



Breaking to the Beat!

written by Linda J. Acevedo

illustrated by Frank Morrison

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

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Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 2–8

Guided Reading Level: U

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
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*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Dreams & Aspirations, New York, People In Motion, Realistic Fiction

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/breaking-to-the-beat

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

SYNOPSIS

A boogie-down picture book about a shy boy named Manolo who overcomes his fears and insecurities to become part of a new innovative dance style called breaking.

Step back, step back!

Kid Flex 'bout to bust a move.

In the 1970s, many said the Bronx was just a pile of rubble, but for a shy kid like Manolo, it was alive with rhythm and music. He grew up with salsa dance parties at home and DJs battling on turntables on the street. Inspired by these new beats and the moves of James Brown, neighborhood boys and girls started dancing with a mix of twists, slides, and shuffles. The rhythm of the Toprock. Drop of the Six-step. Pose of the baby freeze. A new dance style called breaking was on the rise, and Manolo wanted to be a part of it.

Debut author Linda J. Acevedo was inspired to write this story from the many b-boys and b-girls whose love of dance propelled them to create an innovative and groundbreaking new form of dance. Coupled with award-winning illustrator Frank Morrison's sinuous and pulsating art, *Breaking to the Beat!* is an energizing ode to the Boogie Down Bronx and to Hip Hop—a movement that would forever change the course of music, art, and culture.

BACKGROUND

Afterword from Linda J. Acevedo

In researching to write *Breaking to the Beat!*, I read and watched several accounts of breakers and dance crews from all over the world. The character Manolo is a composite of many of those dancers and meant to symbolize a group of kids who created an art form while living in an unstable and chaotic environment. The dance crew Borinquén Breakers is also fictional and loosely based on some of the amazing dance crews that formed over the years. The word Borinquén is the Taíno name for Puerto Rico. The name of the group serves as a nod to the indigenous people of the island.

While some elements are fictional, the setting and different time periods are based on real events. Starting in the mid-1960s and throughout the 1970s, the Bronx spiraled from a thriving community to a mosaic of burned-down and abandoned buildings, piles of rubble, and garbage-filled streets. The reasons the Bronx crumbled were many: middle class residents moved to the suburbs; banks and insurance companies refused to provide services to the residents who remained—namely, people of color; and landlords burned down apartment buildings as it was more profitable to collect insurance money than to rent or sell the properties, just to name a few. Additionally, municipal services were withdrawn due to dwindling tax revenues, which meant less access to sanitation, police officers, and firefighters. All these factors contributed to a rise in crime, in poverty, and an all-time high in unemployment.

Among the rubble, young people were creating a culture that would influence music, dance, film, and fashion for years to come: Hip-Hop. The movement is deeply rooted in Black culture, history, and art. It inspired Latinx youth in the area, particularly Puerto Ricans, to bring their history, music, and dance styles to the movement too. Depending on whom you ask, the b in b-boy and b-girl stands for Bronx, boogie, or the break in a song when the percussion takes center stage. Breakers were often the highlight of many block parties and jams.

Nonetheless, breaking took a dip in popularity in the late 1970s. Most dancers turned to other hobbies, but a small group of Latinx breakers kept the dance alive by pushing the limits of what could be done. Crews incorporated salsa steps, acrobatics, kung-fu techniques, and power moves into the dance. With moves such as the two-hand hops, continuous headspin, continuous backspin (tagged as the windmill), and dynamic choreography, breaking became more exciting to watch.

Over time, more and more dancers returned to breaking. It wasn't long before word about the dance reached Henry Chalfant, a videographer and photographer, who organized exhibitions and performances highlighting urban trends. He recorded Hip-Hop culture in the documentary *Style Wars* and organized a well-publicized breaking battle at the Lincoln Center Out of Doors Program. ABC, National Geographic, The New York Times, The Village Voice, Life magazine, and Time magazine covered the event. The exposure earned many dancers the opportunity to appear in movies, including *Beat Street*, *Breakin'*, *Flashdance*, and *Krush Groove*.

Now featured in Hollywood films, breaking skyrocketed into popularity again and inspired a new wave of dancers who identified with the struggles of breaking pioneers. From growing up in poverty

to the feeling of being unheard and unseen, these new squads of breakers also found courage and hope in expressing themselves through dance.

