

OUR TOWN

This narrative dance, inspired by a painting by L.S. Lowry, provides opportunities for characterisation in pairs and groups.

Specific Learning Outcomes

- Perform expressively, using dynamic qualities to communicate the dance idea.
- Respond imaginatively to a painting.
- Use compositional devices and share ideas in groups.

Stimulus

The painting *Our Town* by L.S. Lowry (1941), or similar, such as *Mill Scene with Figures* (1944), *Industrial Scene* (1967) or *A Manufacturing Town* (1922).

Resources

The painting, video clip of class chorus phrase on DVD, video clip from *A Simple Man* on www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone, an extract from the ballet choreographed by Gillian Lynne inspired by the paintings of L.S. Lowry.



Travelling phrase (see the Video folder in this web resource).

Accompaniment

Traditional brass band music (a march).

Content

- Character and expression
- Step patterns and pathways
- Gesture patterns
- Partner and group work
- Rhythm

Assessment

- Peer evaluation of each section (pair to pair or group to group) using agreed success criteria.
- Self-evaluation against learning outcomes.
- Videotape different sections and film final dance.

Curriculum Links

- History: Social history, the 1940s
- Geography: Location, environment, human processes
- Art: Investigating art—the paintings of L.S. Lowry
- Drama: Role play and characterisation

Options

Children could look at paintings of street scenes from different eras. The same process could be applied (e.g., to Bruegel's *Children's Games*, 1560).

Possible Unit Structure

- Lesson 1: Look at and discuss painting and introductory tasks; learn class chorus and create duos.
- Lesson 2: Recap class chorus and duos, create group character phrase and decide the order.
- Lesson 3: Recap dance so far and create factory section; compare performance and composition with video clip; listen to accompaniment and plan the structure of the dance.
- Lesson 4: Practise each section and the complete dance and videotape it.
- Lesson 5: Evaluate.

(continued)

OUR TOWN *(continued)***Possible Dance Structure**

- Start with a still picture—pairs face left or right.
- Pairs come to life and travel together across space.
- Class chorus face front and repeat to meet up in groups.
- Groups on the spot—gesture phrases.
- Class chorus twice.
- Factory worker phrase.
- Pairs break away to perform original step patterns back to their starting positions.
- Re-create the still picture.

Warm-up

Travelling and changes of direction (e.g., Circle-Partner-Group warm-up in the Warm-ups folder in this web resource) meeting up in pairs and groups.

Tasks	Teaching Points
Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at paintings and discuss different characters and how they might move. • Travel in and out of spaces, varying steps, directions, speeds and pathways. • Show different moods as they travel. • List the ways of walking and explore some together. 	<p>Children could role-play to bring the painting to life.</p> <p>Consider size of steps.</p> <p>Use posture, facial expression and type of steps.</p> <p>Examples are <i>stagger, stride, saunter, march, dawdle</i>. Can they perform these rhythmically to suit the accompaniment, and can they create step patterns that can be repeated?</p>
Class chorus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach a short phrase based on steps and directions. • Perform in unison. • Explore different characters and moods (e.g., brisk and business-like, tired and cold, young and bouncy, old and frail). • Each group chooses a character or mood and performs as a tight group, repeating the phrase to cross the space. 	<p>Practise performing as one tightly knit group.</p> <p>This task could be useful preparation for later in the unit.</p> <p>Organise class into groups of 4 to 6.</p> <p>Examples are child, teenager, mum, dad, worker, boss, someone looking for work.</p>
Step patterns for duos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, choose a character from the painting. Consider age and purpose. Explore different types of steps to suit choice. • Create a step pattern to cross the space in unison. Consider speed, rhythm, pausing, changes of direction. • Bring the painting to life by starting in a space in a still position as if in the painting. • Pairs move across the space a group at a time until all are travelling (if space permits). • Half the class watch the other half to suggest minor changes to spacing and direction. Swap. • Once all pairs have performed, they perform the class chorus in unison (no particular character for this chorus). 	<p>Easier if both partners select the same character type.</p> <p>Ensure pairs are spread out in the space. Space is easier to manage if all travelling takes place <i>across</i> the space (left to right or right to left).</p> <p>Pairs can turn and repeat their phrase in the opposite direction.</p> <p>Use the structure of the music to cue when pairs come to life.</p> <p>Decide the final order of who goes and when to avoid traffic jams.</p> <p>Perform class chorus twice. Keep it energetic and bouncy.</p>

(continued)

OUR TOWN *(continued)*

Tasks	Teaching Points
<p>Group gestures on the spot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group selects a character type for the group (e.g., children, teenagers, gossips, factory workers). Explore suitable gestures (standing on the spot) and find 4. Develop a pattern of gestures (no steps this time) to perform in unison; use facial expression and posture. Consider rhythm, phrasing and musicality. Group-to-group evaluation. <p>• Structure this section so that some groups perform and others are still tableaux.</p> <p>• Perform the class chorus, but this time in group characters.</p>	<p>Select gestures that communicate the character instantly.</p> <p>Gossips might point, whisper, nudge and nod. Suggest 16 counts for the phrase.</p> <p>Is the characterisation clear? How good is their timing?</p> <p>Look for opportunities for interaction (e.g., action and reaction) between groups.</p>
<p>Factory workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore different actions carried out by industrial mill workers. Work in 2s then 4s to create a pattern of actions that can be repeated in a machine-like way. Add “tired” gestures too! Develop to include unison, canon and contrast. Group-to-group evaluation. 	<p>Make a list and display (e.g., <i>push, pull, lift, press, pack</i>).</p> <p>Keep same duos and groups.</p> <p>Match the actions (mainly gestures) to the accompaniment.</p> <p>Dynamics should be strong and mechanical.</p> <p>Look for good focus, projection and timing.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen carefully to the accompaniment; decide as a class how to structure the dance and how to link the different sections. Practise and perform to another class or to the school and video for assessment. 	<p>Use the specific learning outcomes.</p>