



# THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A NEW MUSICAL FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

## TOOLKIT

EXPER  
IENCE<sup>THE</sup>  
art.



Image: Robinson, W. Heath (William Heath), 1872-1944 (illustrator).  
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# Welcome!

***The Emperor's New Clothes*** takes a new spin on a classic tale that will have you dancing in your seats. This musical adaptation about honest, responsibility, and acceptance, tells the story of a land where everyone loves to dance and a leader whose love for disco endangers the uniqueness of the kingdom.

This Toolkit contains resources to help kids, families, and teachers learn together about ***The Emperor's New Clothes***. A story summary, interview with the director and playwright, and a collection of fun activities will bring the story to life. These materials are recommended for parents wanting further insight into the play, teachers preparing their students for a visit to the theater, and kids who want to keep engaging with the story even after the show is over.

See you at the theater!

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Look out for dancer spotlights, like this for fun facts about different types of dance found around the world!



### Hip Hop

Inspired by the hip hop music in the 1970s, this form of dance is known for creating break dancing and pop/lock dance.

Expand language skills with content-specific vocabulary words.

## ***The Emperor's New Clothes*** **TOOLKIT**

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### DESIGNER

James Montaña

## **Thank you for participating in the A.R.T. Education Experience!**

If you have questions about using this Toolkit in your class, or to schedule an A.R.T. teaching artist to visit your classroom, contact A.R.T. Education and Community Programs at:

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Photo: James Montano

## The Story

***The Emperor's New Clothes*** takes a fresh spin on the classic fairy tale in this new musical adaptation, full of dance, disco, and a stylish king run **amok**. In a land, far, far away, there is a country where dance is not just respected, it is loved. Everyone has their own special dance: they chacha, they ballet, they jazz, they Irish step, they breakdance, and much more! But the Emperor is unhappy with all the different dance styles. He wants everyone to be just like him and the only dancing he likes is Disco.

The Emperor makes everyone stop dancing their own different dances and forces them to only disco dance. Those who can't disco dance are swiftly kicked out of the empire! Soon everyone becomes good at dancing disco—too good, in fact. This makes the Emperor jealous because he wants to be the coolest, best, most fantastic disco dancer in the land. He makes another proclamation saying that no one can disco dance cheerfully until he, and only he, can have a stylish new wardrobe to look better than anyone else. Then and only then will he allow the people to become cheerful again.

### Disco

Inspired by the music of the same name, this style of dancing comes from the 1960's and '70's.



THE SHOW & THE TALE

## The Story (cont.)

The Emperor's **court** does not know what to do! Where will they find **tailors** who can make the coolest clothes for the Emperor? Little do they know that three of the people **exiled** for not dancing disco have returned with a plan to put the Emperor in his place and start a dance revolution. The three people come up with a clever plan to deceive the Emperor and his court by pretending to be tailors. The **imposter** tailors tell the Emperor that they are going to make magical clothes that only the most extraordinary disco dancers will be able to see. The Emperor loves this idea! It will show the coolest people that he is truly the best disco dancer in all the land.



### Flamenco

This dance comes from southern Spain and is performed to traditional Spanish folk music.

The tailors pretend to work day and night on the magical clothing. The Emperor, growing impatient, sends his secretaries to look in on the progress of the tailors. The secretaries are surprised when they don't see anything in the looms or being sewn by the tailors. Does this mean that they are not extraordinary disco dancers? Afraid that the Emperor will discover that they are not good at disco, the secretaries lie and tell the Emperor that the clothes are amazing and he will look the best!

The day comes when the Emperor must wear the magical disco clothes. The Emperor plans a huge party to show everyone his new **apparel**. But when the tailors arrive with the clothing, he realizes that he too cannot see it! Does that mean he isn't the best? Being the arrogant—and insecure—leader that he is, he pretends to see the clothes. The tailors fake-dress him in the fake clothing and the Emperor fake-admires himself in the clothes. Just as the Emperor is about to disco dance his best dance to dazzle the citizens, a child points out his nakedness. A lesson is learned by all. What is the lesson? Well, you have to see the show to find out, but we're sure you can guess...!

