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Education Guide: Complete Dogness

Integrating Movement with Language Arts

Program description

The performance for children, *Complete Dogness*, is inspired by several literary sources. These include *The Obstinate Pen* by Frank Dormer, *My Fair Lady* a musical based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, *Wet Pet Dry Pet Your Pet* by Dr. Seuss, *Wallace and Gromit* a British clay animation comedy series created by Nick Park of Aardman Animations and poetry by Ogden Nash. Incorporating spoken word, movement, music the story centers on a small family, a Mother, a Father, and a Child and a new puppy, Barky. The puppy has some bad habits, but with the patience of family and friends, Barky discovers her ability to learn new tricks. At first, Barky, who communicates via facial expressions and body language, is a pest and gets into trouble. She steals a slipper, a delicious wool sweater, and a whole block of cheese in no time. The performance demonstrates the power of family connections and support, the responsibilities of pet ownership, how rules establish order, and the importance of the very human qualities of compassion, empathy and patience in relation to other beings.

Program goals and objectives:

The purpose is to inspire students to explore poetry, language arts, and to nurture creativity through movement and the literary arts. An objective is appreciation for live performance and dramatic arts and physical story-telling. The goal is to inspire students to read, write, and to discover creative potential. Poems, narrative, and story-structure may be the basis for movement exploration in the classroom.

Program outline:

Below is an outline of the performance. The choreography is a narrative structure with rhythmic and non-rhythmic articulation, theme and variation and repetition which advances the storyline or augments the spoken word. The choreographic process used improvisation for the purpose of developing movement ideas. The movement language is taken from the dance techniques of ballet, contemporary dance, jazz dance, pedestrian movement, and a combination of these.

Introduction

Each family member is introduced through a brief movement solo, then the three characters join in unison, doing a range of moves at the same time. The doorbell rings and the postman has delivered the long-awaited puppy.

Puppy behavior

Call-and-response: Barky acts, the others respond to Barky in action and word.

Shadowing a story

Father is working on a screenplay. Barky and Child shadow his words in movement

Outdoors

Barky & Child exalt in the outdoors. The scene is structured around "dog-like" movement motifs that are elaborated upon or developed in a variety of ways. There is an emphasis on levels: the height in



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space at which a dancer is moving (for example, high, medium, low) and locomotor movement: movement in which the body travels across space (for example, running, creeping, rolling).

Misbehavior

Barky doesn't understand the rules. She's up on the table then destroys a favorite item. The movement incorporates retrograde; performing a sequence of moves in reverse order.

Barky alone

A song from *My Fair Lady*, "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" is adapted to fit the dog's viewpoint, but Father joins in to comfort Barky.

Cleaning dance

the text incorporates fragments from a book by Dr. Seuss. Pedestrian movement and repetition frames the action

Party preparation

the dancers invite 4 students from the audience to join onstage as party guests. The students are pre-selected prior to the start of the performance, and will partner with each cast member to perform 'on-the-spot' directed movement that includes mirroring (facing a cast member and doing the same thing), still tableau or frozen group shapes, and 'passing' gestures that circulate within the group.

Isolation

After having stolen a block of cheese from the table, party-goers from the audience return to their seats. Barky is placed in his 'box.'

Resolution

the family resolves some of Barky's behavior issues by changing their own. Compromise by both the family members and by Barky creates a positive result that pleases everyone.



Relationship to English and Oral Language:

Examples for how this material may be used for Language Arts/English related goals and Standards of Learning in K-5:

The student will demonstrate growth in the use of oral language.

K.1 Listen to a variety of literary forms, including stories and poems.

Participate in choral speaking and recite short poems, rhymes, songs, and stories with repeated patterns.

Participate in creative dramatics.

Recognize rhyming words.

Generate rhyming words in a rhyming pattern.

3.1The student will use effective communication skills in group activities.

- a) Listen attentively by making eye contact
- b) Ask and respond to questions from teachers and other group members.
- c) Explain what has been learned
- d) Use language appropriate for context
- e) Increase listening and speaking vocabularies.

2.7The student will continue to demonstrate growth in the use of oral language.

Participate in a variety of oral language activities, including choral speaking and reciting short poems, rhymes, songs, and stories with repeated patterns.

Express ideas orally in complete sentences.

4.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, narrative nonfiction texts, and poetry.

- a) Explain the author's purpose.
- b) Describe how the choice of language, setting, characters, and information contributes to the author's purpose.
- c) Identify the main idea.
- d) Summarize supporting details.
- e) Identify the problem and solution.
- f) Describe the relationship between text and previously read materials.
- g) Identify sensory words.
- h) Draw conclusions/make inferences about text.
- i) Make, confirm, or revise predictions.
- j) Identify cause and effect relationships.

4.7The student will write effective narratives, poems, and explanations.

Utilize elements of style, including word choice and sentence variation.

Write rhymed, unrhymed, and patterned poetry.



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PRE AND POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

1. Introduce Ogden Nash through his biography.

"Frederic Ogden Nash (August 19, 1902 – May 19, 1971) was an American poet best known for writing pithy and funny light verse. At the time of his death in 1971, the New York Times said his "droll verse with its unconventional rhymes made him the country's best-known producer of humorous poetry". Ogden Nash was born in Rye, New York. His father owned and operated an import-export company, and because of business obligations, the family relocated often.

