

Giraffes can dance and so can your class!

This unit of work is a great way to introduce dance to Foundation Stage pupils whilst making literacy and geographical links

The following ideas for are taken a Unit of Work delivered to a range of Nursery pupils. The outcomes of the Unit of Work included:

Pupils will be able to:

- Copy, repeat and perform movement actions including balance
- Improvise movement actions
- Use their full body and isolated body parts when performing movements
- With help, remember, repeat and link movements
- Choose movements that reflect the dance idea
- Describe movements
- Retell a story
- Identify animals
- Identify different styles of dance

Preparatory Work

Read the story with pupils and ask them to identify: Gerald the giraffe, animals/characters, emotions, traditional dances performed and locations. This is repeated and will be referred to throughout the Unit of Work.

Warm up

Start each session with a teacher-led cardio-vascular warm up to focus pupils and prepare their bodies. The warm up is also a great opportunity to develop pupils' movement skills and spatial awareness. The warm up should include opportunities to mobilise body parts and incorporating gentle stretches (teacher demonstrates each component of the warm up and pupils copy). Example activities:

- Shaking arms and legs
- Marching on the spot (lifted knees)
- Stretching arms up to the ceiling and crouching
- Shrugging shoulders
- Bending knees (warming up legs, preparation for jumps)
- Small jumps in parallel
- Shaking the whole body

Remember to explain the purpose of the warm up and how to find a space away from others.

Exploring the story

Giraffes Can't Dance could be explored through the following themes:

- Describing Gerald
- The animals of the jungle and the dances they perform
- Gerald's disappointment and embarrassment of not being able to dance
- Gerald dancing

When exploring the stimulus:

- Model (give examples of) ideas for pupils and ask for their own ideas
- Ask pupils to choose a movement for each and practice
- Create a movement phrase with the pupils accumulatively using the narrative as a structure. You could use a tambourine to set the structure of the dance and length of the movements

Gerald

When using Gerald as the stimulus I used a soft toy giraffe and pictures of giraffes to accompany the sessions. The soft toy created a focus for each session and enabled pupils to conceptualise the following ideas:

- Look at the first few pages of the book that describes Gerald and create movements to represent the following:
 - **tall** - tiptoe with arms stretching to the ceiling, jumping
 - **neck was long** - long still shapes
 - **legs were thin** - big long walks extending legs to the front
 - **very good at standing still** - balances
 - **when he tried to run he buckled at the knees** - shaking knees, shaking whole body, crouch down on floor. Ensure pupils fall safely to the floor without hitting their knees on the floor: crouch and place hands on the floor first. Incorporate rolling movements into the end of the sequence

The animals of the jungle and the dances they perform

Select different animals in the story and explore how they move as an animal and the dances they perform. Here are two examples:

Rhinos

- explore movements that represent the way rhinos move, for example, stamping/heavy walks, heavy jumps, spiky balances representing their horns
 - ! Ensure the pupils are bending their knees when stamping and jumping and are not making a heavy impact on the floor
- Class exploration of the rhinos performing a rock and roll dance, for example, a hand jive

Baboons

- Explore movements that represent the ways that the baboons move and dance in the story, for example, crawling, galloping, swinging, skipping (when performing the Scottish reel)

Gerald's disappointment and embarrassment of not being able to dance

Use the following extracts of text to re-create the narrative:

- "The animals all laughed ... So he crept off from the dancefloor": class exploration of creeping movements
 - ! Encourage pupils to creep around the space following their own pathway and not following anyone else
 - ! Encourage pupils to creep on a medium level with their heads bowed representing Gerald feeling sad

Gerald dancing

Use the following extracts of text to re-create the narrative:

- Cricket: class exploration of a range of jumping movements that represent ways crickets move
 - ! Encourage pupils to find different ways they can rub body parts together representing how crickets rub their legs against their body before they jump

- “Listen to the swaying grass”: class exploration of different swaying movements
 - ! Encourage pupils to use different body parts and levels
- “He threw his arms out sideways And he swung them everywhere, Then he did a backwards somersault And leapt in the air”: class exploration of leaping, turning and rolling movements to represent Gerald somersaulting
 - ! Encourage pupils to use a variety of movements and levels
 - ! Encourage pupils to use their arms when turning
 - ! Give health and safety points to ensure pupils do not attempt to somersault or perform forwards and backwards rolls
 - ! Refer to the pictures in the book as stimuli for pupils movement ideas

These are just a few of the ways that you could explore Giraffes Can't Dance. I hope that you enjoy trying them out with your class and developing new ideas.

Resources

- Traditional African music
- Music to complement traditional dances e.g. Scottish Reel, rock and roll/jive
- 3D examples of animals featured in the story
- Video examples of traditional dances

Further exploratory activities

Why not now use the following of Giles Andreae and David Wojtowycz stories to develop your own dance sessions:

- *Commotion in the Ocean*
- *Farmyard Hullabaloo*
- *Rumble in the Jungle*

Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees

Resource for Foundation Stage (and KS1?)

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