



Activities on The Nutcracker

The Story



- Both Mozart and Tchaikovsky composed music based on a child's fairy tale during their final year. Mozart, whom Tchaikovsky called "the supreme God of music," had written *The Magic Flute* exactly a hundred years earlier in 1791. Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* is based on Hoffman's story called *The Nutcracker and the King of the Mice*. Ask your class to tell the story of *The Nutcracker* as they might have seen it. Or get out a book and tell the plot.

President Silberhaus and his family are decorating their Christmas tree in the drawing room. Counselor Drosselmayer arrives, serious and sinister. He gives the children toys, including a Nutcracker. In the quarrel between Clara and Fritz, the Nutcracker is broken. Clara puts it in her doll's cradle. After everyone has gone to bed, Clara goes down to see her Nutcracker. All the toys have come to life and are battling the King of Mice. Clara hurls her slipper at the King of Mice and kills him. The Nutcracker turns into a prince who invites her to visit his kingdom.

Clara and the Nutcracker Prince fly over a wintry forest to the Kingdom of Sweets where the Sugar Plum Fairy is Queen. There is a splendid banquet featuring many of Tchaikovsky's most familiar melodies: Tea, Coffee, Chocolate, Trepak, and the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Creative Writing

The story of *The Nutcracker* is great material for a creative writing class. Suggest that your students:



- Change the point of view by rewriting the story from the Nutcracker's perspective.
- Change the ending by writing a sequel to the present story.
- Write a whole new story entitled "In the Land of Sweets."

Vocabulary and Associative Thinking with The Nutcracker



- Music can be a wonderful stimulant for lateral, associative thinking. Make a chart like this one to fill in with your class. (These are only sample answers.)

Association	Tea	Coffee	Chocolate
Emotion	<i>cheerful</i>	<i>sad</i>	<i>powerful</i>
Colors	<i>yellow</i>	<i>brown</i>	<i>red</i>
Possible food			
Country			
Animals			
Smells			
Memories	<i>sparkling lake</i>	<i>dark forest</i>	<i>passing band</i>
Instruments	<i>flutes</i>	<i>clarinets</i>	<i>trumpets</i>
Movement	<i>tiptoe</i>	<i>slink low to ground</i>	<i>strutting, arch</i>

Art Class

The Nutcracker is a lovely visual ballet to work with in art class. Suggest that your students:



- Bring in a wooden nutcracker as a model. Make nutcrackers with empty paper towel rolls decorated with paper.
- Build a scene in which to set the nutcrackers, complete with other Christmas tree decorations, and even a little ballerina.
- Does anyone in your class have dolls or toys from other countries? These can be incorporated into the nutcracker scene. Traditional Russian stacking dolls are always a welcome addition.