This article describes three well-known dance forms from Sāmoa. The article is accompanied by colourful, high-energy photos of students from a Porirua primary school performing the slap dance and the sāsā.

The article features some of the history of the dances and it also provides opportunities for an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the heroes of the dances and the stories that each dance tells.

Customary Samoan values are shown through the students’ commitment to their culture group and their enthusiasm and pride in their performance.

The article complements the story “Uncle Tino” in this issue of the School Journal. The three dances featured in that story are described in this article.

Dances of Sāmoa
by Toleafoa Avaui Peter Setefano

Overview

This article describes three well-known dance forms from Sāmoa. The article is accompanied by colourful, high-energy photos of students from a Porirua primary school performing the slap dance and the sāsā.

The article features some of the history of the dances and it also provides opportunities for an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the heroes of the dances and the stories that each dance tells.

Customary Samoan values are shown through the students’ commitment to their culture group and their enthusiasm and pride in their performance.

The article complements the story “Uncle Tino” in this issue of the School Journal. The three dances featured in that story are described in this article.

In Sāmoa, dance plays a big part in the culture of the people. It helps to show who they are and adds richness to their lives. Three of the most beloved dance forms of Sāmoa are:

- The Fa'ataupati (Slap Dance)
- The Sāsā, or Posture Dance
- The Siva Afu, or Fire Dance.

The Fa'ataupati (Slap Dance)

This dance is usually performed by young men. Sāmoa is a country that has many mosquitoes. The fa'ataupati is based on the action of swatting mosquitoes on the body. You need to have a good sense of rhythm for the fa'ataupati.

The dancers carry out the movements together and in time to the rhythm. Often they follow a leader. They use their bodies as percussion by slapping their thighs (vae), chest (fatafata), and shoulders (tau'au) and by clapping (pati). Mostly the tempo of the dance is fast.
To create a table to compare different types of dances and their purposes, across cultures. To report on a cultural event. To compare different Samoan dances and their purposes. Many passive verb forms, for example, “is grown in” or “has been performed”. Knowledge of Pasifika culture and traditional practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values. Knowledge of gagana Sāmoa. Use of an adjective as a verb: “to perfect”. Abstract ideas or figurative language: “grown in popularity”, “dance plays a big part”. Adverbs of frequency and time: “usually”, “often”, “generations”, “neighbouring”, “popularity”, “protection”. To describe the history of a particular form of dance that you know about. To describe and explain a dance or another art form that you know or that is special to you. To evaluate how the author organised and presented information. To find out more about three of the dance forms of Samoan interest.
**The Fa’ataupati (Slap Dance)**
This dance is usually performed by young men. Sāmoa is a country that has many mosquitoes. The fa’ataupati is based on the action of swatting mosquitoes on the body. You need to have a good sense of rhythm for the fa’ataupati.

The dancers carry out the movements together and in time to the rhythm. Often they follow a leader. They use their bodies as percussion by slapping their thighs (vae), chest (fatafata), and shoulders (tau’au) and by clapping (pati). Mostly the tempo of the dance is fast.

**The sāsā is a very energetic dance for men, women, boys, and girls.** Although dancers usually perform the sāsā sitting down, they use their whole body in the dance. Their movements show everyday activities in Sāmoa, such as greeting friends and going swimming. The dancers’ hand and leg actions must be exact. Often the sāsā is performed in time to the beating of pātē (wooden slit drums), tins, or fala.

**The siva afi, which features a dancer with a flaming torch, has been performed in Sāmoa for many generations.** Traditionally, the pule nu’u (village mayor) would invite a neighbouring village to a poula (social evening). Different groups from each village would perform. The last to perform would be the taupou (village princess).

**The Fa’ataupati (Slap Dance)**
This dance is usually performed by young men. Sāmoa is a country that has many mosquitoes. The fa’ataupati is based on the action of swatting mosquitoes on the body. You need to have a good sense of rhythm for the fa’ataupati.

The dancers carry out the movements together and in time to the rhythm. Often they follow a leader. They use their bodies as percussion by slapping their thighs (vae), chest (fatafata), and shoulders (tau’au) and by clapping (pati). Mostly the tempo of the dance is fast.

**The sāsā is a very energetic dance for men, women, boys, and girls.** Although dancers usually perform the sāsā sitting down, they use their whole body in the dance. Their movements show everyday activities in Sāmoa, such as greeting friends and going swimming. The dancers’ hand and leg actions must be exact. Often the sāsā is performed in time to the beating of pātē (wooden slit drums), tins, or fala.

**The siva afi, which features a dancer with a flaming torch, has been performed in Sāmoa for many generations.** Traditionally, the pule nu’u (village mayor) would invite a neighbouring village to a poula (social evening). Different groups from each village would perform. The last to perform would be the taupou (village princess).
### Text excerpts from “Dances of Sāmoa”

In Sāmoa, dance plays a big part in the culture of the people. It helps to show who they are and adds richness to their lives.

- the fa’ataupati, or slap dance
- the sāsā, or posture dance
- the siva afi, or fire dance.

These movements depict making ‘ava.

1. Amata ona palu le ‘ava (Starting to mix the ‘ava)

### Examples of text characteristics

**INTRODUCING THE TOPIC**
An engaging opening paragraph allows the reader to connect with the text. The use of “you” to speak directly to the reader is another way for the writer to connect with the audience.

**LABELLED DIAGRAMS**
Visual features such as a labelled photo or diagram can help readers understand a complex explanation. The labels show the steps, and the text explains what they are, how they work, or why they are important.

**USE OF ANOTHER LANGUAGE**
Other languages are often used in English texts, especially when the topic relates to another country. Using another language can give writing authenticity and is also important for valuing specific cultural concepts, ideas, events, or items.

### Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**ASK QUESTIONS**
- What is your topic? Why are you writing about this?
- Who is your audience and how are you going to make them want to read your article?
- What kind of text structure will best suit your purpose and your audience?
- What knowledge can you assume your audience will already have about the topic?

**EXPLAIN**
- to the students that using another language in their writing can add authenticity. For some students, it may be extremely valuable to use their own language to explain particular events or feelings, especially when they are writing about a cultural activity.

**PROMPT**
- How will your reader know what you have written?
- Would a glossary be the best support, or would a translation provided in brackets be the best support?
- Can you explain the meaning within the sentence?

**MODEL**
- the use of the labelled photos to support understanding.
  - I can use the photos and the text to help me understand the dance movements. The labels describe what is shown in the photos and give me an understanding of what the movement is describing.
  - You may need to help students decide which features are best described in words and which need an illustration. Use examples from other School Journal articles to model different ways of using diagrams.

**GIVE FEEDBACK**
- I can see how you’ve used the criteria to check your use of cohesive devices in these two paragraphs. Use the criteria to check your third paragraph and see if you need another linking word.
- You’ve added “would” to this sentence here. It really makes me think that the dancers probably had red marks on their chests after the dance.

### Metacognition
- Share your writing with your partner and talk about two places where you made changes and explain why you made them.
- Tell your partner what was hard about writing your report. What do you need to work on for your next piece of writing?
- How did you work out what you needed to show using a diagram or photos?