And here they are! Jane Avril, Cléopatre, Églantine, and Gazelle on-stage! Tossing their skirts about in a rambunctious, rollicking cancan, they show off their dark stockings and high-heeled shoes for all to see. This saucy foursome delighted crowds in the dance halls of Paris and planned to take their show across the English Channel to London. But first they asked Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec to design a poster to stir up excitement for their tour.

Toulouse-Lautrec loved the gaiety of Paris. Most nights found him in the dance halls, sketching the performers as they thrilled spectators with high kicks, splits, and cartwheels. Red-haired Jane Avril, the artist’s favorite, was the most famous of the group. She appears at left, stepping out in front of the others. Cléopatre and Églantine shift their eyes toward Gazelle to make sure they all stay in step.

Toulouse-Lautrec makes each face easy to recognize under a tower of plumes and feathers, but he also presents the troupe as a unit bound together by voluminous skirts and yards and yards of petticoats. A single, lively line bounces across the bottom of all four skirts connecting the dancers so that there is no space between them. Three dark legs emerge from the froth of the petticoats as the dancers perform a step called *ronde de jambe* (“rotation of the leg”) in perfect synchrony, bending their knees at precisely the same angle. Finally, the artist introduces the group to the poster-reading public by pointing each dancer’s toe directly to the bright red words “Troupe de Mlle. Églantine.”

**CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS**

Compare *Troupe of Mlle. Églantine* with a brief film of four cancan dancers performing in Paris in 1902: [bit.ly/1ilHjAv](http://bit.ly/1ilHjAv)

Listen to famous cancan music, such as Jacques Offenbach’s *Infernal Galop*. [bit.ly/1hFk7hW](http://bit.ly/1hFk7hW) (Start the music at the 1:45 mark.) Imagine how fast Mademoiselle Églantine’s troupe would have to dance just to keep up. What kind of lines did Toulouse-Lautrec use to suggest the motion of the dancers’ skirts?

Study promotional pictures of bands, dance companies, or sports teams to see how individual members relate to each other through clothing or pose. Create a poster that features a group you admire.

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**PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**