

## *Barn Dancing*

**Subject:** Social Studies: Agriculture

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**McRel Standards: US History** Era 6: The development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)

Historical Understanding II Standard 1: Understands and knows how to analyze  
chronological relationships and patterns

Historical Understanding II Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

Historical Understanding III Standard 1: Understands and knows how to analyze  
chronological relationships and patterns

Historical Understanding III Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

The National Standards For Arts Education: Dance (5-8) Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating  
movement elements and skills in  
performing dance

Dance (5-8) Standard 5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures  
and historical periods

**Anticipatory Set:** When the barn was up, it was time for all those who helped to join in the celebration at the Barn Dance. Why do you think the barn dance was held? Barn Dancing is popular all over the world. Barn Dance by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault, read aloud, will introduce students to the American dance style called barn dancing or square dancing. Students will hear square dance calls and a fiddle providing music. They will learn, practice, and perform a square dance

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will distinguish fiddle playing and violin playing.
2. Read descriptions of barn/square dances in literature.
3. Describe a barn/ square dance after reading a variety of descriptions in literature.
4. Perform a square dance while following selected calls.

### **Teaching to the Objective:**

1. Before the class begins, write the following square dance calls on the board:

"Begin! Get yourself a partner an' jump right in!"

"Right hand! Left hand! Around you go!"

"Now back-to-back your partner in a do-si-do!"

"Mules to the center for a curtsy and a bow!"

"Now spin once again an' that's a-plenty!"

When the class comes in, go over these calls. Ask the following questions:  
Can anyone guess what these are? What are they used for? Has anyone ever seen or heard anything like this before?

3. Read aloud Barn Dance! by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault. Talk about this book in verse that is about a distinctive American dance style, barn or square dancing. Note the calls in the book are on the board. Divide the students into pairs and have students go through the calls with their partner.
4. Point out the fiddler in the book. Play a CD of fiddle playing and another of traditional, classical violin playing. Discuss the violin's sound on the two recordings. Are they alike? Are they different? Give examples of how they are alike or different. Are the Instruments any different? Have a demonstration by a music teacher or a student who plays the violin.
5. Show a video of a square dance. Tell the class about square dancing using the following notes. Square dancing is the most widely-known type of folk dance in the United States. Especially popular in rural areas, it is performed by groups of four couples. These couples may dance in a square, a circle, or longwise in two lines of couples facing each other. A caller gives directions to the dancers. These calls include: "Promenade," "Swing Your Partner," and "Form a Star."
6. Following the directions of the caller, the dance couples do many kinds of movements all based on a smooth, shuffling walk. The dance style is lively and free. The dance is traditionally accompanied by an accordion, banjo, fiddle, and guitar. The square dance derives from courtship dances brought by European immigrants to America. English, Scottish, and Irish country-dances were important influences as well as French court dances. The square dance call is an American invention and is a response to the complexity of dance patterns. With a caller, anyone could join in the dance. The caller also insures that order is kept on the dance floor.
7. Tell students that they are going to learn certain calls that, when put together, form a square dance. Remind them of the book, Barn Dance that you read to them previously. Tell them that the class will do the Virginia Reel, a square dance. Remind the class that a square dance has a caller. On the record they will hear the caller telling the dancers what square dance steps to do. Explain to the students that square dance calls started about the same time as the War of 1812.
8. "...Some smart American invented 'calling' which made it unnecessary to memorize the dance beforehand. Like all great inventions, it was simple: the fiddler or the leader of the orchestra merely kept telling the dancers what to do next. Nobody who knew the six or eight fundamental calls could go very far wrong.