### Words to Know

**amok:** to act out of control; to be disruptive.

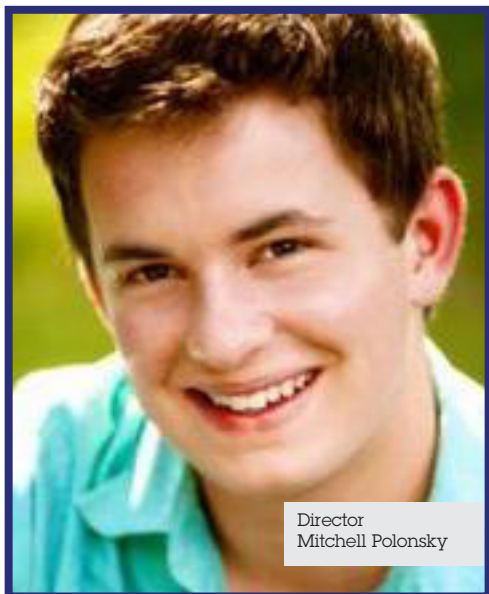
**court:** the advisors and assistants to a ruler.

**tailors:** a person who fits clothes to an individual.

**exiled:** being kicked out of a place, usually a country.

**imposter:** someone who is faking an identity to deceive others.

**apparel:** clothing.



Director  
Mitchell Polonsky



Playwright  
Eliya Smith

## Giving the Emperor New Life: An Interview with the Director and Playwright

Director Mitchell Polonsky (Harvard '19) and playwright Eliya Smith (Harvard '20) have been fascinated by theater since they were two kids growing up in Ohio (Mitchell is from Cincinnati and Eliya from Columbus). Both recognize the impact children and family theater had on their lives and are thrilled to be bringing *The Emperor's New Clothes* to the A.R.T. stage. Education and Engagement Fellow James Montaña interviewed the Harvard College undergraduate team on what excites them about theater and their inspiration for this production.

### And what made you want to study theater as an adult?

**Mitchell:** I've been doing theater since I was a little kid. I think telling stories is the most exciting way to learn from each other and imagine a way we want the world to be.

**Eliya:** Theater is what I love most in the world and it is the thing that consistently makes me happy—but not in the generic happy way, but in a fulfilled, excited, and challenged way. I feel really lucky to have found the thing that makes me feel that way, so why not study it?



## Eliya, can you explain what a playwright does?

**E:** It depends. In this situation, since the story already existed, I've done a lot of reinterpreting the original story. But I think I spend a lot of time imagining different voices in my head and then writing them out. I decide what characters say.

## And what does the director do in this process?

**M:** The director organizes everything that you see onstage, including the people. So, moving them around, and figuring out where they stand, and how they say the things they say.

## Why did you choose this fable to adapt for the stage?

**M:** A lot of reasons! I think it's an incredibly fun story.

***The Emperor's New Clothes*** is a story that makes us think about a lot of the issues that people, especially young people and kids, have to think about in their daily lives. It's about conformity and feeling like you need to be a certain way or do things a certain way if people are going to like or accept you. It's also about learning how our differences can be a really cool and exciting thing, that individuality is important, and how you have the power to come forward and voice when things aren't right.

**E:** Yeah, and the moral of the story is, just because everyone else is pretending that something is: a certain way doesn't mean it has to be a certain way. I think this translates to: trust the experiences you have and the truths you know to be right.

## Have you ever had a moment in your life where you had to discover your own truth or learn to be true to yourself?

### Ballroom

This style of dance has been performed socially and competitively since the 16th century!



**M:** I was the only male student in my high school class that didn't play on an athletic team. It was certainly a weird thing to be doing theater, but I stuck to what I knew was true, what I liked to do, and that was the best thing.

**E:** My mother always told me growing up, "trust your instincts, especially as a woman. Things that you experience and things that your gut tells you are

### Ballet

Coming from Italy in the 1600s, this form of dance remains popular across the world and is known for balance and graceful movement.



how they are: follow that instead of listening to what people try to convince you is happening.” And she’s always right.

**For some audience members, this may be their first time experiencing theater. What were your first theater experiences?**

**E:** I saw a lot of fairy tales on stage, similar to *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, actually.

**M:** Holiday pantomimes. I grew up in Ohio—

**E:** Me too!

**M:** And local theaters always had these pantomimes of fairy tales, like Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati. When I was really, really little I didn’t understand everything, but it’s so different than what I watched on film. It is such a refreshing thing to see real people embodying a story in a much more physical way than you can do in a digital or film world.

**Why do you think theater for young audiences is important?**

**M:** I think storytelling is the most important way that we have of interacting with each other, because it lets us imagine how someone else is thinking or feeling, and it lets us get outside of ourselves and think of ourselves in relation to the broader communities that we’re a part of—whether that’s family, or school, or city. Children’s and family theater are important because, for kids, it is especially important to start imagining different worlds and what life might be like for other people.

