

The Firebird - Aboriginal, Northern Australian

Lesson Objectives ~

Story sequencing can be adapted.
Structuring a dance is similar to structuring a story.

Success Criteria ~

Clear projection of different characters and qualities.
The ability to re-arrange movement material.

Warm up

Ask the pupils to find a space & find as many ways to twist & turn whilst remaining on the spot.

Add the music and prompt them by asking questions such as 'Can you twist your wrists? Your spine? How can you make your fingers twist? Can you twist your legs?'

Then add in different directions: 'Can you twist one leg behind the other? Can you twist your arms out to the sides? Can you twist a hand around your foot?'

Ask pupils to find a partner or get into a group of 3 and move close together but not touching.

Ask them to repeat the twisting and turning actions but now they can include twisting and turning around each other.

Add the music and describe what you see pupils doing - eg 'Marcus is twisting an arm in front of Hayley's knee.'

Encourage pupils to remain rooted to the spot to encourage them to articulate their spines.

Flexibility

Context

Remind or inform pupils of the story and the fire that the crocodile guarded. Ask them to repeat the previous task with the image of a flickering fire in mind.

It may be worth asking pupils for other words linked to flames - eg 'flickering', 'dancing', 'curling', 'guttering', 'coiling', 'sparking', 'glowing', etc.

Add the music and allow 1 minute or so.

Application

Creative Exploration

Organise one team to join up with another.

Ask one team to continue with their fire actions.

Ask the other team to select one person to guard the fire, while the other(s) represent the other animals who are attempting to access the fire for warmth, light or to cook food.

Remind the 'crocodile' to block the attempts to access the fire.

Again it might be worth asking for other words to describe the crocodile's behaviour - eg 'protecting', 'blocking', 'defending', 'shielding', 'obstructing', etc - and how they could do this with different parts of the body.

Add the music for approximately 1 minute. Then change over roles until everyone has had the opportunity to experience both roles.

Ask pupils to say 'goodbye' to their group for the next minute or so. Ask them to find a space and hold a balance. Ask them to see if they can continue to move while sustaining the balance. Then can they stretch making their shape as big, tall, wide or long as possible. Then make a different balance shape and make that move in some way - eg rising /sinking, twisting / tilting, swaying / straightening - before stretching again and into a different balance...

Ask pupils to take the next 2 minutes or so to find different ways of balancing then stretching.

Add the music and describe what you see - eg 'Harold is balancing on his bottom and moving his arms and legs up and down.' Or, 'Flora is stretching her arm forwards right to her fingertips - lovely extension!'

Dynamic balances and Stretches

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Creative Exploration	<p>Remind or inform pupils of the section of the story in which the crocodile yawned a really wide stretch - ask them to show you a really wide stretch - and that the bird flew down and took a twig. Ask them to show a balance shape again. Can they keep this moving and lower down as if swooping in and collecting a twig from the fire? <i>Pause briefly with each animal to allow the children time to perform the action and to make the connection with the story.</i> <i>Repeat 3 or 4 times encouraging a different stretch & balance each time.</i></p>	Dynamic balances and Stretches
Composition	<p>Ask pupils to return to their groups again. Remind them of the key points of the story: * The fire * The crocodile protecting the fire * The animals trying to access the fire * The crocodile yawning * The bird's success in collecting a twig.</p> <p>Ask the groups to use all of these ideas but NOT in the same order as they happen in the story. They might wish to imagine they are telling the story in flashback, or that different people are telling the story from their point of view. <i>Ask the groups to decide upon their order and rehearse it ready to share.</i> <i>Add the music and allow 5 to 6 minutes.</i> <i>Less able groups may benefit from making a note of the order they have decided upon.</i></p>	Structure
Performance	<p>Identify 2 or 3 groups that have worked well and ask them to share their work for the others to watch / film. Ask the observers to identify whether: * They can clearly identify the different roles? * The space was used well? * The stretches and the entrance of the bird added interest? * The order of the movement ideas was varied?</p>	Analysis
Cool down	<p>Ask all the pupils to find a space and recall how the story ended - with the bird flying around the tops of the trees sharing the fire. Select one of them to represent the bird and to travel around the space. As they move they circle other pupils and this 'sets them alight' and allows them to go and put their socks and shoes on again. <i>With a large group you may wish to have more than one 'bird'.</i></p>	Circular pathways

Suggested music