

Northwest Florida Ballet

Presents

The Nutcracker



A Guide for Teachers

This guide can also be downloaded online at www.NFBallet.org

The Nutcracker

Student Activities Guide



Dear Educator,

Thank you for choosing to expose your students to the wonderful world of ballet! In order to assist you and your students to prepare for your upcoming field trip, we have listed a few suggestions of hands-on-activities that may be used to peak students' interest and broaden their knowledge of the Nutcracker story.

The Nutcracker Plot

President Silberhaus and his family are decorating their Christmas tree. Counselor Drosselmeyer 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 Queen of Mice. During the battle The Nutcracker kills the Mouse Queen. The Nutcracker then 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: Reed Flutes, Arabian, Spanish, Waltz of the Flowers, Russian Trepak, and the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

After reviewing the plot above, you may want to choose to explore the Nutcracker further with the following activities:

Music Appreciation: Play some of the music from the *The Nutcracker*, especially from the titles listed above. Note how each song at the feast is connected to a different country and how the various styles, rhythms, and instruments help to set the mood. Ask students to look for the different styles of movement and costumes when they attend the performance.

Creative Writings: Change the point of view by writing the story from the Nutcracker's perspective. Or write a sequel. Or write a whole new story entitled "Kingdom of the Sweets".

Art Class: Bring in a wooden nutcracker as a model and make nutcrackers out of empty paper towel rolls decorated with paper, etc.

World Geography: Each of the foods in the Kingdom of Sweets is associated with delicacies from around the world. Explore the globe by making a musical map of the Nutcracker: Tea (China), Coffee (Arabia), Chocolate (Spain), Trepak (Russian), and the Sugar Plum (France)

Performance Etiquette: A fun way to review rules of etiquette is to get students involved with a project such as Etiquette Posters, or writing their own Etiquette Poem or Rap. Remind them to include the following rules. Walk, don't run to your assigned seat via the aisles, (no climbing over seats!!!) and talk quietly to your neighbor before the Overture, stop conversations as House Lights dim and enjoy the performance by staying focused on the stage, stay seated at all times, applaud politely- no hooting or whistling, no food or drink in the theatre!, etc.

Follow-up Activity: On the following pages are activity sheets for students to complete and display at school, Or, you may wish to have students send them to the NFB dancers as a special thanks for their performances!

We hope that these suggestions are helpful and that you and your students have a wonderful experience at **The Nutcracker!** Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

The Story



ACT I

Guests are arriving for a Christmas Eve party at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum and their children, Clara and Fritz. Clara's godfather, the eccentric Herr Drosselmeyer, arrives with toys for all the children and a mysterious vision of something special in store for Clara. With the party in progress, Drosselmeyer produces another wonderful surprise, life-size dolls, who dance to the children's delight. He then presents Clara with a special gift, a wooden nutcracker in the shape of a soldier, a strange gift for a little girl; but Clara falls in love with the doll and proudly shows it to everyone. Fritz, wanting the Nutcracker for himself, breaks the doll. Clara is heartbroken, but Drosselmeyer fixes the Nutcracker to everyone's relief.

As the party comes to an end, the Stahlbaum children are sent off to bed. Clara, however, is too excited to sleep, and she sneaks downstairs to be with her new Nutcracker doll. Strange things begin to happen. Huge mice almost as big as she, scurry across the floor. The clock strikes midnight and her whole house begins to transform. The Christmas tree grows to an enormous size, and a great battle ensues between the mice, led by the Mouse King, and the Nutcracker, now life-sized, leading an army of toy soldiers. It looks as though the Mouse King might win the battle when, just in time, Clara steps in and hits him with her shoe, distracting him so that the Nutcracker can kill him. The mice carry off their fallen leader. The Nutcracker transforms into a Prince and leads Clara on a fantastic journey, which begins with the wintry Kingdom of Snow. In the final tableau, the entire Snow Kingdom sends Clara on to the Sugar Plum Fairy's palace in the magical Kingdom of the Sweets.

