



# 6/DDICS

## Dance coversheet: dance investigation

Submit To: **Examiner** Arrival Date: **30 APR/ 30 OCT** Session: . . . . .

School Number: 

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 School Name: . . . . .

*Write legibly using black ink and retain a copy of this form.  
Complete one copy of this form to accompany each candidate's work.  
Please see overleaf for teacher declaration.*

Subject: Dance Level: HL

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Session Number: 

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**Instructions to candidates**  
*Check that your candidate session number is on each sheet of paper used in your dance investigation and attach this coversheet to the front of your work.*

Outline below the nature of your dance investigation

SL only	Familiar (first)	Unfamiliar (second)
What is the <b>name</b> of the dance culture/tradition?		
How did you gain some <b>practical knowledge</b> of the dance culture/tradition investigated?		

HL only	Familiar (first)	Unfamiliar (second)
What is the <b>name</b> of the dance culture/tradition?	Square Dance	Irish Step Dance
What is the <b>title</b> of the dance from which you analyse a short extract in depth?	Virginia Reel	Irish Step Dance
How did you gain:  (1) a more developed <b>practical knowledge</b> of the familiar dance work, including <b>movement knowledge</b> of the short extract?  (2) some <b>practical knowledge</b> of the unfamiliar dance culture/tradition (not necessarily of the short extract)?	Traditional, modern western style square dance, performance of Virginia Reel, videos, research journals, social square dancing	Research journals, videos/DVD, Irish Dance School websites, Irish Step Dance Company performance, school workshop

**International Baccalaureate**

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School Name: .....

**Word length** of dance investigation:

SL (no more than 1,500 words), HL (no more than 2,500 words): **2326**

*I confirm that this work is my own work and is the final version. I have acknowledged each use of the words or ideas of another person, whether written, oral, aural or visual.*

Candidate's signature: ..... Date: .....

*I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, the material submitted is the authentic work of the candidate.*

Teacher's name: ..... Date: .....

Teacher's signature: .....

<b>SL</b>	<b>A (0-5)</b>	<b>B (0-5)</b>	<b>C (0-5)</b>	<b>D (0-3)</b>	<b>E (0-2)</b>	<b>TOTAL (0-20)</b>	
Examiner:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examiner code: _____
Moderator:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderator code: _____

**OR**

<b>HL</b>	<b>A (0-5)</b>	<b>B (0-5)</b>	<b>C (0-5)</b>	<b>D (0-3)</b>	<b>E (0-2)</b>	<b>F (0-5)</b>	<b>TOTAL (0-25)</b>	
Examiner:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examiner code: _____
Moderator:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderator code: _____

## Irish Step Dance and Square Dance Comparative

The Step Dance of Ireland and North American Square Dance (most commonly associated with the Appalachian Mountains) are two bold representations of cultural identity. I researched these dances because I found their histories compelling. Each has been lost, forgotten, and suppressed but ultimately, they endured the long span of time, evolving still. The intricate complexity of Irish Step Dance and the social enjoyment associated with Square Dance reflect their deep cultural heritage. Perhaps the greatest commonality these dances share is their folk roots. The structure, simple attire, rich music, and overall appearance of each dance contributed to their country of origin's cultural identity. Recently the dances have evolved from their grassroots beginnings to gain global recognition.

Traditional Square Dance began in New England during the early seventeenth century and epitomizes the great American melting pot. As immigrants settled they gathered together and danced their homeland favourites. Square Dance descended from various English and French numbers including the Morris Dance, Contredanse, The Great Quadrille and Court Ballet to name a few (eaasdc.de/history). The roots of Irish Step Dance on the other hand, appear in the middle of the fifth century during Ireland's "golden age" when there was a development and expansion of the church, education, poetry and dance. Yet, like many dances, the Irish Step Dance and Square dances were not simply created and left as they were.

Square dance has spun and twirled, weaved and passed through the generations. As settlers ventured south, customs and dances did, as well. Square dancing was a social pastime, held in a barn, town hall, or possibly a living room (depending on the size of the group). This nurtured hospitality, which is stereotypically a prominent virtue of the south. Yet with population growth, new fashions, and music, Square dancing gave way to other dances and this pastime was hidden deep in the hills of the Appalachians (squaredancing.org/history.htm).

Irish Step Dance had a more dramatic evolution. Following Ireland's golden age, Vikings ransacked the country destroying massive amounts of Irish records. Ireland was stunted yet again when King John of England declared in 1210: "English law and custom would be established there [Ireland] (McKay, Hill, Buckler 403)" occupying the country in the twelfth century (reagaso.com). Massive discrimination against the Irish held back development of their culture, especially with the declaration of the statute of Kilkenny in 1366 outlawing Irish culture completely (McKay, Hill, Buckler 405). Yet the Irish were persistent and pressed on and continued cultural dance throughout the English suppression by way of secret schools, known as Hedge Schools (antoniapacelli.com). As suppression continued other dance forms were practised with more of an English influence including "Crossroads dancing" or outdoor dancing. During bad weather people would carry on with this entertainment in their barns or kitchens.

