

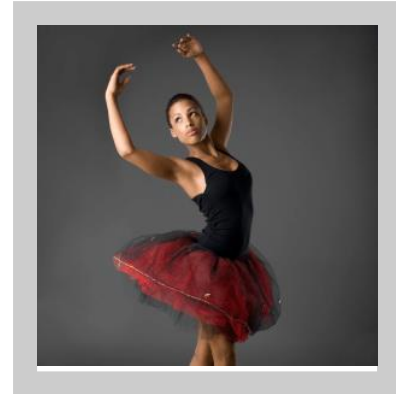
Name _____

Date _____

Ursula Pugh

At an earlier time in her life, Ursula Pugh was—before injuries, before a disastrous marriage, before the death of her beloved sister—a glorious dancer. But according to the grapevine, that fall from grace had left its mark. It was rumored that Ms. Pugh had become nothing more than an angry has-been and an exceptionally strict teacher.

I was not cognizant of these details as I made my way through the doors of The Ursula Children's Theater with my three rambunctious boys in tow. And if I had known such information, it would not have biased my decision in the least.



I was looking for a safe haven in the neighborhood – someplace free from the drugs and gangs that made their way around the community after hours – for the boys to spend time after school. Staying at home by themselves was not an option. They definitely needed adult supervision if I expected my home to still be standing when I got home from work. The children's theater, much to my boys' chagrin, was more convenient for me to get to than the karate studio.

"No, Mama, we want karate," the boys had implored pitifully. I'm glad I wasn't swayed though I would not realize until much later what a fortuitous decision this was.

Ms. Pugh looked up over her glasses as we arrived at the studio. "Boys!" she exclaimed before I could even introduce myself. "Wonderful."

It turned out that Ms. Pugh's program was woefully short of boys and mine were immediately thrown into every production possible at the theater.

As for the rumors? Well, Ms. Pugh could certainly be brusque and rude with her charges and did not tolerate any deviation from the program. But my boys flourished in this environment. My wild, rough boys, who were often so rude that they embarrassed me in public, gradually became a different species. They will certainly never be world-class dancers, but Ms. Pugh's strict ways taught them to be respectful and on time. Moreover, it taught them to follow directions and always strive to do their best.