Chicago-based River North Dance Company was founded in 1989 by several of the city’s well-known dancers and choreographers for the purpose of cultivating and promoting Chicago’s unique wealth of jazz dance talent. Under the leadership of Artistic Directors Sherry Zunker Dow and Frank Chaves, RNDC remains committed to taking jazz dance to new creative heights through concert performances locally and across the U.S. The company continues its commitment to the audiences of tomorrow by performing Street Beat, which strives to instill an appreciation and love of jazz dance to school-age audiences by demonstrating the development of popular jazz dance from the 20s to the present in a social, historical and artistic context. In 1993, River North Dance Company was the subject of an Emmy-winning television special, “Reality of a Dreamer,” which has been aired 12 times in Chicago and nine times nationally. As a result, River North Dance Company has been seen by over one million viewers across the United States.

Street Beat is a fast-paced, fun jazz dance retrospective that demonstrates how the social climates and events of the day affected jazz dance throughout the 20th century. Beginning with the Roaring 20s, each decade is brought to life with a fully-costumed dance number. The entire performance is narrated with information about the major events of the day, the fashions, and the key historical figures.

Dance is affected by the music and fashions that are popular in any given era. This study guide provides this information and explains its impact. Because music and fashion are affected by the social and political atmosphere, we will give you that information as well.

More than anything else, Street Beat will be the most energetic, entertaining, and informative dance performance your students have ever seen. With 14 talented dancers, lively music and period costumes, it is an event they will never forget.

River North Dance Company
1016 N. Dearborn Pkwy
Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: (312) 944-2888 Fax: (312) 944-2581
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GLOSSARY

**athlete**: any person who trains in intense physical exercise. A good athlete will be strong, coordinated, flexible and powerful.

**ballet**: a type of dance usually performed to classical music. It was invented more than 400 years ago in the palaces of the kings and queens of Europe. You can tell if dancers are doing ballet if they are keeping their backs very straight and moving their arms very gracefully. Their legs will always be turned-out and their feet will look pointed. Many times the dancers will be acting out a story. Some of the most famous ballets are actually fairy tales like *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*.

**ballroom dance**: a formal dance for couples. It is a social dance done by a man and a woman who hold hands and touch shoulders.

**Broadway**: a street in New York City where many theaters are located. These theaters put on the best plays and musicals in the country.

**combine / combination**: to connect or join things together. Dancers combine dance steps so they fit together with no breaks. This creates a dance combination. A combination isn't as long as a dance. Think of it this way: a combination is a group of steps, and a dance is a group of combinations.

**company**: a group of people who work for the same business. A dance company employs dancers, artistic staff, office employees, and technicians. All of the work done by the employees is directed toward the company's performances.

**dance**: movements of the body done rhythmically and usually to music. A dance is a complete routine with planned steps and movements.

**dance class**: a place where dancers learn new steps and movements. This is also a place to practice and perfect these steps. A professional dancer also uses a dance class to warm-up before rehearsals or performances, and to improve strength and stamina.

**decade**: a time period of 10 years. RNDC's performance will show a popular dance from each decade starting with 1920.

**flexibility**: the ability to stretch your muscles. To test your flexibility, sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you and reach forward as far as you can. If you can touch your shinbone, that's normal flexibility. If you can touch your toes, that's very good flexibility, and if you can reach forward past your toes and touch your forehead to your knees, that's extraordinary flexibility! This is just one of the abilities a professional dancer must have. (See *athlete*).

**jazz dance**: a type of dance invented in the United States around 1920. It combines African-influenced jazz music with strong body movements. Jazz dance has grown and developed, and it will continue to change because it is affected by what is popular in American culture. Jazz dancers dance to popular music and use the newest dance steps to influence how they move.

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**musical theater**: a style of performance used in musicals. Musicals are plays and movies that use words, music and dance to tell the story. Some of the most loved musicals are *The Wizard of Oz*, *Oklahoma!*, and *Cats*.

**partner**: in dance, this refers to the person you dance with. Partnering is a kind of dancing where two people move together and relate to each other. Most of the time, partnering includes one partner lifting, catching, or turning the other. Sometimes the partners take turns lifting and catching each other.

