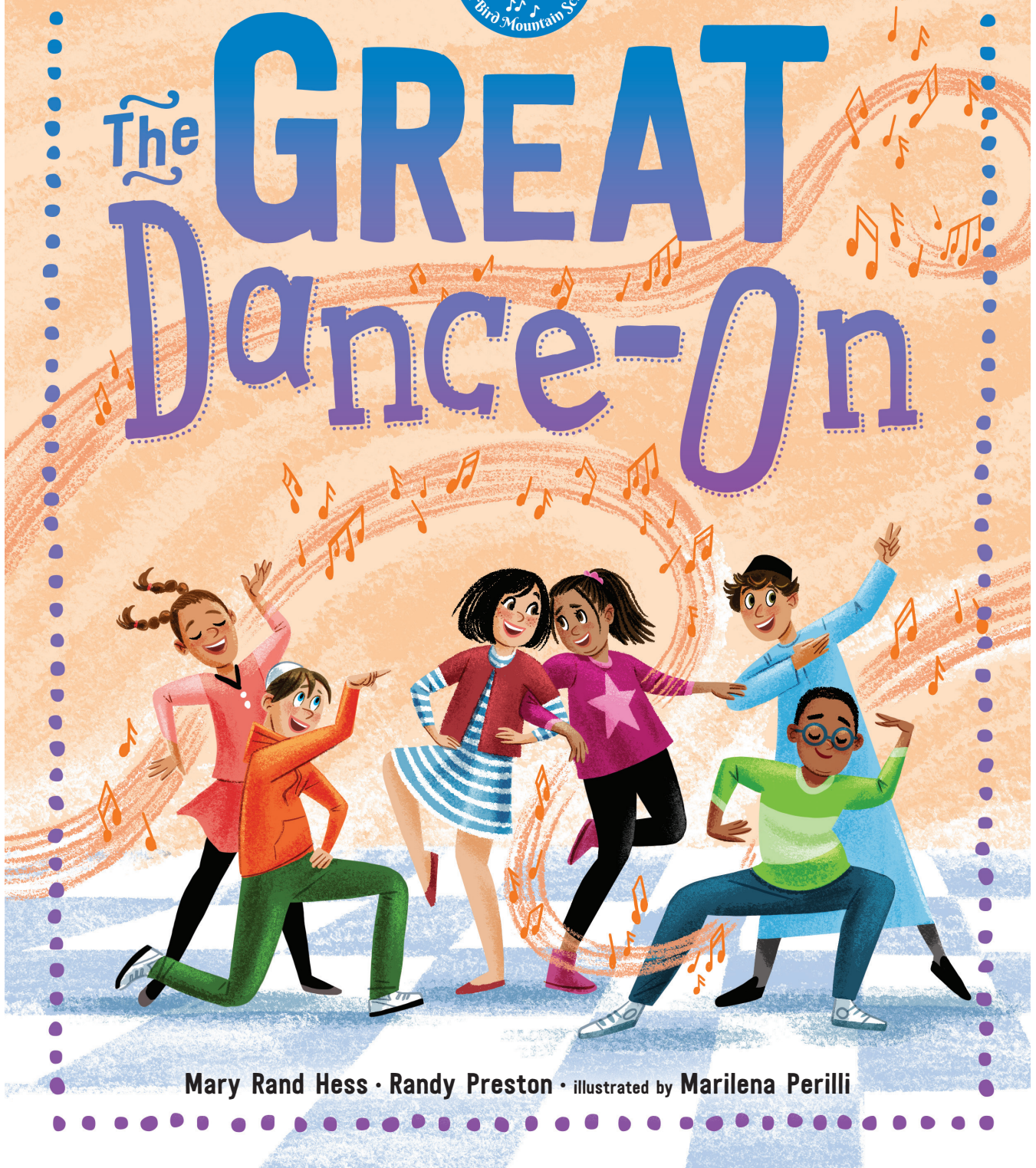




The GREAT Dance-Off



Mary Rand Hess • Randy Preston • illustrated by Marilena Perilli

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Nevaeh is our main character and an above-average student at Bird Mountain School. She enjoys science, math, and poetry, but dancing is not something she feels confident about.

Hanh is Nevaeh's friend. She is also a good student, but she lacks confidence in expressing herself through dance.

Ms. Tharrington is the encouraging and compassionate teacher who has decided to hold a dance-off party each week.

Deuce is a spirited and smart student who loves hip-hop and is excited for the upcoming dance party.

