



Rainbow Dance

This article presents a series of seven dance lessons using the story of the rainbow as a stimulus.

While the specified curriculum objectives are for fifth and sixth classes, the activities may be done with children of all ages. The photographs show children in a multi — class setting engaging with the rainbow dance in their classroom. In the first five lessons, the children are given opportunities to explore and develop their movement vocabulary. They receive ample time to practice, discuss and refine their movements. In the following lessons, the story is introduced, and the children apply their dance skills to create the rainbow dance.

These activities are adapted from the creative dance lessons in the Primary Schools Sports Initiative (PSSI) Lesson Plans, which were written by Trish Fitzpatrick. For more ideas, refer to the PE section on www.pcsp.ie



Resources

- the rainbow story (see page 19 of this magazine)
- CD player
- a selection of slow tempo or atmospheric music such as music by Jean Michel Jarre, Clannad, Enya, Enigma, Adiemus, Deep Forest, Afro Celt
- coloured sarongs or ribbons or strips of crepe paper

Warm ups and stretches

Warm ups and cool downs are an **essential** part of any PE lesson. A selection is available on www.pcsp.ie

Lesson 1: Exploration of shape, levels, directions



- Begin the lesson with a warm up.
- Encourage the children to explore the range of **shapes** they can make with their bodies. This may be done without music initially, and then with music. For example:
 - **Shape:** Can you make a wide open shape with your body? Next make a

tight twisted shape. Can you make a shape like a star? Hold it for four counts.

level

- Encourage the children to explore different **levels** by making the shapes at high, medium and low levels. For example:
 - **Shapes and levels:** Can you make a low closed shape? Now make a tall narrow shape. Can you make a wide shape at a low level, followed by a narrow shape at a high level?
- Encourage the children to explore different **directions**, for example, forwards, backwards, to the left, to the right. Ask them to incorporate direction and level, for example:
 - Can you move forward at a low level, and then change level and move to the right.
- **Consolidation of shape, levels and directions:** Ask the children to travel in a direction of their choice for four counts or beats, to make and hold a shape for four beats, and then to travel in another direction for four beats. This may be done first without music, and then with music as the children gain confidence.
- End the lesson with a cool down.

direction

Lesson 2: Consolidation and exploration of pathways and body actions



shape

- Commence with a warm up activity
- Revise shapes, levels and directions from Lesson 1.
- **Pathways:** Encourage the children to explore different **pathways**, for example curved, straight or zigzag as they move, for example:
Can you move as if you are travelling in a curved path?
Can you move as if you are on a zigzag road?
Can you travel in a circular direction?
It is important to remind the children that they should move without touching anyone else.
- **Actions:** Ask the children to use different **actions** as they travel in the various pathways, for example, hopping, skipping, stepping and galloping.
- When the children have had ample time to explore shapes, levels, directions, pathways and actions as outlined above, ask them to incorporate all of the above elements into a **solo dance**. For example: *Can you travel in a certain pathway and in a certain direction for a count of eight? Now make and hold a shape for four beats. Change direction, and travel for a count of eight at a different level and pathway. Make and hold a different shape for a count of four.*
- Practice first without music and then with music
- End the lesson with a cool down.

Lesson 3: Extension and exploration of pathways in the air



- Commence with a warm up.
- Revise parts of Lessons 1 and 2.
- Show the children a visual stimulus such as the following, or draw some similar pathways on the board.
- Encourage the children to trace the pathways in the air, using their arms, in response to the stimulus.
- Ask the children to imagine that they are in a space bubble and to perform their actions in their "bubble" while the

bubble is stationary. This is ensure that the children use all the available space in the room, as children tend to cluster in the same areas.

- Ask the children to move around the floor in their space bubble, while using the dance elements that they have explored up to now, shape, levels, directions, pathways and actions. They should use the picture as a stimulus for different pathways. Do this without music initially, and then with music.
- End the lesson with a cool down.

Lesson 4: Dancing in pairs



- Begin the lesson with a warm up.
- Divide the class into pairs of children
- Guide the children to explore movements in **canon** or in **unison** as follows:
- **Canon:** one child performs a movement and then holds the finishing position while the partner copies. This is explored without music then with music
- **Unison:** Pairs of children perform simple movements together, first without music and then with music
- **Guided discovery:** Give the children a short time to create a simple pair dance using their own shapes and body actions. Each dance should have four parts as follows:
 1. An opening shape
 2. A movement in a chosen pathway, at a chosen level
 3. A different movement in another direction and pathway, and at a different level
 4. A finishing shape.

The children may perform the movements in canon or unison, or a combination of these.

- Following some planning and rehearsal time, encourage the children to perform their pair dances to music. Each pair does their own dance, but the entire class is moving at the same time.
- End the lesson with a cool down.



Lesson 5: Dancing with a prop

- Begin the lesson with a warm up.
- Revise shape, actions, levels, pathways and directions from Lessons 1 and 2.
- Give the children a prop such as a sarong, or ribbon, or strips of crepe paper. Ask the children to explore various pathways in the air using the prop. The visual stimulus from Lesson 3 may be used again here.
- Ask the children to explore various ways of moving with the prop, and to experiment with balancing it on various body parts. Remind them to use a variety of actions, levels and directions.
- Ask the children to invent a simple pair dance using the prop. The dance could be structured in four parts as in Lesson 4. Practice this without music, and then with music.
- End the lesson with a cool down.

Lesson 6: Use of the rainbow story as a stimulus for strong and light movements



- Read, or ask a child to read the rainbow story.
- Spend some time on talk and discussion and questioning, for example:
What pictures come to mind when you think of these different colours?
Do you associate any feelings with these colours? Blue is often thought of as a calm soothing colour. What feelings

come to mind when you think of yellow?
Violet?

