

Lesson Plan: Dancing in the Canopy!

Room Requirements & Arrangement: Open space (if desk or chairs are in the way, these are to be moved to the walls of the room to create open space)

Content Area & Arts Discipline: ELA and using description in writing as well as the facts about the rainforest in combination with the dance elements of space (near and far) and level (high, medium, and low)

Overview of the Lesson: Using the dance elements of near and far and high/medium/low to show the layers of the rainforest and how density of vegetation changes in each layer.

Materials/Equipment: CD (Tigger Benford), handouts on the layers of rainforest (4 copies), 22 dancing scarves

School: St. Anthony Catholic Elementary School, Madison, MS

Grade Level: 1st & 2nd Grade (Mrs. Jones)

Date Lesson Created: September 2017

Proposed Time Frame: 45 minutes

Lesson Author: Julie White

Big Ideas & Learning Objectives

1. The student will be able to verbally articulate the four layers in the rainforest (forest floor, under storey, canopy, emergent layer).
2. The student will be able to both verbally articulate and demonstrate through movement, the difference between dancing with a partner who is near as well as far, and the three distinct levels of high, medium, and low.
3. The student will work creatively, collaboratively, and respectfully with a partner during the mirroring exercises, and will work appropriately with their prop (scarf).
4. The student will work creatively, collaboratively, and respectfully with a small group of their peers to create a dance about the animals that inhabit three layers of the rainforest.

Procedures

Affective Hook: "Who can tell me something interesting about a rainforest?" (The teacher will list out and confirm what student volunteers' offer here, focusing in particular on the fact that rainforests provide 28% of the world's oxygen and serve as the "earth's lungs" in this way. She will also highlight that rainforests are defined by how much rain they get).

Introduction: "Today we will be learning the three levels in dance and use these to review three of the layers of the rainforest."

Relevance: "In the rainforest it is important to know what defines each layer – animals, vegetation, etc. – so that we are aware of why the rainforest is so important to our planet and also important for us to protect! In dance, it is important to understand how to work with a partner and a group when moving, and also be able to dance at all three levels so that you can show things clearly in the space and place that they are supposed to happen."

Introduction of Participation Expectations

"This is a special kind of class. You need to give me your full attention and do your best to watch me as I teach. In a movement class, you follow-the-leader and what you see me do as much as you listen to what I am saying and follow spoken directions. You also want to be spatially aware and respectful of those around you. Keep your body to yourself and stay safe in your movement above all else – there is no room for horseplay if we are going to get to everything that we have planned! We will be working together in teams for part of this class, which is important to know how to do well, and I will be asking for volunteers to help me be leaders and demonstrators as well. I always choose students who are paying attention and eager to try things. Make it clear to me if this is you from the beginning of class so I notice you and ask you to help me teach! Finally, we have a special "cue" for attention in class because we are moving a lot. Doing a hand signal doesn't work. (Model call-and-response and have students practice it several times). Any questions? Now we are ready to go."

Warm-ups: Dancing in the Rain and the BrainDance

The teacher will lead the students in movement that represents all different kinds of rain:

- *Drizzle*: fingers wiggling and moving from high to low
- *Sideways rain*: arms overhead and waving with the body leaning side to side
- *Big ploppy rain*: the hands making "plopping" movements and then the feet stomping one at a time, and then combining them both
- *A downpour*: a student volunteer suggests a movement for this
- *Hard stinging rain*: a student volunteer suggests a movement for this
- *Soft misty rain*: The arms move softly and smoothly side to side as the body sways
- *Gusty rain*: The arms punch into the space in all directions and speed up and slow down to represent a gust of wind

A different movement will be used to represent each and will be repeated 4 – 8 times each. The teacher can either assign these movements, or ask student volunteers to suggest a movement for each, or (ideally) a combination of both of these approaches as noted above and time allowing.

The teacher will then immediately lead students in the BrainDance with a focus on "getting the rain off our bodies" as we dance (if possible, the teacher should do movements at all three levels as well!):

- *Breath* (Inhale/Exhale) -- shake the arms as we move to shake the rain off
- *Tactile* (Touch) -- swipe and squeeze the rain off
- *Core/Distal* (Expand/Contract) – open and close the umbrella we were using in the rain
- *Head/Tail* (Bobblehead, move the parts of the spine) – Like a puppy, shake off the raindrops head to toe Upper/Lower (arms and legs separately) – touch the clouds and stomp in the puddles
- *Right/Left* (sides of the body and alternating) – each side can be a windshield wiper
- *Cross Lateral* (hand to opposite knee, lunging if preferred) – changing wet clothes into dry ones
- *Vestibular* (spin, jump to a stop, shake it out, breath and do the left OR tip side to side and settle in the middle then breathe) – spinning to get the last bit of wetness off of us (shake the arms once more on the inhale/exhales at the end)

Discussion: "This warm-up was done to focus our energy and wake-up our bodies. It is also a way for you to see that we can "move" to show rain and the three levels (high, medium, and low) we can do these on."

Review of Concept: The Layers of the Rainforest

The teacher will ask for student volunteers to name the layers of the rainforest. If necessary, she will review the requirements for being a “teacher’s assistant” in this way. Once all four layers have been correctly identified, she will correlate these to the three levels in dance in the following way: high (emergent layer), medium (canopy), and low (under storey). She will explain to students that they will not be doing the forest floor because they would have to be on the actual floor in the classroom and that is not possible in the space.

