

# Dance activities – unit 4

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children focus on creating characters and narrative through movement and gesture. They gain inspiration from a range of subjects, and work in pairs and small groups.

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 foundations for 'Dance activities – unit 5', in which children will look at different styles of dance, create and perform in larger groups, and develop their ability to evaluate their performance.

In other physical education units in year 4, children concentrate on combining and linking phrases of movement fluently and with control (games, gymnastics and athletics) and on working in groups and different environments (outdoor and adventurous activity).

## VOCABULARY

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

- character
- narrative, costume, props
- describe, analyse, interpret, evaluate
- communication
- gesture
- words to describe choreographic devices, *eg unison, canon, repetition, action and reaction, question and answer*
- myth, legend
- mobilise joints
- diet

## RESOURCES

- a cassette or CD player
- a tape recorder
- percussion instruments
- a variety of stimuli, *eg words, stories, poems, pictures, plays, myths and legends, magazines and comics, film and video, artefacts, music*

## EXPECTATIONS

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

*most children will be able to:*

respond imaginatively to a range of stimuli related to character and narrative; use simple motifs and movement patterns to structure dance phrases on their own, with a partner and in a group; refine, repeat and remember dance phrases and dances; perform dances clearly and fluently; show sensitivity to the dance idea and the accompaniment; show a clear understanding of how to warm up and cool down safely; describe, interpret and evaluate dance, using appropriate language

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

copy and explore simple ideas; link and remember a limited amount of movement material; work with a group to refine and practise movement ideas and phrases; show some understanding of how to warm up and cool down; with help, make simple statements about their own and other people's work

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

structure and vary longer dances; develop movement ideas for others; show a good sense of rhythm and style when performing; remember and perform a range of warm-up and cool-down activities; give reasons why physical activity is good for health; use a range of dance vocabulary to describe, interpret and evaluate dance

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**POINTS TO NOTE**

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

**ACQUIRING AND DEVELOPING SKILLS**

- to explore and create characters and narratives in response to a range of stimuli
- Ask the children to look at different pictures and short pieces of film, *eg silent movies*, and ask them to describe the movements used to create humour, horror, suspense, and so on. Encourage them to draw on their experience of narrative and character in films, drama and stories.
- Help them to explore how to use actions, along with dynamic and spatial qualities, to communicate character and narrative, *eg expressing the character of Popeye might involve strong, powerful gestures and balances, boxing poses at different levels, exaggerated and stylised actions and gestures; expressing blood becoming rivers and streams in Pangu (Chinese creation story) might involve travelling in small groups, exploring different pathways, and changing levels, shape and speed.*
- Help the children to improvise, using a wide range of actions, dynamics, directions, levels and relationships.

- think about character and narrative ideas created by the stimulus, and respond through movement
- experiment with a wide range of actions, varying and combining spatial patterns, speed, tension and continuity when working on their own, with a partner and in a group

- 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, as a starting point for structuring simple dances that focus on character and narrative, *eg cartoon.*
- 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.
- Make sure the children have an opportunity to watch and talk about examples of professional dance, *eg 'Coppelia' (The Royal Ballet Company), 'The Hard Nut' (Mark Morris), 'La Fille Mal Gardée' (The Royal Ballet Company), or classical Indian dance (Sampad).*
- 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 put together a database of visual images, sounds and actions that they could link to music. They could also use a tape recorder to record different sounds, then store, repeat and reorganise these to accompany their dance phrases.

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

- to use simple choreographic principles to create motifs and narrative
- to perform more complex dance phrases and dances that communicate character and narrative
- Teach the children how to create dance motifs that bring out character and dramatic effect, *eg a House of Fun character – giggle, giggle, stamp, stamp, kick, balance, tumble and splat!* Teach them how to make motifs for different sections of a story. Encourage them to explore how to communicate character and narrative when moving on their own, with a partner and in a group.
- Help the children to sequence movement in a logical order. Ask them to think about the way they link motifs and sections.
- Teach the children to develop and vary dance phrases using canon, unison, repetition, and changes of direction, level, speed and pathway. Teach them the importance of keeping focused on the dance idea. Ask them to think about the way that movement material has been structured to get their ideas over through the dance. Encourage them to be aware of the people they are performing with as a group.

- use different compositional ideas to create motifs incorporating unison, canon, action and reaction, question and answer
- remember, practise and combine longer, more complex dance phrases
- communicate what they want through their dances and perform with fluency and control, showing sensitivity to the accompaniment and to others

**KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF FITNESS AND HEALTH**

- to know and describe what you need to do to warm up and cool down for dance
- Ask the children to show you different activities that will warm the body, mobilise the joints and stretch the muscles, raising the heart rate slowly. Talk to them about why they need to get warm, mobilise joints and stretch muscles before dancing, and why they need to stretch, relax and breathe slowly to gradually calm the body down after dancing.

- show understanding of warming up and cooling down, and choose appropriate activities to do on their own

**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?

**EVALUATING AND IMPROVING PERFORMANCE**

- to describe, interpret and evaluate their own and others' dances, taking account of character and narrative
- Ask the children to focus on using shape, action, and dynamic and rhythmic phrasing more clearly in their dances.
- Ask them to suggest how the movement material, motifs and performances could be improved to communicate the dance idea more clearly. Ask them to say how successful they think different motifs are in expressing the dance idea.

- describe and interpret dance movements using appropriate vocabulary
- suggest how dances and performances can be improved, so that they communicate more effectively

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- used different stimuli to create dances on their own, with a partner and in small groups
- experienced drama techniques such as ‘snapshots’, role play and simple storylines
- created and written stories
- worked in groups
- watched different dance forms on video or at the theatre
- watched theatre live or on video

## CORE TASK

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

### Task 1

Create and perform dances based on characters and narrative, using the dance idea ‘Welcome to the House of Fun’. The dance should have two or three sections, which could be based on:

- individual characters – body shape, travelling at different speeds, shy, giggling, kicking, punching
- hall of mirrors – developing body shapes using different levels, balancing, supporting, changing the group shape by moving under, round and through each other to create different still images, *eg long, thin, contorted, wide, round, while pulling funny faces*
- a comic fight – *eg Popeye against Pluto*, including action and reaction, and question and answer sequencing, *eg swipe, turn, travel, swing, fall, lift, tumble, roll*

### 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 include myths and legends, *eg Icarus, Where the Wild Things Are*; films, *eg The Iron Man, Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Nutcracker Suite*; advertisements; objects, *eg shoes and hats*.

## EXTENSION AND ENRICHMENT

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

- watch plays and dance performances
- create and write a storyline, animation or comic outlines on a computer at home, or design simple self-review sheets for evaluating their dance performances
- take part in dance and drama clubs, both at school and in the community
- visit the theatre to look at costume and set designs and improve their understanding of drama

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

This unit could be linked to:

- art and design – investigating photography, painting techniques, colour, and how different artists have used dramatic subjects
- drama – taking part in role play, developing storyboards and learning about character
- ICT – creating animated stories
- literacy – working on creating characters through dance motifs could be contrasted with the techniques used by writers. In term 2 of the *National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching* there is emphasis on the use of expressive language that could be reinforced in this unit.
- music – composing sound effects to show different characters or moods, *eg comic, suspense*

