



*Lesson: Conducting Dance Research*

Middle School

**STANDARDS: New York: Strand # 3: Making Connections**

- Students illuminate their own relationship to dance by exploring the dances of different cultures and periods, find shared elements among the arts and use video and [interactive technology](#) to support their dance learning.
- Students make inquiries into the variety of careers in dance and dance-related fields. They begin to develop personal goals in their own dancing. They visit local dance venues, and learn about the physical and social benefits of dancing.

## Social Studies: Conducting Dance Research

**Motivation:** Students will be able to use [dance research resources](#) to debate historical mysteries. [Think, pair, share](#) activity. What historical questions arise in the arts in general? What questions arise in dance specifically? How do historians answer these questions? What evidence do they need?

**Group Activity:** View Gregory Hines piece about the origins of tap. Discuss the historical uncertainty Hines brings up. What is Hines's opinion? What is Kelly's opinion? What biases are apparent in their opinions?

**Independent Activity:** Randomly divide the class into two groups, tell the groups they are going to engage in an historical debate. Students will have to prepare speeches defending either the point of view that African Americans invented tap or the point of view that Irish clog dancers invented tap. Each group can make one speech, each student can make a speech, or groups can be further divided. Emphasize that speeches must have an introduction, a conclusion, and at least two points with supporting details. Students should also be required to cite at least two valid sources.

**Additional Activity:** Have students write and present speeches. Students who are listening could fill out reflection sheets about which side they find more convincing and why. After speeches have been presented, discuss what students think. Is there a clear answer? If not, what evidence is needed to answer the question? Also discuss how Irish and African American dancers collaborated and jointly influenced tap dancing.