**E:** I also think that the moral of our story is that, often times, children are the people who have the strongest consciences and the most centered morals. So, I don’t think theater is just about teaching people how to be empathetic—it’s also about cultivating an innate sense of empathy and making sure that children can recognize that they have it right.

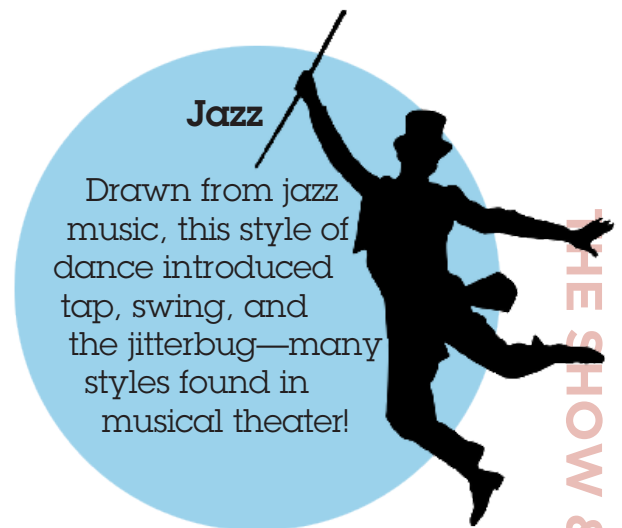






Image: Hans Tegner [Public domain]

# The Emperor's Old Clothes: The Story Through History

By James Montañó

The ART adaptation of ***The Emperor's New Clothes*** is one of numerous adaptations of this tale—a tale told throughout many centuries in many cultures around the world. A core idea of the story has remained: a leader is tricked in their quest to be unique and powerful and their people follow. Sometimes the story was more about the tricksters than about the emperors. Sometimes the emperor is not publicly shamed for their foolish beliefs. Sometimes the truth teller is not a child, but a servant. But almost always, the story has remained a fable—a short tale illustrating a moral or lesson. Danish author Hans Christian Andersen's version of this previously well-known story in 1837 changed the story's status from fable to "fairy tale," alongside other tales such as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and many others.

Hans Christian Andersen wrote many books, essays, plays, and journals, which were well-regarded during his lifetime and since his passing in 1875. He is most famous for his fairy tales. Stories such as "The Little Mermaid," "Thumbelina," and "The Ugly Duckling" are still well-known by children around the world

and are regularly adapted into new movies, songs, books, or video games. ***The Emperor's New Clothes*** is one of his most famous fairy tales. Despite the many fantastical elements usually found in fairy tales, the magic in this story is not real; instead, the Emperor is fooled into believing in fake magic. ***The Emperor's New Clothes*** tells a universal story about lying, arrogant leaders, blind followers, and the truth tellers.

Politics have always been at the core of the story. Political cartoonists of many different countries regularly use the theme of the naked emperor as a way to criticize politicians. When Hans Christian Andersen first published the story in 1837, as part of his collection of *Fairy Tales Told For Children*, Frederick VI was king of Denmark. Many people read Andersen's story as a careful criticism of the noble class and their mindless acceptance of anything the king declared. And Andersen knew that these stories, though mostly written for children, had an adult audience as well. In fact, he planned on adult readers enjoying and learning from the stories, saying, "I seize on an idea for grown-ups and then tell the story to the little ones while always remembering that Father and Mother often listen, and you must also give them something for their minds." The politics could have been for the adults, the humor and trickery for the kids.

As with many fairy tales and fables, though, this story had a long history before Hans Christian Andersen put pen to paper. Like Shakespeare, some of Andersen's best stories were those he adapted from others. One of the earliest known versions of the Emperor story came from a 1335 Spanish text, *Libro de los ejemplos del conde Lucanor y de Patronio* written by the Prince of Villena, Juan Manuel. This version is very similar to Andersen's original, with one strong exception: instead of the fake weavers saying that only fools cannot see the garments, the Spanish swindlers say that only legitimate children could see the garments. Legitimacy—being born with a royal or noble, legally married father and mother—was incredibly important to nobility at that time, but even more so for a king. If a king was considered illegitimate they could lose their throne.