**practice**: to try something over and over again; to review it many times. A dance practice is called a rehearsal.

**perform**: in the dictionary, to perform something simply means to do it, but when a dancer performs, he/she does a well-rehearsed, carefully planned dance on stage in front of an audience.

**professional dancer**: a dancer who gets paid to perform is a professional dancer. These people are the best in the business and must maintain a high level of skill.

**style**: a special way of expressing yourself in speaking, moving, or dressing.

**tap dance**: a type of dance where the dancers make sounds with their feet. They wear special shoes that have metal pieces on the tips and on the heels. Tap is a truly American invention because it developed here. It is a combination of many ethnic dance styles. It took steps from traditional African dance as well as the Irish Jig.
GLOSSARY TEST

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the appropriate term listed below. Each term should be used only once.

ballet  perform  Broadway
practice  dance class  flexibility
jazz dance  tap dance  professional dancer

Amy loves to dance. She loves listening to her older brother's rock music and jumping and spinning until she just can't dance anymore. She also likes to ___________________ her new steps over and over again when Grandpa plays his music. Amy's baby-sitter takes her to _______________ every Thursday afternoon where she learns these new steps. Her dance teacher, Miss Beth, is very nice, and reminds Amy that "practice makes perfect." Miss Beth wants her students to practice their _______________ so she has them stretch their muscles carefully at every class. Miss Beth also teaches _____________. Before this class, she gets out her special metal-tipped shoes and her earplugs because she knows the dance students will be making a lot of noise! Amy loves Miss Beth, but she can't wait until she's older and can take class from Mr. Kenny. Amy's dad told her that Mr. Kenny's class will include dances that are popular now. He also says that African music plays an important part of this type of dance. Amy will wait until she's eleven to study this kind of dance, but she keeps a picture of Mr. Kenny in her room that he autographed, "I can't wait to teach _________________ to you. Remember, I need strong dancers who love to move."

Amy is happy to be in the class she's in now. She dances _______________ to classical music, and Miss Beth is strict about making sure Amy keeps her back straight and toes pointed. They are practicing for a show and will _______________ their dance at the end of May on the high school stage. Amy can't wait to get her special costume and dance in front of an audience. She's a little nervous, but she is excited, too, because some of her family is able to come and watch. Her mom, dad, step-mom, brother, grandpa, Aunt Cathy and Uncle Mark will be there. She loves Uncle Mark because he knows so much about dancing. He worked for a dance company for ten years, rehearsing and performing all over the country. Now Uncle Mark lives in New York City and does shows on _______________. He performs in the musical Cats, where he must act, sing, and dance like a cat. Amy has seen the show three times and loves it more every time! That's what she thinks she wants to do when she grows up. She knows she'll have to work very hard and become the one of the best, but a _______________ is what she wants to be. Her Mom told her that doing something you love is important to being happy. Amy likes a lot of things, but she loves to dance!
GAMES

BEFORE THE SHOW

Interviews
Have the students interview their parents about the kinds of dancing that their parents did when they were young. Sample questions:

1. How old were you when you first saw or learned this dance?
2. How did you learn it?
3. What kinds of music did you dance to? Who were the big music stars?
4. Can you teach it to me?
5. Show me some pictures of you when you did this dance.
6. What types of clothing were popular?

This will give the students a personal connection to the performance and encourage communication and understanding between generations.

Variations

• Have the students interview two different people who are different ages. Parent and grandparent, parent and aunt, grandparent and baby-sitter, etc., so they can get even more information about the different dances and eras.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Letters
Have the students write letters to the dancers. They can ask the dancers anything they were unable to at the performance or anything they didn't understand. The dancers are not able to respond to each letter, but they often do write back to the entire class.

Drawings
See if your students can draw a simple picture from each decade they saw. They can draw the actual dancers or maybe just the costume or costumes from the era. (See following pages.)