ACT II

The scene opens in the palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy, where everyone is gathering to welcome Clara. As the Angels move about the palace, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier meet Clara and the Nutcracker Prince and call all the characters to enter for a royal greeting. In the language of mime, the Nutcracker Prince describes to all assembled how the fearless Clara helped to win the battle with the Mouse King. Then the Sugar Plum Fairy arranges a great party with grand entertainment. Dancers from far away places like China, Spain, Arabia and Russia have come to perform for Clara. The Reed Flutes dance and Mother Ginger is there with her sixteen children! The Dew Drop Fairy leads the beautiful Waltz of the Flowers, and then the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier perform the most beautiful dance of all. Finally, all the characters gather to say goodbye to Clara and send her on her journey home.

The Composer

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Few composers are more popular with audiences than Tchaikovsky; the reasons are several and understandable. His music is extremely tuneful, luxuriously and colorfully scored, and filled with emotional fervor directed to the heart rather than to the head.



Piotr (Pyotr) Tchaikovsky was born on April 25, 1840 in Votkinsk, a small town in Russia, the son of a mining engineer in the government mines and his wife, Alexandra, a Russian woman of French ancestry. Musically precocious, Pyotr began piano lessons at the age of five. In 1850, his father was appointed director of the St. Petersburg Technological Institute. There, the young Tchaikovsky obtained an excellent general education at the School of Jurisprudence, and furthered his instruction on the piano. When his mother died of cholera in 1854, the 14-year-old composed a waltz in her memory.

Tchaikovsky left school in 1858 and received employment as an under-secretary in the Ministry of Justice. From 1862 to 1865, Tchaikovsky studied instrumentation and composition under the director and founder of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Anton Rubinstein, who was both impressed by and envious of Tchaikovsky's talent.

Tchaikovsky visited America in 1891 in a triumphant tour to conduct performances of his works. On May 5, he conducted the New York Music Society's orchestra in a performance of Marche Solennelle on the opening night of New York's Carnegie Hall. The US tour also included performances of his First Piano Concerto and Serenade for Strings.

Just nine days after the first performance of his Sixth Symphony, Pathétique, in 1893, in St Petersburg, Tchaikovsky died.

Ballets

Tchaikovsky is best known for his ballets and symphonies, although it was only in his last years, with his last two ballets, that he was appreciated as a ballet music composer.

1875–1876: Swan Lake

Tchaikovsky's first ballet, it was first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1877. It was not until 1895, in a revival by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov that the ballet was presented in the definitive version it is still danced in today.

1888–1889: Sleeping Beauty

This work Tchaikovsky considered to be one of his best. Commissioned by the director of the Imperial Theatres, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, its first performance was in January, 1890 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg.

1891–1892: The Nutcracker, Op. 71.

Tchaikovsky accepted the commission granted by Ivan Vsevolozhsky, he did not particularly want to write it. (Though he did write to a friend while composing the ballet: "I am daily becoming more and more attuned to my task.")

This ballet premiered on a double-bill with his last opera, *Iolanta*. Among other things, the score of Nutcracker is noted for its use of the celesta. Although well-known in The Nutcracker as the featured solo instrument in the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from Act II, it is employed elsewhere in the same act.

Note: This was the only ballet from which Tchaikovsky himself derived a suite. The Nutcracker Suite is often mistaken by novice listeners as the ballet itself, but it consists of only eight selections from the score intended for concert performance.

Costumes

When we think of a ballerina we usually picture a lovely woman with a sparkling crown on her head wearing a beautiful costume of satin and jewels. The costumes' skirt is short, full and flares outward. This is a tutu. Ballerinas have worn the tutus that we know today for more than a hundred years. In the earliest days of ballet, when members of the royal courts of Europe danced ballet, dancers wore variations on the formal clothing of their day. As ballerinas were able to perform more interesting and difficult footwork, skirts became lighter and shorter so the audience could see their legs and feet.

However, the tutu is only one kind of ballet costume. There are many different types of costumes for both the ballerina and the danseur, the male ballet dancer. There are tights and leotards, long romantic dresses, jackets and peasant skirts, to name just a few. Costumes often describe the character a dancer is portraying – a prince or a princess, sailor or a beautiful white swan. Costumes add a feeling or mood to the dance by their color or design. A costume can give you a sense of the time and place of a ballet. Are the dancers wearing colorful Chinese pajamas, elegant ball gowns with long white gloves, or bright military uniforms?

