

A Great Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. A person who is highly skilled in performing music is _____.

- (A) a major
- (B) an ear trumpet
- (C) a muffler
- (D) a virtuoso

2. The cause of Beethoven's deafness was _____.

- (A) not stated in the text
- (B) playing the piano loudly
- (C) being born deaf
- (D) conducting the orchestra

3. Beethoven used a conversation book when he could no longer hear. What modern inventions can you think of that might have helped him?
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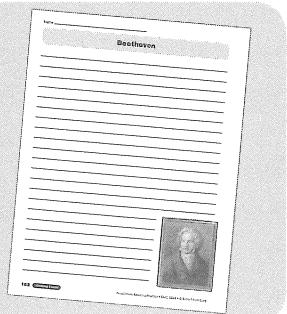
4. What evidence can you find that it was very difficult for Beethoven to lose his hearing?
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5. What do you think about the fact that Beethoven composed music after he became deaf?
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Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Write about the accomplishments that earned Beethoven a place in history as one of the greatest composers.



Agnes de Mille

Level 1

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

Level 2 ■ ■

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

Level 3 ■ ■ ■

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

Assemble the Unit

Reproduce and distribute one copy for each student:

- Visual Literacy page: Agnes de Mille, page 171
 - Level 1, 2, or 3 Reading Selection and Reading Comprehension page and the corresponding Words to Know list
 - Graphic Organizer of your choosing, provided on pages 180–186
 - Writing Form: Newspaper Review, page 172

Introduce the Topic

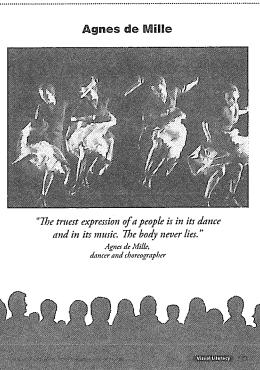
Read aloud and discuss the picture and quote. Explain that the photographer took multiple exposures to capture the action. Tell students that Agnes de Mille created many dances that expressed the American spirit.

Read and Respond

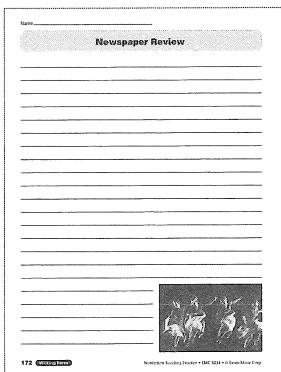
Form leveled groups and review the Words to Know lists with each group of students. Instruct each group to read their selection individually, in pairs, or as a group. Have students complete the Reading Comprehension page for their selection.

Write About the Topic

Read aloud the leveled writing prompt for each group. Tell students to use the Graphic Organizer to plan their writing. Direct students to use their Writing Form to respond to their prompt.



Visual Literacy



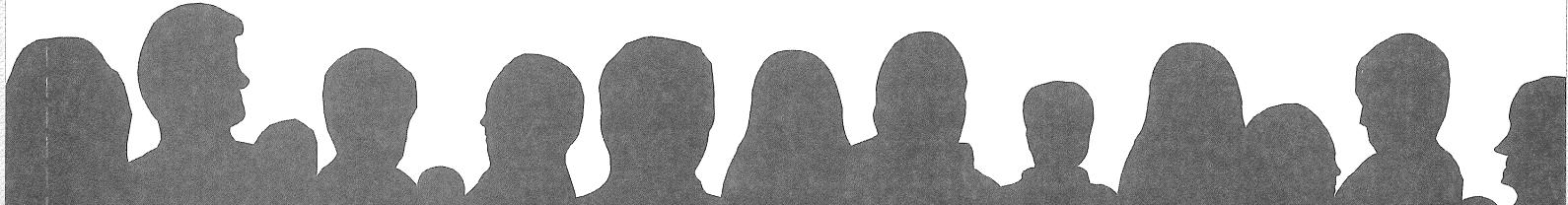
Writing Form

Agnes de Mille



*“The truest expression of a people is in its dance
and in its music. The body never lies.”*

*Agnes de Mille,
dancer and choreographer*



Name _____

Newspaper Review



Words to Know

America Dances

films
ballerina
choreographer
ballet
performed
female
resembled
extended
musical
Broadway
audience
plot

Words to Know

Dancing Cowgirl

ballerina
choreographer
technique
ballet
performed
female
resembled
extended
audience
applauded
curtain calls
musical
Broadway
folksy
plot
film

Words to Know

An American Musical

musical
ballerina
choreographer
technique
classical ballet
composer
female
resemble
extends
lyrics
Broadway
emotion
plot
audiences

Agnes de Mille ■

Agnes de Mille ■ ■

Agnes de Mille ■ ■ ■



America Dances

Agnes de Mille was born in 1905 and lived in Hollywood as a young girl. Her father was a writer who worked in films, and her uncle was a famous movie maker. Young Agnes once saw Anna Pavlova dance. Pavlova was a world-famous Russian ballerina. Seeing Pavlova lit a spark in Agnes de Mille. She grew up to be a dancer and choreographer with an original style. A choreographer is a trained dancer who creates dances. In her most famous dances, de Mille used ballet training and movement. But she added a modern American touch.