Variations

• If you want to ask for more detailed pictures, give them a whole page of paper on which to draw each decade.
• Have them write something they learned about each decade in the appropriate frame.
• Have your students draw just one picture of their favorite decade. Have them write three things they learned about that decade on the page with the picture.
Discussion
Discuss what dance might be like in ten years. What will fashion be like? What about music?

Making Shapes and Pictures
Ask the students to make letters using their own bodies. They can use parts or their whole body.

For instance:
- Make an "L" with your pointer finger and thumb.
- Make an "O" with their arms rounded in a big circle.
- Make a "T" using their body as the stem and their arms pointing to the sides.

Variations

- Have the students pick partners (or you pick them), and have them work as a team to make letters.
- Now, using closely supervised groups of three or four, have them make the letters using their full body in combination with the others in the group.
- Bring in pictures from newspapers and magazines. Good pictures to bring are baseball players at bat, a rock star (guitar player), boxer, opera singer, dancers (of course!), even animals like lions, snakes, or gorillas. Get a volunteer from the class, give him/her a picture and have him/her re-create the pose. See if the other students can guess what it is.
- Give them a piece of paper with an emotion written on it: sad, happy, mad, proud, bored, tired, excited. Have them do a pose that interprets this feeling. Again, see if the other students can tell what the emotion is.

This is what dancers do: we use our body to make shapes that describe who we are or what we're feeling. This is body language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20s-Charleston</th>
<th>30s-Ballroom</th>
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<th>40s-Jitterbug</th>
<th>50s-Rock &amp; Roll</th>
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<th>60s Groovy</th>
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<td>80s-MTV</td>
<td>90s-What dances do you do?</td>
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Study Guide K-4
WORD SEARCH

Dance  Solo  Practice  Costume  Jazz  Duet  Clap
Perform  Class  Music  Stage  Lighting  Chicago  Style

C L A S S T Y L E L
D O I G Y N J E Z Z
A S D G N G C J A C
N O I C H I C A G O
C L A P T T C Z S S
E O L C E Z I Z T T
C L A Z U A S N A U
N R J A D Z U J G M
P E R F O R M N E E
THE GENERATION JUMBLE

Directions: Match the key phrase with the decade where it was introduced or most important. Use each word or phrase only once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illegal alcohol</th>
<th>War against Japan and Germany (WWII)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Jackson on MTV</td>
<td>President Ronald Reagan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disco</td>
<td>Sesame Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jitterbug</td>
<td>Elvis Presley</td>
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<td>Baby Boom</td>
<td>Women voters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flappers</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Depression</td>
<td>Growth of U.S. Space Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballroom dancing</td>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
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<td>Women in the workforce</td>
<td>Television became popular entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Don't Worry Be Happy&quot;</td>
<td>Jesse Owens</td>
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<td>Women's Rights Movement</td>
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70s

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80s

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THE GENERATION JUMBLE ANSWERS
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THE PERFORMANCE

Street Beat opens with the River North Dance Company demonstrating the athletics of a typical jazz class. To the beat of contemporary instrumental music, the full company will take turns jumping, turning, and kicking. The dancers will show the amount of flexibility, strength, coordination, and stamina it takes to be a professional dancer. A man and woman from the company will then demonstrate the basics of partnering. This section closes with the dancers demonstrating a full jazz combination. Remembering all of the steps in a certain order, doing them with correct form, and making it all look easy is the work of a dancer!

THE 1920s

Our first dance is a view of life and entertainment in the 1920s. World War I had just ended, and people were proud and happy. Businesses were growing and people had good jobs and extra spending money. They traveled, entertained, and bought automobiles in bigger and bigger numbers.

There were some new laws passed just before and during the 1920s. One law made it illegal to buy or sell alcoholic beverages. Some people wanted alcohol so badly they went to secret nightclubs called “speakeasies” to get it. Later, the government decided to change the law so that alcohol became legal once again.