9. Assign students partners or have them choose and stand across from a partner, forming two long parallel lines facing each other. Name the calls, demonstrate, and then have the students execute the calls:
  - a. forward up and back: take three steps to your partner, bow or curtsy and take three steps back.
  - b. right elbow swing: in eight counts, walk or step forward, hook right elbows with your partner, go around one time, then let go of the elbows and go back to place.
  - c. left elbow swing: same as the right elbow swing, only with the left arm.
  - d. two hand swing: walk or skip forward and join both hands, moving clockwise, go around the circle one time and go back to place.
  - e. do-si-do move forward: while facing the same direction all of the time, make a circle around your partner, passing right shoulders first back to back and then left shoulders and back to place.
  - f. head couples-sashay down: the couple at the end or top steps forward and joins hands out to the sides and slides down the center for eight counts while the others are stomping and clapping.
  - g. sashay back: the same head couple slides back the other way in eight counts and ends up back where they started.
  - h. cast off: everyone turns in the direction of the head couple and walks forward - each of the two people as the head couple turns toward the outside of the group and walks back to where the end of the line of 2's used to be. The others in his/her line follow.
  - i. make an arch and pass through: the head couple comes together again, makes an arch, and the other couples join hands as they go under the arch and then straight forward to form two lines again, but with a new head couple.
  
10. After teaching forward up and back, right elbow swing, left elbow swing, two hand swing, and do-si-do move forward, have the students practice these calls with music. Then teach head couples-sashay down, sashay back, cast off, and make an arch and pass through, and do these calls with music. Later, do the entire dance with music. Repeat a number of times. Have the students practice saying two or three of the calls that you select.

11. Distribute various books in which square dancing appears. Students may work in teams, pairs, or individually; whichever is appropriate for the class. Sample books include: Barnyard Dance by Sandra Boynton, Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls Wilder, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving, Lyrics of Lowly Life by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and Bigfoot Doesn't Square Dance by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones
12. Distribute the Barn Dance/Square Dance Study Guide handout. Tell the students they are to read the dance passage and complete the study sheet. Have the students read the entire book if it is short. Otherwise, identify the passage containing the dance. Have students read the entire chapter in which the dance appears. Collect the students' worksheets when completed.

**Assessment:** Collect the Barn Dance/Square Dance Study Guide and use the Dance Assessment Rubric to assess the work of the students.

**Extensions:**

1. Invite a local square dancer to the class. There often are square dance clubs in many communities. Ask the guest to talk about square dancing, model square dance clothing, demonstrate and teach a favorite square dance.
2. Learn more square dance calls. Have groups learn and then teach the calls to the rest of the class.
3. With the help of the music teacher, learn some folk songs. These will provide more insight into another popular folk activity.
4. Students may study the origins of square dancing and the history of social dancing in America. Such a study will show the many dance links to other countries. A class-created time line may help students visualize when these dances arrived in America.



**Complete the following questions.**

1. The book we read is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In your own words, describe the dance you read .
3. Where does the dance take place?
4. Who dances?
5. Why are they dancing?
6. What kind of music is there? What are the instruments?



## "Swing Your Partner!"

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please check under the number of the correct description.)

	3	2	1	0
<b>Beginning Middle Ending</b>	There was a very clear beginning, middle, and ending to the dance.	Two of the three parts of the structure were clear, but one was not.	Only one part was clear by the students' movements.	There was no evidence of the beginning, middle or ending.
<b>The concept or idea demonstrated in the dance</b>	The movements performed and the manner in which they were done demonstrated the concepts or ideas for the dance. A person could verbalize these ideas upon looking at the dance.	Most of the movements selected and performed demonstrated the ideas or concepts for the dance. Many of the movements were either done in unison or were done at the appropriate time.	The movements did not seem to fit the ideas or concepts, or they were not done in a way that helped the audience understand the meaning behind the movements.	The movements had nothing to do with any ideas or concepts in the book and were not performed correctly.
<b>Working together as a group</b>	I listened to the ideas of the other people in my group and also presented at least one idea to my group. I had a positive attitude.	I either only listened to or only presented ideas to the others in my group for the dance. I tried to have a positive attitude.	I neither presented ideas nor listened to the ideas of others, but when we put the dance together, I practiced with everyone.	I did not help my group at all.