



Shake the Dust

Film Study Guide

Director: Adam Sjöberg

2014 | Documentary | 85 Minutes | USA | English | Unrated

<http://www.shakethedust.org/>

Synopsis: The documentary *Shake the Dust*, by journalist-turned-filmmaker Adam Sjöberg, chronicles the far-reaching influence of breakdancing, exploring how it strikes a resonant chord in the slums, favelas and ghettos of the world. While each culture adopts and adapts hip-hop music, blending it with their own traditions, the breakdancing moves act as a universal language. Moving smoothly between breakdance crews in the poorest urban neighborhoods of Colombia, Yemen, Uganda, and Cambodia, Sjöberg weaves together the stories of rappers, DJs, and b-boys across three continents, revealing how breakdancing today acts as a positive force for social change. Older generations are passing along their moves and showing kids, most of whom are orphans, that the “family” of hip-hop can be an alternative to street gangs and drug addiction.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. Each of the dancers say they want to change how people outside of their city define and perceive their culture and community. Why do you think this is so important to them? How have you seen Chicago identified in the media?

2. What similarities do you see among the five dance crews highlighted in the film? How do these similarities fit into the theme of community?
3. The film suggests that an art form – like dance – can connect different cultures and communities, even with great distance or differences between them. Do you think this is true?
4. Mark of the Breakdance Ugandan Project says he views the world “slum” as an acronym for “s.l.u.m.: social lessons use for the mind.” What do you think this means, and how does the film agree with Mark?
5. What do you think the title Shake the Dust means? Why do you think the director chose it as the title for the film?
6. How do you define “community”? Think about who is part of YOUR community: your family, friends, school, church, etc.
7. How can art (film, music, etc.) shape a community? How does it shape your community?
8. Towards the end of the film, hip-hop and breakdance are described as a “culture that gives you hope.” Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not?
9. How are the areas where the crews live portrayed throughout the film? Why do you think the director chose to show the areas the way he did?
10. Do you look at breakdancing differently after seeing the film than before seeing the film? How so?
11. Throughout the film, the director uses mostly close up shots and medium shots. Discuss the difference between these types of shots. Why do you think he chose to use closer perspectives and how does it change the “feeling” of the film as you watch it?
12. The film is produced by the musical artists Nas, Common and Talib Kweli. Why do you think they were involved in the film? How does their involvement change your perception of the film (if at all)?
13. Each of the crew members talks about the connection between their styles of breakdance and the original U.S. breakdance movement. Why do you think they make those comparisons?
14. Which crew was your favorite and why?

15. How do you express yourself? Through dance, art, music or words? If someone asked you to explain your art or passion, how would you explain what you do, why you do it and why it matters?