Another law was passed in the 1920s allowing women to vote for the very first time. They were very proud to have fought and won the right to make their views heard in city, state, and national elections. This helped women feel stronger and more important. This confidence carried over to other parts of their lives as well. Women began to feel like they could do other things that people didn't think they could or should do. One of these things was to dramatically change the way they dressed. They took control of the fashions they wanted to wear. If they wanted to wear short sleeves, they did. If they wanted to wear a dress that showed their ankles, they wore it. Before the 1920s, women wore tight corsets around their waists, and this made it difficult to move, dance, and even to breathe. By the 1920s they threw away those restrictive corsets! Their dancing showed their new freedom, and they moved in a wilder, freer way. Sometimes these women were called "flappers." That name started when their clunky shoes would make a flapping sound when they did their crazy dances.
THE 1930s

The 1930s began in what was called the Great Depression. We call it that because our economy was in very bad shape. People had very low paying jobs or no jobs at all. Many banks, factories, and farms went out of business, and this left people with no money and little hope.

People looked to the President for answers and encouragement. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was voted into office more than any other president. He was elected four times.

Tension was starting to form in other parts of the world as well. Adolf Hitler, whose Nazi Army fought against the United States during World War II, was trying to take over Europe in the 1930s.

The following story happened at the 1933 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany and will give you an idea of the kind of person he was:

The United States had done quite well at the games. An athlete named Jesse Owens was especially proud because he won four gold medals in the Track and Field events! When Hitler shook hands with all the gold medal winners, he refused to shake hands with Mr. Owens because Mr. Owens was an African-American. There were nine other black medalists and Hitler wouldn't acknowledge any of them, either. We know Adolf Hitler was prejudiced toward Jewish people, but he was obviously prejudiced against many people.

With people feeling so much tension due to the Depression, they tried to forget their troubles by listening to the radio and going to the movies. (Remember, there were no TVs or VCRs!) Radio programs were funny and lively, and the movies were beautiful and glorious. Back then you could see a double feature (two movies shown back-to-back) for five cents! It cost only one nickel to see your favorite stars who were not only great actors, but great dancers as well. Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Shirley Temple, and Bill Robinson were some of the best-loved stars of the time. Often, they used ballroom dancing to add glamour and beauty to the movies. In the 1930s, dancing was used in the movies to show how people felt, especially a man and a woman who were falling in love. It was typical to see a man and a woman dancing a waltz or a tango with only their arms touching. The movies made ballroom dancing seem glamorous and helped the style to become popular.
THE 1940s

When 1940 began, the world was at war. The United States declared war on both Japan and Germany. Japan had bombed a naval base in Hawaii called Pearl Harbor and Adolf Hitler and his Nazi army from Germany were trying to eliminate the entire Jewish race. This is why the United States got involved.

Many young men were called up to serve in this war. They were either in the Pacific Ocean fighting Japan, in Europe fighting Germany, or here in the U.S. training to be sent into battle. This left thousands of jobs in this country that needed to be filled. Women began working on farms, in factories, and at offices to fill in while the men were at war. Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady at the time, pushed for their rights, including good wages for this new work force. An interesting side note about some of these new workers: when women went to the factory or farm jobs wearing skirts (the only acceptable clothing to wear at the time) their skirts would get caught in the machinery. This obvious hazard finally made pants acceptable, and even fashionable, for ladies to wear. This is a great example of how social changes affects fashions.

The biggest forms of entertainment during the 1940s were sports and movies. Radio programs were going off the air and television was just starting to develop. Ballrooms and nightclubs were always busy with people eager to go dancing to the music of the popular big bands. The Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, New York was extra special because many of the popular dances were invented and developed there. Some dances were the Jitterbug, the Swing and the Lindy Hop. Another exciting aspect of these ballrooms was the fact that it brought so many different kinds of people together. Men, women, soldiers, dancers, blacks, whites, and people of every other ethnic background came together and socialized together like never before.

This is what our 1940s dance is about: people going out dancing and meeting each other for the first time, while Benny Goodman's famous orchestra plays in the background.
THE 1950s

When the 1950s started, the soldiers had come home from the war and women left their jobs to stay at home with their husbands and start families. There were so many people having babies at this time it has been called the "Baby Boom."