Worldwide, this story has been told with similar variations. In a seventeenth century Turkish version, the king desires a magical turban that will show him who is a born out of wedlock; again, note the necessity of being a "legitimate" child or heir. Interestingly, this version is missing the outsider telling the king there is no magic turban, or, as in the traditional story, that the Emperor is naked. In the Turkish version, the king begins to suspect that he has been



Image: Christian Albrecht Jensen [Public domain]

Portrait of author Hans Christian Andersen, 1836

fooled, which allows his advisors to acknowledge that they too have been tricked. It seems that wisdom, in the Turkish version, only comes from the king himself, and not from an innocent bystander.

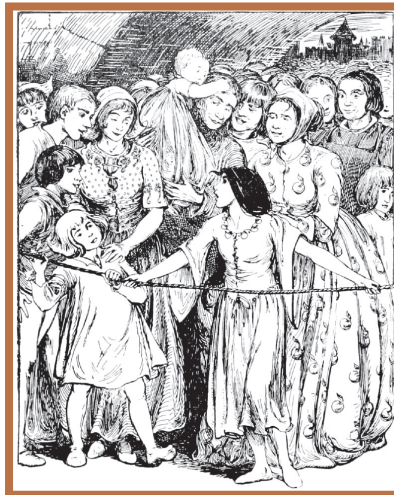


Image: Helen Stratton [Public domain]

The outsider or innocent bystander character is one of the most surprising elements of the various versions of ***The Emperor's New Clothes***. Out of the various characters present in the story, children only appear in the final moments—and they're one of the most important characters! Similar to the Biblical scripture, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have you ordained strength” (Psalms 8:2), which has been shortened to the modern phrase “Out of the mouth of babes...”, the twist of the story comes from the truth, strength, and wisdom of an innocent child. But, depending on the version of the story, this role is sometimes changed to a servant or lower-class person who

can see the wisdom that the higher-class person cannot. For instance, in the early Spanish version, it is a Moorish slave who notes that the king clearly is unclothed. In a German version, called “How Eulenspiegel Painted the Forebears of the Landgrave of Hessen,”—featuring a popular German trickster named Eulenspiegel—the wise innocent character is a “fool-woman” or clown, who is a part of the princess’ court.

Tricksters have also been an exciting part of folktales throughout the centuries. Each of these Emperor stories employ the tricksters in uniquely different ways. Almost always the goal of the trickster is to gain wealth, though sometimes it is to make a point to the king and his court. In the case of the German Eulenspiegel, the point is simply to do what he does best: trick people. In “How Eulenspiegel Painted the Forebears”, trickster Eulenspiegel goes from town to town tricking people and taking their money. When he comes to the Landgrave of Hessen—a noble landowner in Germany—he pretends to paint a massive mural celebrating the history of the noble’s family, for a massive amount of money. When everyone realizes that the magical mural does not separate the nobly-born from the ignobly-born, they are frustrated. However,

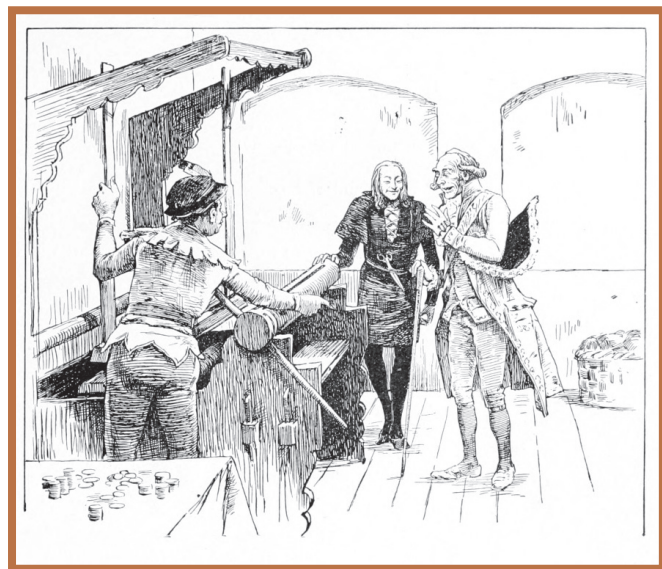


Image: Hans Tegner [Public domain]

they recognize the wisdom that he has provided. Similarly, in an Indian version from the late seventeenth century, called “The King and the Clever Girl,” the king is tricked into lying by a young woman, who doubts the king’s claims of honesty. She concocts a plan to build a chamber where only those born in wedlock will be able to “see God.” It is a bold plan that not only fools the king and his court, but shows the young woman to be exceedingly wise. So wise, that the king chooses to marry her.

