

# Critique of i am a dancer assignment

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I AM A DANCER Martha Graham was born on May 11, 1894, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and died on April 1, 1991. She was a modern dancer, instructor and icon of her time. In this article Graham speaks in a philosophical and spiritual sense about the meaning of dance in her life, about what it takes to be a dancer, and about her profession or calling in general. She feels that dance is a special form of art in which movements and gestures help one make the effort to communicate with others. For Graham, art is eternal because it reveals the soul of man. She also uses her own experiences as a student, a performer, an instructor and a choreographer to give us her opinion regarding these and other subjects related to dance. Graham compares a dancer's necessity to dance with a tree that persists in living and growing toward the light and which carries the scars of its journey within. In order to do this we need to take care of our mind, our bodies and our spirit. She tried to instill this philosophy in her students. For Graham dance is the result of a necessity to create, to communicate and to express feelings in hopes of finding and defining life, instant by instant. Graham believes that we learn everything in life through practice. As a consequence of this we learn to dance by dancing just as we learn to live by living. She affirms that it takes about ten years to make a mature dancer. First, study and practice; Second, shaping the body and third the cultivation or personal life growth of the dancer. It is true that there are several different stages to becoming a mature dancer and that it does take time. Then she goes on to say, "I was chosen to be a dancer, and with that you live all your life." She believes in destiny and that each of us has been chosen to fulfill a certain role in this life. This is a reflection of her own faith and of the time in which she was raised and lived. To a certain point I agree with her but not completely because life

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is not only what you were born with but also what you make of it. It also strikes me as strange when she describes her reaction to young students whenever they ask her, "Do you think I should become a dancer?" Graham tells us that she always responds that if a student needs to ask this then the answer is no. I can not think of a more discouraging or less pedagogical thing to tell a young student.

Especially if they are just starting and haven't had the chance to learn yet. Perhaps, this is why she refer' to the dancers body as a 'tragic instrument', as a reflection of her own world view. I prefer to view the dancers body as a 'marvelous instrument' which may be reflection of my own world view. What I am in complete agreement with is her description of finding a moment to relax and meditate before performing. Graham tells us hat she never thought of herself as a genius , she thinks a better expression is a retriever that brings things back from the past and I agree with her expression because I can feel the same hing. Her description of an artist's state of mind and feeling for his/her art is extremely inspiring for me in addition to the faith she shows in her work. In this sense I would recommend this article to any dancer or prospective dancer. Graham closes her article speaking again about a dancers' necessity to create, or express themselves which brings us back to the personification of the tree's growth around the wire gate, to the light. Bibliography Carter, Alexandra and Janet O'shea. The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010, pp. 95-100.