Something called the "Cold War" started in this era. Countries weren't actually fighting, they were just threatening to fight. This struggle was between countries with a democratic style of government (like ours) and those countries who were communist-controlled. Americans were so scared of the atomic bomb that they built bomb shelters in their back yards. They thought that if a bomb was dropped that they could hide in these shelters and be safe.

Television had taken over as the most popular form of entertainment in America. Comedy and variety shows, westerns, and game shows were the most popular programs. Television audiences were shocked to find out that the most popular television game show cheated by giving some of the contestants the answers.

Music changed forever in the 1950s with the invention of Rock and Roll. Musicians like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and, of course, Elvis Presley took the country by storm. Elvis Presley had many number-one songs, and he often performed on television variety shows. When he first performed on the top-rated Ed Sullivan Show, he was censored. They would only show him from the waist up because they thought he moved his hips too much when he sang. Of course, most people liked the way he sang and danced, including us. We love to dance to the old Rock and Roll songs, especially if "the King," Elvis Presley is singing them.
THE 1960s

In the 1960s it seemed that every part of American life was changing. People didn't trust the government like they once did. People, particularly African-Americans, were fighting for their civil rights like never before. People began to change the way they felt about war, music, fashion, relationships, family life, drugs, and music. Sometimes things changed for the better, sometimes they did not, but things were changing, that's for sure.

These important events shaped the way people thought in the 60s, and you'll be studying them in your history classes later:

• President John F. Kennedy was killed in 1963
• United States troops were sent to fight in Vietnam
• The Space Program grew and took hold of our imaginations

The Civil Rights Movement grew stronger under the influence of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. These particular men were very outspoken about their vision for America. Their opinions, although both important in this time period, were very different. One message, however, was the same: equal rights for everyone. Sadly, both of these leaders were killed while trying to share their ideas. Other important names from the Civil Rights Movement are Robert Kennedy, Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, and Medgar Evers.

People's feelings are often reflected in music and other art forms. In the 1960s, the feelings of change, peace, and freedom entered into popular songs. Some musicians like Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan sang about the anger and frustration people felt, while the Beach Boys sang fun, lively songs so that people could stop thinking of their problems. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones did both.

The dance that we perform shows another facet of the 60s, a mod, hip, sophisticated attitude.
THE 1970s

The 1970s continued the era of change that began in the 1960s. The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement had inspired women to break out of their traditional roles. The Women's Rights Movement involved many issues, including equal pay for equal work.

President Richard Nixon resigned from office in 1974 when he couldn't hide from a major scandal called Watergate. This increased the feelings of mistrust directed toward the government.

Television, music, and movies continued to be popular forms of entertainment and escape. Some of the most popular TV shows for kids were “The Muppet Show,” starring Kermit and Miss Piggy, "Fat Albert," a cartoon starring Bill Cosby, and a show that is still on everyday called "Sesame Street." A movie called Saturday Night Fever, starring John Travolta, made disco music and dancing the most popular style of the decade. In order to be good, you had to know certain steps like the Bump, the Hustle, and the Bus Stop.

Disco fashion was unlike any other. Tall platform or elevator shoes and hip-hugging pants were popular with both men and women. Men also wore polyester leisure suits with wide belts, and many gold chains around their necks. Women also wore silky dresses and blouses with necklaces called chokers. In the 1970s, you could also see bell bottom pants, wild polyester shirts, and everything was made with the craziest colors and patterns you've ever seen!
THE 1980s

Ronald Reagan became president in 1980 and a new era began. President Reagan held office for eight years, and then his vice-president, George Bush, ran for president and won the election in 1988.

Communism, a political system, had been in power in the Soviet Union and other European countries for a very long time. Both President Reagan and President Bush pushed for the fall of Communism in these countries. By the end of the 1980s, communist ideas were failing and citizens of the communist countries fought for more democratic systems. The citizens of Germany brought down the Berlin Wall which separated Germany into two countries, democratic West Germany, and East Germany, a communist-controlled nation. When the wall fell, Germany was reunified into one country. The biggest communist country was the Soviet Union. When the Soviet communists lost power in 1990, it officially marked the end of the "Cold War." (See The 1950s) The whole world was happy and very relieved that the "Cold War" had ended.