Ana is very excited about showing off her salsa moves to her classmates. She is also compassionate toward her friends who are not so confident about the upcoming dance-off.

Ariel is a tap dancer and thrilled that he finally gets to share his dance moves in front of the other students and his best friend, Zakariya.

Zakariya is Ariel's best friend and he, too, is excited to show off his moves. At first, he just wants to win the dance-off, but he soon learns it's less about winning and more about sharing your authenticity.

Big Sister is Nevaeh's fun older sister who is supportive in helping her prepare for the dance party.

Little Sister is Nevaeh's funny and energetic younger sister who looks up to the older girls and is proud of Nevaeh and sees her potential.

Dad is Nevaeh's father who is warm and cheerful, giving his daughters space to be creative and productive.

The Class in Ms. Tharrington's room engages in chatter and dance, and sometimes sings along to the songs with the other characters.

SETTINGS

Scene 1: Ms. Tharrington's Classroom

Scene 2: The Lunchroom

Scene 3: Ms. Tharrington's Classroom

Scene 4: Nevaeh's Home

Scene 5: Ms. Tharrington's Classroom

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set design and scene changes in this mini-musical should be easy. They can be shown with a poster/sign change, along with easy props you find around your classroom or school. Fancy set designs are not required or encouraged. If props are not handy or cannot be easily created, miming is an entertaining alternative. This is meant to be fun and accessible for all! Costumes can be made with some creativity, or you might simply create t-shirts with the names of the characters on them. Remember, creativity and expression are encouraged!

SCENE 1

Mrs. Tharrington's classroom: The lights come on to reveal a bright and busy room full of excitement, as students strike poses for the upcoming dance-off.

While students dance around their desks, Nevaeh stands at a poster inside the classroom that reads: *The Dance Is Strong Magic. The Body Can Fly Without Wings*. She looks nervous and contemplative.

NEVAEH

(to herself)

I'm an ace at science, math, and poetry, but dancing is not my thing.

(takes in a deep breath)

I wonder if I'm missing some dance magic.

She slowly heads back to her desk and looks down. Her eyes look left to right and right to left, observing her classmates dancing around her. Frozen in her own worry, she doesn't notice that her friend Hanh looks concerned too.

Ms. Tharrington joins in on the fun, striking her own pose, just before passing out journals to each student.

MS. THARRINGTON

(to all students)

Got your dance moves ready for tomorrow? It's almost time for our first midweek dance-off. It will give us an energy boost for the rest of the week.

Many students, in excitement, begin chiming in! They dance in their seats as they call out their answers to Ms. Tharrington's question.

DEUCE

I've got some new moves from my cousin's hip-hop video!

ANA

Wait 'til you see me dance salsa like my tía showed me.

ARIEL

(beaming)

I'm bringing my tap shoes. I'm gonna tip-tap-tippy-tap-tap across the floor!



ZAKARIYA

(shouting out)

I'm gonna win!

Students are so excited, they break into song! Well, except for Nevaeh and Hanh.

#1 — *THE DANCE-OFF*

ZAKARIYA

IT'S LIKE A DANCE BATTLE
OR A CONTEST BALL
YOU CAN'T GET RATTLED
'CAUSE THE WINNER TAKES ALL

THE GAME'S ALMOST OVER
YOU'RE THE WINNING TEAM
THAT FEELING IS GREAT
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN

DEUCE

THERE'S TAP, JAZZ, MODERN
THERE'S HIP-HOP

ANA

THERE'S THE DANCE
YOU DO TO BEBOP!

ARIEL

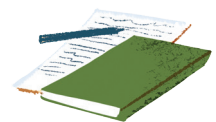
THERE'S BALLET, SALSA
COUNTRY LINE DANCING

ZAKARIYA

DON'T FORGET
THE FREESTYLE PRANCING

ALL (except NEVEAH and HANH)

THE DANCE-OFF
IT'S WHERE WE BELONG
WE'RE ALL GOING
TO DANCE SO—



ANA AND DEUCE

LIKE THE OLYMPICS
OR THE SUPER BOWL
WHERE LEGENDS ARE MADE
AND STORIES ARE TOLD

THE DANCE-OFF WINNER
WILL RULE THE SCHOOL
'CAUSE THEY'RE THE BEST DANCER
THAT'S SO COOL

ZAKARIYA AND ARIEL

THERE'S MAMBO
THERE'S RHUMBA
AND DID WE SAY JAZZ?

