

# Deer Dancer

Written by Mary Lyn Ray  
Illustrated by Lauren Stringer

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## Activity Guide

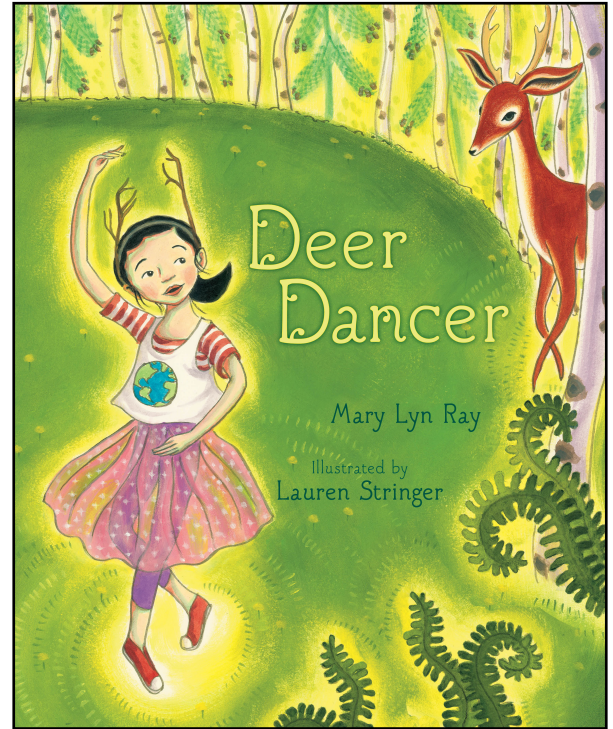
A girl.

A deer.

A chance encounter  
in a woodland  
meadow - a place  
of sun and green  
and grass.

And then...

a dance!



### About the Author:

Mary Lyn Ray wrote this story after a deer approached her in a field on the old farm where she lives in South Danbury, New Hampshire. Mary Lyn Ray is a conservationist and author of several picture books for children. Ray's texts are often praised for their lyricism and emotional depth, and in her works she frequently focuses on humankind's relationship with nature. Among her critically acclaimed titles are *Stars*, *Christmas Farm*, *Pumpkins*, *Shaker Boy*, and *Welcome, Brown Bird*.

### About the Illustrator:

When Lauren Stringer first read Mary Lyn Ray's story, *Deer Dancer*, she was whisked back to her youthful days of ballet lessons and ballerina dreams. Lauren Stringer has illustrated many award winning books, including her own *Winter is the Warmest Season* and *When Stravinsky Met Nijinsky*.

Mary Lyn Ray and Lauren Stringer have made two previous celebrated books together, *Mud* and *Red Rubber Boot Day*.

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## Common Core Connections:

This guide is aligned with the Common Core Curriculum with the following standards for the 1st grade. If you teach another grade, you can easily find the coordinating standard at this website for your grade level: [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

## Questions You Might Ask

### Reading Literature:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1](#) Key Ideas and Details.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2](#) Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.3](#) Retell stories, including key details; demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7](#) Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

### Pre-reading:

- ✿ After reading the title of this book and looking at the cover, what do you think this story is about?
- ✿ What do you think the girl on the cover is doing? What is the girl thinking or imagining? What is the deer thinking?
- ✿ What season does this story take place in? What is your favorite season? Why? Make a list of things you like to do in your favorite season.

### Post Reading:

- ✿ Describe the place the girl likes to go. Why do you think she likes it there?
- ✿ What does she mean when she says, “a place I thought that no one knew?” Do you have a place you like to go, to be alone, where no one else goes? What do you like to do there? Where’s your favorite place in the whole world?
- ✿ Explain why the girl stood so still when she saw the deer.
- ✿ Did she touch him or not? Find the sentence which tells you the answer.
- ✿ Why does she think Nona met the deer?
- ✿ What does the dance teacher mean when she says, “Listen with your cheekbones.” or “Look with the eyes in your shoulders.”
- ✿ Study the pictures to figure out why she doesn’t “look like Nona.” What is different?
- ✿ Why is she practicing? Who sees her again?
- ✿ How do they greet one another?
- ✿ Describe the dance in the green place with the deer.
- ✿ What does she learn by watching the deer dance with her? Can you move like a deer? If you wanted to learn how to dance from an animal what animal would you choose? Why?
- ✿ Does she keep dancing after the deer leaves? Why?
- ✿ How long do you think she practices? What line give you the clue?
- ✿ When does she decide to leave?
- ✿ What happens after she leaves?
- ✿ What’s your favorite part of the story? Why? Does it match the picture?

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## Activities

### Phonological Awareness:

Sort the following list of words from the book into the column where they belong. Put words with a short vowel sound in the *sun* column and words with a long vowel sound with the *deer* column.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.2.A](#) Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.

