

Rainforests

In this unit students work in improvisation and movement to explore and enhance their understanding of rainforest environments.

They will:

- consolidate and extend belief in roles
- manipulate drama elements to enhance meaning
- show the consolidation and extension of movement and language skills
- critically evaluate drama and through drama
- develop a greater understanding of characteristics of rainforests
- show greater awareness of the issues related to their protection.

Drama forms

- improvisation
- movement

Resources

- Baker, Jeannie (1987). *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*. MacRae Books, Sydney.
- Selection of New Age recordings based on sounds of rainforests.

Learning activities

Getting started

- Students research rainforests, explore images, stories and other information. They research particular groups of living things found in tropical rainforests e.g. animals, plants, insects or birds.
- With the assistance of the teacher students listen to the sounds of rainforests e.g. recordings of New Age music. Students move in response to the sounds and music. *What is the mood?*
- Students listen to the teacher read the story, *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*. Stop at "...good place to hide". Discuss the images and sounds of the forest at this point in the story. What can the students-in-role see and hear through the windows of the tree? Students imagine that they are in the forest and near the ancient tree. What is it like?

• Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- As a whole class decide on the space in the classroom which will represent the forest and identify the location of the ancient tree by using an object e.g. a chair or other piece of furniture.
- In groups, students improvise and build a simple movement sequence which explores the special meaning of the ancient tree for roles suggested in the story e.g. one group shows the significance of the tree for the children who used to play there, one group shows the significance of the tree for the creatures who live there, one group shows the significance of the tree for the scientists who visit for research, one group shows the significance of the tree for "the future". *Who is involved? What's happening? Where? When? Why?*
- Groups may develop a simple statement to begin the piece or choose to improvise in movement and sound only.
- Photograph groups as they work to develop a piece.
- Ask the class to sit in a circle around "the tree" in the forest. Walk into the circle and invite one group at a time to present its piece, e.g. *Please show me the meaning of the ancient tree for the children who used to play there*. The particular group stands and presents its improvisation. The teacher repeats this approach for each of the other groups.
- Photograph moments as each piece is performed.
- Display photographs and write about the moment portrayed.

Responding

- The students discuss the ideas and techniques used in each piece. *What did you notice about the use of focus, contrast, tension and mood? How was the meaning of the tree different for each group? Why is it important to protect such trees from destruction?*
- Students write about the ideas and issues explored.



Assessment of students

- Observe students' drama work and their process of working.
- Analyse the students' oral and written comments and other responses to their drama work.
- Consider the following questions about students' learning in drama:
 - ♦ How well are they able to consolidate and extend belief in roles? How effectively do they use voice and gesture to characterise and communicate the roles? To what extent are they showing a serious commitment to their roles? To what extent are they able to depart from stereotypes and create new and challenging roles?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are manipulating drama elements to enhance meaning in their work? How are mood, focus, contrast and tension being developed and used in their work? To what extent are new techniques being sought out and tried? How is the use of symbol becoming more evident in their work? How effectively are students working together?
 - ♦ Which movement and language skills are being consolidated and extended as they perform? Which movement and language skills need further development?
 - ♦ How well are they able to critically evaluate drama? What else are they learning through their drama experiences?
- Consider the following questions about other learning:
 - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to the students' understanding of characteristics of rainforests?
 - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to the students' understanding of the issues related to their protection?

Extension activities

- Create a fictional tropical Australian rainforest. Class decides on a name and location. Develop and draw a map and geographical features. Identify location e.g. a walking trail, an Aboriginal cave, an observation bridge. Create a movement work to show the impact of change on living things in this environment. Select music and sound scapes to build the piece.
- Students-in-role act as research scientists at a local council meeting and share information about the animals, plants, insects and birds studied on a recent expedition into the forest named above. They have been asked to the meeting to assist in the writing of a promotional publication about the forest.
- Teacher-in-role as council representative and chair of the meeting seeks scientists' opinions about a proposal that a public roadway be developed through a part of the forest to bring more tourists into the local area. What is the opinion of members of the group?
- Create a series of depictions at the scene of a protest against the bulldozing of an area of the rainforest.