Crossroads Dancing became very popular throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and its influence on Irish Step Dance is evident. Not only did the English stifle Irish culture, the Irish church shunned dance as well, marking the practice an unsociable thing to do. One parish priest stated,

"Dancing is a thing that leads to bad thoughts and evil actions. It is dancing that excites the desires of the body. In the dance are seen frenzy and woe, and with dancing thousands go to the black hell (Curtis, 1994 – quoted in O'Donovan)."

Conditions worsened in Ireland during the Irish potato famine in 1845 to 1851. Suppression by both England and the Church along with the Great Famine brought about extreme living conditions. One million people fled Ireland during the Famine and migrated to America (McKay, Hill, Buckler 775). In America people were free of religious persecution and English rule and thus, culture and dance thrived. Ironically, Irish Step Dance added to ingredients to traditional Square Dance.

Square Dance and Irish Step Dance were both revived in the twentieth century. American automaker, Henry Ford, is credited for the comeback of Square Dance. During the 1930s, he and Benjamin Lovett, a dance teacher and close friend of Ford's, wrote a book, made radio broadcasts, and created school dance programs throughout the country. Ford's book "Good Morning" inspired a young man named Lloyd "Pappy" Shaw to write his own book. He saw that Ford's book included only part of the information on American dance, so he wrote a definitive work on Western square dancing entitled "Cowboy Dances" (Egender 7, quoted in Dosado.com).

The Irish Nationalist movement brought about the revival of Irish Step Dance. There was a strong need for cultural identity, separate from that of the overriding English image. The Gaelic League (a nationalist party established in 1893) compiled certain cultural aspects that were Irish. "...The Irish language and later Irish

step dance became a focal point for Irish cultural representation” (Foley, pp35). After technical Irish independence in 1922, the Gaelic Commission established the Irish Dancing Committee (which still exists today), in 1929, to oversee competitions and establish rules in judging and teaching (Foley 36).

“Irish step dance is the forerunner of folk dance (streetswing.com)”. It is also the father of clogging (“clog” meaning “time” in Gaelic) and has influenced other dances, including American styles of tap and jazz (itap2.com). We can see the influence of Irish Step Dance in Square Dance especially when looking at the structure of the dance. Interaction between the dancers is a key component of both Square and Irish Step Dancing. In fact Square dance requires interaction and involvement among the dancers, as it is a group dance. To be considered a Square dance, at least eight dancers (four couples) are required. The couples begin and end each sequence in the shape of a square. The so-called sequences are known as “sets-in-order”. The caller is also a vital part of Square dance and is usually someone who is experienced and knows the calls. For instance, when a caller calls for a “dosado”, then a couple is supposed to latch arms at the elbow and swing each other around in a circular fashion. (dosado.com)

Two specific types of Square Dance exist: the traditional, and Modern Western style. Both are quite similar with slight alterations in the calls and music timing. As far as music is concerned Square dance is typically danced to guitar, fiddle, banjo, and even accordion music. Both men and women might wear boots, yet in Square dance performance competitions, hard sole shoes are often the style in order to enrich the rhythm of the upbeat tempo of the music. Square dance requires a hard floor mostly for keeping rhythm as the dancers dance their sets, but also to create less friction for easy movement.

Like Square Dance, there are different versions of Irish Step Dance, four in particular. They include the jig, the reel, the hornpipe, and set dances (itap2.com). Other step dances derive from the jig, including the light, heavy, single, double, and slip. There is also a strong musical link between Irish Stepping and Square Dance, in that both dances require the keeping of strict rhythm and time.

Irish Step dance is most widely recognized by the skills and technique of the feet, particularly the rhythms produced by the feet. This fact makes shoes the most important piece of Irish Stepping attire. They provide much of the music in a dance and they are also associated with the certain types of Irish step dance. The soft or light shoe is used mostly in the reel dance and certain jig dances, including the slip and the light jig. These dances show off the grace and airborne qualities of the dancer. On the other end of the spectrum, there are hard shoe dances, such as the double jig and hornpipe; they show the dancer’s rhythm and timing qualities (Foley 37). Hard shoes today consist of a fibreglass tip with elevated heels (reagoso.com). Originally, dancers wore wooden shoes and would drive a nail into the sole to enhance the rhythmic sound (reagoso.com).

