

THE CALABASH CHILDREN

The outcome of this unit of work is an African-style dance in narrative form that interprets the themes of work and play.

Specific Learning Outcomes

- Perform expressively, using dynamic qualities to express the dance idea.
- Show beginnings, middles and ends and use simple compositional devices.
- Understand and demonstrate the style of African dance.

Stimulus

The story, Africa.

Resources



The story and video clip of the African Celebration dance (see Video folder in this web resource).

Accompaniment

Cymbal, tambour, two pieces of African music—one for celebration and one for work, such as *Djembe and African Drums* (Air Mail Music) or *The Rough Guide to African Music for Children* (World Music Network).

Content

- Patterning actions
- Developing everyday actions into dance
- Rhythmic awareness
- Group work
- Unison, canon and formations
- Sense of style

Assessment

- Pair-to-pair and group-to-group evaluation of each section.
- Videotape the complete dance for assessment and self-evaluation. Sample evaluation sheet is in chapter 7.

Curriculum Links

- Geography: Contrasting locality
- English: Traditional stories from other cultures
- Music: Responding to music from another culture
- PSHE and RE: Festivals, diversity, Black History Month

Options

Art: Create a collage or print based on calabash shapes and patterns.

The celebration section could also include some African call-and-response songs.

Possible Unit Structure

- Lesson 1: Teach the celebration dance; develop into a group dance by adding actions; create group calabash section.
- Lesson 2: Recap group calabashes and celebration dances; explore working actions and develop in groups.
- Lesson 3: Practise and refine the work dances.
- Lesson 4: Practise each section and perform the whole dance; videotape and evaluate.

(continued)

THE CALABASH CHILDREN *(continued)*

Possible Dance Structure

- Calabashes grow (in groups) and explode one group at a time.
- Children set to work in their groups.
- All perform celebration dance facing front. Step and clap into groups to repeat celebration dance with added actions.
- Repeat work dance.
- Turn into calabashes.

Warm-up

Circle warm-up in African style, comprising isolations, coordination and stepping (see Warm-ups and Video folders in this web resource). Develop to include partners and groups.



Tasks	Teaching Points
Introduction: Tell the start of the story. Learn the African celebration dance as a warm-up.	Tell the rest of the story as the dance develops. Begin in a large circle. Develop to dance with a partner on either side; travel to a new space and perform individually; meet up in 2s and 4s and perform.
Celebration: In groups of 4, practise and perform the celebration dance then explore new actions to add; select two and pattern them. Each group selects a strong finishing shape. Group evaluation.	The children will work in these groups for the rest of this unit. What might they be celebrating? Harvest? A victory? A special event? Jump, punch, clap, spin, turn, link arms. Do the actions communicate celebration? Do they flow smoothly? How good is the group's timing?
Calabashes: Individually make a small round shape on the floor (magic seed into pumpkin). Grow slowly as large as possible but keep rounded. On the signal, jump into a big wide shape and shout, "Here I am!" Develop in groups to make bigger round shapes (keeping contact). Repeat as previously.	Encourage smooth and controlled movements. Use a cymbal for control. Ensure there is space to jump; each group could explode at a different time.
Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this dance, discuss and explore possible working actions. • In pairs, pupils choose one action to practise together. Pairs choose a second action and practise it. • Develop the 2 actions into a pattern (e.g., a repeatable phrase). • Return to groups and evaluate each pair's phrase. • Learn each other's patterns and combine to make a longer unison dance. • Develop to include part in canon (one after the other); contrast (e.g., one pair high, one pair low) and variety in grouping (different formations). See Relationships, chapter 4. • Rehearse each section and combine them to create a narrative dance. Share with another class or in assembly. Videotape and assess.	For harvest: Sowing, digging, weeding, picking, cutting, gathering or stacking. The work could also relate to cooking, fetching water, feeding animals, cooking. Use tambour for the pulse and rhythm. Encourage bold, clear, rhythmic actions. Model good examples; look for appropriate numbers of actions (e.g., 8 and 8, unison, clear pathways and directions). Is the pattern clear? Ask children how to make these group dances more interesting for an audience. Use the specific learning outcomes.

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