

**Instructor**  
Kristi Burris

**Lesson 1**  
The history of Tap dance

**Objectives**

To begin learning the origins of Tap dance as it relates to different cultures and to create movement that incorporates elements of the cultures discussed.

**Standards Addressed**

IL 26A, 26B,27B;Nat'l 2, 5, 6

**Motivation**

Students will be asked where they think the art form of Tap dancing originated. It will be concluded that tap dance is an American art form that was influenced by African and Irish cultures during its conception.

Students will watch a clip of African dance and one of Irish dance to discuss the differences in the rhythmic dances of the two cultures. With the assistance of the instructor, students will find Africa and Ireland on a world map and discuss their geographic relationship to North America. The instructor will ask the students to do outside research on 3 traditions related to each culture and bring them to the following class for discussion.

In addition, students will be asked to think about and share their own ethnic backgrounds and some of the traditions related to their cultures with the rest of the class.

Afterwards, students will watch a clip of American tap dance and discuss the visual influences that they see from the African and Irish cultures.

The teacher will ask students if they know the science behind center of gravity. After a brief explanation of center of gravity, the teacher will then briefly demonstrate how African dance and Irish dance use their center of gravities in different manners to achieve their movement goals.

**Activities**

1. To further the discussion on center of gravity, the teacher will stand holding a towel facing a student, the student will take the other end of the towel and gently pull the teacher forward. The student will have two tries to pull; one when the teacher is standing straight up and down, and one when the teacher is in a bent-kneed, squat position. The student will be asked to determine when the teacher is the most stable – When the center of gravity is lower or higher to the ground. The student will then be asked to think about the correlation between center of gravity, stability and dance movement.
2. Students will warm-up using basic tap vocabulary.
3. Students will be asked to create 4 bars of their own interpretive movement based on the video footage that they watched in the beginning of class.
4. Students will review the origins of American tap dance at the end of class.