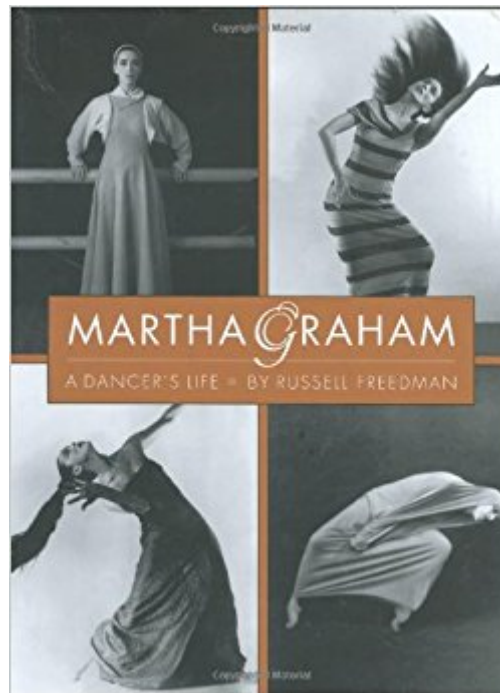




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# Martha Graham: A Dancer's Life



## Synopsis

Martha Graham, the American dancer, teacher, and choreographer, revolutionized the world of modern dance. She possessed a great gift for revealing emotion through dance, expressing beliefs and telling stories in an utterly new way. Newbery Medalist Russell Freedman documents Martha Graham's life from her birth in 1894 to her final dance performance at the age of seventy-five and continued career as a choreographer until her death in 1991. Graham's own recollections as well as those of her dancers, students, friends, and lovers reveal Graham's unwavering dedication, her extraordinary sense of artistry, and the fierce intensity that left an impression on all who saw her perform. Original research based on interviews and a remarkable collection of photographs not widely reproduced give this biography a rare and unparalleled depth. Includes notes, a bibliography, and an index.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Martha Graham (1894-1991) referred to her dancers as "acrobats of God," but in truth it was she who seemed divinely inspired. Graham was a dancer, choreographer, and teacher for more than 70 years, and during that time she changed the landscape of dance forever. An unlikely candidate for a dance diva, she was shorter and more muscular than the principal ballet dancers of her time and

she didn't start dancing until age 22--a flower long past her bloom in the eyes of most choreographers. Nonetheless, Graham managed to turn the dance world on its tutu with her innovative approach to movement and teaching and her clear understanding that feelings are not always graceful, but always intense. Russell Freedman, who won the Newbery Medal in 1988 for *Lincoln: A Photobiography* and Newbery Honors for *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane* (1992) and *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* (1994), has once again crafted a beautiful, intriguing biography. He traces Graham's remarkable life from a childhood filled with imaginative play, to her decision to attend dance school instead of college, through her departure from the Broadway Follies to pursue her own dance style, and onward through her late life, when she continued teaching and creating distinctive performance pieces. The fascinating biography is complemented by exquisite black-and-white photographs that reveal Graham's sense of beauty and her remarkable ability to translate pure, raw emotions into expressive movement. Freedman's lovely tribute makes us fully believe Graham when she says, "I did not choose to be a dancer, I was chosen." (Young Adult/Adult) --Brangien Davis

Freedman (*Lincoln*; *Eleanor Roosevelt*; *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*) once again animates American history through biography; here he adds culture to the mix as he chronicles the inspiring life of legendary dancer Martha Graham. The venerable author hooks readers in immediately with his description of young Martha learning to move her body by watching a lion pace from one side of its cage to the other. Freedman then seamlessly charts the fiery, passionate Graham's rise from a 19-year-old "homely, overweight" dance student to principal dancer to teacher to the creator of modern dance. The biography points up Graham's commitment to a "uniquely American style of dance," focusing on such works as *Frontier*, an homage to her ancestral roots, and *Appalachian Spring*, for which she collaborated with composer Aaron Copland. Freedman acknowledges that the dancer's sources of inspiration and consolation came from other American artists: writer Emily Dickinson (the source of Graham's work *Acts of Light*) and composer Scott Joplin (*Maple Leaf Rag* was her last complete work), among them. Her passions were not circumscribed to her work; she also took stands on tough political issues, both in her dance (e.g., *Deep Song*, 1937, which "expressed her anguish over the brutal Spanish Civil War") and in her life?she refused to perform at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin ("How could I dance in Nazi Germany?"). But Freedman does not paint an unblemished picture. His abundant sources, including unpublished transcripts of an interview with Graham's longtime companion Louis Horst, as well as his own interviews with Graham's former dancers, colleagues and friends, make clear the shadow side of her passionate

nature. What emerges from these pages is a multilayered view of a genius who danced and choreographed, and designed her own costumes and lighting, but who was also human? a woman who laughed and cried, hoped and feared, and who unflinchingly followed her dream. Stunning photographs, arrayed chronologically, demonstrate the dramatic changes Graham wrought upon dance as a discipline. Four at the close of the volume, showing Graham in what appear to be a dance sequence, are particularly spectacular. This outstanding biography speaks not only to dancers but to anyone interested in the arts, history or the American entrepreneurial spirit. Ages 10-up. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

inspiring!

It's a lovely book. Amazing photos. Happy to have it in my collection

This book was part of a graduation gift for a person who loves dance. It has many

Martha Graham: A Dancers Life by Russell Freedman, the full-length biography of Martha Graham, takes a deep look into Martha and the people around her. She was a dancer, teacher, and choreographer who changed the world. Her life began in Pittsburgh where she was born in 1894. The book also tells about the lives of her dancers, students, close friends, and lovers. The biography goes into great detail up until the day she died in 1991. I liked this book because of all the details it gives about her life and the way it tells about all the heroic things she did. I would recommend this book to dancers and people who enjoy the things Martha did in her 97 years of life.

This book is a beautiful, concise study of her life. Studying Martha Graham's life is an awakening experience. Reading Graham's memoir "Blood Memory" simultaneously provides a beautiful counterpoint, knowing the subject will not observe herself in the same way as her biographer. I dance away from this book with a definite appreciation for Graham's brilliance in creativity and willingness to navigate the many rough patches she encountered AND give such a gift to humanity at the same time. The numbers of influential people she touched is amazing and enlightening. I suggest this book for any creative thinker: there are applications for all of us.

I bought this book after reading an interesting article about Martha Graham in the New Yorker about a year ago. I was attracted to the book by the beautiful photography, in evidence on the cover (and

throughout the book, as I soon learned). However, I was interested in reading about Martha's "demons" and character flaws, as well as her relationships and focus on archetypal figures in dance. Unfortunately, this book is a pretty happy-go-lucky, bland account of her life. In fact, it's so bland that I would have given it three stars if the pictures in it were not so beautiful and well-suited to the descriptions given in the text.

I am a former Graham Dancer, and when I saw this book, I had some very intense emotions, it shows Martha in her best years, the pictures are beautiful, some of them are very rare to see, and if you want to see the beauty, or the drama, of that Incredible American Woman, this is the book you need to own. As a Graham Based Dance Teacher, I use this book to show some intentions in the movement, or I simply quote her, I wish you a wonderful Journey in the world of Martha Graham...

It's a great book, I read it for my book report book, and i just absolutely loved it! It's great for kids over 9+. It teaches you the whole life story, and some people she worked with, including Liza Minnely, and Madonna. And her whole family, to her dad, mom, sisters, to her nanny, look inside this book for another persons life, that you just get lost in, when i read it, i thought i was there. Hope Ya Read It!!!!Thanks.

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