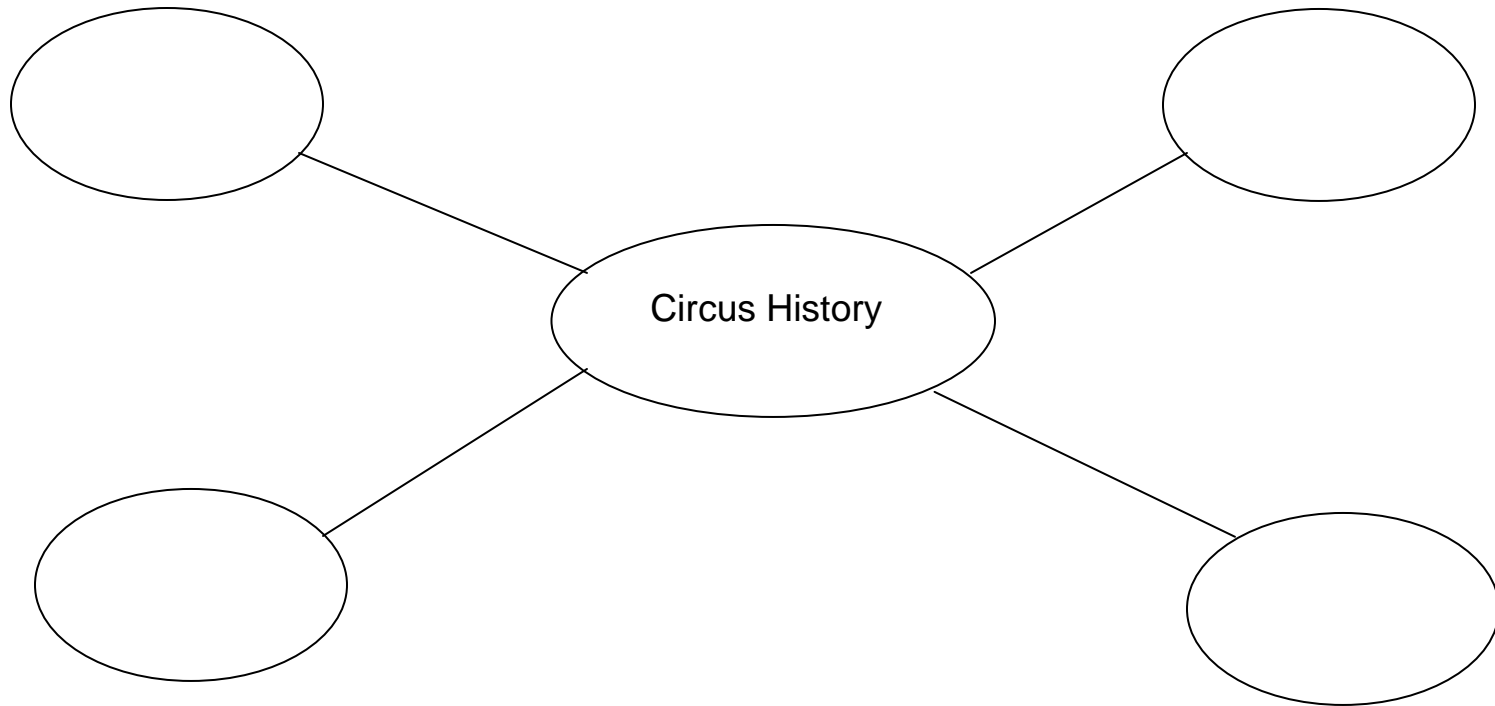
Diagram a set for one of the scenes in your performance. Consider how simple or complex it can be based on available building resources, and whether it will be used for all scenes or changed out. Also, make notes about lighting for at least one scene:



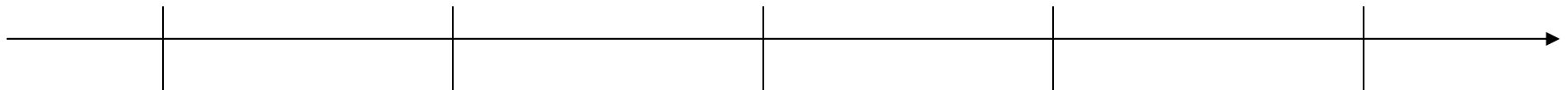
Ideas and Planning

Use the Web Map below to brainstorm ideas for the structure of your timeline. Don't filter any ideas at this stage- there are many different ways to focus the events included in the performance. For instance, each scene could concentrate on a new stylistic development, or on a famous individual, or simply show the trajectory of circus history through the ages.

After choosing a focus, use the timeline at the bottom of the page to sketch out your performance- each date is a new scene.



Timeline of selected events:



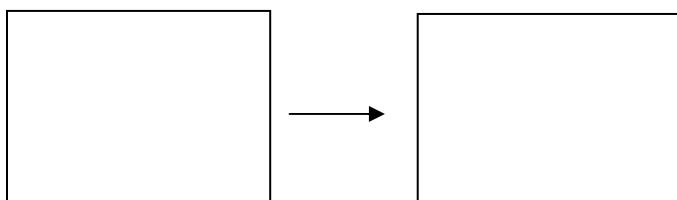
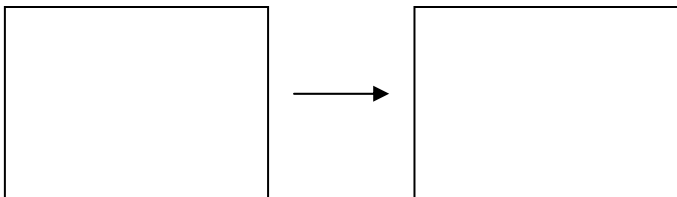
Scripting it Out

Once the scenes are sketched out, it's time to pull everything together. Outline the elements below before beginning the official script.

Write a brief synopsis of each scene:

	Narrative	Main Characters	Setting
Scene 1			
Scene 2			
Scene 3			
Scene 4			
Scene 5			

Quality transitions are important for continuity.
Outline two scene transitions below:



Answer the following:

Who is the narrator?

Is this the same character throughout?

Are they seen or invisible?

Do they interact with the other characters or do they remain aloof?

Rhythm and Movement

Create a short dance number based on the music using the following basic formula. Sketch out the movements in the space below (stick figures are fine). Note the counts for each motion under the boxes.

1. Start with an action or emotion and design a pose or movement that conveys this wordlessly. For example, love could be simulated by crossing the hands over the chest, tilting the head, and then reaching towards the object of affection.
2. Perform this basic movement at various levels. Try reaching up and/or skimming the floor while repeating the basic motion.
3. Add movement to the sides or forward and back.
4. Choose another action or emotion. Have the dance transition from the first motion to the second.
5. Repeat steps 2 and 3.
6. Transition back to the original movement.

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