Musically, drums, bagpipes, flutes and violins reflect Celtic roots. The rigid upper body is probably the most recognized characteristic of Irish step dance. This lack of upper body movement has a notable history. Although there is not one definite reason for inactive torsos, there are many theories. One holds that Queen Elizabeth loved Irish dancing. So, despite supporting Irish cultural suppression, she had a group of Irish step dancers come to perform at her castle. Out of defiance these dancers remained stiff, refusing to acknowledge the Queen. Another idea is that during wartime when Catholicism was thriving, the Church forced boys and girls to keep their arms to their sides to stop any contact between them. Although Irish Stepping is stereotypically performed with a very rigid, straight torso, sometimes, when danced for the purpose of personal entertainment, it can be characterized by a looser torso, as is the case in Square dance (Dancing at Lughnasa).

Square Dance, has been modified and modernized in the twentieth century, nonetheless, it has kept much of its traditional shape and flavour. Previously, accompaniment was limited to live musicians. Now, recordings allow for more flexibility, and this has both musical and financial impacts. Not only has the delivery of the music changed; so has the music. Modern bluegrass hits and country twanged tunes paint an oral picture behind each Square dance. Professional callers use public address systems with microphones as opposed to the earlier shouting out of calls. Although urban centres have taken the place of a neighbor’s barn, social enjoyment remains a major reason for the dance’s existence (Egender 9, quoted in Dosado.com).

New ideas are also frequently incorporated to keep Square dancing part of living history, insuring it does not fall into the “rut of sameness (squaredancing.org)”. Modern Square dance clubs and organizations also contribute to its’ development. Square dancing is a highly participatory dance unlike Irish Step Dance where it can take years of practice to master difficult techniques. Perhaps Square dancing’s greatest public achievement was an act of Congress which would, had it been passed, have made Square dancing the National folk dance (govtrack.us).

Presently, Irish step dance is thriving. The Irish culture became truly globalized when, in April 1994, the world witnessed the introduction of the Irish Step dance show Riverdance. Riverdance presented a highly

westernized perspective regarding Irish step dance and incorporated diverse dance forms and music such as western style ballet, including eye and hand contact, hands on hips movement, and 'theatrical' walking. Music from countries such as Bulgaria was composed, and individual musicians performed in a "rock-like" fashion, often taking centre stage. This was not typical for a traditional Irish musician. Thus, Riverdance, in shaping the world's view of Irish step dance, gave it a kind of Hollywood gloss (Foley pp. 38-40).

The basic structural floor patterns and the unity between music and movement are defining elements to both Irish Step Dance and Square Dance. Analyzing an extract from Friendship Set to Music, a T.V. show that airs in the Upper Midwest, and a segment of a performance by the Trinity Irish Dance Company, I focus on the use of space and rhythm in these sources.

Friendship Set to Music (broadcast in the U.S.) reflects the dance's egalitarian social intentions in that there is no clear stage front. This social square dancing features no choreographer. Instead all dancers respond cooperatively to the named steps announced spontaneously by a 'caller'. Dancers spread across the space in discrete squares of four couples. The caller relays instructions as he sings creating an element of mystery for the dancers. Rhythmic, pedestrian movement patterns are all comprised of metered walking steps. Intricacy in use of hand/arm holds in relation to various 'calls' helps distinguish dancing expertise. The dancers in this excerpt circle, "promenade", and "star". In a promenade couples walk counter-clockwise around their square using a crossed handhold and return to their starting place. This pattern takes between eight and twelve counts. In the star, done by both men and women, dancers raise one hand to the center of the square, connecting with the others participating and walk around, either clockwise or counter clockwise, to return to their places. My experience performing the Virginia Reel suggests this geometrically structured dance style depends on metrically accurate footwork as well as memory of and instantaneous response to calls. Calls progress from simple ones such as the promenade and star to more complex ones such as 'ocean wave' and 'recycle'. This excerpt and square dance generally is characterized by the partners' musical, kaleidoscopic execution of lines, circles, and square-like shapes,

Unlike the Square dance, Trinity's Irish Dance is always front facing. It is clear that there is only one angle from which to properly observe the performance. The captivating hook of the Trinity performance is the sudden but fluent shift from one floor pattern to the next. The choreographer's aptitude for creative and precise symmetry is made evident when two rows of dancers break from the center, branching out in diagonals until they form two horizontal lines. One line drops to lower levels as the back line leaps over them and explodes into a series of shuffles and riffs matching the percussive beat of the music. The ecstatic tune is overpowering with high energy, reflecting its strong Irish flavour. The warrior-like intensity of the footwork is spurred on by whoops of praise from the audience. The dancers partner up, but remain in line as they gracefully shimmy their feet.

As this paper demonstrates, Irish Step Dance and North American Square Dance are both folk forms strongly tied to ethnic and national identity. The aspects of partners, lines and pedestrian-like transitions are movement characteristics shared by both dances. Also, the link between movement and rhythm is the structural foundation from which these two dances were created. Both Irish Step Dance and Square Dance appeal to people of all backgrounds and walks of life. In this sense the cultural identities are passed on, organically, through the generations, as the dances evolve.

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