

Progress Monitoring Probe 14

Martha Graham

Imagine a woman sitting for hours in front of a lion's cage in a zoo. She watches the lion very carefully, studying its every movement as it paces back and forth across the cage. Then, the woman goes home and teaches herself to move as the lion moved.

The woman so interested in a lion's movement was Martha Graham, one of the greatest dancers of the twentieth century. She changed people's ideas about what dance is by exploring new ways of movement and by connecting dance and feelings.

When Martha saw her first live dance performance as a teenager, she made up her mind to become a dancer. She began taking lessons, eventually becoming a lead dancer in the dance company that was part of the school where she studied.

Soon Martha was performing around the country and gaining fame as a dancer. After a few years, she struck out on her own, teaching and creating a personal dance style. She formed her own dance group, creating experimental dances that expressed feelings such as joy and grief in new ways and doing away with fancy costumes in favor of simple outfits and bare stages.

Not everyone loved Martha's dances. Some called them hard to understand and even "ugly," but Martha was not discouraged. She kept pushing her talent as far as she could, striking out in new directions. She added male dancers to her company and began to use spoken words. The company performed all over the world, and Martha became an international star, widely celebrated as a genius.

Martha's last dance performance was at the age of seventy-five. She continued to teach and to direct her company and travel

Martha Graham (Continued)

abroad with them until shortly before her death, at the age of ninety-six. Since her teenage years, dance had mattered more than anything in her life. "I did not choose to be a dancer," Martha once said. "I was chosen."

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

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