Breaking competitions popped up around the world throughout the 1990s to present day. Thousands of spectators attend these battles to watch a winner be crowned. Each generation of breakers blends old-school moves with newly created power moves and explosive stunts, allowing the dance to evolve and remain relevant. Breaking will make its Olympic debut in Paris 2024, the biggest and most prestigious competition yet, where we'll find the best of the "Charlotte Street, South Bronx," circa 1980.

Author's Note from Linda J. Acevedo

I was twelve years old when a friend grabbed my arm and said, "Come on! They're doing the City dance." It was the first time I saw a b-boy rocking on a street corner. The dancer was in the middle of the six-step; his feet moved faster than lightning before he transitioned into a backspin and then a freeze. Blown away, I rushed home to give my own footwork and spins a go.

Soon after, movies about breaking came out in theaters. As a young Puerto Rican girl, it was exciting to see teens who looked like my family and neighbors on the big screen. I later came to understand how incredible it was for a group of kids from the Bronx— who were steeped in poverty—to have created a dance that ultimately took the world by storm. This story was inspired by the first and second generation of breakers who created beauty in the rubble and the generation of dancers who came after them.

While admiring the flips, dips, and dives in this story, I hope young readers connect with the determination and passion of those young kids and realize that they, too, have the inner strength to overcome any stumbles along the way.

Breaking Terms from the Backmatter

Baby Freeze is one way for breakers to end a dance routine. Breakers balance their body with their hands and forehead while their feet are in the air. Other popular freezes include airbaby, shoulder, and turtle.

Battles are a huge element of breaking. Circled by spectators in what is known as a Cypher, breakers show off their own unique styles and routines.

Continuous Head Spin requires the dancer to balance their head on the floor and spin multiple times in a row.

Footwork, also known as **downrock**, happens on the ground. B-boys/b-girls use hands and feet to gain momentum and build the dance from there. Since the dancer is on the floor, the transition into power moves is seamless.

Power Moves are the most dynamic movements in breaking. Many power moves use

acrobatics and gymnastics to deliver continuous spins. The windmill is the most popular.

Six-Step is a type of footwork. Dancers lift their bodies with their arms and quickly walk around in a circle six times.

Toprock is an opportunity for breakers to warm up and introduce their style to the crowd before hitting the floor. This opening sequence is performed while standing and can include a mixture of salsa, Lindy Hop, and disco, along with kicks, hip twists, and other forms of dance and creative moves. There are many different types of toprock, including crossover step and kick step.

Two-Hand Hops are when breakers are in a handstand position and hop on their hands.

Windmill is one of the first power moves performed on the ground. The breaker uses the palm of each hand to turn his or her body while the legs spin in the air in a V-shape position.

To learn more about breaking, check out:

Born to Dance: The Breakdancing Kid: <https://youtu.be/8tVOH2R5rh0>

Breaking Confirmed for 2024 Paris Olympic Games: <https://youtu.be/mHMMCH0kJpw>

Why Hip Hop Is World Culture: <https://youtu.be/Noh7ptT0Rcc>

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Do you like to dance? Why or why not? Do you know any specific dances? What are they?
- Have you ever heard of breaking dancing or breaking before? What is breaking dancing or breaking? Have you ever tried it? What was that experience like?
- What do you know about hip hop? Do you listen to hip hop? What kind of hip hop music do you like? If you listen to hip hop, why do you like the music?
- What kind of music do you like to listen to? Why do you like that kind of music? How does music make you feel? Do you like to dance to specific kinds of music? Why or why not?
- What are activities that are meaningful to you? How do you practice? What does it mean to work on that activity? How do you improve, and what do you do to get better?
- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though some-

thing may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?

- Why is important to practice something? Whether you dance, sing, play an instrument, sport, or are learning how to do something, how does practice help you improve?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the end result? Was it worth taking a chance? How are taking chances important in your life?
- Was there ever a time where you solved a problem creatively? What did you do? Why did you have to solve that problem? How did you think quickly?
- Have you ever performed on a stage? What did that feel like? If you haven't performed on a stage, would you want to some day in the future? Why or why not?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Breaking to the Beat!* Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Linda J. Acevedo's Biography:** Read about Linda J. Acevedo on the jacket back flap. Encourage students to think about how she comes up with the idea to write her first picture book about breaking, and what could have been her inspiration for writing *Breaking to the Beat!*
- **Read Frank Morrison's Biography:** Read about Frank Morrison on the jacket back flap, as well as on his website <https://morrisongraphics.com>. Have students look at his illustrations for other books and compare his style across books. How are his illustrations among the books similar? How are they different? Does it seem like the subject matter of a book influences the style of his illustrations? Why do you think so? What awards has Frank Morrison won for his illustrations?
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how Manolo's childhood influenced his interest in music and dance
- why Manolo became interested in breaking

