



project.org

STUDENT HANDOUT · REFLECTION

RED LEVEL
GO DEEPER

Move Like Harlem

Grades 5–8 · PE

ADMIT ONE

NAME

DATE

CLASS

Critical frame: Dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild argues that the Lindy Hop was the first time African American aesthetics — improvisation, polyrhythm, call-and-response, groundedness — were adopted wholesale by mainstream American culture, though rarely credited to their Black originators. The Savoy Ballroom was simultaneously a space of genuine integration and a site where Black cultural ownership was later erased.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

1. In your creative sequence, you translated an abstract concept into physical movement. What choices did you make about rhythm, energy, and space — and why did you make them? Were they conscious choices or instinctive?

2. Gottschild argues that Black aesthetic contributions to American dance were systematically uncredited. How does this connect to patterns you've seen in the Harlem Renaissance more broadly — in music, art, and literature?

3. The Lindy Hop is described as “conversation between partners.” You physically experienced this today. What did that teach you about the difference between performing and communicating?

4. The Savoy Ballroom was demolished in 1958 to build public housing. What is lost when a cultural site is destroyed — and who decides what gets preserved?

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

Deep dive: research Frankie Manning (1914–2009), who helped create the Lindy Hop’s aerial moves at the Savoy. He danced and taught it for most of his long life, and led its revival in the 1980s. What does his story reveal about how cultural knowledge is transmitted — and what risks that transmission faces?

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/harlem-renaissance