

TAP INTO HISTORY

Study Guide for Educators



Highlights of Tap History:

1600's: English people migrate to the United States, bringing social dance, waltzes, jigs, reels and clogs. At the same time, Africans come to America (as slaves) and bring percussive, grounded and syncopated rhythms.

1880's: Vaudeville (a variety entertainment performance circuit) establishes tap as an American art form.

1915: Metal taps are added to shoes.

1930's-50's: The era of dance movies starring Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Eleanor Powell, Bill Robinson, Buddy Ebsen, James Cagney, Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Ann Miller, and others.

1970's: Dance studios and colleges start teaching tap. Hip hop and other social dance forms eclipse tap's popularity.

1980's: The first tap companies are formed, primarily by women, and the first international tap festival takes place in New York City.

1989: Congress establishes National Tap Dance Day to honor Bill "Bojangles" Robinson's birthday, May 25th.

1990's: Tap/percussive dance shows such as *Riverdance*, *Lord of the Dance*, *Stomp* and *Tap Dogs* become popular worldwide. Savion Glover becomes the poster child for the genre for his appearances in shows like *Bring in 'da Noise*, *Bring in 'da Funk* and on *Sesame Street*.

Present: Many veteran tap dancers pass away, giving rise to a new generation of tap dancers like Michelle Dorrance, Chloe Arnold, and Jason Samuels Smith. Contemporary tap dance pushes the boundaries of the art form beyond just tapping, exploring elements such as storytelling, technology, and fusion with other dance forms.

Basic Tap Vocabulary:

Ask your students if any of them have taken or currently take a tap class; they might be able to demonstrate some of these steps or lead the class in a mini-lesson. Have students guess what they think the steps might be or sound like based on their names. Look up instructional videos on YouTube that demonstrate how the steps are performed.

1 sound	2 sounds	3 sounds	4 sounds
Scuff	Shuffle	Slurp	Paradiddle
Brush	Ball change	Riffle	Cramproll
Spank	Flap	Wing	Buffalo
Dig			

DEMO: Shuffle ball change (4 sounds):

Have you and your students stand on your left leg. Pick up your right leg and swing it forward, as though you are kicking a soccer ball (but don't fully straighten your knee; keep it bent/relaxed). Your toe should brush against the floor; your heel should not touch the ground at all and the leg should be extended in front of the body. This is called a *brush*. Next, reverse that motion by kicking your toe backward. Your foot should end in the air next to your left leg, where it started. This movement is called a *spank*. Those two movements together (brush + spank) have created a *shuffle*, one of tap's most basic steps. It can be done at varying tempos.

Now, step back on your right foot and then quickly step forward again on your left to return to where you started. This movement, as if you briefly rock backward and then forward, is called a *ball change*, because you swiftly change your weight between the balls of your feet. Putting the shuffle + ball change together creates another common step, *shuffle ball change*. The name has four syllables, just like the step has four distinct sounds, which may help students learn. Once they have it on their right foot, challenge them to figure it out on their left foot!

Suggested Video Clips:

As/after you watch these clips, ask students: How would they describe the dancing? What words or images come to mind? What are these performers doing that is similar? What are they doing that is different? What styles do they see? What changes in tap dance occurred over time? Consider comparing and contrasting two clips:

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson - Stair Dance (1934): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vj1KYaCIA5o>

Fred Astaire - A Damsel in Distress (1937): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTH9VwACh7o>

Gene Kelly - Singin' in the Rain (1952): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1ZYhVpdXbQ>

Savion Glover - *Noise/Funk* (1996): https://youtu.be/Dp_bM_c-BTo?t=27

Anything Goes - 2011 Tony Awards: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qo6lPifGnGA>

Michelle Dorrance (2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geH1HO3P3pI>

Ayodele Casel - "While I Have the Floor" (2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyeuvqUd6jo>

Hoofers UK - Billie Eilish routine (2019): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1gAnotNNeg>

Curriculum Connections:

The underlying premise of our show is that **tap dance history is U.S. history**: from slavery to segregation, the Golden Age of Hollywood movie musicals to today, tap dance -- and its connections to race, class, and the performing arts -- has long been a part of our cultural fabric. Read the information under the second heading, "An American Genre," in [this essay](#) for more information.

Examples of connections to Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Social Studies:

C&G 3: In a democratic society all people have certain rights and responsibilities.

- Tap has roots in slavery and in oppression of black lives (e.g. minstrel shows)
- In tap improvisation and tap jams/cyphers, everyone has a chance to be heard
- As opposed to some classical dance forms/pedagogies, tap is accepting of diverse bodies

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form.