Green	Grass	Go
No	Still	Be
Tail	Back	Did
Meet	Spin	Bend
Back	Mine	Graze
Begin	Feel	Song
Lifts	Nose	Leaps

Words with a LONG  
vowel sound (like *Deer*)



Words with a SHORT  
vowel sound (like *sun*)



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## Activities Continued

### Phonics and Word Recognition:

Divide the following words from the story into two syllables:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.3e](#) Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.

New Word:	First syllable:	Second syllable:
Shadows		
Antlers		
Listen		
Shoulders		
Practice		
Empty		
Hundred		

Check the box that matches the sense being used to describe something from the story:


[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.4](#) Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Sentence from the story:	SEE	HEAR	SMELL	TASTE	TOUCH
Then he flashed his tail and leaped back toward the trees where shadows start and woods begin.					
"Hold your head as if you're wearing antlers."					
He starts to graze.					
A song to dance.					
He shows me how to leap like him and leap like him.					
I turn the way my song turns.					
Now there's only empty grass.					
Then shadows move behind the trees.					

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## Activities Continued

### Print Concepts:

Put a  around the first word in each of the sentences from the story below.

Put a  around any capital letter.

Put a  over each period in the sentence.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.1.A](#) Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation).

1. I could almost have touched him.
2. Did Nona somewhere meet the deer?
3. I answer with what I've learned from Nona.
4. So I come to practice in the place that's grass.
5. I don't look like Nona.

### Writing:

Like the girl in the story, write about a favorite place you like to go and something that happened there (it can be real or imaginary).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3](#) Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.

Senses:	Details I can include in my description:
SEE	
HEAR	
SMELL	
TASTE	
TOUCH	

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## Activities Continued

### Writing Continued:

Now that you have some details to write about, think about the order of what will happen. Fill out this chart to get your ideas in order before you write a draft:

FIRST...	THEN...	NEXT...	FINALLY...

### Dance Your Words!

Below is the alphabet with a movement assigned to each letter. You could start with something as simple as dancing your name or try writing a short poem, then write down the movement associated with each letter and dance your poem.

A = ARCH	N = NOD
B = BALANCE	O = POP
C = CREEP	P = PUNCH
D = DROP	Q = QUIVER
E = EXPLODE	R = REACH
F = FLOAT	S = SPIN
G = GLIDE	T = TIPTOE
H = HOLD	U = UNCOIL
I = SLITHER	V = VAULT
J = JUMP	W = WALK
K = ROLL	X = FREEZE
L = LEAP	Y = SLIDE
M = MELT	Z = ZIGZAG

*Example:* If I made a dance to my name, LAUREN, I would begin with 1. L=Leap, 2. A=Arch, 3. U= Uncoil, 4. R=Reach, 5. E=Explode, 6. N=Nod. Now it's your turn!

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## Activities Continued

### Animal Dance

In *Deer Dancer*, the girl learns how to dance by moving like a deer. “Holding her head as if she is wearing antlers,” and “listening with her cheekbones.” Make a list of other kinds of animals, (ie: tiger, snake, fox, penguin, elephant, etc.) Next, make a list of their characteristics. Do they have big ears? Long tails? Finally, list words that describe how the animal moves.

Choose your favorite animal and create a dance moving and being still just like your animal! Try making a dance to [The Carnival of the Animals](#), by Camille Saint-Saens.