After talking to the choreographer, it is the job of the costume designer to draw sketches, choose fabrics and create all of the costumes for the ballet. The Costume Shop will buy material, dye it, sew it and decorate it. The designer must always remember that the dancers need to move freely and easily in their costumes.

Dancers try on their costumes before they perform in them to be sure that they fit securely. Since many different dancers often perform the same role, costumes have rows of snaps and hooks so that they can be easily adjusted for each dancer.

Costumes add to the spectacle of a ballet. But most importantly they must help us see the choreography and the dancer's movements.



Ballet Vocabulary



Accent – A strong movement or gesture.

Balance – A state of equilibrium referring to the balance of weight or the spatial arrangement of bodies.

Ballet – A classical Western dance form that originated in the Renaissance courts of Europe. By the time of Louis XIV (mid-1600s), steps and body positions underwent codification.

Ballerina – A female ballet dancer of the highest ranking.

Barre [*bar*] – The place where a dancer goes to begin his/her class work. The barre is a long pole that gives the dancer support. After the dancer has done barre work to warm up, he/she will move to the center the classroom or studio to practice increasingly complex steps.

Choreographer – One who creates and composes dances by arranging or inventing steps, movements, and patterns of movements.

Composer – One who writes music.

Corps de ballet [*kawr duh ba-LAY*] – A group of dancers who work together as an ensemble. They form the background for the ballerina and her partner and are the backbone of any ballet company.

Gesture – The movement of a body part or combination of parts, with emphasis on the expressive aspects of the move. It includes all movements of the body not supporting weight.

Libretto – The text on which a ballet is choreographed; the story of a ballet.

Motif – A distinctive and recurring gesture used to provide a theme or unifying idea.

Pantomime – The art of telling a story, expressing a mood or an emotion or describing an action without words.

Pas de Deux [*pah duh DU*] – a dance for two people, traditionally between a ballerina and the male dancer of the highest ranking.

Pointe Shoes – Shoes worn by female dancers that enable them to dance on the tips of their toes. The area covering the toe is made of layers of fabric glued together in the shape of a “box” covered in satin and hardened. The sole is made of hard leather to prevent the shoe from breaking when bent. To keep the shoes on tightly, the dancers sew satin ribbons and elastic to the sides and tie the ribbons securely around their ankles. A pair of pointe shoes may only last for 3 to 4 days of work.

Rehearse – to practice.

Technique – The physical skills of a dancer that enable him or her to execute the steps and movements required in different dances. Different styles or genres of dance often have specific techniques.

Tempo – The speed of music or a dance.

Turnout – The ability of the dancer to turn their feet and legs outward from the hip joints to close to a 180-degree position.

Tutu – Ballet skirt, usually made of net or tulle. Tutus may be of varying lengths. While the style and mood of the ballet help to determine the preferred tutu length, the dancer’s technique is most clearly visible when she wears a short tutu.

More ballet terms can be found at www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html

Theatre Etiquette

General Information:

- Please plan to arrive at Mattie Kelly Arts Center at least 30 minutes prior to the performance.
- The performance will begin promptly and lasts approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.
- Let your children know in advance what behavior is expected of them. This is a LIVE performance. Unlike television or the movies, the people on stage are there at that moment and are dancing for the audience's pleasure. Any noise distracts them. The performance will be exciting, but let your children know that they will be required to sit quietly in their seats for a fairly long period of time.
- School clothes are appropriate dress, however, some children may choose to "dress up."

Once you arrive at the theatre, please....

- No food, drink, chewing gum, cameras or recording equipment is allowed inside the theatre. Please leave these items at home as we do not have provisions for storing these items at the theatre.
- It is important to accompany your children to the restrooms before the performance begins. It is inappropriate to visit the restrooms during a live performance, unless there is an emergency. Ushers will direct you to restrooms.
- We recommend that you provide your children with some guidelines of things to look and listen for during the performance. You may also want to encourage your children to add to the following list.

Children should be encouraged to:

- a. Watch the dancers
- b. Listen to the music
- c. Look at the costumes and set designs
- d. Laugh when they see the dancers doing something funny
- e. Clap when the dancing has finished to show the dancers that they are enjoying the performance. It is customary to applaud when the dancers take a bow.