- Tap dance is a result of both immigration & slavery
- Although it is considered an American art form and a black art form, it has a global following and acknowledges a variety of cultures, races, genders, etc.
- Tap as a form of cultural expression (especially black culture)

HP 3: The study of history helps us understand the present and shape the future.

- Tap dance has adapted/responded to changes in [pop] culture, music, etc.
- To understand the history of tap is to understand the history of the U.S.

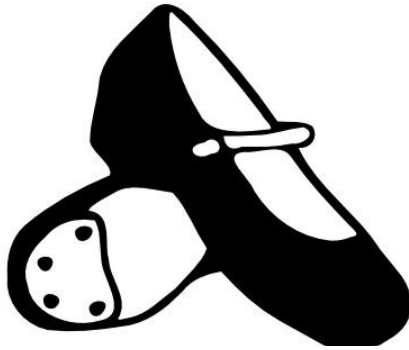
G 3: Human Systems: (Movement) Human systems and human movement affect and are affected by distribution of populations and resources, relationships (cooperation and conflict), and culture.

- Tap dance is a result of immigration
- Tap dance festivals have grown exponentially over the past 30 years & are currently more international than ever

Our show also connects to many of the [National Core Arts Standards in Dance](#).

On the following pages, you will find worksheets with these activities:

- Basic tap dance vocabulary
- Matching game
- Word scramble
- Word search (4 different levels of difficulty)



MY TAP WORDS

RELEASE ★ RELAX ★ READY

TOE DIG

BRUSH

HEEL STAND

MARCH

TOE DROP

SHUFFLE

LIFT

HEEL DIG

TAP

HEEL DROP

SPANK

CRAWL

STEP

ROCK

TIP

★ MATCHING ★

DRAW A LINE TO MATCH THE TAP WORD TO ITS CORRECT DEFINITION!

TAP WORD:

DEFINITION:

March

Press toe tap down into the floor

Crawl

A light tap with no weight

Shuffle

Heel Drop & Toe Drop & Heel Drop & Toe Drop

Toe Dig

Hit the tip of the toe tap

The "1"

Brush & Spank

Heel Stand

Step on the balls of the feet

Tap

Stand on the edge of the heel

Tip

The first quarter note of a bar of music



WORD SCRAMBLE

CAN YOU UNSCRAMBLE THESE TAP WORDS?

TAP

HEEL DROP

SHUFFLE

HEEL DIG

PTI

PDRO TEO

FFSUHLE

HLEE PORD

BRUSH

SPANK

TOE DROP

TIP

LEHE IDG

APT

KSAPN

SURBH



WORD SEARCH

RELEASE

TOE DIG
MARCH
LIFT
HEEL DROP
STEP
BRUSH

RELAX

TOE DROP
HEEL DIG
SPANK
ROCK
HEEL

READY

STAND
SHUFFLE
TAP
CRAWL
TIP

I F K X Y S O H T D S Z G T V
X A B Q U H S T Y O V W U K B
M A L X I U R R E L E A S E A
E U K D R F G G X E C D D T K
Q M V B Z F X C D B G G R K Y
H L I X S L L N T T K D J O T
S P A N K E A O S L L T C F P
J L K G A T S T M T J V R M B
E M D B S J R K I D E Z A A T
H E E L D R O P V P R P W R O
F W E I L K C I V D R X L C E
M E H N X D K K H C A O D H D
H E E L D I G Y W L I F T P I
K J I H O A F O E H U P W C G
U P I T A P R R E A D Y Y K Q



WORD SEARCH

RELEASE

TOE DIG
MARCH
LIFT
HEEL DROP
STEP
BRUSH
TOE DROP

RELAX

HEEL DIG
SPANK
ROCK
HEEL STAND
SHUFFLE
TAP
TIP

READY

CRAMP ROLL
SLAP
STAMP
PRESS CRAMP ROLL
CONNECT
STOMP
BALL CHANGE

C P G T R O C K Q E S X X P U
S R E I M J A H G J S A E R L
B I A P S C X N I H L A L E I
Z R D M S L A A C E A P D S F
S W U U P H C P R E P R L S T
T X S S C R O C W L T E A C T
E G X L H R O P H D O A S R H
P V L S D D O L V R E D P A R
N A C E E H X O L O D Y A M E
B B O M A R C H I P I P N P L
N T M P K K P H I S G O K R E
H E E L S T A N D T T Z T O A
S H U F F L E T E E U A L L S
P H E E L D I G Z E M M M L E
C O N N E C T S J S T O M P F



