

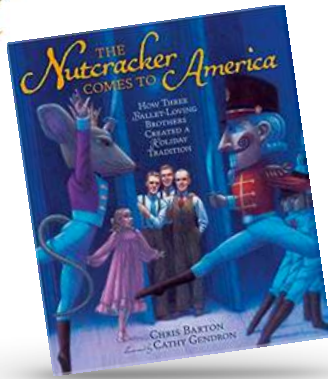
# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### The Nutcracker Comes To America

Written by Chris Barton, Illustrated by Cathy Gendron  
36 pages / Grades K-4

We think of The Nutcracker as being a longstanding American holiday tradition, but in reality, it has only been here since the 1940s, brought to America by three brothers growing up in Utah who staged their own production of the story on a tiny budget in San Francisco. Help your students understand the why behind the magic as a beloved holiday tale truly comes to life.



#### C Context

**Historical context** of holiday traditions.

**Timelines and historical fiction.** The book includes archival photographs and real life event timelines at the end of the book to pique student interest more.

**Staying focused and determined despite humble beginnings.**

#### A Arts

##### Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite

Be sure to expose students not just to the visual elements of ballet, but also through the musical elements of the original piece.

**Telling story through ballet** - There are numerous versions and clips of this ballet readily available on YouTube from multiple famed ballet companies, including the NYC Ballet.

**Process of illustration** There is a detailed, inspiring note from the illustrator that takes students inside the creative process.

#### T Themes

Perseverance and dedication

Following a passion

Holiday traditions

#### C Create

Play a movement of the music - ask students to visualize what they hear. Place the music within the frame of the story and analyze the movement of the music and how it fits.

Read the story without sharing pictures. Ask students to represent how they visualize the characters, particularly in the land of sweets.

Challenge students to research the beginnings of a different holiday tradition, from any holiday.

#### H Heart Words

*"Like a trio of dancers trying to share two spotlights, the brothers often wove in and out of one another's view."*