ZAKARIYA, ANA, ARIEL, AND DEUCE

THERE'S WALTZES
TANGOS, BRING WHAT YOU HAVE

ALL (EXCEPT NEVAEH AND HANH)

THE DANCE-OFF!
IT'S WHERE WE BELONG!
THE DANCE-OFF!
WE ARE GOING TO DANCE SO STRONG
THE DANCE-OFF!
IT'S WHERE WE BELONG
THIS SONG IS GOING ON TOO LONG

THE DANCE-OFF!
IT'S WHERE WE BELONG!
THE DANCE-OFF!
WE ARE GOING TO DANCE SO STRONG
THE DANCE-OFF!
THIS SONG'S REALLY LONG
SO NOW WE'RE ENDING THIS DANCE-OFF SONG!

Sad and nervous, Nevaeh and Hanh look at each other.



SCENE 2

The lunchroom: Students file in and sit at lunch tables. They are taking excitedly about the upcoming dance-off.

Nevaeh and Hanh walk over to a lunch table and sit down. They take out their lunches and begin to eat.

NEVAEH

I can't believe this dance-off is tomorrow.

HANH

(whispering to Nevaeh)

I don't know any cool moves. Do you?

NEVAEH

Not really. I'm so nervous, but it's good to know you feel the same way. I was starting to think I was the only one.

Nevaeh and Hanh share their snacks and worries.

HANH

What if I embarrass myself dancing in front of everybody?

NEVAEH

(nods her head in agreement)

The only dance moves I know are the ones my sisters and I made up just for fun.

HANH

Me too—except I dance with my dogs.

They both laugh at the thought of Hanh dancing with her dogs.

NEVAEH

I feel like my worries are shrinking a little, thanks to you!

HANH

I know . . . same!

(a deep breath)

But I still hope we don't have to dance tomorrow.



NEVAEH

(thinking hard)

Hmm . . . I know! Maybe we can get out of dancing.

HANH

Really? How?!

Nevaeh turns to Hanh and begins to sing:

#2 — *THE PERFECT EXCUSE*

NEVAEH

WE NEED THE PERFECT EXCUSE
SOMETHING THAT LETS US OFF THE HOOK
AN EXCUSE THAT CUTS US LOOSE
TO WATCH OR PLAY OR READ A BOOK

NEVAEH AND HANH

WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO
WE THINK WE'D RATHER JUST WATCH YOU
WE DON'T QUITE KNOW THE BEST DANCE MOVES
MAYBE TOMORROW WE SKIP SCHOOL?

HANH

IF WE'RE SICK, WE CAN MISS SCHOOL
MAYBE WE BOTH HAVE ALLERGIES
OR I'LL SAY WE HAVE THE FLU
IF YOU PRETEND TO SNEEZE AND WHEEZE

NEVEAH

MAYBE WE GOT LOST AT SEA
OR HIKING UP MOUNT KILIMANJARO
OR MAYBE WE WERE STUNG BY BEES
WE CAN'T MAKE IT IN TOMORROW

NEVAEH AND HANH

WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO
WE THINK WE'D RATHER JUST WATCH YOU
WE DON'T KNOW THE BEST DANCE MOVES
OH, HOW CAN WE SKIP SCHOOL?



HANH

MAYBE WE GOT PULLED INTO SPACE
 FLYING A ROCKET FOR THE DAY
 OR MAYBE WE WERE IN A SURFING RACE
 AND GOT STUCK BEHIND A WAVE

NEVAEH

OR MAYBE WE BOTH BROKE OUR FEET
 WOULD MS. THARRINGTON BUY IT?
 OR MAYBE WE CAN SIMPLY PLEAD
 “WE CAN’T DANCE!” AND NOT DENY IT

As students start leaving the lunchroom, Nevaeh and Hanh look
 at each other and realize . . .

NEVAEH

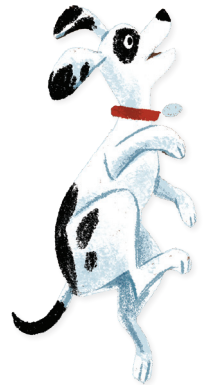
MAYBE THE BEST EXCUSE
 MAYBE THE BEST EXCUSE
 MAYBE THE BEST EXCUSE
 IS SIMPLY THE TRUTH!

NEVAEH AND HANH

MAYBE THE BEST EXCUSE
 MAYBE THE BEST EXCUSE
 SOMETIMES THE BEST EXCUSE
 SOMETIMES THE BEST EXCUSE
 SOMETIMES THE BEST EXCUSE

IS SIMPLY THE TRUTH
 IS SIMPLY THE TRUTH
 IS SIMPLY THE TRUTH
 SIMPLY THE TRUTH!
 SOMETIMES IT’S SIMPLY THE TRUTH
 SOMETIMES IT’S SIMPLY THE TRUTH

They pick up their lunch bags and hurry back to class.