- how Manolo practiced breaking and improved his dance style
- how music was instrumental in Manolo's life and breaking
- how Manolo demonstrated persistence and resilience despite obstacles throughout his life
- what the Bronx was like during the 1970s
- how Manolo exhibited problem solving skills when he was confronted with challenges
- who helped to launch Manolo's career in breaking as part of the Borinquén Breakers
- how Manolo and the Borinquén Breakers left a lasting impact on the breaking community and inspired future b-boys and b-girls

Encourage students to consider why the author, Linda J. Acevedo, would want to share with young people this story about Manolo and the style of dance called breaking.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Many words can be found in the glossary at the end of the book, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.

Content Specific

Bronx, Latin Boogaloo, hip-swaying, rumba, Puerto Rican, conga, jam, DJs, MCs, spray paint, b-boys, b-girls, James Brown, break, hip-hop, cypher, dance-off, toprock, six-step, baby freeze, Crotona Park, sliced-and-diced, Kid Flex, Borinquén Breakers, acrobatics, kung fu, salsa, Henry Chalfant, *Beat Street*, *Breakin'*, *Flashdance*, *Kush Groove*, windmill, two-hand hops, continuous head spin, talent scout, Boogie Down Bronx

Academic

soaked, bold, rubble, snappy, splits, twists, shuffles, flickering, funky, battled, hovered, bragging rights, lumpish, retreated, thumping, shadowed, fluttering, fumbled, goofs, droops, corrupt, politicians, greedy, landlords, crumbled, busted, hydrants, abandoned, limber, snappy, dazzling, dynamic, gravity-defying, sweep, swivel, pulsed, grooved

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Where did Manolo live? What did he grow up listening to?
2. What was the Bronx like in the 1970s?
3. What did the neighborhood kids like to do?
4. What music did Manolo and the neighborhood kids listen to?
5. Who was James Brown?
6. What does the B in Break stand for?
7. What kind of music was emerging during the time? How did it influence breaking?
8. What were dance battles? What did Manolo see? Did he think he could break?
9. How did Manolo practice breaking? What did he do to improve?
10. What did Manolo have to do after he became more confident in breaking?
11. How did Manolo get his nickname?
12. What was the Borinquén Breaker's style? What were they like as performers?
13. Who was Henry Chalfant? What did he do?
14. Where did the Borinquén Breakers start to perform? How did Kid Flex dance for the audience?
15. Who heard about the Borinquén Breakers? What happened next?
16. What did Manolo see when he returned to his neighborhood?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Breaking to the Beat!* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author chose this title?
2. How did Manolo's childhood inspire his future in dancing? What did he see growing up that fueled him to begin breaking? How did he use different styles of what he saw as a child in his

own breaking?

3. How did Manolo use persistence and determination to achieve his goals? What lessons did Manolo learn along the way that influenced his breaking career?
4. What were some of the ways that Manolo practiced breaking? What inspired him to keep practicing? Why is it important to practice something?
5. In what ways did Manolo overcome the many different obstacles in his life, starting at an early age? What was his Bronx neighborhood like, and how did the state of his environment empower him to achieve his breaking dreams?
6. Why was it important for Manolo to find a breaking group? How did his style of breaking change or improve when he joined the Borinquén Breakers? Where did they perform? Did they achieve fame? Why or why not?
7. Manolo gets the nickname Kid Flex. How do you think this nickname influenced his breaking career? How do you think Kid Flex embodies Manolo's style of breaking?
8. How did Manolo confront adversity? What were the techniques that he used to achieve his dream of breaking? How is Manolo an inspiring character?
9. What does the line "the Bronx was nothing but rubble" mean? It's important to stress that the Bronx was crumbling, not because its people didn't care about their neighborhood and community, but because of a clear example of systemic racism. And despite being discarded like rubble, the people left behind created art. How does the author describe the Bronx during the 1970s? Why did politicians ignore the poor state of the neighborhoods in the Bronx? How did Manolo continue to pursue his passion for breaking, despite the condition of his environment?
10. How would you describe breaking to someone who is unfamiliar with this style of dance? What are some of the qualities you would use to describe the dance? How did breaking make people feel? How was it an important dance during this period?
11. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about Manolo's legacy in the story and what it was like to learn about breaking. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think is Linda J. Acevedo's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions for writing the book. What do you think she

wanted to tell her readers?

