

Creatures of the sea

In this unit students will develop and present a performance about an underwater environment and make links with learning in Human Society and its Environment.

They will:

- sustain and build belief in roles
- use elements of drama to create effects
- show the development of movement and language skills
- form opinions about drama and through drama
- enhance their understanding of factors which threaten a marine environment.

Drama forms

- improvisation
- movement
- storytelling.

Resources

- research material based on sea creatures, including images and recordings
- recorded music as selected by the teacher and students e.g. *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff from the CD recording, *Universal Classics #6* (1993). EMI Records Ltd, London.

Learning activities

Getting started

- Students research marine life. They study creatures living in particular locations and examine ways in which sea creatures move and communicate. They examine factors which threaten the existence of sea creatures.
- Students in role as marine biologists report on their findings about the life and habitat of a particular marine creature being studied. Teacher-in-role as chairperson of meeting facilitates discussion.
- Students find a space with a partner. They move and make sounds as if they were some of the creatures studied above... e.g. *dolphins...* playing with others, searching for food, diving through the surface of the water, *octopuses...* moving outside the cave, finding a partner, swimming to the surface, *sharks...* chasing prey, catching prey, patrolling the outside of the cave, *stingrays...* exploring the cave, balancing on the surface, moving through the water, *starfish...* resting on a wall of the cave, sliding down the wall, twisting over.

• Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- Decide on an underwater location e.g. sea cave, rock pool, sea bed etc. and consider factors which may threaten it, e.g. unexpected storm, arrival of strangers, pollution, oil spill, human intervention etc.
- *What is the name of this place? Where is it? What creatures are found here? What is their source of food? How do they move from place to place? What are the local conditions? Does any human activity occur here?* Students draw a rough map of this place, indicating any special features, and create images to build belief in this place.
- In small groups, students decide on roles and improvise a movement sequence as if they were a group of creatures engaged in regular activities in and around this place e.g. feeding, chasing, hunting, playing, protecting, etc. Each group represents a different type of creature. Have each group develop a sentence which introduces and focuses the scene e.g. *The sharks are hunting their prey.* Present and discuss with class.
- Build a movement piece about a threat to this environment. Introduce a piece of music which shows strong contrast in mood e.g. *Carmina Burana*. Decide on the situation and develop a story in movement which shows how the groups of sea creatures will respond and what will happen. Begin with the initial work developed in groups and decide how the piece will develop from there.
- Develop ideas without the music at first. Teacher assists as required. Students then rehearse their ideas as the music is played. Listen for moments in the music to guide the focus, mood and contrast.
- Assist students to explore and refine movements using varying levels and use of space. Explore interactions between the groups at different moments. Discuss quality of movements used to move through the water at different moments in the story.



Are the movements heavy or light? Fluid or rigid? How does the type of movement change in response to the threat? How do the focus and mood of the piece change? How can the ending be made clear?

- Students rehearse, decide on costumes and props, rehearse several more times and perform for other groups.

Responding

- Discuss the performance. *Which movements were particularly effective? Why? How convincing were the roles? Were the situations clear? Where was the focus of the piece? What was the mood? How was it created? How was contrast used in the telling of the story? Where was tension felt? Why? What part did the music play in the telling of the story? How could the performance be improved?*
- Students write about the experience. *Describe your role. How well did you sustain it? What helped you to do this? Write about your group. How did you develop your ideas? How has this drama work helped you to learn about life under the sea? What do you think about the problem explored?*
- Encourage students to form opinions about their own work and the performance in general. *What worked well? What could be improved?*

Assessment of students

- Teacher observation of students' drama work and their process of working.
- Analysis by the teacher of students' oral and written comments, drawings and other responses to their drama work.
- Consideration of the following questions about students' learning in drama:
 - ♦ How well are they able to sustain and build belief in roles? How convincing are they?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are using drama elements to create effects as they work with others to develop drama? How effectively are they working together?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are developing movement and language skills? Which particular skills were developed in this unit? How well were students able to use voice, gesture and different types of movement to communicate their ideas? Which movement and language skills need further development?
 - ♦ What opinions about drama are students forming? What other learning in drama is evident as they observe and respond to their drama and the drama of others?
- Consideration of the following question about other learning:
 - ♦ What evidence is there that the drama work has contributed to their understanding of factors which threaten a marine environment?

Extension activities

- Develop a movement piece with students which explores the environment over a longer period of time and indicates the impact on marine life and humanity.
- Students research other natural environments and explore in a similar way, developing roles and a situation in which the environment is threatened or responds to change.
- Teacher-in-role as local journalist questions groups with different interests in the environment e.g. scientists, developers, residents, marine biologists, people who fish, tourists, etc. Have students indicate opinions about the protection of the area for a newspaper article.