In 1942, Agnes de Mille was asked to create a dance for a ballet company. "Rodeo" was performed in New York, but the stage looked like the wide-open spaces of the American west. In this ballet, the men were cowboys, and the lead female dancer was a cowgirl. Agnes de Mille created movements that resembled leaping into the saddle, riding a horse, and roping cows. When the cowgirl extended her leg and pointed her toes, she was wearing cowboy boots!

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were making a musical together. The setting was Oklahoma in the early 1900s. The characters were cowboys and farm girls. Rodgers and Hammerstein asked Agnes de Mille to create the dances. They were about to make Broadway history together.

The musical "Oklahoma!" was a big hit on Broadway in 1943. That was during the years of World War II. Americans needed to forget about the war for a time. "Oklahoma!" was light and happy. It was the story of a farm girl who wonders which cowboy she should take to the picnic—and maybe marry. De Mille's dances helped the audience understand the characters. She created a 15-minute ballet of the farm girl's dream. In the dream, the girl makes up her mind.

Earlier musicals had dances, jokes, acts, and songs. However, those things did not always tell more about the characters or move the plot along. In "Oklahoma!" all the pieces fit together to tell the story. "Oklahoma!" was a very popular show. It ran on Broadway for five years and was made into a film in 1955. Agnes de Mille's first Broadway musical changed the way musicals were done from then on.



Richard Rodgers composed the music and Oscar Hammerstein II wrote the story and lyrics for "Oklahoma!"



catwalker / Shutterstock.com

A postage stamp showing an image of the musical "Oklahoma!" circa 1993

America Dances

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. Agnes de Mille created dances _____.
 A in a modern American style
 B for Anna Pavlova
 C in the style of Russian ballet
 D only for female dancers

2. "Oklahoma!" was a _____.
 A horse
 B ballet company
 C popular Broadway musical
 D famous New York stage

3. What are several traits and skills that you think a choreographer needs to possess?

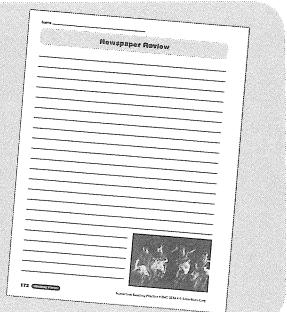
4. In your opinion, why did Rodgers and Hammerstein want Agnes de Mille to work with them on "Oklahoma!"?

5. What data supports the conclusion that audiences loved "Oklahoma!"?

Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Imagine it is 1942. Write a newspaper review of Agnes de Mille's new ballet, "Rodeo."



Dancing Cowgirl

Agnes de Mille was a young girl when she saw Anna Pavlova dance. Pavlova was a world-famous ballerina. Seeing her lit a spark in Agnes de Mille. De Mille grew up to be a dancer and choreographer with an original style. In her most famous dances, she used dance training and technique and gave them a modern American look and feel.

A choreographer is a trained dancer who creates dances. In 1942, Agnes de Mille was asked to create a dance for a ballet company. "Rodeo" was performed in New York, but the stage looked like the wide-open spaces of the American west. The music was by the modern American composer Aaron Copland. In this ballet, the men are cowboys, and the lead female dancer is a cowgirl. Agnes de Mille created movements that resembled leaping into the saddle, riding a horse, and roping cows. When the cowgirl extended her leg and pointed her toes, she was wearing cowboy boots! De Mille danced the role of the cowgirl, and the audience applauded her for 22 curtain calls.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II saw de Mille's choreography. Rodgers and Hammerstein were making a musical together. The setting was the Oklahoma territory in the early 1900s. The characters were cowboys and farm girls. Rodgers and Hammerstein asked Agnes de Mille to create the dances for their show.

The musical "Oklahoma!" was a big hit on Broadway in 1943, during World War II. The musical was happy, light, and folksy. This was just what Americans needed to help them forget about the war. The story was about a farm girl who wonders which cowboy she should take to the picnic—and maybe marry. The dances were an important part of the plot. De Mille created a 15-minute ballet of the farm girl's dream. In the dream the girl makes up her mind.