3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Manolo's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Breaking to the Beat!*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does making a difference mean to students after reading? After reading *Breaking to the Beat!*, what does the idea of making a difference mean to you? Why?
7. What does resilience mean to you after reading this book? How did Manolo's passion for breaking fuel his success? Why is resilience important? How do you demonstrate resilience in your own life?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Manolo's story inspired them and how he demonstrated his dedication to breaking.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Dancing and moving can help kids feel good and be beneficial for their health (<https://bit.ly/3tJPjTZ>). Have students think about why dancing can relieve stress or anxiety. How does dancing make them feel? Do they like to dance? Why or why not? If they like to dance, how does it help them feel better if they're feeling anxious, nervous or sad? Have students write a piece about how dancing, or any kind of movement, makes them feel and why.
2. Connect Manolo's experiences with dancing to students' own frustration about something that they've had in their life. Were students ever nervous about something, or felt like they weren't good enough at a particular activity? How did it make them feel? Did they want to keep trying? How did they practice that activity? Students can share their findings in an essay.
3. Which illustration in *Breaking to the Beat!* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
4. What gives Manolo confidence when he breaks? How did he develop a positive self-esteem, even though he encountered obstacles and setbacks along the way? How does he feel when he gets his nickname, Kid Flex, and dances with the Borinquén Breakers?
5. How does Manolo feel when he's performing with the Borinquén Breakers? How does he feel when he finds a breaking group? Have you ever been a part of a group, like a sports team, dance troupe, or any kind of group in your classroom? How did being part of that group make you feel? Why do you think teamwork is important?
6. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Breaking to the Beat!*

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students conduct a dance literature study featuring other Lee & Low titles, including *The Electric Slide and Kai* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-electric-slide-and-kai>), *i see the rhythm* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-see-the-rhythm>), *Drumbeat in Our Feet* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/drumbeat-in-our-feet>), *Knockin' on Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/knockin-on-wood>), *¡Olé! Flamenco* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ole-flamenco>), and *Capoeira: Game! Dance! Martial Art!* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/capoeira>).** Use a graphic organizer to compare the different characters and people featured in the texts. How did these individuals get started in dancing? Why were they passionate about dancing? What dances(s) were at the center of each story? What were some problems the characters encountered during their careers? How were they creative in their work? How did they demonstrate determination and patience? Students can discuss their findings and then write an essay about what they learned from conducting this literature study.
- **Conduct a “how-to” unit featuring something that students like to do.** Manolo had to learn the different elements of breaking during the story. Have students write about their favorite hobby, such as a dance, sport or anything else like that to do, and instructions on how to do it. Students can think about the following: what are the most critical instructions? How do I write the directions so people will know exactly how to do my hobby? What makes an effective how-to writing piece? ReadWriteThink has a lesson plan for more information about how-to writing (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writing-motivating-students-write-871.html>). After students write their piece, if possible, they can also record a video on how to do their hobby. Students can also accompany their pieces with illustrations or pieces of artwork.
- **Come up with a list of questions to ask author Linda J. Acevedo.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *Breaking to the Beat!* What was it like to publish her first children's book? How is this story important to her? Consider contacting Linda J. Acevedo and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit.
- **Examine the text in *Breaking to the Beat!* for the different features that are used to display music and sounds.** How does the text show musical effects? How does the

author Linda J. Acevedo present the text that describe music and sounds? How do the words that describe breaking and music differ from the rest of the narration? Have students go back through the text and record the different words that appear differently from the rest of the text on the page. Then, reflect on what it was like to read those sounds, and have students discuss what it was like to imagine what those sounds or musical words seemed like. How did reading those words impact their reading experience? Students can experiment with writing their own piece with musical sound effects similar to *Breaking to the Beat!*

- **Students can write a piece about a hobby, such as a dance or a sport, that's meaningful to them.** Do students have a hobby, such as dance or another activity, that makes them feel good? Did they ever struggle with it in the beginning, or feel embarrassed about it? Students can write a small moment piece or another reflection on their hobby, how it makes them feel, how they practice, and why it's meaningful to them. If possible, students can show off the hobby to the class or bring in an artifact that demonstrates their hobby to the class.
- **Have students write an essay or reaction to the Afterword from *Breaking to the Beat!*** Afterwards, have students reflect on the following guiding questions in an essay: What did they learn from this section after reading *Breaking to the Beat!*? What additional information did they learn that was new about breaking and the history of breaking and the Bronx featured in the story? How did this affect what they thought about the book? Why do you think author Linda J. Acevedo decided to include this Afterword featuring more details about the history of breaking and the Bronx?