Children should be encouraged not to:

- a. Talk or make noise because they might miss something important.
- b. Chew gum or eat because it is disruptive to others and makes a mess in the theatre.
- c. Leave their seats before the lights go on because this is very disruptive to their neighbors.
- d. Bring cameras, ipods, or headphones to the theatre because this is disruptive to the dancers and other members of the audience.

The Nutcracker Ballet Word Search

L M M P D Y A N C M D D S S K Y W A B J
R I Z A X N F T O H E E R P N P G R Z J
E C L V G I M U A Q I E A R A B I A N L
I E O E K O S P Q K I N C G Q R M L V K
L F L V W E L Y O D K Y E F H R T C W M
A S L J Q K N O L L D R F S F U P Y L K
V N E U M H C O H A V I X W E S J T D B
A C E X B R S S K Y Z A H O G S Y W Y Z
C E F E E X M O E J J F S M X I S T Z A
N J K G R V R O R T S M J N Z A I C C N
M Q N F R I T Z T H U U B V A N U H P H
M I E M W M F M W H R L K T E L L A B C
G S J Y T W Q Y M F E P F P N O K I P V
D R O S S E L M E Y E R X D W E S K R B
R E K C A R C T U N O A G V E L T O A L
I B C X V F K D J H O G S I L E T V V C
W G P N Z T E K E Q M U T O N S R S L F
A V P C I P P V T Q N S D J N G P K W X
K F I D D R X R T G T T Y O O K E Y G G
V R S K X W P X T H U H W M N S T R O G

ANGELS
ARABIAN
BALLET
CAVALIER
CHINESE
CLARA
DOLLS
DROSSELMEYER

FRITZ
GINGER COOKIES
MICE
MOTHER GINGER
MOUSE QUEEN
NUTCRACKER
PRINCE
PARTY

REED FLUTES
RUSSIAN
SNOW
SOLDIERS
SUGAR PLUM FAIRY
TCHAIKOVSKY

The Nutcracker Ballet Mad Lib

Mad libs are a fun way to learn your parts of speech. To play fill in the blanks below with the words and parts of speech noted beside each blank. Transfer your word list answers to the corresponding numbers in the story below. Now enjoy your silly new version of the Nutcracker story!