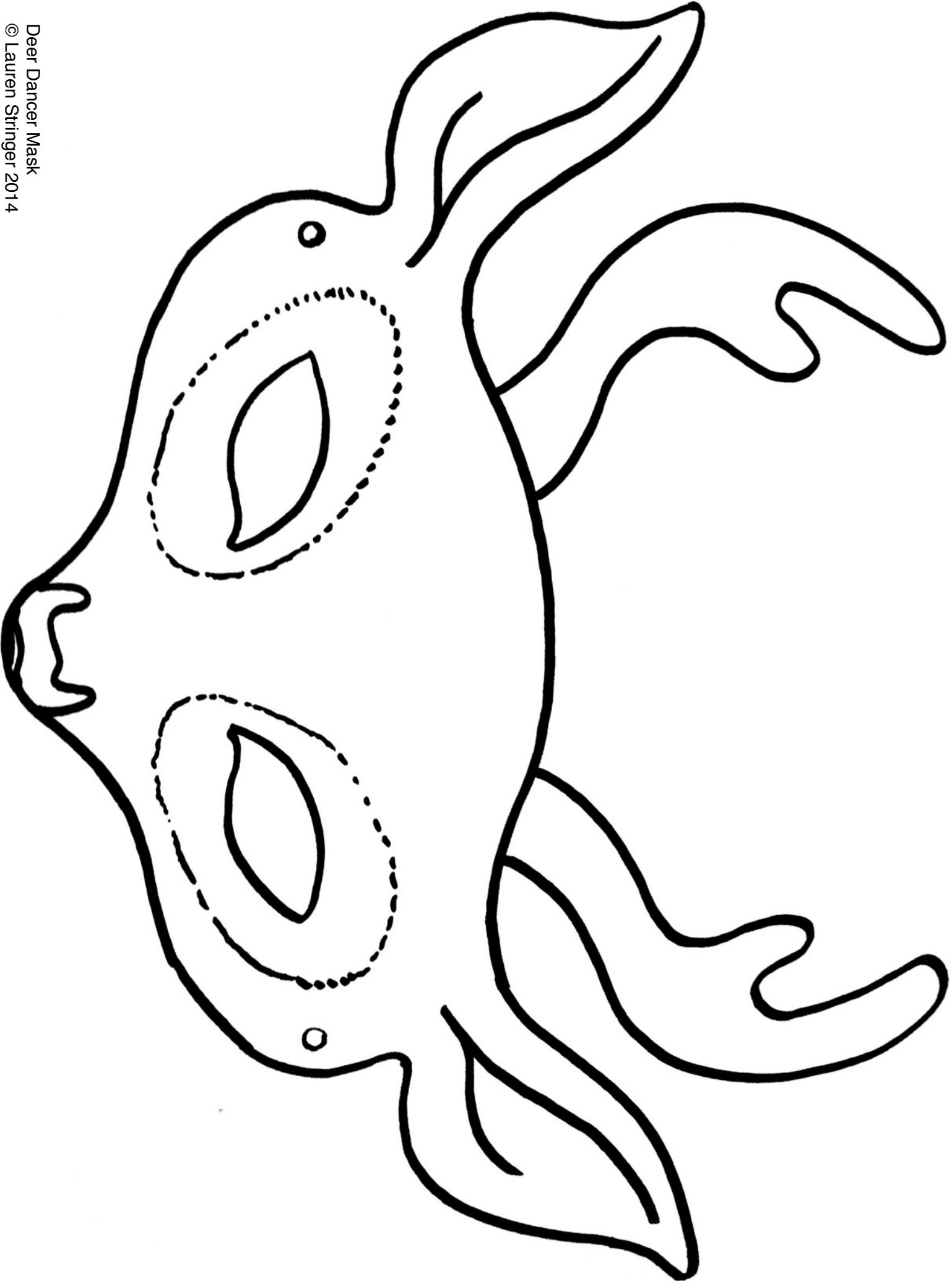
Animal:	Characteristics of Animal:	Movements of Animal:

### Make a Green Painting!

When the illustrator, Lauren Stringer, painted *Deer Dancer*, it was winter in Minnesota. After reading Mary Lyn Ray’s text, she knew she would be painting a place that was “green and grass”, using a green palette, which brought her great pleasure during the months when white snow was everywhere. The green palette with yellow greens and blue greens felt soothing. Try making a “green” painting, mixing yellow with green to make it lighter and blue with green to make it darker. How does painting with a green palette make you feel? Try painting a picture with a red palette? How does it make you feel? What season does red feel like?

### Make Your Own Deer Mask!

Pretending to be a deer can be lots of fun. Becoming a deer is easy with this mask! Mask-up with your friends and create a deer dance in your backyard or park playground. Use your imagination to create the kind of dance that deer dance “when there is no one to see.” Print out the Deer Dancer Mask template on the next page, onto a sheet of white card stock. Use crayons or markers to color it in. Then use scissors to cut out the eyes, then cut around the outside shape of the deer’s face and antlers. Use a hole punch to make the two holes on either side of the mask. Tie some string or ribbon through each of the holes, then tie the mask on. Time for a deer dance!





## Make Your Own Antlers!

In *Deer Dancer*, the little girl makes antlers for herself out of sticks. This helps her hold her head up more like a deer when she is practicing dancing. To make your own antlers, all you need is a plastic head band, duck tape, and two sticks that look a little like the shape of deer antlers.

1. Buy or find one or more hair bands. These are cheap plastic ones from Target.



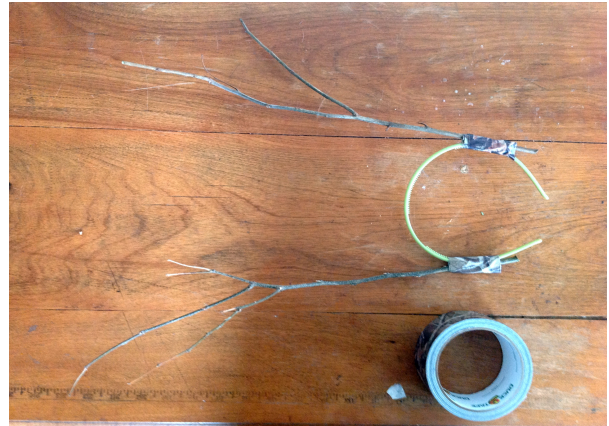
2. Buy some colorful Duck Tape. These rolls are from Home Depot.



3. Find sticks on a walk, or using clippers you can trip from branches in the spring, when trees need trimming. Careful not to cut any branches from trees during the summer. It can wound the trees.



4. Attach the sticks to both sides of the head band using a 4" piece of Duck Tape for each stick, winding it round and round until it feels secure.



5. Place antlers on your head and dance!

