

# Dancing in Silence

Deaf people cannot hear. They cannot make out the sound of music. But they can still learn to dance. In fact, deaf people can dance just as beautifully as dancers who can hear. If you ever get the chance to see a group of deaf dancers, you will be amazed. You will see a **complex** performance that has been perfectly timed to go along with the music. The dancing will be so precise that you will feel sure the dancers can hear the music.

You may wonder how deaf dancers could learn such **sophisticated** dance moves without hearing the music. The process is interesting. Even though they cannot hear music, deaf people can feel vibrations from drums. Did you know that drums help deaf people play football? Football teams with deaf members use a big drum that creates vibrations. These vibrations tell deaf players when to start a play. In the same way, vibrations from the music can sometimes help deaf dancers. The dancers can feel when they should move. But some kinds of music do not have strong vibrations. In these cases, deaf dancers learn a dance by counting the steps.

A piece of music has a certain number of beats. You can count the beats. Dance steps go along with the beats of the music. Dancers who are deaf break down the dance into its individual steps. They learn **elaborate** dances by counting the beats carefully. They learn each step, and then they count in their heads when the step should happen. It is like remembering every turn in a long and confusing **maze**. Learning a dance can be **elusive**, or difficult to grasp. It takes many hours of hard work and practice before the dancers are ready for a big **production**, where they will show the dance to audience members.

When a deaf dancer performs, he or she is in a deep state of concentration. Dancers compare it to walking through a **labyrinth**. You follow a path that takes you to the center of the labyrinth, but you must pay attention or you will get lost. The dancers think about each step and keep count of the beats of the music at the same time. This is very hard to do.

When the curtain goes up on a show, the audience is always amazed by the beauty of the performance. It's inspiring to see people who do not let their challenges stop them from living out their dreams.

**COMPREHENSION** What are some challenges that a deaf dancer has to work past? Which words make learning to dance without hearing seem like a puzzle?



# Where's Father?

The wind roared and shook the windows of the farmhouse. Olivia peered out at the driving snow. "Father should be back by now," she said to her brother, Ethan. Her voice was quiet and tense.

Snow had blocked the road. Mother could not get home from town. Father had gone to the barn to check on the sheep. Ethan pulled on his coat. "I'm going to look for him," he declared.

"He told us to stay in," Olivia reminded him. "Remember last year, when the tornado **demolished** the old barn and the **debris** from the broken wood was flying around? He wants to be sure we're inside in bad weather so we're not caught in any **destruction**."

"This is a blizzard, not a tornado," Ethan pointed out. "I'm not going to blow away." As he put on his hat and tattered old gloves, Olivia ran upstairs and quickly returned with a ball of red yarn. She handed it to Ethan. "I read a myth about a man in a maze. Let the yarn **unravel** as you go. Then you can follow it back. I'll tie this end to the doorknob. Just be sure to come back before it **disintegrates** in all that heavy snow."

Clutching the yarn, Ethan stepped outside. The wind shrieked. The snow hit his skin like millions of needles. He struggled to walk in the knee-deep snow. He stepped wrong once and collapsed into a drift. Yet he held on tight to the yarn.

With every step, he noticed the outline of the house disappearing. Ahead, the barn slowly began to take shape. Two minutes later, he was inside. The barn smelled of wool and the **decomposition** of old, rotted hay.

"Ethan?" Dad said. He hugged his son. "I'm glad you're here. Two lambs were born. They're fine, but the blizzard was getting really bad. The situation seemed to be **deteriorating** and I did not want to leave the barn."

Ethan held up the yarn. "Don't worry. Olivia found a way to get us home safe."

They fed the cows and chickens. Ethan **shattered** the ice on the water tank outside the door so he could give the animals more to drink. Then he and his father followed Olivia's yarn back to the farmhouse.

**COMPREHENSION** Which words help you understand how strong the storm is? What do you think Ethan learns from this challenge?

