

# Dance activities – unit 6

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children will focus on using different visual images as the starting point for composing, performing and watching dance. In dance as a whole, children think about how to use movement to explore and communicate ideas and issues, and their own feelings and thoughts. As they work, they develop an awareness of the historical and cultural origins of different dances.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit lays the foundation for future dance units, in which children will consolidate and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding of composing, performing and appreciating dance. They will extend the range of movements they use and develop new skills in working with a partner, including taking weight, supporting, leaning, balancing and lifting. They will also increase their knowledge of dance styles from different social, historical and cultural contexts.

## VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use a range of words and phrases, such as:

- improvisation
- unison, canon, action, reaction
- motif, phrase, section
- form, eg AB, ABA, ABAC
- artistic intention
- exploration
- dance framework
- interpret

## RESOURCES

- a cassette or CD player
- a video camera and recorder
- percussion instruments
- a database of visual images
- a variety of stimuli, eg professional dance videos, adverts, Hollywood musicals, modern sculptures, paintings

## EXPECTATIONS

### When carrying out the type of activities and tasks in this unit

*most children will be able to:*

work creatively and imaginatively on their own, with a partner and in a group to compose motifs and structure simple dances; perform to an accompaniment expressively and sensitively; perform dances fluently and with control; warm up and cool down independently; understand how dance helps to keep them healthy; use appropriate criteria to evaluate and refine their own and others' work; talk about dance with understanding, using appropriate language and terminology

*some children will not have made so much progress. They will be able to:*

use a small range of movements and patterns in their dances; express some of their ideas clearly when composing and performing; work in a group, cooperating with and following others to complete work; with help, use specific activities to warm up and cool down for dance; show some understanding of how dance helps to keep them healthy; show some understanding of how to structure a dance; talk about dance, with guidance

*some children will have progressed further. They will be able to:*

interpret different stimuli with imagination and flair; create, refine and structure movements and patterns with artistic understanding; communicate the artistic intention of a dance clearly, fluently, musically and with control; take the lead when working in a group; help others to refine and structure movements and patterns; understand why dancing is good for their health; organise their own warm-up and cool-down activities to prepare for, and recover from, dance; describe, interpret and evaluate dance, using appropriate language and terminology

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**POINTS TO NOTE**

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

**ACQUIRING AND DEVELOPING SKILLS**

- to explore, improvise and combine movement ideas fluently and effectively
  - to create and structure motifs, phrases, sections and whole dances
  - begin to use basic compositional principles when creating their dances
- Ask the children to look at visual images and to talk about movement ideas inspired by the images, *eg a dance video – movements used, style, structure, patterning; a sculpture – shape, texture, mood, line, form, colour, material*. Encourage them to use more than one stimulus to inspire their initial ideas and movements, *eg videos, pictures, music, books, materials from other curriculum areas*.
  - Ask the children to explore and practise movement ideas inspired by the stimulus, *eg Comical Folk (skipping patterns) – skips, skip-hops, skip-steps, heel-toe, quickly, slowly, large, small, different directions, different pathways*. Help them to turn a number of ideas into dance phrases, taking into account actions, dynamics, space and relationships. Encourage them to improvise freely and to explore movement ideas until they create a variety of movements that show what they want to communicate.
  - Teach the children how the movements reflect and use the music. Teach them how to perform their movements accurately and with a sense of rhythm.

- respond to a range of stimuli, improvising freely using a range of controlled movements and patterns
- explore dance and movement ideas imaginatively, including actions, dynamics, space and relationship

- In every lesson, most of the children's learning should take place through physical activity relating to the core tasks.**
- Most lessons should start with short warm-up activities that help the children remember what they did in the last lesson and prepare them for what they will learn next. Most lessons should end with cool-down activities.
- Give the children different stimuli, including some from different times and places, *eg professional dance videos, sculptures, paintings, adverts, photographs*.
- Give the children enough time to practise and develop their movements and ideas. They should also have opportunities to talk about, explore and play with dance and movement ideas.
- In term 1 of the National Literacy Strategy, Framework for planning, children explore alternative approaches to telling stories and characterisation. This unit would add a further dimension to this work.
- Make sure the children have the opportunity to watch and talk about examples of professional dance, *eg 'Ghost Dances' (Houston Ballet), 'Swan Lake' (Adventures in Motion Pictures), 'Cats' (Andrew Lloyd Webber), 'West Side Story'*.
- Give the children specific guidance on what to do and how to do it, as well as general feedback and praise. Make sure you give them information that they can use to improve the quality of their performance.
- The children could use different databases to get ideas for their movement patterns and motifs, and as stimuli for dances. They could also use a digital still or video camera to record, compare and contrast their own and others' techniques and motifs.