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Learn more about breaking and the history of this specific type of dance.** Consult Linda J. Acevedo's suggested resources at the back of the book that includes videos about breaking in the Background section of this guide, in addition to the following resources: "From the Bronx to a global phenomenon- here's a brief history of breaking" (<https://www.redbull.com/int-en/history-of-breaking>) and "How the Bronx brought breaking to the world" (<https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/6/20/15836346/how-bronx-created-breaking-breakdancing>). Students can answer the following guiding questions: what is breaking? What are the characteristics of breaking? What kind of music is involved with breaking? Who are some famous breakers throughout history? How is breaking meaningful to people? Students can create informational posters with their research findings about breaking to share with a small group or the whole class.
- **Have students research hip hop music.** The Universal Hip Hop Museum has a section dedicated to hip hop history (<https://uhhm.org/>). The Museum of the City of New York also has photographs and articles dedicated to hip hop (https://www.mcny.org/exhibition/hip-hop-revolution?gclid=Cj0KQCjwpPKiBhDvARIsACn-gzA36a2TkzE0AtsFUv0PUiUh88xi1mr2pNu-0e3shpz10xX05HEqVuwaAgs0EALw_wcB). Education through Music (<https://etmonline.org/>)

[stories/hiphophistory/](#)), Billboard (<https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/billboard-explains-origins-of-hip-hop-1235260696/>), the Kennedy Center (<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/>), and MasterClass (<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/hip-hop-guide>) all have articles, resources, and guides on the history of hip hop for students to get started. Have students answer the following questions: what is hip hop? How did hip hop begin? What other musical influences inspired hip hop? What musicians were the first to introduce hip hop? What does hip hop sound like? Have students listen to hip hop and write their reactions to the questions in an essay or informational poster.

- **Research the history of the Bronx, specifically focusing on the era featured in *Breaking to the Beat!*** PBS (<https://www.thirteen.org/bronx/history3.html>), the City University of New York ([https://www.macaulay.cuny.edu/seminars/lobel08/articles/r/en/Renewal_and_Its_Aftermath_\(1950s_and_1960s\)_568a.html](https://www.macaulay.cuny.edu/seminars/lobel08/articles/r/en/Renewal_and_Its_Aftermath_(1950s_and_1960s)_568a.html)), the Bronx Music Heritage Center (<https://www.thisisbronxmusic.org/bronx-music-history/1960s-1980s/>), and Stony Brook (<https://you.stonybrook.edu/undergraduatehistoryjournal/2022/03/24/the-puerto-rican-experience-in-the-south-bronx-an-oral-history-with-lizette-piedra/>) all have articles dedicated to the history of the Bronx during 20th century. Students can focus on the following questions: what was happening in the Bronx during the time of *Breaking to the Beat!*? How was Puerto Rican culture integral to the Bronx and Bronx history? Why did the Bronx go through a challenging period during the 1960s and 1970s? Consult Linda J. Acevedo's Afterword for additional perspective on what the Bronx was like during *Breaking to the Beat!* Students can put together an essay or other creative ways of presenting information to showcase their findings and what they learned about the history of the Bronx.
- **Conduct a research study on other types of dance across the world.** PBS LearningMedia has a digital library that encourages the exploration, analysis and appreciation of dance (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/the-arts/dance/society-and-history-of-dance/history-of-dance/>) (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/dance-arts-toolkit/>). The *New York Times* also has an article, "Travel the World Through These Dance Tutorials" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/25/travel/cultural-dances-tutorials.html>). Students can work independently, with a partner or in small groups and select a dance of their choice. Students can think about the following guiding questions: Where did this dance originate? What are the steps and movements involved in this dance? When was this dance created? What kind of music is typically involved with this dance? Students can share their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing with photographs and other digital or print resources.
- **Have students create a timeline of Manolo's life from the book and elaborate on the events that happened during the period.** To help students understand the historical context of Manolo's story encourage them to research the events in the book by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the events mentioned and creating a timeline. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students may work in groups in different years (i.e., 1970-1980) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a dance, sport or hobby that they care about.** Why did students choose this dance or hobby? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of the hobby that they're passionate about, and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **Learn about musician James Brown and his impact on breaking** (<https://www.jamesbrown.com/bio/#/>). Who was James Brown? What was James Brown's music like? How did he influence breaking and other kinds of dance? Have students conduct a research study on James Brown and listen to his music. Students can reflect on why they think James Brown was important in the breaking movement.
- **Watch and reflect on videos of breaking.** Students can answer the following questions through discussion or an analytical essay: what was it like to watch videos of breaking, as opposed to reading about it? Have students ever seen breaking before? Have students tried breaking themselves? How does watching breaking differ from videos of other dances? See Linda J. Acevedo's following videos to show students actual videos of breaking: Born to Dance: The Breakdancing Kid (<https://youtu.be/8tVOH2R5rh0>); Breaking Confirmed for 2024 Paris Olympic Games (<https://youtu.be/mHMMCH0kJpw>); and Why Hip Hop Is World Culture (<https://youtu.be/Noh7ptTORcc>).
- **Have students try breaking on their own.** After watching the videos and reading about the different breaking moves in *Breaking to the Beat!* if students are comfortable, have them try out breaking in their classroom or any open space. Ask students to discuss with a partner or small groups: what was it like to try breaking? Do students like to dance? Did they like breaking? Why or why not?
- **Look at photographs from Henry Chalfant, the photographer who brought breaking into the spotlight** (<https://www.henrychalfant.com/>). Why did Henry Chalfant make breaking famous? What did his photographs of breaking look like? How did he capture the dancers' moves? What was special and unique about his photographs? Students can reflect on what they learned from looking at his photographs of breaking and compare to what they learned in *Breaking to the Beat!*
- **Consider having students conduct an illustrator study about Frank Morrison.** Other Lee & Low titles illustrated by Frank Morrison include *George Crum and the Saratoga Chip* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/george-crum-and-the-saratoga-chip>), *Sweet Music in Harlem* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sweet-music-in-harlem>), and *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/little-melba-and-her-big-trombone>). Visit Frank's website for a complete list of all his children's books (<https://morrisongraphics.com/>). If possible, display the books for students to examine the illustrations, and have students brainstorm how Frank's illustrations are similar across the books, or how they differ per book.