After graduating from St. George's School (Middletown, Rhode Island), Nash entered Harvard University in 1920, only to drop out a year later. He returned to St. George's to teach for a year and left to work his way through a series of other jobs, eventually landing a position as an editor at Doubleday publishing house, where he first began to write poetry.

Nash moved to Baltimore, Maryland, three years after marrying Frances Leonard, a Baltimore girl. He lived in Baltimore from 1934 and most of his life until his death in 1971. Nash thought of Baltimore as home. After his return from a brief move to New York, he wrote "I could not love New York had I not loved Baltimore." His first job in New York was as a writer of the streetcar card ads for a company that previously had employed another Baltimore resident, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Nash loved to rhyme. "I think in terms of rhyme...and have since I was six years old," he professed. He had a fondness for crafting his own words whenever rhyming words did not exist. In 1931 he published his first collection of poems, *Hard Lines*, earning him national recognition. Some of his poems reflected an anti-establishment feeling." https://www.poetrysoup.com/ogden_nash/biography

There are many books, biographies, anthologies of Ogden Nash poetry. His material is widely available online, in libraries and bookstores. <https://allpoetry.com/Ogden-Nash>

2. Listen, Gesture Exercise

My Fair Lady is a musical based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, with book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner and music by Frederick Loewe. The story concerns Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl who takes speech lessons from Professor Henry Higgins, a phonetics specialist, so that she may pass as a lady. Explore how the articulation of small movements and body language affect conversation patterns. Have a spoken-word conversation, and then communicate the same message with gestures alone. How does eye contact with the speaker or mover allow or confuse comprehension.

3. Interactive Explorations Find historical information and explore compositional process:

"Theodor Seuss Geisel (March 2, 1904 – September 24, 1991) was an American author, political cartoonist, poet, animator, book publisher, and artist, best known for authoring children's books under the pen name Dr. Seuss. His work includes several of the most popular children's books of all time, selling over 600 million copies and being translated into more than 20 languages by the time of his death.

Geisel adopted his "Dr. Seuss" pen name during his university studies at Dartmouth College and the University of Oxford. He left Oxford in 1927 to begin his career as an illustrator and cartoonist for *Vanity Fair*, *Life*, and various other publications. He published his first children's book *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* in 1937. During World War II, he worked in an animation department of the United States Army where he produced several short films, including *Design for Death*, which later won the 1947 Academy Award for Documentary Feature.

After the war, Geisel focused on children's books, writing classics such as [If I Ran the Zoo](#) (1950), [Horton Hears a Who!](#) (1955), [If I Ran the Circus](#) (1956), [The Cat in the Hat](#) (1957), [How the Grinch Stole](#)



Christmas! (1957), and Green Eggs and Ham (1960). He published over 60 books during his career, which have spawned numerous adaptations, including 11 television specials, four feature films, a Broadway musical, and four television series. Geisel's birthday, March 2, has been adopted as the annual date for National Read Across America Day, an initiative on reading created by the National Education Association." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Seuss

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Teaching the Three R's by Ann Green Gilbert

Creative Dance For All Ages by Anne Green Gilbert

- Blom, L. A. and Tarin Chaplin, L. (1989) *The Intimate Act of Choreography*. Dance Books. ISBN 0-8229-5342-0
- Ellfeldt, L. (1998) *A Primer for Choreographers*. Waveland Press. ISBN 0-88133-350-6
- Minton, S. C. (1997) *Choreography: A Basic Approach Using Improvisation*. Human Kinetics. ISBN 0-88011-529-7
- Tufnell, M. and Vaughan, D. (1999) *Body Space Image: Notes Toward Improvisation and Performance*. Princeton Book Co. ISBN 1-85273-041-2
- Smith-Autard, J. M. (2000) *Dance Composition*. Routledge. ISBN 0-87830-118-6

Artists whose work appears in the show:

Mark Sylvester, composer: <http://www.marksylvester.net/>

Steven Rogers, composer: http://www.stevenrogers.us/Steven_Rogers/home.html

John Kamman, composer

About Jane Franklin Dance

Jane Franklin Dance crosses disciplines in partnership with music, media, visual artists and community participants. A vibrant part of the Washington DC/Northern Virginia cultural community, Jane Franklin Dance has been presented at multiple venues and festivals and internationally in Mexico. A recipient of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region Creative Communities Award, Jane has developed innovative and collaborative projects combining dancers with the round wall skateboarding community, with a life size kinetic sculpture, with the architecture of a specific site, with dogs & owners, and with interactive live video and sound for numerous public art projects. Jane Franklin is a recipient of the American Association of University Women Elizabeth Campbell Award for the Advancement of the Arts in Arlington, and her video work Four Mile Run Footbridge was selected for PHOTO/VIDEO 13: Juried Mid-Atlantic Exhibition. Jane Franklin Dance has been recognized by Virginia's Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. The company tours for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Paul Mellon Arts in Education Program, Virginia Commission for the Arts Teaching Artist Roster and the Virginia Commission's Tour Directory.