Earlier musicals had dances, jokes, acts, and songs, but they didn't always tell more about the characters. In "Oklahoma!" all the pieces fit together to move the plot along. Audiences loved it. "Oklahoma!" ran on Broadway for five years, until 1948. It was made into a film in 1955. It was Agnes de Mille's first musical on Broadway, and it changed musicals from then on.



Dancers perform "Oklahoma!" at the St. James Theater in New York, 1943.

Dancing Cowgirl

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. Agnes de Mille was first inspired to dance by _____.
 A a dream
 B seeing Anna Pavlova
 C seeing Broadway musicals
 D World War II
2. Synonyms for the word *folksy* in paragraph 4 might be _____.
 A grand and proud
 B sad and serious
 C formal and stiff
 D simple and down-home
3. How would you justify the statement that de Mille choreographed in an original style?

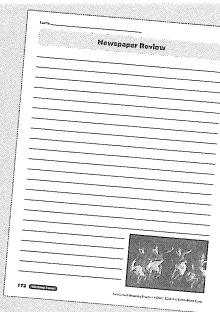
4. Why does the author think "Oklahoma!" was a different kind of musical?

5. In your opinion, was it a good idea to make "Oklahoma!" into a film? Give reasons.

Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Imagine it is 1943. Write a newspaper review of the new Broadway musical "Oklahoma!" with choreography by de Mille.



An American Musical

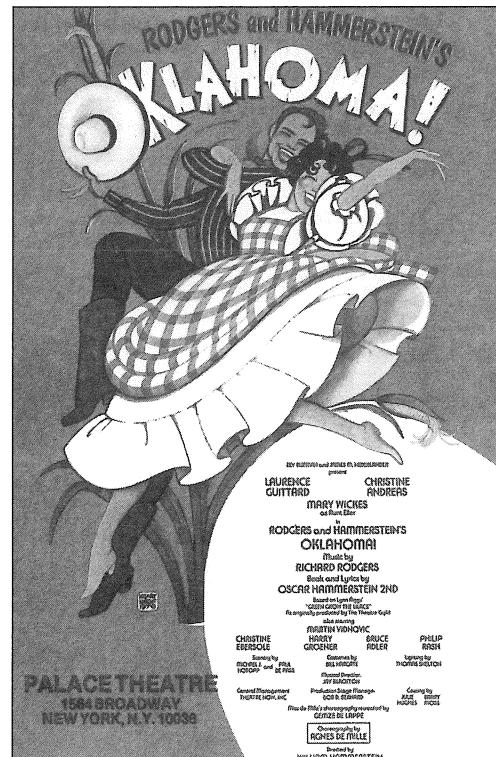
When Agnes de Mille was a girl of 13, she watched the world-famous ballerina Anna Pavlova dance. Young Agnes loved to dance, and seeing Pavlova lit a spark in her. Agnes de Mille grew into a dancer and choreographer with an original style. She used the training and technique of classical ballet and added a modern American look and feel.

A choreographer is a trained dancer who creates new dances. Agnes de Mille created one of her most famous dances for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1942. "Rodeo" was danced to the music of Aaron Copland, a modern American composer. In this ballet, the setting is a ranch out west. The men are cowboys, and the lead female dancer is a cowgirl. The cowboys' movements resemble leaping into the saddle, riding a trotting horse, and roping cattle. When the cowgirl extends her leg and points her toes, she is wearing cowboy boots! This was a different kind of ballet, with an American kick to it.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II saw de Mille's choreography. Rodgers and Hammerstein were making a musical together. Rodgers wrote the music and Hammerstein wrote the story and song lyrics. Their musical was set in Oklahoma during the early 1900s. The characters were cowboys and farm girls. Rodgers and Hammerstein thought Agnes de Mille was the right choreographer to create the dances.

The musical "Oklahoma!" was a big hit on Broadway in 1943. The story was about a farm girl who wonders which cowboy she should take to the picnic—and maybe marry. The writer gave the story lots of emotion, with both highs and lows. The composer wrote music that went perfectly with the lyrics. The dances were an important part of the plot. De Mille created a 15-minute ballet of the farm girl's dream. In the dream the girl makes up her mind.

Earlier musicals had dances, jokes, acts, and songs, but they didn't always move the plot along. In "Oklahoma!" all the pieces fit together into a package that told the story. Audiences loved it. "Oklahoma!" ran on Broadway for five years, until 1948. It was made into a film in 1955. It was Agnes de Mille's first musical on Broadway, and it changed musicals from then on.



"Oklahoma!" ran for 2,212 performances in New York City.