(1) Adjective _____

(9) Verb _____

(2) Plural Noun _____

(10) Noun _____

(3) Noun _____

(11) Adjective _____

(4) Verb _____

(12) Noun _____

(5) Adjective _____

(13) Plural Noun _____

(6) Adjective _____

(14) Adjective _____

(7) Verb _____

(15) Noun _____

(8) Proper Noun _____

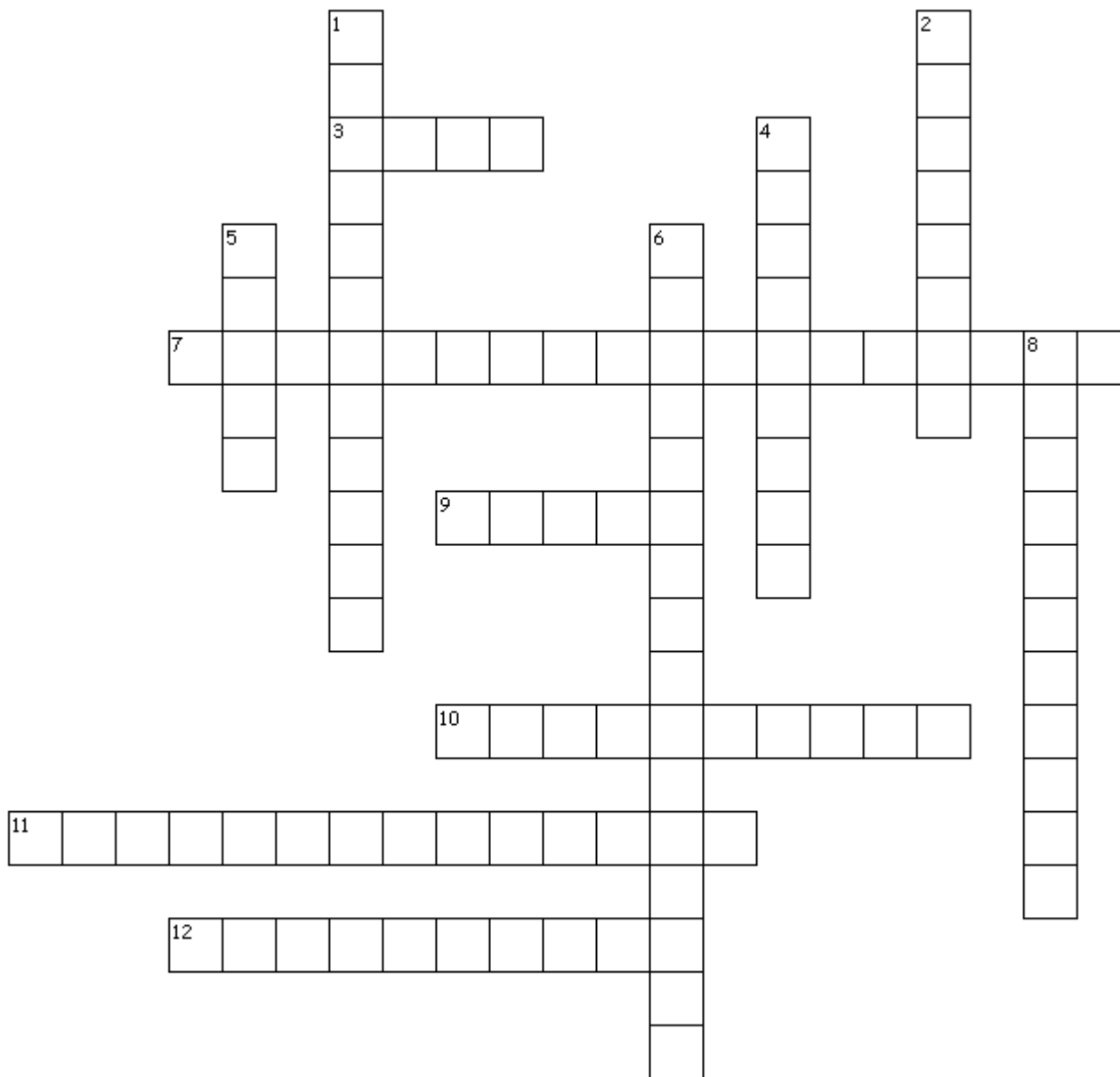
Mr. Stahlbaum, and his _____ (1) wife are having a party for their family and _____ (2). Drosselmeyer, an eccentric but kindhearted _____ (3) arrives and _____ (4) presents to the children. Among her gifts, Clara receives a nutcracker. Clara's brother snatches the nutcracker from her and breaks it, leaving _____ (5).

After the guests leave and Clara has gone to bed, she cannot forget _____ (6) nutcracker. She _____ (7) downstairs and when the clock strikes midnight, she is startled to see mice appearing from all corners of the _____ (8) in house. Clara watches in amazement as soldiers and the nutcracker come to life to battle the mice. Then Clara _____ (9) the Mouse King to the floor with _____ (10). The victory that Clara has brought about breaks the spell on the nutcracker, transforming him into a _____ (11) prince. The prince invites Clara to accompany him to the Kingdom of the Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy reigns as _____ (12).

When Clara and the Prince reach the Kingdom of the Sweets they are welcomed by the Spanish, Arabian and Chinese _____ (13). Other dances follow - a lively Russian trepak, dance of the reed flutes, Mother Ginger, the _____ (14) Waltz of the Flowers, and the great pas de deux by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

Then she awakens from her _____ (15).

The Nutcracker Crossword Puzzle



Across

3. What a ballerina wears
7. Where Clara goes on an adventure
9. Girl who has a magical adventure
10. What Clara receives as a gift from Herr Drosselmeyer
11. Queen of the Kingdom of the Sweets
12. Leader of the charge against the soldiers

Down

1. Lady with lots of kids
2. Man who dances with Sugar Plum Fairy
4. A female ballet dancer
5. Clara's mischievous brother
6. He comes to Clara's defense
8. The Nutcracker music composer

Crossword Answer Key:

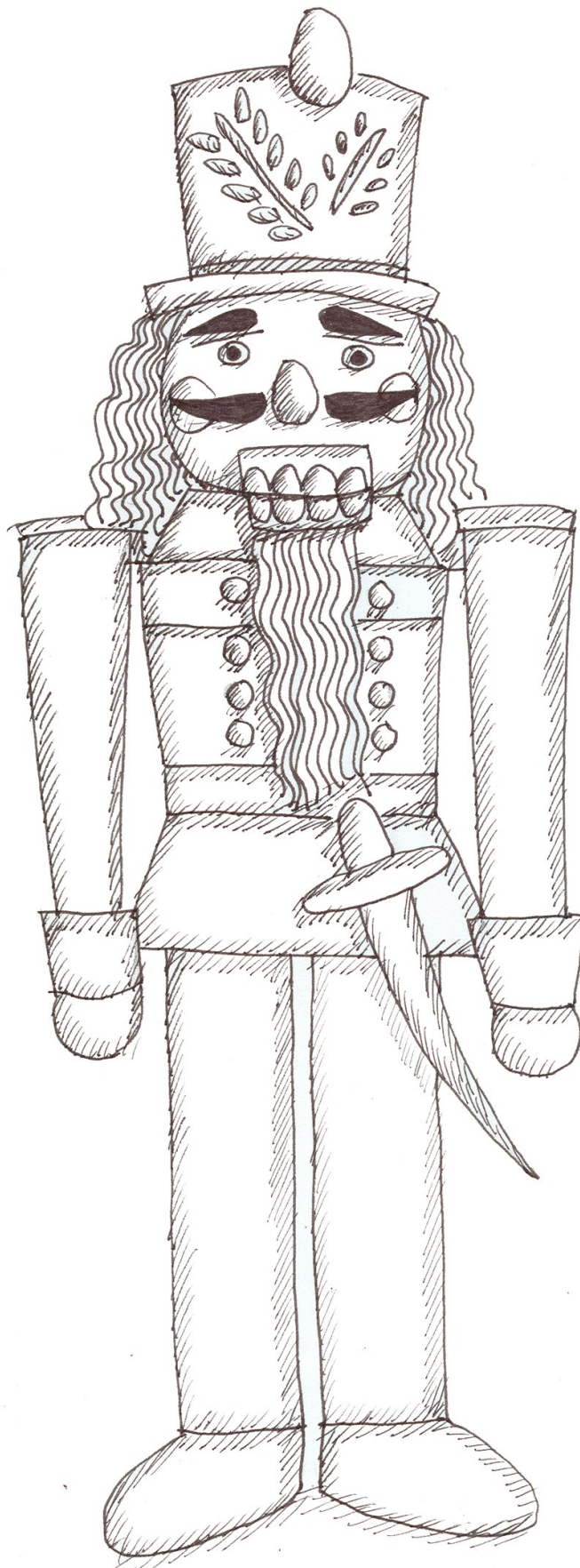
Across

3. What a ballerina wears - TUTU
7. Where Clara goes on an adventure - KINGDOM OF THE SWEETS
9. Girl who has a magical adventure - CLARA
10. What Clara receives as a gift from Herr Drosselmeyer - NUTCRACKER
11. Queen of the Kingdom of the Sweets - SUGAR PLUM FAIRY
12. Leader of the charge against the soldiers - MOUSE QUEEN

Down

1. Lady with lots of kids - MOTHER GINGER
2. Man who dances with Sugar Plum Fairy - CAVALIER
4. A female ballet dancer - BALLERINA
5. Clara's mischievous brother - FRITZ
6. He comes to Clara's defense - NUTCRACKER PRINCE
8. The Nutcracker music composer - TCHAIKOVSKY

The Nutcracker Coloring Page



The Nutcracker Coloring Page



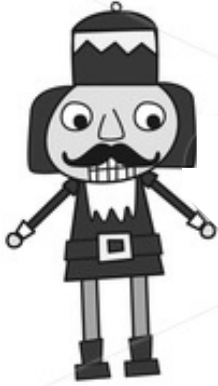
The Sugar Plum Fairy and her angels have been waiting to welcome Clara and the Prince to her palace.



The Nutcracker Maze



Help Clara and her Nutcracker Prince find their way to the Kingdom of the sweets.



START



FINISH