The longevity of this fable is proof of its continued relevance. As long as there are foolish leaders and blind followers, this story will continue to be adapted for new readers and audiences. While it is relevant for adults as well,

***The Emperor’s New Clothes*** is still considered a story for children. Maybe that is because the story has a lesson that children understand clearly: adults sometimes do not know what they are doing and are guilty of following the crowd, even when the crowd is wrong. Children may not know everything, but they can sometimes see the truth, even when adults cannot.

Notes:

Windling, Terri. “Hans Christian Andersen: Father of the Modern Fairy Tale.” Terri Windling. 2003. December 03, 2018. <https://www.terriwindling.com/mythic-arts/hca.html>

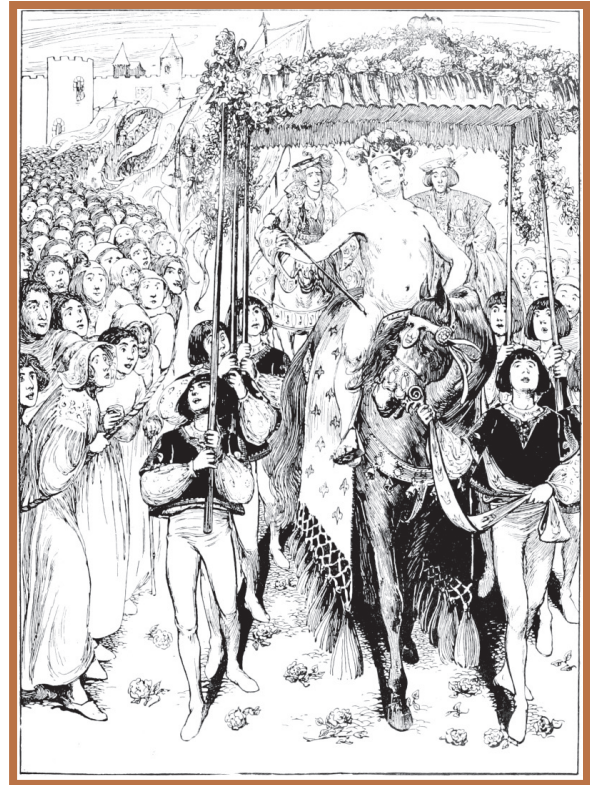


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# Educational Activities

## Lesson Plan Index

### **PORTRAYING CLASS**

*Grades 1-4*

Pages

*In this activity, students will explore the various class structures found in an empire or kingdom. Discussing dress, language, and access to goods, services, and wealth, students will apply the ideas of class or status through performance exercises.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **The Emperor's New Clothes**.*

### **DANCING ON YOUR OWN PATH**

*Grades 1-3*

Pages 47-48

*In this activity, students will understand how a visual design can be utilized to create movement. Students will learn the concept of a physical "pathway" and design a path that they will enact in a movement or dance piece.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **The Emperor's New Clothes**.*

# Lesson Plan: Portraying Class

## OBJECTIVES

*In this activity, students will explore the various class structures found in an empire or kingdom. Discussing dress, language, and access to goods, services, and wealth, students will apply the ideas of class or status through performance exercises.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **The Emperor's New Clothes**.*

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

*MA ARTS.T.01.02 --[PK-4] - Imagine and clearly describe characters, their relationships, setting, conflict, and plot from a variety of appropriate literature.*

*MA ARTS.T.01.04 --[PK-4] - [PK-4] - Create characters through physical movement, gesture, sound and/or speech, and facial expression.*

*MA ARTS.T.01.06 --[PK-4] - Demonstrate the ability to work effectively alone and cooperatively with a partner or in an ensemble.*

## TIME

30 Minutes

## MATERIALS

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Post-its or paper with tape

## PROCEDURE

### Introduction

Discuss with the student the varieties of class statuses found in kingdoms during the 1800s, when the story was first printed by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. Frederick VI was King of Denmark and the social classes were as follows:

- Royalty: King, Queen, Prince, Princess
- Nobility: People born or given a high status by royalty
- Landowners: Sometimes nobility, sometimes farmers. Paid taxes and had some power.
- Peasants: Poor. Little or no power.