WORD SEARCH

RELEASE

TOE DIG
ROCK
HEEL DROP
BRUSH
TIP
HEEL DROP
MARCH
HEEL STAND

RELAX

SPANK
TAP
TOE DROP
STEP
LIFT
SHUFFLE
CRAMP ROLL
SLAP

READY

STAMP
BALL CHANGE
PRESS CRAMP ROLL
CONNECT
STOMP
FLAP
LEAP
MAXIE FORD

SHIM SHAM

HOP
WALTZ CLOG
RUDIMENTS
SOFT SHOE
IRISH
ESSENCE
VARSITY DRAG
SCUFF

H B Q E H M K B D S A U P X C I P E S S E N C E C L F
 E M A O L N A N R B T A H R R R P F Z H L M Q Q W F D
 E A P L A X A X V U L E E O A I R R R P I D G R U V C
 L R M P L T G F I F S S P C M S E E K U B M S C K J R
 D C S D S C F L R E S H A K P H S A U Y D A S S N B E
 R H H L B C H V T C F H E O R L S D H J A I O H K N L
 O Z E S T R H A R S M O L P O S C Y E F C H M C A X A
 P E H K I A X A N W N K R C L H R R E L E A S E T M X
 H E U O P R P H C G Y N Z D L U A G L Z T E J T N V L
 R W E U B P I Z U O E F H T C F M Y D U Q S L O K T Z
 V A R S I T Y D R A G T V O M F P H I D S Y E I C S S
 H E N O W A L T Z C L O G E A L R V G T O I A D F P T
 O S L T O E D R O P I M J D R E O G C Y X A P W L T E
 P L S T A M P D S Y O G U I C T L S O F T S H O E K P
 S L A P M Z S T O M P G M G H C L M M I C O N N E C T

Thelma's

TAP NOTES



WORD SEARCH

PADDLE AND ROLL
 BOMBERSHAY
 DOUBLE ESSENCE
 BACK ESSENCE
 RIFF
 RIFFLE
 SCUFFLE
 BUFFALO
 PADDLE TURN

DOUBLE IRISH
 PENDULUM CRAMP ROLL
 DRAWBACK
 GRAPEVINE
 DOUBLE CRAMP ROLL
 TRIPLE CRAMP ROLL
 DOUBLE TIME STEP
 TRIPLE TIME STEP
 BUCK TIME STEP
 AROUND THE WORLD CRAMP ROLL

CININNATI
 DOUBLE CININNATI
 SINGLE PULL BACK
 DOUBLE PULL BACK
 MILITARY TIME STEP
 SCISSOR STEP
 RHYTHM TIME STEP
 TIME STEP

S C I S S O R S T E P C Q K K D P A L N K A B P Q E G L T
 A P I S D G H Q P L P A D D L E T U R N V R V E I T R D R
 D N C I H F Y T K B A C K E S S E N C E P O V D H L B O I
 B W G E X O T I Z D D L D D C D J N Y C I U C E N P A U P
 I D F W Q L H L A D D B C O R A N A M J Z N I C Z C O B L
 U D A M M Q M X N Y L U B U Z I H Z C A E D N N T X D L E
 T S R I I P T N F N E C T B L S F P L F V T C N R I O E C
 T A A L K W I Y X W A K K L R I F F Y V H H I R I R U P R
 W H K I B H M D I U N T O E Y O V B L G L E N P P X B U A
 H D V T Y K E L A O D I B E R K K S E E H W N M L P L L M
 D A C A I E S T E H R M N S M C O D F O S O A O E J E L P
 O R B R E N T V P B O E U S C U F F L E Y R T C T I C B R
 U Q C Y B X E O E B L S V E D U D K O L C L I W I U I A O
 B E I T V H P B L U L T H N P O R E W E Z D N N M I N C L
 L D C I J R C R G F T E O C H T U U L U L C P D E D C K L
 E R C M X D Y T G F P P C E D I O B Y Q Y R A O S D I O L
 T U U E I N M D R A W B A C K T U Y L P C A E I T C N R H
 I I V S X A U U A L T L P L R O I M O E N M V V E A N X D
 M N M T K T O U P O V D M U D U G G M G I P I R P R A I P
 E L X E B N K B E Q B B X R X A H C A P R R D X D B T K O
 S P C P S Y I X V R C K M A R I Z P I Y K O I K E C I N Y
 T J B V I T Q S I N G L E P U L L B A C K L R S R X Q R K
 E O Q Z P N E T N O O P E S K I J P L E C L B Y H Y I P W
 P R L H E T Z P E N D U L U M C R A M P R O L L K F G D U

