

Soldier's journeys

Drama

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To develop an extended role play
- To have imaginative experiences of battle
- To create their response to the battlefield
- To build a group scene
- To develop movement skills.

SKILLS TARGETED

- Movement
- Listening
- Imaginative responses to verbal stimuli.

SUGGESTED TIME SCALE

- 30 minutes

Step 1

Ask the children to sit around the sides of the hall – they are all soldiers in the trenches. Everyone is going to work alone and in silence. Play some quiet music if you wish to help create an atmosphere

Step 2

Ask everyone to go for a walk around the hall. The children are to take a short journey and return to their starting point. The journey should last about 15 seconds. They need to remember this journey as it is one they must repeat many times.

It may take time for the children to overcome their awkwardness about pretending to be alone while walking around among the rest of their class. Keep stressing that they should all walk in silence and not pay attention to anyone else. As you add new layers and more action, the children will become increasingly absorbed in the activity

Step 2

When each child has returned to their place, explain that they are all going to do the journey again, but this time add a place on their route where they must change levels. They can decide where and why: maybe to help a wounded soldier lying on the ground? Or to duck because they see the enemy?

Step 3

Continue to make the same journey, building in another piece of movement each time. So the next journey will be the same route and will contain the change of levels, but it must also include rolling on the ground for some reason – perhaps to get under some barbed wire or to avoid shellfire

Step 4

The next journey contains the levels and the roll – and adds a place where the children

must balance – for example walking along a narrow duckboard over some mud

Step 5

The next journey includes steps 2-4 and adds a place where the soldier must stop and listen to something – perhaps some enemy fire, or a call for help from an injured comrade. It can be close or far off, loud or quiet

Step 6

The next journey includes steps 2-5 and each person must add one sound. This sound can be words, or other sounds such as cries of fear or gasps of pain

Step 7

Run the whole journey once more, but to each step add an awareness that the enemy could be present. The whole walk is full of alertness and tension

Step 8

Ask everyone to sit in his or her places. Show the class about five of the journeys – choose those who have really concentrated

Step 9

Now ask everyone to take their journey again with the same degree of focus. Try starting the journeys at different times

Step 10

If you haven't been using music, try adding a low soundtrack to the sequence at this point, to support the scene without obscuring the words and sounds made by the soldiers

Step 11

Run the journeys with half the class – so the others can see how effective they are. Ask the audience what they thought was happening, what stories are being told

Step 12

If you have done the Objects exercise, you could add in a place where each person finds or leaves behind a special object. You could also add a place where pairs meet and either explain or exchange objects.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- The children will engage in a complex extended role-play
- They will imagine the experience of a soldier on the battlefield
- They will develop a scene using a layering process, moving from abstract exercises to imaginative role-play
- They will work individually to create a whole class scene.

War Horse Learning

War Horse drawings by
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