SCENE 3

*Back in Mrs. Tharrington's classroom,
students are already back at their desks,
waiting for the next assignment.*

Nevaeh and Hanh rush in just before Ms. Tharrington is about to shut the classroom door to start class again.

MS. THARRINGTON

You two are almost late.

HANH

Sorry. We just . . .

Hanh looks down. Nevaeh grabs her hand. She gathers the courage to tell Ms. Tharrington their concerns.

NEVAEH

We want to tell you how we feel about the dance-off.

MS. THARRINGTON

Okay, start from the beginning.

Ms. Tharrington leans in and listens carefully.

NEVAEH

There's a lot of pressure to be good at this dance-off. Do we have to participate?

HANH

I don't know any cool dance moves. I'm scared I'll mess up or look weird in front of everyone.

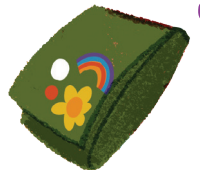
MS. THARRINGTON

Thank you for advocating for yourselves. That's important. And just so you know, you aren't the only ones who are worried.

NEVAEH AND HANH

(relieved and surprised)

Really?!



Ms. Tharrington walks to the front of the classroom and faces all the students.

MS. THARRINGTON

Everyone, let's huddle up. I've learned some students are nervous about the dance-off. We need to find a way to make sure everyone is comfortable tomorrow. Or we might decide not to have the dance-off at all. And that's okay too.

Students form a circle on the carpet. They begin tossing out ideas.

DEUCE

Some can cheer and keep the beat!

ZAKARIYA

Only dance if you want to.

ARIEL

All dances are welcome.

ANA

Or no dances!

NEVAEH

This should not be a contest!

Ms. Tharrington walks over to the circle.

MS. THARRINGTON

I like the way you all are working together to figure out a solution. Let's have a vote. Those in favor of keeping the dance party, please raise your hand.

All the students raise their hands.

MS. THARRINGTON

Well, that's a big yes to the dance party! Now remember, you all have set the rules. "No one is required to dance. All dances are welcome." And . . . am I missing anything?

DEUCE

Some can cheer and keep the beat.



MS. THARRINGTON

YES! You can always cheer and keep the beat.

Students start clapping and stomping to keep the beat.

MS. THARRINGTON

Let's save the beats for tomorrow.



SCENE 4

It's evening at Nevaeh's home. We follow her from place to place as she practices her dance moves in her backyard, in her Big Sister's bedroom, in the kitchen, and in the family room.

In her backyard, Neveah is practicing her dance moves with her older and younger sisters.

BIG SISTER

Why don't you move your arms and legs like this?

LITTLE SISTER

Or like this?

NEVAEH

I'm going to fly like the birds.

Nevaeh moves across the yard, pretending to fly.

LITTLE SISTER

(pointing to the tree)

You can always dance like the squirrels too.

NEVAEH

What do they call their dance?

LITTLE SISTER

Running up a tree!

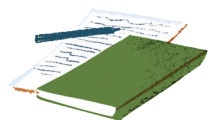
BIG SISTER

Or jumping branch to branch.

They all laugh.

BIG SISTER

Nature's music is cool, but let's go to my room and put on some dance music and really get our freestyle going.



They dance their way to Big Sister's room

Big Sister puts on some upbeat music.

NEVAEH

Turn it up!

LITTLE SISTER

Way up!

Big Sister turns it way up. They begin dancing around and feel the music with every move and every emotion.

BIG SISTER

You're really getting the feel for it, Nevaeh. I think you can dance!

They dance off toward the kitchen, where Dad is cooking homemade soup at the stove.

DAD

(while stirring the pot of soup)

Are you girls going to dance or set the table?

LITTLE SISTER

Do we have to choose?

NEVAEH

How about both? Homemade dances for homemade soup.

DAD

Deal.

The girls grab the plates and do a little jig on their way to set the table. They dance around the table, setting each place.

The lights dim and when they come back on, we are now in the family room.

Nevaeh's sisters are exhausted, sitting and watching Nevaeh as she keeps dancing.



BIG SISTER

Watch out for the cat! Little Sis already tripped on her.

NEVAEH

I see the cat and the cat sees my moves.

Nevaeh has become quite confident.

