

Express yourself!

Paint and make then act and dance with **Brenda Williams'** poetic approach to expressive arts and design...

We have only to think of the wonderful creative links in the theatrical production of operas, musicals and dramas to realise how closely these expressive arts and designs are mutually supportive. Every child in your setting will find some individual strength and creative talent in using performance poetry to express themselves through language, art, music, dance, imagination and design, and will also experience that collective delight in working as a group.

Role-play Communicating with expressive movement

Many little girls love stories about princesses, so start by asking for

volunteers to role play the first verse of the poem below. Encourage them to listen to the narrative, before exchanging ideas on interpreting it. You can demonstrate 'dainty steps and twirls', but explore and develop the children's own touches, such as pointing to themselves, touching an imaginary crown, or expressing their dance through arm movements or ballet steps, as they respond to the words of the poem.

Continue in the same way, with the following verses, taking one each day. You could ask just boys to be pirates to create a balance in the first two verses, but there is no reason why girls can't be pirates too! From the third verse, all children should be encouraged to take part.

I Want To Be...

I want to be a princess, and wear a crown of pearls.
I'll dance inside a castle,
And take dainty steps and twirls.
(*Dance daintily and swirl around*)

I want to be a pirate, and sail the oceans wide.
I'll have a map of islands,
And treasure chests to hide.
(*Swashbuckling stance, mime reading map*)

I want to be a spaceman, and zoom around the stars.
I'll walk across the moon's face,
And circle back round Mars.
(*Zoom around. Walk with big heavy steps. Zoom in a circle*)

I want to be a fire-fighter, fighting every fire.
I'll squirt the flames with water,
And send my hosepipe higher.
(*Mime using a water hose*)

I want to be a cowboy, and ride a horse all day.
I'll lasso all the buffalo,
And round up every stray.
(*Mime holding reins with one hand, lassoing with the other*)

I want to be a diver, and walk below the sea.
I'll shake hands with an octopus,
And make him smile at me.
(*Walk around slowly. Shake hands with others*)

I want to be a wizard, and play exciting tricks.
I'll mumble magic words and spells,
And turn you into sticks!
(*Walk and mumble. Wave arm to cast spell on other children, who then stand stiffly*)

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Constructing with a purpose

Use appropriate resources

to create props to support role-play

Ask children what items would help to make their role-play more realistic. Give prompts such as...

- a crown of pearls for the princes;
- a map of islands for burying treasure;
- a spaceman's helmet or rocket;
- a fireman's hat or hosepipe;
- a rocking horse and lasso;
- an octopus to shake hands with;
- a wizard's hat and wand.

Ask children, "Do we have anything we can use already? If not, how can we make these things? What else might a pirate/spaceman/wizard need?"

At this stage, it might be appropriate to place children into working groups for each verse. Help them to think carefully about what they want to make and how to construct each item. Support children in their enterprise by providing suitable resources and guiding them in ways to use and adapt them.

Map-making

Creating simple representations

Children making a map might need some conceptual help in visualising the finished product, so first explain that a map is like a picture, showing a place from the air, looking at it as a bird would do. Then create a tabletop model as follows:

- Cover the table in a blue cloth to represent the sea.
- Place irregularly shaped, large pieces of yellow card in a group on top to create islands.
- Ask children to place a few small world trees on the islands.
- Take a photograph from above the model, and show it to children to help them draw their own map of islands. They could use the cardboard islands to draw around.
- Ask them to draw a pirate ship anchored near the islands.

Shaking hands

Exploring a variety of materials

Engage children in a group activity making an octopus:

- Cover a large exercise ball with black crepe paper or black material, and glue or staple it to a circular base of black card.
- Glue on large paper eyes about halfway down the ball, and a smiley mouth underneath.

- Involve children in stuffing the legs and feet of four pairs of children's bright tights with soft paper or similar. Attach the tights at regular intervals to the circular base, close to the ball.

- To make a more cuddly octopus, use a



about the author

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circular cushion covered in black material for the body of the octopus.

- Place the octopus on a small table and invite children to 'shake hands' with it.

Ask the octopus to a naming party, at which children can offer suggestions for its name. Start by asking them to describe the octopus, making a note of their ideas. Ask



them to shake hands with it, feeling and describing the different textures of the tights, body and face. Look at its expression. Is it a happy octopus? Encourage them to be imaginative and to invent names which most suit the octopus. Choose the final name by vote.

