

Engaging Creative Minds Program Description

Program Title: A Turn of the Phrase (poetry in motion)
Contact Person Name: Erin Leigh

Grades: 3-12

Program Description:

Students will summarize the content of a poem and identify essential themes and motifs. Special attention will be given to word choice, and literal and nonliteral language (such as metaphors and similes), and recognizing how these elements create meaning, beauty, and/or impact the reader. Students will use this information to create dances by selecting gestures, shapes, and movement sequences and by comparing the processes of composing a dance to the process of writing. They will collaborate in small groups or as a whole class to revise, edit, and refine their work toward the goal of clearer communication and physical expressiveness. The experience culminates with students composing group poems based on a theme and performing their choreography for another class or parents. Excerpts of professional choreography can be used to spark the students' imagination and illustrate the lesson's points.

Anticipated student products/outcomes:

Students will learn and use tools, which both writers and dancers use, to create meaning and aesthetic interest. By creating, selecting, and editing movement, they will become more aware and better capable of using nonverbal and nonliteral communication methods. Through the discipline of dance, they will refine and find an outlet for their personal and physical expressiveness. By collaborating with their peers, they will practice using their skills in negotiating and working on a project with others. Overall, students will enhance their understanding and appreciation of both the written word and movement as forms of communication.

Materials/Resources/Space Requirements for Schools:

A large enough space that students could move freely, such as a gymnasium, library, cafeteria, or a classroom in which desks could be moved to the side.

Scheduling requirements:

Flexible

Project length:

The project length can be adapted to fit the classroom teacher's needs. Generally, if students compose the poems with the classroom teacher and perform their choreography for each other, then the experience takes about 5-6 classes. If the teacher prefers that students compose the poems during the dance experience, and see the project through to an "informance" for another grade level or parents, then around 7-10 classes.

Daily Activities: 5 days, 50 minutes each session

Day 1:

- Artist introduces self and performs a dance to a poem for the class. Students discuss how ideas in the poem were communicated through movement.
- Students learn the "rules" of a dance class and warm-up and improvise using dance vocabulary.
- A poem is projected on the smart board. Students discuss the poem's structure and identify similes and metaphors.
- As a class, students improvise and select movements that best demonstrate the meaning of the poem.

- Class is divided in half. Groups perform the dance for each other and use audience response techniques to give feedback

Day 2:

- Students learn the name game using pattern and rhythm. Students review dance vocabulary.
- Students improvise using dance vocabulary that emphasizes differences in word choice such as gargantuan, average, tiny or bumpy, jagged, smooth.
- As a class, students improvise and create a unison phrase based on 4 words (such as yell, chatter, whisper, silence) focusing selecting and performing the movement to best express the words. Literal and non-literal movement is introduced.
- In duets, students receive cards with three words. Students identify what the words have in common and put them in an order. Students compose a duet to express the movement of the three words. Students show the duets to their classmates and the class practices appropriate audience response.

Day 3:

- Students repeat the name game using pattern and rhythm. Students review dance vocabulary.
- Students improvise using dance vocabulary that emphasizes differences in word choice such as quiver, wiggle shake.
Students improvise literal and non-literal movement to figures of speech such as pulling my leg, bouncing off the walls, zip it, spill the beans, and sharp as a knife. Students are encouraged to create unique ways to express the figure of speech through interesting movement and gesture. The meaning behind the figures of speech is discussed.
- Students read a poem identifying figures of speech and structure.
- In small groups, students are given a line/s from the poem. Students improvise and select movements that best demonstrate the meaning of the line/s. Students work on techniques for performing the movement with expression.
- Students perform their movement for each other and use audience response techniques to give feedback.

Day 4:

- Students repeat the name game with a new pattern/rhythm and review dance vocabulary.
- Students improvise using dance vocabulary.
- As a class, students are given a theme and asked to brainstorm ideas for writing a poem on that theme (such as the solar system, animals, or sports). As a class, students “fit” their ideas into the structure of a poem such as a diamante or cinquain (5 line or poems). As a class, students improvise movement that best expresses the ideas in the poem.
- In small groups, students are given a theme and asked to follow the same procedures for constructing their poem (brainstorming and selecting). Students improvise and select movement to best express the ideas in their poem. As students are working, they show their ideas to the artist for feedback.

Day 5:

- Students repeat the name game with a new pattern/rhythm and review dance vocabulary.
- Students continue working in small groups to finish their poems and choreography.

Days 6-8:

- Students repeat the name and review dance vocabulary
- Students improvise using dance vocabulary.
- Students complete their poems and choreography. As students are working, they show their ideas to the artist for feedback. Students perform their dances for their classmates and use audience response techniques for feedback.
- Optional: Students create an “informance” in which they practice and perform their dances for another class or parents and during the presentation, inform the audience about the concepts they learned during the experience.