LITTLE SISTER

(to Nevaeh)

Yeah! You're a dancing machine!

NEVAEH

Thanks! And thank you for dancing with me. This is the best homework ever.

Nevaeh dances her way to bed. The lights dim.

When the lights come back on, we are in Nevaeh's bedroom and it is morning.

Nevaeh looks at her watch. She turns to the audience.

NEVAEH

(breaking the fourth wall)

I've never felt such flutters in my stomach. Like ever. Because today is the day for dancing. The question is . . . am I truly ready?

She paces a little before grabbing her backpack to leave.



SCENE 5

Ms. Tharrington's classroom: Day of the Dance-Off.

Nerves turn into excitement for the students in Ms. Tharrington's class, as students prepare the room for the dance-off.

Nevaeh looks more confident than ever.

MS. THARRINGTON

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... DANCE TIME!

Ms. Tharrington turns on the music and the classroom pumps with upbeat tunes.

Everyone feels the rhythm in their feet and hearts. They spread out to dance, sharing their unique and wonderful dance styles.

Some clap, cheer, and sing along.

Nevaeh stretches out her arms, shuffles her feet, hops around, and shimmies her shoulders.

NEVAEH

(to Hanh)

I love the feeling of dancing free. No matter who's watching!

HANH

I know! Look at these moves I made up!

ANA

I'm having a blast.

DEUCE

Me too!

ARIEL

Watch me tap, tap, tap away!

ZAKARIYA

This is definitely more fun than only one of us winning.



NEVAEH

We're like birds whirling and twirling in the sky.

Nevaeh takes center stage for a moment.

ALL STUDENTS

Go Nevaeh!

She twirls off, and all the students wind down. Ms. Tharrington turns the music off, and students rest at their desks or on the carpet on the floor.

NEVAEH

(to Hanh)

I couldn't be happier.

HANH

Or more tired.

Nevaeh nods in agreement, but suddenly she is bursting with a grand idea to share.

NEVAEH

Wait. I have an idea!

She runs up to Ms. Tharrington.

NEVAEH

Ms. Tharrington, since our dance-off isn't a contest, I think we should rename it. Can we call it a **dance-on** instead? How about The Great Dance-On?

Ms. Tharrington likes this idea and presents it to the classroom.

MS. THARRINGTON

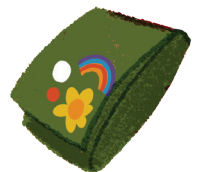
Hey, students, did you hear Nevaeh's great idea? All in favor of calling our weekly dance party The Great Dance-On, please cheer.

Everyone cheers and chants:

ALL STUDENTS

The Great Dance-On! The Great Dance-On! The Great Dance-On!

They stand up to sing:



#3 — *THE GREAT DANCE-ON*

DEUCE, ZAKARIYA, ANA, AND ARIEL

WE LOVE DANCING FREE
WE WON A VICTORY
WE DON'T HAVE TO COMPETE
TO HAVE FUN DANCINGLY!

NEVAEH AND HANH

WE ALL JUST DO OUR MOVES
WE HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE
WE ARE ALLOWED TO BE
WHO WE WANT TO BE

They begin dancing as they continue to sing the song:

ALL STUDENTS

THE GREAT DANCE-ON!
IT'S TOO MUCH FUN
THE GREAT DANCE-ON!
COME SING ALONG

NEVAEH AND HANH

WE DANCE TO THE SAME RHYTHM

ANA AND DEUCE

DANCE TO THE SAME BEAT

ZAKARIYA AND ARIEL

DANCING WITH OUR BODIES

NEVAEH AND HANH

STOMPING WITH OUR FEET

ANA AND DEUCE

WAVING BOTH OUR HANDS

ZAKARIYA AND ARIEL

OUR MISSION IS COMPLETE

NEVAEH, HANH, ANA, DEUCE, ZAKARIYA, AND ARIEL

OUR DIFFERENCES MAKE THIS ALL SO SWEET



ALL STUDENTS

THE GREAT DANCE-ON!
IT'S TOO MUCH FUN
THE GREAT DANCE-ON!
COME DANCE ALONG
LET YOUR BODY MOVE
THE GREAT DANCE-ON!
YOUR DANCE IS SMOOTH
COME DANCE ALONG
TO THE GREAT DANCE-ON SONG
THE GREAT DANCE-ON
THE GREAT DANCE-ON
THE GREAT DANCE-ON
THE GREAT DANCE-ON
THE GREAT DANCE-ON
THE GREAT DANCE-ON!

THE END.

