

# Dancing in the Wings

Book by Debbie Allen

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## **Social Studies: Geography – California and Washington DC**

The story is set in a city in southern California called Inglewood. Perhaps you would mention to your student that Inglewood is near Los Angeles, California where a lot of famous actors, musicians, and television personalities reside. A lot of movies and television shows are made here, too. Help the student locate both California and Washington DC on a map. First, talk about how they are on opposite ends of the country. Talk about how California is near the Pacific Ocean while Washington DC is near the Atlantic Ocean. Second, have the child determine which direction Sassy would have to travel to get to Washington DC for the recital. Third, talk about the fact that Washington DC is the nation's capital. You might want to locate pictures of the famous monuments of DC.

## **Social Studies: Occupations – Ballet Dancer**

Most professional classical dancers have studied ballet from about the age of five. However, some modern dancers, particularly men, begin training as late as 16 to 20 years of age. Try to find a book from the library about ballet dancing. Discuss the terms *adagio* (a slow ballet dance) and *tendu* (pointing the toe). If the student is interested, try to attend a ballet performance so that he/she will learn to appreciate the discipline that is required of ballet dancers.

## **Social Studies: Biography**

Jackie Joyner-Kersey is often regarded as the best all-around female athlete in the world. She has won three gold, one silver and one bronze Olympic medals in heptathlon track and field events. Read a biography to your student detailing the achievements in Jackie Joyner Kersey's sports career.

## **Social Studies: Character – Perseverance**

Dancing in the Wings is about perseverance. It is to keep at something in spite of difficulties, opposition, or discouragement. Sassy encountered plenty of opposition

through the teasing from Molly, Mona, and even her brother, Hughie, but she continued “dancing in the wings” until it was her turn to be in the spotlight. Ask your child if he has ever been teased. How did that make him feel? Talk about the expression, “Make your mark on the world.” Explain the importance of not letting other people’s comments deter you from your dreams and goals.

### **Social Studies: Character – Self-Image**

Sassy was made to feel self-conscious about her height and big feet, but Uncle Redd taught her to look at what made her unique (being tall) as a gift. “Being tall means you can see all around, so you can always find the right path to take.” After the talk with Uncle Redd, it didn’t bother her that she stood out. Have your student make a list of people that make him/her feel special and unique.

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### **Language Arts: Vocabulary**

dismiss(ed): to send away

intelligence: the ability to learn and understand or to deal problems

potential: a cause for hope

protégé: a person guided and helped in his career by another person

ripple: a small wave

troglydte: any of the prehistoric people who lived in caves

recital: a public performance by music or dance students

### **Language Arts: Memorization**

Use this passage for copywork or memorization:

“Ever since I was born and could see

Everywhere I looked, I saw dance.

In the clouds as the wind blew them across the sky,

In the ripples on a pond,

Even in the sea of ants marching up and down their hills.

Dance was all around me. Dance was me.”

Read the passage to your student daily until student can recite from memory.

### **Language Arts: Similes and Metaphors**

A simile is the comparison of two things using the connecting words like, as, seems, etc.

Example: “I took off like Jackie Joyner Kersee in the long jump at the Olympics.”

A metaphor is a comparison of two things in which one thing is spoken of as if it were another.

Example: Molly and Mona watched, lookin’ pea green with envy.

The example above is a color metaphor. Color metaphors are metaphors that use colors as a way to describe a person’s emotions. Talk with your student about different color metaphors and what emotion they represent (red=anger, purple=bravery/pride, yellow=afraid, blue=sadness). Write some color metaphors. A good go-along book would be *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss.

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### **Art - Medium**

Kadir Nelson has used oil paint to illustrate *Dancing in the Wings*. Experiment with applying white oil paint over a dark blue oil paint (as seen on the cover or on the pages when she is staring out the window thinking about the audition.)

Check out other Kadir Nelson books, too. He has a distinct, beautiful style.

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### **Math – Measurement**

Sassy is teased for being too tall. Using a tape measure, take this opportunity to measure the height of your child. Explain that there are twelve inches in a foot. For older children, see if they can calculate how many inches tall they are. If you haven't already, consider keeping a growth chart somewhere in the house to measure your child's height every year.

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### **Science – Astronomy**

Before she goes to sleep, Sassy envisions herself dancing on the Milky Way. Explain that our solar system consists of eight planets that revolve around the sun, and our solar system is one of many that make up the Milky Way Galaxy. Have the student make a list or draw a picture of the planets in relation to their proximity to the sun.

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