

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History



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often called Maria. Her family had a mixed heritage. Her father was Osage, and her mother was of Scotch-Irish descent.

When she was three, Maria took ballet and piano lessons. She spent many hours practicing. Her love for music and dance grew and grew.

Five years later, her family moved to Los Angeles, California. Maria's parents wanted her and her sister Marjorie to get better ballet training. Maria studied with a famous ballet teacher named Bronislava Nijinska.

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After high school, Maria moved to New York City. She wanted to be a professional dancer. In 1942, she joined a top ballet company called Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. That was the start of her ballet career.

Later, she joined the New York City Ballet. She danced many important roles and became very famous. Maria was America's first "prima ballerina." That means she was the top female dancer in a major ballet company.



too. She practiced for long hours every day. She pushed through sore muscles, tired feet, and strict teachers. Even with



But things weren't always easy for Maria. Others told her to change her name to sound more European or Russian. Many dancers did this back then. People thought ballet was mostly European, so they believed dancers needed European-sounding names to fit in. Maria refused. She was proud of her Osage heritage. She kept her last name, but made it one word: Tallchief.

Maria faced other challenges in the ballet world. There were very few Native American dancers. Some people didn't think she would fit in. Training was tough,

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and women.

In the late 1960s, Maria stopped performing as a dancer. After that, she taught ballet and inspired young dancers to learn and grow. Maria and her sister also helped start the Chicago City Ballet. Her mission was to help keep ballet strong for the future.

Maria Tallchief is inspirational. She teaches us to believe in ourselves, work hard, and never give up on our dreams. Also, you don't need to change who you are to succeed. Being proud of your identity is powerful.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History

By Lydia Lukidis



1. Where was Maria Tallchief born?
  - a. Chicago, Illinois
  - b. New York, New York
  - c. Los Angeles, California
  - d. on the land of the Osage Nation in Oklahoma
2. What did the author mean when she said Maria's family "had a mixed heritage"?
  - a. Her family moved to many different places.
  - b. Her family changed their last name.



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5. Why did some people want Maria to change her name? Why did she refuse?

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6. What overall text structure did the author use in the first six paragraphs of the article "Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History"?
  - a. chronological order
  - b. cause and effect
  - c. compare and contrast
  - d. problem and solution

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History



The following terms are vocabulary words from the article.  
Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing  
the corresponding letter on the line.

1. \_\_\_\_ heritage

a. things that block one's way or  
prevent progress



5. \_\_\_\_ major

e. didn't allow someone to have or do  
something

6. \_\_\_\_ refused

f. the traditions, achievements, beliefs, etc.,  
that are part of the history of a group or  
nation

7. \_\_\_\_ descent

g. ease and fluidity of movement

8. \_\_\_\_ obstacles

h. engaged in a specified activity  
as one's main paid occupation  
rather than as a pastime

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History

In the article, "Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History," you read about Maria's journey to become a famous professional ballerina.

Explain how Maria Tallchief showed perseverance in her life. Use details from the article to support your answer.

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## ANSWER KEY

# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History

By Lydia Lukidis



1. Where was Maria Tallchief born?

a. Chicago, Illinois

b. New York, New York



because she was proud of her Osage heritage.

6. What overall text structure did the author use in the first six paragraphs of the article "Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History"?

a. **chronological order**

b. cause and effect

c. compare and contrast

d. problem and solution

## ANSWER KEY

# Maria Tallchief: Dancing into History



The following terms are vocabulary words from the article.  
Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing  
the corresponding letter on the line.



8. a obstacles

h. engaged in a specified activity  
as one's main paid occupation  
rather than as a pastime