Introduction of Concept: Dancing with the Scarves

Half the room will then be given dancing scarves and asked to stand and spread out so that they have enough space to dance fully in place. The teacher will put on music and lead these students in a movement exploration of the three levels, encouraging them to “dance” with different speeds, movements, etc. as they do. The second group will explore and move with the scarves. Following the teacher will point out what creative movements she saw from individual students to reinforce the importance of this in dancing, and will also compliment the students on their participation and use of a prop if it was respectful and they were focused.

Development of Concept: Forest Density and Mirroring

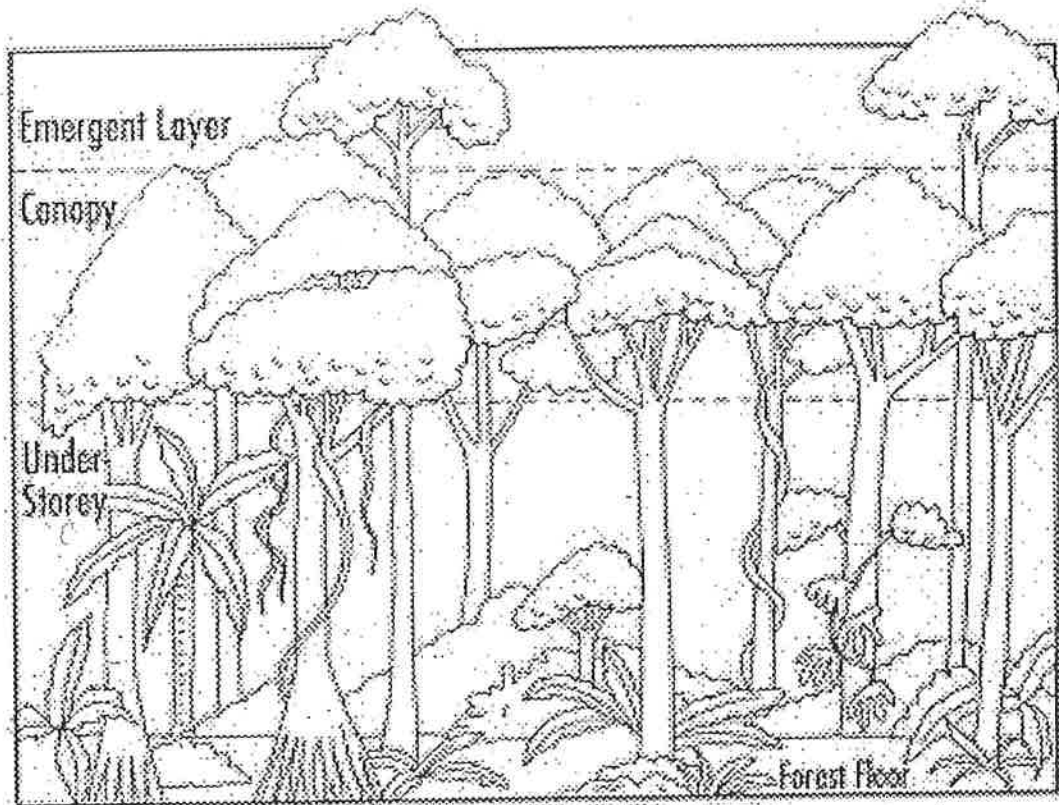
The teacher will explain to students that in the lowest layer of the rainforest, vegetation is so tightly packed that it can take up to 30 minutes for a raindrop to go from the emergent layer to the forest floor! To explore the idea of “density” the students will dance near to a partner and far away from them. They will do this with mirroring. The teacher will ask students to find a partner and explain what makes a good leader (moving slowly, deliberately, and clearly) and a good follower (paying close attention to detail and making sure to “do the opposite” so that they are mirroring not copying movement) in this exercise. Each person will do both roles and when they switch positions, they will compliment one another on what they did well before they do it again. The partners will repeat this exercise far away from one another (the other side of the room!) to represent the “emergent layer” in the rainforest and also reinforce the important in reading comprehension of paying attention to details (a huge part of mirroring well, especially when separated in space) in order to do it well and get it right!

Culmination of Concept: Being Creatures in the Rainforest

The students will be put into small groups (3 – 5 people) and given a word a handout that shows a picture of the layers of the rainforest and lists out the three levels in dance. An animal that lives in each specific layer of the rainforest will be listed next to each level. The group will be asked to work together to create a movement to show each animal and to perform each of these in sequence and at the level that they occur. For example: a boa constrictor lives in the under story (low level). The group would create a movement together to show this snake and also perform the movement at a low level. Their final “dance” would include three animals, showing three levels, and reinforcing the three layers of the rainforest. The groups would then perform for the larger class and also be an “audience” for their peers as they did the same.

Closure

“Today we reviewed the layers of the rainforest and learned the three different levels in dance. We also talked about how dense the rainforest can be and explored this in mirroring by moving together closely as well as far apart. Movement can help us understand, remember, and apply what we learn in other subjects and if you participate well (like you did today!), you can continue to learn in this way in class!”



Layers of Rainforest

High :

Medium :

Low :