### Primary Activity

1. Write the four ranks on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or other surface. For students with limited literacy, post pictures of each rank on a board for reference.
2. Ask: What would a King do for a kingdom? [What would the nobility do? Landowners? Peasants? Write down brief answers.]
3. Ask: How would each rank dress? [Write answers down near the ranks as well.]
4. Ask: What kind of education do you think each rank would have? [Write down]
5. Write down numbers next to the ranks. 1 is Royalty, 2 is Nobility, 3 are Landowners, 4 are Peasants.
6. Lead the students through a physical exercise, where they explore the movement of each rank. [What does a king walk like? Nobility? If landowners are farmers or hunters, do they walk differently? What about peasants?]
7. Pair-up students. Using a post-it or paper with adhesive, tape or post a number 1-4



# Portraying Class

- to the back of each student in the pair.
8. Instruct them not to look at their own number but to notice the other's number/status. They are not to tell the other person what their status is, however, they are supposed to respond as if that person is that status. For example, if student A has a number 1 on his back, Student B will notice it and act as if the person is royalty. Maybe Student B will bow or look away when student A approaches.
  9. Have each pair perform this in front of each other, then guess what their own status/number must be based on the performance. This can be done in front of the class or in small groups.

## REFLECTION

- Was it difficult to discover what status you were?
- How would you act as your assigned status?
- Do you know any other stories, movies, or plays with these classes or ranks?
- What classes do we have nowadays in America? Are there people with more power or resources than other people?

# Lesson Plan: Dancing on Your Own Path

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will understand how a visual design can be utilized to create movement. Students will learn the concept of a physical “pathway” and design a path that they will enact in a movement or dance piece.*

*This activity can either precede or follow a viewing of **The Emperor’s New Clothes***

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

*MA ARTS.D.03.02--[PK-4] - Observe and discuss how dance performance is different from her forms of human movement used in sports, everyday gestures, or social dancing.*

*MA ARTS.D.02.01--[PK-4] - Explore and invent movement, and improvise to solve movement problems.*

*MA ARTS.D.02.03--[PK-4] - Create a dance phrase and then vary it, making changes in space, time, and energy/force.*

## TIME

45 Minutes

## MATERIALS

- Example sheets (page 18 and 19)
- Music (something upbeat and instrumental)
- Speakers/stereo
- Paper
- Pencils

## PROCEDURE

### Introduction

- Explain that dance is structured on design, called “choreography.”
- A person who designs that choreography is called a “choreographer.”
- There are many ways to design choreography but one way is to create a “pathway.”
- Define *pathway*: an part of space that refers to the immediate space surrounding the body in all directions—similar to a personal bubble that moves. Pathway in dance is the same as a line in visual art: a point that moves through space that can vary in width, length, curvature and direction. In dance, a body part of the entire body can move in a variety of pathways

### Primary Activity

1. Draw a spiral on the board. Ask everyone to walk in a spiral shape.
  - Ask: How can we make a spiral shape with just our arm? Our leg?
2. Next draw a zigzag. Ask everyone to walk in a zigzag.
  - Ask about making a zigzag with an arm and leg.
3. Draw a straight line. Repeat the same questions.
4. Show students an example of a drawn pathway (Example on page 18). Talk about the different shapes we see.
5. Refer to shape page (page 19) and discuss the varieties of shapes that we noticed on the pathway drawing.

# Dancing on Your Own Path

6. Explain that the pathway could be a map for movement in dance. Ask: If this were a map, how would one walk a line?
  - How would one walk a zipzag?
  - What would a dotted line look like?
  - A dashed line?
7. Ask for a volunteer to look at the example pathway and to imagine it in an open classroom space. Then ask them to walk across the space, with the pathway as their map.
8. Tell the class that music will soon be played. The students are to use the sound of the music to help them create a simple pathway.
  - The pathway should use 4 of the different types of lines but none of the lines should cross (it should be pretty easy to follow).
9. Play the song for 2 minutes while students draw.
10. Stop the music.
11. Ask for volunteers to show their map, then, with the music playing, perform their movement.

## VARIATION and EXTENTION

Think of the pathway map as instructions for a body part. How would one make their arm perform a straight or curved line?

- How would a leg?
- A hand?

## REFLECTION

- What was challenging about this activity? What was fun?
- Did any of the movement feel natural? Did it look natural?
- Do you think you could create a whole dance routine just using a pathway map?
- What is your favorite type of dance? Do you think you could use a pathway map to create a dance in that style?



## Types of lines we can use in drawings

Straight Lines: // \ \ \_\_\_\_\_ |

Curved Lines: 

Dotted Lines: . . . . .

Dashed Lines: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Zigzag Lines: 

Spiral: 

# Craft Activity: The New Clothes

In this craft, students can design the clothing for the Emperor. Give the Emperor a face, a name, and a whole new wardrobe! Below is an example of this craft, which is designed like an old-fashioned paper doll. Students can fold along the tabs to fit the clothing to the Emperor.