- **As a follow-up activity, have students come up with questions to interview Frank Morrison.** What is his process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did he choose to create the illustrations? Why? How did he capture the art of breaking in his illustrations? Consider contacting Frank Morrison for a school visit (<https://morrisongraphics.com/>).
- **Encourage students to select the illustration that resonated with them the most from *Breaking to the Beat!*** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?
- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models in their hobby they enjoy through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. How do they relate to this person? What do they admire about the way that they dance, sing, play their sport or create their art? Why is it important for students to connect with people they admire in their hobby, sport, or art?

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to interview family members about dancing.** Do they like to dance? Why or why not? How does dancing make them feel? What kinds of dances do they know? Where do they typically dance? Students can share their findings with the class. Encourage students and families to dance at home!
- **Encourage families and children to learn more about breaking.** Families can watch videos of breaking and consult the resources in the back of *Breaking to the Beat!*, including: Born to Dance: The Breakdancing Kid: <https://youtu.be/8tVOH2R5rh0>; Breaking Confirmed for 2024 Paris Olympic Games: <https://youtu.be/mHMMCH0kJpw>; and "Why Hip Hop Is World Culture:" <https://youtu.be/Noh7ptTORcc>. Ask students to reflect with families about what it was like to watch breaking, and if families have ever done breaking or watched it before.



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/breaking-to-the-beat

📞 **By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

📠 **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

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Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda J. Acevedo is a New York native who was known to do the toprock and six-step at birthday parties and in her backyard. She is thrilled she gets to share this story about the origins of breaking and Hip Hop with young readers. This marks her authorial debut.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Frank Morrison is a fine artist and illustrator of numerous award-winning books, including the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor winner *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*. Before becoming an illustrator, Morrison was a well-known graffiti artist and accomplished dancer. Morrison lives with his family in Georgia. To find out more about Frank Morrison, visit his web site: www.morrisongraphics.com

REVIEWS

"This joyous celebration of break dancing is a visual treat. Vibrant full-page illustrations pop off pages, perfectly complementing the spare but effective text."
—*Booklist*, **starred review**

"An irresistible beat to get readers on their feet." —*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

"A dazzling mix of spirited text and striking illustrations, this beautifully evokes a time period and the art it gave rise to." —*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.