**SELECTING AND APPLYING SKILLS, TACTICS AND COMPOSITIONAL IDEAS**

- to understand why dance is good for their fitness, health and wellbeing
  - to prepare effectively for dancing
- Ask the children to choose material for dance phrases or dances and to explain their choices. Help them to think about things they might include, *eg in a group section – partner work, circle and straight line formations, unison and canon, exaggerated jumps and gestures to make movements comic*.
  - Teach the children about musical phrasing and talk to them about how they can structure a dance. Ask them to listen to the accompaniment and help them to link their movements with the dance idea and the music. Listen to the music's expressive qualities and talk to the children about how the movements they use or the dance structure can be changed so that it fits the accompaniment better.
  - Ask the children to plan a simple dance framework using different forms, *eg ABA, ABAC*. Encourage them to create a motif to show the dance idea, developing its expressive qualities. Teach them how to use costumes and set.

- select and use a range of compositional ideas to create motifs that demonstrate their dance idea
- perform with clarity and sensitivity to an accompaniment, communicating a dance idea on their own, with a partner and in a group

**Health and safety**

- Are the children wearing footwear and clothing that are safe and help their learning?
- Is the space safe and clear enough to work in?
- Are the children aware of others in the class when they are moving around?
- Have all the children warmed up and cooled down properly?

**KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF FITNESS AND HEALTH**

- to understand how a dance is formed and performed
  - to evaluate, refine and develop their own and others' work
- Ask the children to think about what muscles and joints work when they are performing different types of dance. Talk to them about how dancing helps to extend their range of movements.
  - Talk to them about how being involved with and performing dances helps to improve their health and fitness. Help them to recognise how dance contributes to their social lives. Ask them why it is important for them to keep fit, strong and flexible if they want to dance well.
  - Talk to them about how they can include more dance in their lives.

- describe how dance contributes to fitness and wellbeing
- identify what types of exercise they need to do to help their dancing

**EVALUATING AND IMPROVING PERFORMANCE**

- use appropriate language and terminology to describe, interpret and evaluate their own and others' work
  - comment on what works well and explain why
  - recognise how costume, music and set can help to improve a dance performance
- Teach the children how to practise and refine their dances. Teach them what to look for as they watch professional dance videos.
  - Help the children to improve the way they use actions, expressive features and space in their own dances. Help them to become more aware of how they work with a partner and of group dynamics. Talk to them about what makes a good dancer. Help them to recognise how they need to work their bodies to improve their dancing.
  - Ask them how costumes, set design, props and accompaniment contribute to a dance. Talk to them about the sensory and expressive qualities of the dance.

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- experienced a wide range of stimuli for dance
- copied and adapted movement material from videos
- composed and performed dances with a partner, in trios and in groups
- experienced different styles of dance

## CORE TASK

Following are core tasks the children could be asked to carry out.

### Task 1

In pairs or small groups, create and perform a dance. Use a short video extract, eg *'Humboldt's Hog Nose Flea Dance'* from *'Still Life at the Penguin Café'*, *'Cats'* (Andrew Lloyd Webber), or *'West Side Story'*, to inspire your movements and ideas. For example, you could base your dance on an idea such as 'comical folk', human animals, fitting in with a gang.

Take ideas from the video, choosing:

- movements and actions, eg *skipping, hopping, jumping, lifting, supporting, different body shapes, stamping and striking sticks*
- dance style
- structure, eg *solo, partner and group work; meeting, parting, over, under, around, follow, unison, canon*
- patterning, eg *circling, weaving, straight lines, facing*

Make sure you plan a dance framework for one, two, three or four sections, with different forms such as AB, ABA, ABCDAB. You need to choose which sections are danced by individuals, and which in pairs or groups. Try taking on someone else's role in the dance. Try being the choreographer, costume or set designer.

### **Adaptations and variations on the task**

To make the task easier:

- use ideas the children are familiar with
- make the dance phrases shorter and keep actions simple
- use simple accompaniment
- ask the children to work on their own
- use small spaces and similar heights and directions

To make the task harder:

- use more abstract stimuli
- make the dance phrases longer and actions more complicated
- use more complex rhythms, including changes of speed
- work in small groups
- use larger spaces and different heights and directions

Other dance ideas could be inspired by cubist paintings; Aboriginal art; modern sculptures; photographs from a particular era or event; architecture; junk; props; film and television; personal and social issues, eg *bullying, pollution*.

## EXTENSION AND ENRICHMENT

Out of lessons, at home and in the community, children could be encouraged to:

- watch or take part in social and cultural events, celebrations and festivals
- watch their peers perform in school lessons or assemblies
- get involved in a dance festival
- take part in a school theatre and dance group
- visit museums, art galleries, libraries, theatres and cinemas
- take part in youth dance or regional festivals, as a choreographer or performer
- take part in community events, eg *fashion shows and discos*

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

This unit could be linked to:

- drama – using narrative and performance skills
- art and design – designing sets, costumes, lighting and programmes
- humanities – learning about different habitats, people, places and dance customs
- music – appreciating rhythm, tempo and phrasing in world music
- ICT – using music and lighting boards

