

## Unforgettable

The theater lights dim. A spotlight appears on the stage, and a figure comes gliding out from the left. She enchants the audience with her dancing as she leaps and twirls her way to history. The figure is Misty Copeland, the first African American woman to become a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theater.

Misty started studying ballet at the age of 13 when she took her first lesson at a Boys and Girls Club. At that time she was living in a motel, sleeping on the floor with her five siblings. She was a gifted dancer and began performing professionally only a year after her first lesson.

When she was 15, Misty won the Los Angeles Music Center's Spotlight Award. She was offered a spot with the company at the American Ballet Theater. Only six years later she became their third ever Black solo dancer.

Misty struggled at times. She felt different from the other ballerinas. "For some people I don't look like a ballerina," she said. "My body is very different from most of the dancers I dance with. My hair is different...but I didn't let that stop me." Misty stayed true to herself and always kept reaching for her goals.



Some of Misty’s most famous roles include the title dancer in Firebird, Clara in The Nutcracker, and Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. She was the first Black woman to dance the role of Odette in Swan Lake.

Misty is also famous for her work off stage. She partners with charitable organizations to give back to the community. She mentors boys and girls and provides a role model for young dancers around the country and the world.

As part of her mission to give back, Misty has written several books for children. Her most recent, *Black Ballerinas*, tells the story of African American dancers who came before her. Misty is known for saying, “start unknown, finish unforgettable.” Clearly, she followed her own advice.



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How old was Misty Copeland when she took her first ballet lesson?
  - a. 15
  - b. 13
  - c. 6
  - d. 10
2. Misty was the first Black woman to dance which of the following roles?
  - a. Juliet
  - b. Clara
  - c. Firebird
  - d. Odette
3. Which characteristic best describes Misty's reaction to feeling different?
  - a. Determination
  - b. Defeat
  - c. Excitement
  - d. Fear
4. How did Misty pay tribute to older African American ballerinas?
  - a. By dancing the role of Clara
  - b. By writing a book
  - c. By mentoring younger dancers
  - d. By joining the American Ballet Theater

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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