

You Can... Use language to inspire dance

Inspiration for dance can come from many sources: from music, from art, and also from language. The written word has been used by many great choreographers as a stimulus or backdrop for their work.

Thinking points

- Words and dance movements might seem to be very different forms of expression. However, they can both use a symbolic language as a way of expressing an artistic sensibility.
- Thinking of ways to express words through movement will help your children widen their vocabulary in both English and dance.
- Linking words and dance shows your pupils how language can be given a sense of movement. This should hopefully help your more able pupils add pace and interest to their writing.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Use different kinds of words, particularly adjectives and adverbs, to inspire your children. For example:
 - directions: in, out, up, down, over, under, through, between, around, across
 - opposites: black/white, open/closed, happy/sad, yes/no, fat/thin
 - speeds: fast, slow, quick, sluggish, swift, leisurely
 - ways of moving: slide, jump, skid, turn, hop, run, saunter, stretch, bend
 - textures: rough, smooth, sharp, bumpy, shiny.
- Create letter shapes as a starting point for dances, encouraging your children to use their arms, legs, heads and bodies to 'draw' letters in the air. Choose fluid shapes such as S, M and O for flowing movements and more linear letters such as T and Z for jagged ones.
- Experiment with some onomatopoeic words, finding ways to express them through movement. For example:
 - crash
 - bang
 - miaow
 - woof
 - boo.
- Create a mind map of words connected to animals, thinking particularly about the way that different animals move. For example:
 - cat: sleek, slinky, pounce
 - elephant: plod, heavy, trunk
 - snake: slide, slimy, slither
 - bee: buzz, fly, sting.
- Use a range of texts as a stimulus for movement work: poems, stories, newspaper articles, myths and fairy tales.
- Discuss some traditional stories that have been used for ballets. Play your children extracts of music from these ballets. For example:
 - Peter and the Wolf
 - The Nutcracker
 - Coppelia
 - The Sleeping Beauty.