If we were to make a dance about this story, what actions would you do for blue? Red? Would the actions be strong or light

- Begin the movement section of the lesson with a warm up.
- Ask the children to invent a strong movement for one of the colours as discussed in the oral part of the lesson. Do this without music, and then with music.
- Ask the children to invent a light movement for one of the colours as discussed in the oral part of the lesson. Do this without music, and then with music.
- Now assign each child to a colour of the rainbow, and ask them to individually create a solo dance to represent their colour. Suggest that the dance could be in four parts, as in previous lessons. The children may use sarongs, ribbons or crepe paper for this.
- Give the children the opportunity to practice first without music, and then with music.
- Group work: The class is now grouped according to the seven colours of the rainbow. The children are asked to work with their groups for five minutes without music to create a **group colour dance**, which will include a starting point, at least two actions, and a finishing point. The groups may perform the movement in **unison** or in **canon**.
- The groups practice the movement with music
- Each group performs while the other children watch. The observing children are encouraged to give positive feedback to the performers.
- End the lesson with a cool down.

Lesson 7: Rainbow dance with narration

- Begin the lesson with a warm up.
- Arrange all the colour groups in their starting position for group dance.
- Choose one child to be Lightning, another to be Thunder, and a third to be Rain.
- Commence reading the story in its entirety, or ask a child to read it. As each colour is referred to, the various groups do their colour dances.
- On completion of each dance, the children should 'melt' down to the floor until all group dances are completed.
- Proceed to the next part of the story. On reading the line "*quarrelling gets louder and louder*", the groups are prompted to divide into two parallel lines facing each other about two

metres apart.

- Suggest to the children that they make vivid pathways with their arms in the air, as the colours compete and try to outdo each other as being the most important colour in the rainbow.
- When the narrator reads: "*Suddenly there was a brilliant flash of white lightning..*" all the groups should freeze.



Lightning

- The child who has been chosen to be Lightning moves between the lines in sudden, sharp movements - running, jumping, turning.
- The groups cower on the ground as they watch and wait.
- When the narrator reads "*Thunder rolled and boomed*" the child who is assigned the role of Thunder moves in with slow sustained movement, stamping feet and slapping thighs.



Thunder



Rain

- When the narrator reads "The Rain spoke 'You foolish colours, fighting amongst yourselves.....'" The child who is selected to be Rain moves around the lines and tells the colour there is a place for them all and that they can all live in peace and hope.
- If the children have been using props such as sarongs or ribbons, they can wave these.
- End the lesson with a cool down.

Strand: Dance

Strand Unit:

Exploration, creation and performance of dance

Content Objectives:

Fifth / sixth classes:

The child will be enabled to

- create and perform a more complex range of movements
- communicate through movement a range of moods or feelings
- choose and respond with increasing sensitivity to a broader range of stimuli
- develop work with a group
- explore and experiment with the use of costume and props to enhance creation and performance of dance.



The Story of the Rainbow

Once upon a time all the colours in the world started to quarrel; each claimed that it was the best, the most important, the most useful, the favourite.

GREEN said: 'Clearly I am the most important. I am the sign of life and of hope. I was chosen for grass, trees, leaves – without me all the animals would die. Look out over the countryside and you will see that I am in the majority.'

BLUE interrupted: 'You only think about the earth, but what about the sky and the sea? It is water that is the basis of life and this is drawn up by the clouds from the blue sea. The sky gives space and peace and serenity.'

YELLOW chuckled: 'You are all so serious. I bring laughter gaiety and warmth into the world. The sun is yellow, the moon is yellow, the stars are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower the whole world starts to smile. Without me there would be no fun.'

ORANGE started next to blow its own trumpet: 'I am the colour of health and strength. I may be scarce, but I am precious for I serve the inner needs of human life. I carry all the most important vitamins. Think of carrots and pumpkins, oranges, mangoes and pawpaws. I don't hang around all the time, but when I fill the sky at sunrise or sunset, my beauty is so striking that no one gives another thought to any of you.'

RED, unable to stand it any longer, shouted out: 'I'm the ruler of you all, blood, life's blood. I am the colour of danger and bravery. I am willing to fight for the cause. I bring fire in the blood. Without me the earth would be empty as the moon. I am the colour of passion and of love; the red rose, poinsettia and poppy.'

PURPLE rose up to its full height. It was very tall and spoke with great pomp: 'I am the colour of royalty and power. Kings, chiefs and bishops have always chosen me for I am a sign of authority and wisdom. People do not question me: they listen and obey.'

INDIGO spoke much more quietly than all the others, but just as determinedly. 'Think of me. I am the colour of silence. You hardly notice me, but without me you all become superficial. I represent thought and reflection, twilight and deep waters. You need me for balance and contrast, for prayer and inner peace.'

And so the colours went on in this line, each convinced that it was the best. Their quarrelling became louder and louder. Suddenly there was a startling flash of brilliant white lightning; thunder rolled and boomed. Rain started to pour down relentlessly. The colours all crouched down in fear, drawing close to one another for comfort.

Then **RAIN** spoke: 'You foolish colours, fighting amongst yourselves, each trying to dominate the rest. Do you not know that God made you all – each for a special purpose, unique and different? He loves you all. He wants you all. Join hands with one another and come with me. He will stretch you across the sky in a great bow of colour, as a reminder that he loves you all, that you can live together in peace, a promise that he is with you, a sign of hope for tomorrow.'

'The Story of the Rainbow' is taken from Workers for the Kingdom, a part of the Children of God series courtesy of Veritas, 1976.