

CIRCUS

This unit of work is inspired by human circus acts. The dance ideas encourage children to develop control, coordination and simple partner skills as well as character and expression. They are linked together to create a complete circus experience.

Specific Learning Outcomes

- Show expression through face, posture, action and dynamics.
- Show awareness of others and share ideas with a partner.
- Respond to feedback and give feedback to others using success criteria.

Stimulus

The circus

Resources

Circus pictures or video clips showing human acts

Accompaniment

"Tuba Smarties" by Sky; Variations 2 by Andrew Lloyd Webber

Content

- Variety of actions
- Tension, balance and control
- Partner and small-group work
- Relationships: mirroring, unison, canon, action and reaction (see chapter 3)
- Character and expression

Assessment

- Peer-to-peer evaluation of clown dance and strength phrase.
- Pair-to-pair evaluation of high-wire phrase.
- Pair-to-pair and group-to-group evaluation of trapeze twins and fantastic foursomes.
- Videotape and evaluate the complete dance.

Curriculum Links

PE: Balance and shape in gymnastics

Options

Less experienced and younger children may not be ready for group work; in that case, let all the children perform all sections and omit Fantastic Foursomes.

Possible Unit Structure

- Lesson 1: Introduce idea and discuss different acts; create clown dance with partner phrase.
- Lesson 2: Recap clown dance; create and refine strength phrase; create and refine balance phrase.
- Lesson 3: Create trapeze twins and fantastic foursomes.
- Lesson 4: Create parade; practise each section and perform whole dance.
- Lesson 5: Videotape and evaluate.

Possible Dance Structure

- Circus parade: Line up in pairs and parade around the space. Sit in a horseshoe or circle shape (circus ring).
- All perform clown dance and partner custard pie phrase. Return to seats.
- Half the class enter the ring, perform strength phrase and return.
- Half the class perform partner balance phrase.
- All children run to a space to perform Fantastic Foursomes with group photos to finish.

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From L. Paine and the National Dance Teachers Association, 2014, *Complete Guide to Primary Dance Web Resource* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

CIRCUS (continued)

Warm-up



- Lead a lively warm-up (use Mix and Match ideas in the Warm-ups folder in this web resource).
- Introduce large swinging actions: forwards and backwards and side to side in preparation for trapeze twins section.

Tasks	Teaching Points
Introduction: Look at circus pictures and list human acts (e.g., clowns, jugglers, tight-rope walkers, strongmen, acrobats, trapeze artists).	
Send in the clowns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children sit in a circle in front of imaginary mirrors. They slowly and carefully put on clown make-up with large, clear gestures and avoiding touching the face or head. • Stand and put on imaginary baggy trousers (stretch and balance), baggy jacket, big shoes. • Admire reflections in imaginary mirror then bend and stretch to limber up. • Enter the circus ring with funny walks. Explore a variety of walks and select favourite. • Trip and fall in slow motion; finish flat on the floor. Sit up and silently laugh (or cry)! Recover and return to circle. Alternate children perform all sections; swap and evaluate. • Make and throw a large imaginary custard pie in slow motion. • Practise receiving a custard pie, minding your own business, then zap! • In pairs, work on the custard pie routine: action and reaction. 	<p>Create red cheeks, smiling mouth, eyebrows, big red nose, funny wig, hat (what shape and size?).</p> <p>Ask children for ideas for clown clothes.</p> <p>Admire from the front, sides and behind.</p> <p>Feet turned in or out, size of step, bent or straight knees; wiggly, straight or zigzag pathways; arms swinging, waving, holding on hat or holding up trousers.</p> <p>Look for character, expression and bold actions. Which children have funny facial expressions and which have the silliest walks?</p> <p>Model this first.</p> <p>Focus on large, slow, clear actions and a stretched balance to finish.</p> <p>Where does it land? How do you feel?</p> <p>Keep a distance between partners and model examples that use good control and clear gestures.</p>
Strength: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand tall, feet apart, hands on hips, looking proud and strong. • Stride into the ring and greet the audience with arms outstretched; turn and bow. • Prepare to lift a heavy weight: Flex each arm and feel the muscles. Rub hands and prepare. • Bend to lift, keeping back straight. Lift weight to shoulders then ceiling, shoulders, floor. • Bow and stride back to place in circle. <p>Practise and improve performance. Do peer evaluation.</p>	<p>Look for strength, control, clear actions and facial expression.</p> <p>Add a wobble for effect!</p> <p>Encourage slow, controlled movements and body tension.</p>

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CIRCUS (continued)

Tasks	Teaching Points
<p>Balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practise walking very slowly and carefully along a straight line, arms out to balance and looking ahead. Include a balance on one leg in clear shape, then change to a low-level balance (different shape if necessary). • With a partner, start at opposite ends of an imaginary high wire. Walk slowly towards each other and make the same balance shape (mirror) and low-level shape. Walk slowly backwards away from each other. Bow to the audience on reaching the end of the high wire. • Practise and evaluate (pair to pair). 	<p>Model this first.</p> <p>Allow time to explore and select suitable balances.</p> <p>Look for control and ability to mirror actions.</p>
<p>Trapeze twins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore large swinging actions using arms. • Relate to a partner by mirroring or opposites (one swings forwards/other swings backwards). • Make a pattern of swings that can be repeated (e.g., 4 forwards and backwards then 4 side to side). • To end the phrase, create a balance with contact. 	<p>Forwards and backwards; side to side; with travel. Involve whole body in the swinging action (bend and stretch).</p> <p>Use same partners as before.</p> <p>Options: facing, side by side, one behind other, back to back, different levels, same or different shapes. This requires good body tension and alignment.</p>
<p>Fantastic foursomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join with another pair and evaluate each other's trapeze phrases. • Combine ideas to make a group phrase finishing in a group balance. • Jump away from the group one at a time (in canon) with a big dramatic jump, emphasising clear shape and safe landing. Roll or spin in canon. • Stride to meet up again for a group photo. <p>Group to group evaluation.</p>	<p>Look for good partner work (matching or complementary actions, timing).</p> <p>Use ideas from each pair's phrase. Model an example with one group.</p> <p>Have clear beginning, middle and end.</p> <p>Group decides on the order.</p> <p>Options: bow, group or partner balances, different shapes or positions on different levels.</p> <p>Look for clear structure and good relationships.</p>
<p>Circus parade: Pairs choose to be clowns, strong people or acrobats and explore how they would march in a parade. Match steps and gestures exactly with partner. Line up and parade around the room, form a large circle and sit down to create the circus ring.</p> <p>Practise each section and perform the whole dance. Assess individual achievement.</p> <p>Share with another class.</p>	<p>Encourage steps and gestures appropriate to character. Share ideas and good examples.</p> <p>Use the specific learning outcomes.</p>