

Teacher Guide

Cue Sheet

The Peking Acrobats

Friday, February 5, 2027
10:15am

Questions to ask students **BEFORE** the performance

- Do you know what an acrobat does?
- Do you study martial arts such as Shaolin Kung Fu or Tai Chi? Can you demonstrate a little?
- Name tasks, jobs, sports, or artistic efforts that require teamwork.

Questions to ask students **AFTER** the performance

- What was your favorite part of the show? Is there anything you saw that you would like to be able to do?
- Did any parts of the show remind you of martial arts? Were there similar movements?
- When did you see the acrobats working together as a team? How did they do it?



About the Performance

The performers of The Peking Acrobats® share the joy of acrobatic skills with the world. Carefully selected from the finest acrobat schools in China, these gymnasts, jugglers, cyclists, and tumblers transform their athletic disciplines into an awe-inspiring entertainment, accompanied by live music performed by an exotic Chinese orchestra.

Chinese acrobatics is an art form that dates back more than 2,000 years, reflecting everyday life experiences in work, war, and religion. At one time, almost everyone in China practiced acrobatics, believing it to be a skill that could increase their will, physical strength, and accuracy of movement. In the period between 206 B.C. and 220 A.D., the best Chinese acrobats were first invited to perform for the emperor, especially when he wanted to impress visiting foreigners. The various acts of tumbling, singing, dancing, and juggling that they performed became known as “The Hundred Entertainments.” Over the centuries in China, acrobatics continued to develop into an art form, with each generation of acrobats adding its own improvements and embellishments.



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Vocabulary

Acrobat (*AK-roh-bat*) - an athlete or artist who performs acts requiring skill, agility, and coordination

Agility (*uh-JIH-luh-tee*) - an ability to move arms and legs quickly, easily, and gracefully

Aerialist (*AIR-ree-uh-list*) - an acrobat who performs high off the ground with a trapeze, a tightrope, or silks

Cartwheel (*KAHRT-weel*) - springing sideways to one hand, then both, then the second hand only, then back to one's feet

Contortion (*kuhn-TOR-shun*) - an acrobatic act where humans twist and flexing of the body in highly unusual ways

Kipping (*KIH-ping*) - moving from ground to standing by thrusting one's legs forward and moving the upper body to a standing position

Mandarin (*MAN-dur-ihn*) - the most common language in China and the most spoken language in the world with more than 600 million people using it every day

Peking (*pee-KING*) - An early attempt to translate the name of China's capital city into Western languages

Pike (*pyk*) - a position where the body is bent into an L shape, and can be done seated, standing, or jumping

Slacklining (*SLAK-ly-ning*) - walking on a strap strung between two poles but with less tension than a tightrope so it will give, stretch and bounce. Also called tricklining.

Somersault (*SUH-mer-saalt*) - forward roll, where the acrobat squats on all fours, tucks their chin to their chest, and rolls forward until their legs are underneath them again

Trapeze (*tra-PEEZ*) - a short bar suspended by ropes on each end that can swing like a pendulum or even in a complete circle

Tumbler (*TUHM-blur*) - another word for acrobat



Interactive PDF
Click here to visit link.

Additional Resources

Click here to download a study guide for the performance provided by the show.

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Beyond the Show

Use these activities before or after the performance to extend the production's themes and concepts into the classroom.

Finding Similarities

Share pictures of Chinese musical instruments with your class. Ask your students to describe similarities and differences with instruments they are familiar with. Next, have them listen to the instruments. Compare the banhu or erhu to a violin, and the dizi to a flute. Ask your students which instruments look the most interesting and how the shape of an instrument might change how it sounds when played.

Basic Acrobatics

Have students learn some basic acrobatics. Most can pretty easily learn to do somersaults. Another basic exercise that helps to develop agility is jumping rope. Ask your students which moves they would like to learn, and how they might go about learning them.

Acrobatics in a Story

Have students create a story about a hero who needs to evade, escape, or hide from someone trying to catch them. Recall some of the tricks the artists performed in The Peking Acrobats. How can their heroes use some of those tricks? Can they dive into a hole (like a hoop jumper jumps through a hoop) to get away? Should their heroes walk across a very narrow strap (or board) to escape? What if their heroes dove into a very large pot to hide? How can they use some of the balancing or other acts in their stories?