Music

Introducing children to a wide range of music

Play a different piece of music each day as children arrive at the setting. Which ones set their feet tapping? Which encourages them to sing or hum along with it?

- Ask them to bring in music of their own, from ballerinas dancing on a music box to CDs they enjoy in the car.
- Select a variety of short extracts, from your own choice of classical music to pop music.
- Give children time to listen and think about each piece by playing it as stimulus to activities in the role-play area or as background to quieter activities such as painting.
- Create a 'pop' chart for children to tick if they like the piece being played.
- Return to the poem after a few days. Play some of the music selected from the 'pop' chart, and together choose a different but appropriate piece for each verse.

Background scenery

Mixing colours, and combining materials

Engage each of the groups of children in creating a life-size picture of the character depicted in the verse they have explored.

- Draw round the outline of a child lying on strong paper, and cut it out.
- Look at pictures similar to the characters in the poem in books or on the Internet.
- Show children how to mix or choose colours to infill each part of the character in paint.
- Discuss how to draw an octopus.
- Select other materials to glue on as headgear to each character.
- Display all the characters on a covered background wall.

The 'I Want To Be...' talent show

Working cooperatively to develop and act out a narrative

Bring together the whole group in a role-play enactment of each verse, played in front of the children's background scenery, using their props, as you read the poem to the accompaniment of their chosen music. Invite other children at the setting to be the audience.

Performance poetry

Developing a link between imaginative play and narrative

Extend and expand the children's imagination by building on what they have

learnt about role playing for performance.

Ask them to act as amusing, mythical, fantastic or natural creatures of their own invention or selection, i.e. a bouncy ball, bonfire, twinkling star, Gruffalo, giant, or monkey.

- Let them experiment to develop their character's movements.
- Help them to add a short narrative or non-rhyming poem to support their actions or dances, such as...

If I were a bouncy ball I'd bounce like this...

If I were a giant I would stride like this...

Responding to colours

Choosing colours for a particular purpose

Coloured Bands

(Provide groups of children with body bands in the colours mentioned in the rhyme.)

Blues must skip,
And reds must run.
Greens must dance,
To have some fun!

Yellows must jump,
And oranges leap.
Whites must twirl,
And browns must creep!

Now it's time,
To stop and stand.
Everyone change,
Their coloured band.

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Encourage colour recognition using linked actions with the poem *Coloured Bands*, which can be used indoors or outside.

- Make coloured body bands from crepe paper.
- Display the bands and discuss each colour, and ask children to point to other nearby objects with the same colour.
- Distribute the bands equally amongst the children.
- Establish that each child knows their own band colour, then explain that they must listen carefully and respond to the actions you will read out, relating to their colour.
- Have a short, on the spot, practice.
- Read the poem, as children follow the narrative with actions, changing bands before repeating.

Actions and colours

Representing ideas through art

Indoors, hang the coloured bands near a painting area, and provide pots of paint in each colour, with an assortment of

differently coloured sheets of paper.

- Ask each child to say which colour and action was their favourite in the poem.
- Encourage them to choose that colour paint pot and decide which background to paint it on.
- Remind them of the action they used for the colour, and ask if they can paint that action by making their brush skip, run, dance, jump, leap or twirl across the paper.
- Display and compare all the children's interpretations.

Puppet theatre

Supporting children in imaginative play

Little Robin Redbreast

(A traditional rhyme for role-play)

Little Robin Redbreast sat upon a tree,
Up went pussy cat, and down went he.
Down came pussy, and away Robin ran.
Says little Robin Redbreast, "Catch me if you can."

Little Robin Redbreast jumped upon a wall,
Pussy cat jumped after him and almost had a fall.
Little Robin chirped and sang, and what did pussy say?
Pussy cat said, 'Meow!', and Robin jumped away.

- Make glove (or sock) puppets of a robin and a cat.
- Read the *Robin Redbreast* poem, using the puppets to demonstrate.
- Involve children in creating a puppet theatre, from a tall cardboard box which they can enter from the back. Alternatively, adapt an existing structure, such as a shop, or build one from large bricks.
- Invite two volunteers to be puppeteers.
- Read the poem, encouraging their audience of children to join in.
- Help children to memorise the rhyme so that they can play in pairs.