
Leslie Carliss
Overbrook High School

Abstract

D.R.A.M.A. is an exciting, energetic, hands-on curriculum that allows students to learn about renowned African American performers and artists from the 1940s and 1950s. I will lead students as they build bridges between artistic disciplines—showing the connections between dancers, musicians, and an artist from a particular period. We will read biographies of Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Ray Charles, Mahalia Jackson, and Jacob Lawrence, among others. I will introduce my students to popular dance forms from this era--the Lindy-hop, the Cha-Cha, the Freeze, and Minstrel dance--encouraging them to compare these forms to some of their favorite contemporary dances. I will also show how segregation and the emerging civil rights movement affected the development of the arts. Finally, I will guide my students as they read, discuss, analyze, and rehearse the play On Strivers Row, by Abram Hill. As a culminating event, students will perform this play during an assembly at Overbrook High School.