

Magic beach: using picture books

In this unit students explore the picture book, *Magic Beach*, through improvisation, movement and reader's theatre, and make links with learning in English.

They will:

- take on roles
- notice and respond to drama elements
- use movement and language skills effectively
- express feelings about drama and through drama
- enhance their understanding of the text.



Drama forms

- improvisation
- movement
- reader's theatre

Resources Books

- Lester, Alison (1996). *Magic Beach*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

CDs

- Lendich, Clive (1998). *Salt Wind: Nature's Symphony*. AudioVisual Marketing, Sydney.

Learning activities

Getting started

- Research and discuss beaches and coastlines. Students listen to tapes of coastal sounds. Students warm up by moving in response to the sounds.
- Organise *Yes Let's* around activities and possible roles at a make-believe beach. e.g. Let's: jog along the sand, collect shells, build a sand castle, dig for treasure, patrol the beach, fly like seagulls, etc.
- Present to the class the picture book, *Magic Beach*. Discuss students' predictions about the story. Read each page and display the corresponding image. Discuss images, text and meanings. Discuss and analyse unknown words and organise into class word banks.

• Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- Organise class into small groups. Select for each group an image and corresponding text.
- Students take on the role of someone in the image and create a group freeze. The teacher moves around each group, providing support where needed.
- Using the freeze to begin their work, students improvise some brief action, using language and movement, or movement only, to bring the scene to life. Refer to the corresponding text at this moment for other ideas. (Some students may prefer to depart from the given image at this time and develop another perspective on the text.)
- Organise class in a circle around the drama space. The teacher reads the story. As each piece of text is read, the relevant group moves into the centre of the drama space and freezes as if depicting the image.
- Give a signal e.g. click fingers, and the students perform their improvised sequence. The students freeze the action when finished and return to the circle.
- Continue in this way until all groups have shared their work. Discuss results. *What worked well? What did you like? Why? How could we improve our storytelling?*
- Rehearse the whole piece several times from beginning to end, discussing focus and the use of space. As an alternative to the teacher's narration of the story, groups may choose to present their own narration.
- Invite another class into the room and present the performance or perform at a community gathering e.g. assembly or special event.



Responding

- Discuss with the audience. *What did you enjoy? Why? What grabbed your attention?*
- Students write about or draw a moment from the story which they brought to life through their drama work. They write about the beach in role as someone portrayed in the story.
- Students write about or draw a sequence of moments from the story. Students discuss with the teacher and respond to specific questions about what happened. They mime some new words from the story.

Assessment of students

- Teacher observation of students' drama work and their process of working.
- Analysis by the teacher of students' oral and written comments, drawings and other responses to their drama work.
- Consideration of the following questions about students' learning in drama:
 - ♦ How well are they able to become involved in a make-believe situation and take on roles?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are beginning to notice and respond to drama elements as they work with others to develop drama? How effectively are they working together?
 - ♦ How effectively are they using movement and language skills as they perform?
 - ♦ What learning is evident as they observe and respond to their drama and the drama of others?
- Consideration of the following questions about other learning:
 - ♦ What evidence is there that the drama work has contributed to their understanding of the text?
 - ♦ How has the drama work assisted vocabulary development, sequencing skills and comprehension?
 - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to the development of talking and listening skills?

Extension activities

- As a whole group, students develop a simple scene by representing the *Magic Beach* in the classroom. They identify the space and use props or other items to indicate the location of landmarks e.g. rock pool, sandcastle etc. They take a pose in role as someone in the scene. They improvise some action when approached by the teacher in role as a visitor to the beach.
- Students develop other whole-class improvisations around other magical locations e.g. magic desert, magic cave, magic city.
- Select other picture books to develop into performance pieces, using some of the ideas introduced in this unit e.g. *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, *Fang Fang's Chinese New Year*.
- Explore the use of props such as material, ribbons etc. and percussion instruments to create another scene with a soundscape to match.

