

Songs of a summer night



Colin Lanceley (Australia, b. 1938) *Songs of a summer night (Lynne's garden)*
1985 oil, wood on canvas 165.0 x 222.0 cm.
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The Art Gallery of New South Wales

In this unit students explore the collage, *Songs of a Summer Night (Lynne's Garden)*, through improvisation, movement and reader's theatre, and make links with learning in visual arts.

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 visual qualities of the collage.

Drama forms

- improvisation
- movement
- reader's theatre

Resources

- Lanceley, Colin (1985). *Songs of a Summer Night (Lynne's Garden)*. Art Gallery of N.S.W.
- Percussion instruments as required
- Everyday items which produce sound as required e.g. clickers, sticks, blocks, tin lids, spoons, hooters, whistles. etc.



Learning activities

Getting started

- Students brainstorm the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures of summer. Students list activities, objects, clothing, feelings and places associated with summer. Students display ideas on a chart. Students move around the room as if involved in the activities listed e.g. surfing, gardening, playing in the park, eating ice cream. Freeze. Relax. Discuss.
- Sit class on floor in a group. Introduce the reproduction of the artwork, *Songs of a Summer Night (Lynne's Garden)*. *What do you notice?* Discuss the name of the artwork. *Imagine that we are in this garden. Can you see or hear birds? insects? trees? flowers? water? something else? What sounds can you hear? Look carefully at the artwork to find other sounds. Which sounds are the loudest? How do you know?*
- As teacher points to a part of the artwork, class improvises sounds using voice. Discuss ways to improve this. Discuss ways of using body to make sounds, e.g. clicks, claps, stamps etc. Try again, this time selecting individual students to make a sound. Discuss the effectiveness of different types of sounds, contrasts between sounds, combinations of voice and body, and the use of volume.

• Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- In pairs or small groups, students make the shape of something from the garden as depicted in the artwork. Students improvise movement and sound to enact this role. Students experiment with ideas, with help from the teacher.
- Clear a space in the classroom to represent the garden. Identify the location of items in the garden. Students decide as a group other features of the garden, not necessarily represented in the artwork. Encourage creative ideas. Students use furniture, simple props or pieces of fabric to symbolise landmarks in the garden if required. *What is the feeling or mood in the garden? How can we show this?*
- Each group takes a position in the space and freezes. As the teacher identifies a group, e.g. points or clicks, it comes to life in sound and movement until the signal is repeated and the group freezes. Continue in this way until all groups have performed. Discuss ways of improving the action.
- Perform the piece again, building the piece gradually until everyone is participating at the same time. Decide on the order of participants and practise several times until the mood of the piece is established. Freeze the whole action at the end or gradually, by having each group freeze one at a time in reverse order from the way the piece began.
- Explore the use of percussion instruments and everyday sound-makers to build the piece further if required. Use these selectively for maximum effect.
- Finalise decisions, refine and rehearse. Develop simple costumes or props based on the colours, shapes, textures and other qualities observed in the original artwork. Incorporate into further rehearsals.
- Students perform at a community event, using an image of the collage, or a class-made collage as a backdrop for the performance. Take photographs.

Variations:

- Rather than having everyone in the space to begin with, build the piece gradually by having the students enter the space one group at a time, moving around the space as they enter.
- Consider building the piece further by having each small group develop a piece of text to focus their part, e.g. in the garden the cicadas are calling their friends. The sentences could be developed into a reader's theatre presentation narrated by a group of students.

Responding

- Discuss and evaluate the live performance. *What worked well? How did you feel about performing for others? What really grabbed the attention of the audience? How well did you work with your group?* Examine photographs taken. *What is happening here?*
- Students write about the artwork and the performance. They identify feelings, words or images which sum up their responses. They write words which describe the sounds and movements developed. They write a simple story about the garden.
- Students may develop an individual or a class collage in response to their drama work.

Assessment of students

- Teacher observation of students' drama work and their process of working.
- Photographs.
- 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.
 - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to their understanding of the visual qualities of the artwork?
 - ♦ What evidence of this is there in the students' discussions about their own collage work?

Extension activities

- Discuss and explore ways to build tension in the garden. *What would happen, for example, if it started to rain?* Students improvise and build a sequence which shows what happens. Students develop and explore contrast between moments before, during and after the rain.
- Use teacher-in-role to find out more about this garden. Organise a meeting of all occupants of and visitors to the garden. Teacher-in-role as new caretaker of the garden asks for information about the best way to maintain it and protect it. *What problems need solving?*
- Students develop a class story about a magical garden. Make links with the visual arts program and explore ways to represent this garden through more collage work and other art forms. Explore these artworks through movement and sound as above.
- Students develop artworks around other seasons. Students develop movement and sound sequences for each season. Students build a piece which incorporates movement work based on the four seasons.

