

# Dance



LEVEL B-11 • Written by Elfrieda H. Hiebert





**People of ancient  
Greece enjoyed dance.**

# Dance Long Ago

Just as they do today, people long ago loved to dance. In Egypt, men and women might dance for fun. Men and women also danced at important times. They danced to ask for the gods' help.

Some of the most important dances were done when a person died. The Egyptian people thought special dances were important to help the person who died go to the afterlife.

Long ago, the Greek people liked to dance because they thought dancing was good for the body and mind. Some Greek dances were for men, others for women. Today, men and women dance together, but women dance in a slow and pretty way. Dance is still an important part of Greek life.

## Key Notes:

**Why did Greek people like to dance long ago?**

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**In some African  
dances, dancers jump  
into the air.**

# African Dances

Dance is a part of life in places in Africa. Dances may be done just for fun. They may also be part of a large event.

Some African dances are done to help crops grow, or bring luck. For example, people might dance to bring good luck in hunting for animals. In West Africa, dances tell stories about hunts that have already taken place.

Some East African dances are contests that test people's skills. In one dance, young men leap into the air from the ground to show how high they can jump. Another dance is a contest in which people dance with a cup of water on their heads. The person who doesn't spill any water wins the contest.

## Key Notes:

**What are two reasons for African dances?**

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**Tap dance gets its name from the sounds made when the shoes hit the floor.**

# Tap Dance

Tap dance is a kind of modern American dance. As tap dancers dance, they make tapping sounds as their shoes strike the floor.

Tap dancing comes from several other dance forms. Tap has some African dance in it, as well as some English clog dancing. Early tap dancers had shoes or boots with hard bottoms that made loud sounds as they danced. Other dancers wore special shoes that made loud sounds. Many others danced with pennies attached to the bottoms of their shoes. Modern tap shoes have plates, called taps, attached to the heel and toe.

Before the 1830s, tap dance was done in the street. Today, people go to shows to watch the dancers and hear the tapping sounds.

## Key Notes:

**How has tap dancing changed?**

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**Some hip-hop  
dancers perform on  
the street in front  
of crowds.**



# Hip-Hop

Hip-hop dances have steps with names like glide, float, pop and lock, and backspin. In the 1970s, hip-hop music was called rap music. It began in the United States. People quickly created dances based on the strong beat of the music.

In the 1970s, hip-hop dances were called break dances. Today, most people call it hip-hop dancing. Some of the steps in hip-hop come from African dance, while other steps come from tap dance.

Dancers take turns jumping, rolling, spinning, and stepping in hip-hop contests. They try to dance faster and better than all the other dancers. They may even try to create some brand new hip-hop steps. People clap their hands for the dancers they think won the contest.

## Key Notes:

**What is hip-hop dance?**

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