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# SOPHIE AND LOU

Author: Petra Mathers  
Publisher: HarperCollins

## THEME:

When you're afraid to try something new, sometimes all you need to do is take that first step to open up a whole new world.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

This is the story of Sophie, a shy mouse who sets out to learn on her own after she is enticed by the dancing that she sees in the studio across the street.

LeVar masters some fancy footwork as he learns some new dances—the mambo and hip-hop. Then viewers are taken across the world (including Bali, Ireland, and Australia) to look at the many cultural differences there are in dance.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

In the story, Sophie is very shy. Discuss some of the things she did that showed she was shy. Talk about shyness and why people might be shy. Sophie overcame her shyness by learning to dance. Discuss other ways that people might overcome shyness. (Keep the discussion at a positive level so that shy students in the classroom will not think that shyness is a negative attribute.)

Discuss with students how Sophie became good at dancing. Invite students to share skills they have or activities in which they have participated that were improved through practice.

Discuss why people enjoy dancing. Ask students to share experiences they have had learning to dance. How does dancing make them feel? (Ensure that the discussion is respectful of students who do not dance because of religious or other beliefs.)

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Before viewing the program, brainstorm a list of different types of dances. Add to the list after watching.

Invite a dance instructor into the classroom to demonstrate different types of dances.

Locate a community resource person (e.g., parent or grandparent) or school staff member who can teach the students a dance (e.g., square dance, folk dance, etc.).

Organize students into small groups. Play different types of music and have students invent a dance that corresponds to the way the music makes them feel. Allow each group to demonstrate and then teach its dance to the whole class.

Locate Bali, Ireland, and Australia on a map of the world. Based on what they saw in the program, have students compare and contrast the dances in all three places. How were the movements, accompanying music, costumes, purposes for the dance, etc., different?

Sophie (a mouse) said she looked “mousy.” Discuss what Sophie meant by that description of herself. Identify other common words or phrases that are a direct comparison with an animal and discuss their meanings. Possible animal metaphors include: referring to someone as a tiger, bear, pig, chicken, silly goose, lamb, or as eagle-eyed, lion-hearted, pigeon-toed, dog-eared, etc. Phrases that incorporate an animal name include: wolf down one's food, bear hug, something's fishy, going batty, don't bug me, monkey around, etc. Many similes also contain animal comparisons, such as quiet as a mouse, sly as a fox, hungry as a bear, gentle as a lamb, and others.

The story ends with Lou asking Sophie to dance. What happens next? Discuss the function of a “sequel” and have students write and illustrate a sequel to *Sophie and Lou*.

Sophie thought she needed a new pair of shoes in order to dance. Have students design a special pair of shoes. Make a variety of supplies available, including cloth scraps, trims, ribbons, buttons, different types of paper, etc., and encourage them to use their imaginations and creativity. Display the creations along with labels written by the students about what their special shoes can do!

Sophie used a “how-to” book to learn dancing. With the assistance of the library media specialist, locate other how-to books. Have students browse through the books, noticing the different topics and how these books differ from other nonfiction books and from fiction. In particular, have them look closely at how directions and illustrations work together to teach the reader how to make or do something.

## RELATED THEMES:

following directions  
making friends  
trying new things  
developing self-confidence

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**RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:**

Program #35 — Abiyoyo

Program #51 — Barn Dance!

Program #20 — A Chair For My Mother

Program #10 — The Gift Of The Sacred Dog

Program #95 — Silent Lotus

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Petra Mathers grew up in Germany and moved to the United States as an adult. She has no formal training in art, but states that she “has to be painting all the time to be happy.” She has illustrated several books for children including the **Reading Rainbow** feature book, *Borreguita and the Coyote*. Petra Mathers now makes her home in Portland, Oregon.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

CORDELIA, DANCE!

by Sarah Stapler (Dial Books)

DANCING WITH THE INDIANS

by Angela Shelf Medearis, illus. by Samuel Byrd (Holiday House)

LION DANCER: ERNIE WAN'S CHINESE NEW YEAR

by Kate Waters & Madeline Slovenz-Low, photos by Martha Cooper (Scholastic)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

DANCING WITH DZIADZIU

by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, illus. by Annika Nelson (Harcourt Brace)

MEET RORY HOHENSTEIN, A PROFESSIONAL DANCER

by Jill D. Duvall, illus. by Lili Duvall (Children's Press)

DANCE TANYA

by Patricia Lee Gauch, illus. by Satomi Ichikawa (Philomel)

MAX

by Rachel Isadora (Macmillan)

A VERY YOUNG DANCER

by Jill Krementz (Alfred A. Knopf)

CAN YOU DANCE, DALILA?

by Virginia Kroll, illus. by Nancy Carpenter (Simon & Schuster)

WHEN AUNT LENA DID THE RHUMBA

by Eileen Kurtis-Kleinman, illus. by Diana Greenseid (Hyperion)

TWIST WITH A BURGER, JITTER WITH A BUG

by Linda Lowery, illus. by Pat Dypold (Houghton Mifflin)

RED DANCING SHOES

by Denise Lewis Patrick, illus. by James E. Ransome (Tambourine)

ALVIN AILEY

by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illus. by Brian Pinkney (Hyperion)

DANCE AWAY!

by George Shannon, illus. by Jose Aruego & Ariane Dewey (Greenwillow)

SHY CHARLES

by Rosemary Wells (Dial Books)



Sophie Lowe, Actress: Beautiful Kate. Sophie is the daughter of Ian and Anne Lowe and younger sister of brother Sam. Sophie moved, with her family, to Australia, at age 10, and first developed an interest in acting, after appearing in a grade school musical production at age 16. Moreover, Lowe did some modeling in her early teens (she was signed to Chadwick Models), but eventually