

SAINT LOUIS **BALLET**

THE NUTCRACKER

Synopsis

Act I, Scene I: “The Party”

It is Christmas Eve in the town of Nuremburg, Germany. Festivities begin as Doctor and Mrs. Stahlbaum put the finishing touches on the Christmas tree and prepare to welcome their guests. Their children, Clara and Fritz, burst gleefully into the room and the party begins. Refreshments are served, gifts are exchanged, and the spirited fun continues until the arrival of the mysterious Herr Drosselmeyer and his handsome young nephew. His gifts for the children quickly allay their initial fear of him. To everyone’s delight, life-size, mechanical dolls perform lively dances. The children are disappointed as the dolls are carried off, but Herr Drosselmeyer has another surprise; he produces a colorful Nutcracker for Clara. Fritz, in a fit of jealousy, grabs the Nutcracker and breaks it. Herr Drosselmeyer tenderly repairs it and Clara rocks the wounded Nutcracker in her arms. Fritz and his friends make mayhem at the party by blowing their horns and banging their drums. As the evening ends, the older guests join the parents in a traditional folk dance before everyone departs for home.

Act I, Scene II: “The Battle”

Later that night, while everyone is asleep, Clara returns to the living room to make sure her Nutcracker is safe. Upon finding him, she becomes tired and falls asleep. As the clock strikes midnight, a magical spell begins: giant mice appear, the Christmas tree seems to grow...and the toys even come to life! Clara’s Nutcracker becomes real and leads the toy soldiers and bunnies in battle against the mice. When Clara sees that the mice are winning, she joins the fight. Courageously, she jumps on the Mouse King’s back, startling him, and the Nutcracker is quickly able to slay him. Suddenly, the Nutcracker changes into a prince and he and Clara journey to his kingdom. Snow begins to fall and the Snow King and Snow Queen and their swirling snowflakes escort Clara and the Prince on their journey through the Palace of Snow.

Act II: “The Palace of Sweets”

As Clara and the Nutcracker Prince approach the Palace of Sweets, they are met by charming Christmas angels and the beautiful Sugar Plum Fairy. Clara and the Prince are led to a place of honor where they are entertained by the sweets, spices, and flowers of the court. The act concludes with the romantic pas de deux of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. The entire court joins in the final tribute to Clara. Clara awakens...was it a dream?... or did it all really happen on that magical Christmas Eve?

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Video Challenge: Spot the Characters

Watching the video, can you catch all of these characters? Pay attention; they move fast!

- 1) Fritz
- 2) Drosselmeyer
- 3) Clara
- 4) Dolls
- 5) Mouse King
- 6) Nutcracker
- 7) Snow Queen & King
- 8) Snowflakes
- 9) Angels
- 10) Arabian Coffee (blue)
- 11) Chinese Tea (red)
- 12) Russian Candy Canes (white with stripes)
- 13) Sugarplum Fairy & Cavalier (pink)
- 14) German Mazipan (ivory)
- 15) Dewdrop (pink)

Reading Comprehension

- 1) What holiday is Clara's family celebrating? _____
- 2) What is the name of Clara's brother? _____
- 3) What does Godfather Drosselmeyer bring to the party? _____
- 4) What time does the clock strike when everything starts to grow? _____
- 5) Who is fighting against the Nutcracker, Clara, and the soldiers? _____
- 6) Who greets Clara at the Palace of the Sweets? _____

Matching Game: Match the country to the sweet that they present to Clara.

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| 1) Spain | a) Candy Canes |
| 2) Saudi Arabia | b) Tea |
| 3) China | c) Hot Chocolate |
| 4) Russia | d) Flowers |
| 5) Germany | e) Marzipan cookies |
| 6) France | f) Coffee |
| 7) Austria | g) Ribbon Candy |