

quantum leaps: splish splash for stages 1-3

michelle ware

Introduction

- The resource “Quantum Leaps” in the context of the Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus
- Issues in introducing dance to older Primary school students with no previous experience in dance (in particular, boys)
- Teaching dance through a sequenced unit of work
- Considerations: Safe Dance, student management, lesson location, linking lessons to syllabus outcomes and programming

The Unit : Splish Splash

Although originally designed for Stage 1, “Splish Splash” involves students in a range of performing, composing and appreciating activities which all help in developing an understanding of dance as an artform and a means of personal expression. It gives opportunities for students to work individually, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class using a wide range of stimulus material. Communication and other social skills are developed through collaboration and problem solving within each lesson. Whilst opportunities to view “work in progress” through this unit are frequent, the emphasis is upon the process of making dance rather than on creating a performance piece by the end of the unit. There are extension suggestions within most lessons, and by the end of the unit, students certainly would have a wide range of movement, from which to devise a dance work based on the theme of water (with teacher guidance).



body of work

Whilst briefly exploring each of the lessons, this presentation will feature Lesson 2 : “Creatures of the Sea” and provide suggestions for ways in which the material could be adapted to suit students in Stages 2 and 3.

A Practical Overview of Splish Splash

Lesson 1 “Bubbles”

Warm Up

I have used the Big Book “Bubbles Bubbles Everywhere” as a visual and literary stimulus.

The notion of moving within your own “bubble of space” is one that young children can understand, especially when assisted by pictures, discussions and bubble – making activities.

** With older students, this concept still works well, but rather than using “Bubbles Bubbles Everywhere”, different stimuli could be used (eg photographs, discussion about the qualities of bubbles)*

The “bubble of space” concept underpins this unit of work and develops an early understanding of use of personal and corporate space in dance.

Selected lesson activity:

- Teacher develops a movement sequence, which can be repeated Eg. Form a bubble with your whole body (4 counts); float slowly around the room (4 counts); turn slowly (4 counts), pop and freeze (4 counts). Repeat.
- Discuss how it felt to float. How did the movements change from forming the bubble to floating and popping?

Featured lesson - Lesson 2 : “Creatures of the Sea”

- View video excerpt: “Coral Sea Dreaming”
For younger students, I use an excerpt of no more than 3 – 4 minutes, but with older students 7 – 8 minutes provides them with a wide range of creatures to choose from. Other under-water video footage can be substituted here or still pictures. Old calendars provide a low-cost source of pictures.
- Brainstorm creatures that live in the sea

- Select one creature seen on the video and move as it would move – high/medium/low levels
- With a partner, share your creature's movement (high, medium and low versions) and learn each other's. Select one movement from each partner and link them together.
- Half class demonstrates whilst other half watches. Swap.
- Join with another pair and work out a way of combining the four movements
- 2 groups at a time show rest of class.
- Discuss after each showing: What parts of the body did this group mainly use? What did you like best about their movements? What interesting shapes did they use?

The pace of the lesson and the extent of teacher direction will largely depend on the concentration span and maturity of the individual class. With older students, it may be possible to increase the length of time given to some aspects of the lesson and to increase the number of different demands required of students within a particular task (eg in pairs, select two instead of one, movement to teach your partner and include at least two changes of direction and level).

- An extension activity - students could draw themselves performing as their sea creature or write about the process of learning the movements of their partner.
- Display the drawings or date and keep them in a dance journal/folder.
- Students could describe in words, pictures or diagrams, the movements performed by their group of four.

Lesson 3: Rivers, creeks and waterfalls

Selected lesson activity: Warm Up "The River"
Wherever possible, it is important to allow the warm up to link with the main body of the lesson. The following warm up uses images of bridges and rivers, whilst gently stretching the back, stomach and arm muscles.

- Slowly make a bridge of the [local name of river or creek] river (an arch shape – hands and feet on the floor)
- Slowly make a flat bridge over the [] river (push up – like position)

- Slowly put your nose in the [] river (sit back on heels, arms extended forward along the floor, head in line with then spine)
- Slowly put your stomach in the [] river (feet flattened on the floor, push up with straight arms, gently arch back with face to the ceiling – being careful not to hyper-extend the neck)
- Repeat.

Lesson 4: "Water, water everywhere"

Selected lesson activity:

Create a word bank of terms associated with the movement of water.

Discuss places where water moves.

Each student explores ways of moving the whole body to represent how and where water moves.

With older students, again it is possible to increase the degree of complexity of the task, once the teacher is satisfied that students have grasped the intent. For example, select two contrasting places where water moves and consider how and why it moves that way in that location. Move just using just your right knee and left elbow.

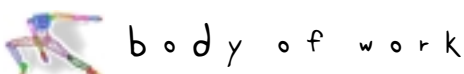
Lesson 5: "People and the Sea"

Using mirror imaging in dance is just as appropriate for Stage 1,2 and 3 students. The degree of concentration required to accurately mirror movements is significant and assists in the development of sustained concentration and control and isolation of body parts. This lesson includes a section in which students mirror their partner performing movements, which people might do in the sea.

This lesson also includes a teacher- devised dance using swim-like movements. With careful choice of music, it is equally appealing and fun for younger and older students alike (Beach Boys style music works well).

Lesson 6: "Moving in the Water"

At this stage of the unit, students now have a wide range of movement repertoire associated with the theme of water. This lesson draws together movement ideas or motifs, and allows students in small groups to compose a short movement sequence based on the material explored and developed throughout the unit.



I have found this to be equally successful and challenging for Stage 1, 2 or 3 students. As always, the teacher of the class is the best person to make individual decisions about how simple or complex a task should be. Often, older students will grasp abstract concepts more quickly and you will be able to take them further in a particular task than you could younger students in the same time frame.

All students, regardless of age, enjoy viewing their own work and that of other students. Providing opportunities to view dance in a focused way is of utmost importance. This can be done by modeling questions throughout each lesson and providing scaffolds for describing, discussing and writing about dance.

There are many opportunities for linking your dance units with learning in other KLAs Eg. Talking and Listening and Writing in English with Dance Appreciation.

Concluding comments

A key factor in introducing dance to all students is to ensure that the experience is positive, enjoyable, challenging and is pitched at their cognitive level.

Having said that, it is worth remembering that relatively simple tasks in dance can be quite challenging and confronting for a Stage 3 student who is approaching dance for the first time.

Creating a classroom climate where there is no fear of "making a mistake" or failing is essential, particularly for those just beginning in dance.



body of work