Americans shared in this joy and also felt proud for staying strong for so long. With the fall of Communism, people started to look for other battles against homelessness, things that affect the environment, and a growing national debt. Singer Tracy Chapman became popular for her songs about these problems. Another popular singer, Bobby McFerrin, sang "Don't Worry, Be Happy" about that hopeful feeling that most Americans felt during the 1980s.

Movies made more money in the 80s than ever before. Two men, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, made the most popular hits. The three Star Wars movies, the Indiana Jones movies and the mega-hit E.T. were the most popular of the decade.

Another huge entertainment business in the U.S. was the music video business. Cable TV was in more homes than ever and the new station, MTV, was becoming very popular. MTV really helped the careers of two singers who are still around, Madonna and Michael Jackson. Dancing and acting were important when making a song into a video, and these artists were good at both of them. Michael Jackson's videos used the biggest dance craze at the time, break-dancing. Mr. Jackson combined jazz and break-dancing to make his own famous style.
THE 1990s

The century is ending as it began, with major changes in technology. Computers, the Internet, video cameras, cash machines and cellular telephones are changing the way people work, play and communicate. From your own home computer you can “talk” to someone as far away as Africa, or chat with someone right around the corner!

George Bush, who was Ronald Reagan’s Vice President, was elected President in 1988. His four years in the White House were often difficult ones. Many important things happened in history while he was our President. The country of Iraq invaded the country of Kuwait. President Bush had to make the very important decision to send our military to that part of the world to help out. It was called Operation Desert Storm, and is sometimes also called the Gulf War. Another major change in world politics happened in 1991. The Soviet Union, also known as the USSR, was dissolved into independent countries.

Like in the 1950s and 60s, fear and misunderstanding about people of different races was on the minds of many people. In 1991 in California, several white policemen were videotaped beating an African-American man. Later, after a trial, the police were found “not guilty.” People were hurt and angry about the decision, and many of them showed their anger by acting in violent ways. For many days buildings were burned, people were injured, and stores were robbed. This was called the “LA Riots.” Still today, some people treat others badly because of their race or religion. It is a problem that we will be working to solve into the next decade and beyond.

In 1992, the American people elected Bill Clinton to be the new President. President Clinton had many problems during his time in the White House, but he was re-elected in 1996. Because one person is allowed to be President for eight years, we will have to elect a new President to lead the country starting in the year 2000.

Hip-hop became important in entertainment and popular culture in the 1990s. “Hip-hop” is a term that refers to music, poetry, fashion, art, and dancing. The best-known type of hip-hop music is rap. In rap, the performer speaks poetry over the music instead of singing all of the words. Hip-hop dancing started with “breaking” or break-dancing in the 1980s, but it has evolved into something different, with pedestrian-type movements including stomping and skipping, isolations (moving one body part at a time), and athletic aerial tricks. By the middle of the 1990s, hip-hop surpassed country-western as America’s best-selling music.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Magazines

Dance Magazine is a monthly publication devoted to the highest standards in writing and photography. Contact Dance Magazine at 33 W. 60th Street, NY, NY 10023; (212) 245-9050; Fax-(212) 956-6487.

Study Guide K-4
These articles are especially relevant:

"Anniversary Issue." (June 1987: Comprehensive coverage of the last 60 years in dance).


Videos


"Great Performances" is a series produced by PBS. The "Dance in America" specials are a wonderful source of dance video. Write to Great Performances for videos at Homevision, 5547 N. Ravenswood, Chicago, IL 60640-1199. Highly recommended are:

Bob Fosse. 1990.

The Nicholas Brothers. 1995.

*Dancing. 1993. This is a wonderful eight part series depicting all of the different aspects of dance. Each part is one hour.
  1. The Power of Dance
  2. The Lord of the Dance
  3. Sex and Social Dance
  4. Dance at the Court
  5. New Worlds New Forms
  6. Dance Centerstage
  7. Individual and Tradition
  8. Dancing in One World

* Highly Recommended