

Anansi through the Arts

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Introduction

“All the world’s a stage”¹ or at least first grade is. Many elementary school students come to school full of energy and “perform” for seven hours every day. They laugh, cry, shout-out, sing, dance, and make noise, a lot of noise. Recess is the scene of many different scenarios, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles battling zombies and vampires, police officers taking the robbers to jail, concerts by Taylor Swift, gymnastics competitions and countless other uses of students’ imaginations. If we could harness this energy and imagination and turn it into a useful learning tool, students would be better engaged in their lessons, have a greater comprehension of the concepts and, maybe most importantly, have fun and enjoy learning.

Two branches of the Arts, Music and Visual Art (drawing, painting), are taught in my elementary school. Other Arts, such as Drama and Dance are not. The two that are taught are mostly taught in isolation, I drop off my students at their special, have my planning period or a meeting and then return to pick them up. They may have an art project that they have completed, or failed to complete, or a sheet of music that they sang in class but these things are rarely referred to in my own classroom. While understandings of Visual Art concepts will manifest themselves in my students’ illustrations for their writing, “spider” people with arms and legs emerging from their heads will turn into stick figures who will, in turn, become “fleshed out” two – dimensional people with details such as noses and clothing, concepts in Music rarely make their way into my classroom. Arts integration allows me to take all the Artistic disciplines and explicitly teach skills and concepts that will not only compliment the core curriculum I currently teach but also enhance my instruction, student comprehension, student engagement and student enjoyment. With these potential outcomes, I can only ask myself, “Why haven’t I been doing this from day one in my teaching career?”

This unit requires no specialized artistic skills or talents to teach. My singing is off-key, my drawing skills are developmentally appropriate for an actual first grader, I am a graduate of the “I only dance at weddings” school of dance and my acting skills are those that we have all honed in our classrooms and during parent teacher conferences. Some students may be reluctant to dance or sing, but as they see the fun that their peers and you are having, they may eventually come around.

Background

I teach first grade in a K-5 elementary school consisting of almost 1200 students. As part of our first grade Language Arts instruction, we have a program called Response to Intervention. Every eight weeks, students are sorted into groups based on reading ability and receive targeted instruction based on the data. This means that although I have 23 students in my regular class, I may have different students in my RTI – Response to Intervention block. These RTI students come from 3 first grade classrooms that are part of my Professional Learning Community- PLC. Typically, the students in my RTI group are from various ethnic groups and socio-economic classes. Most students are not well traveled and have very little experience with the world outside of their respective communities. At the moment, I have 24 students in my RTI group. These students are advanced readers; they generally read one to two grade levels above their peers. Although their reading is advanced, the students' writing ranges from below grade level to on or above grade level. First grade writing consists of writing on topic with a minimum of four sentences that include proper conventions (capitals, spacing and punctuation) and correct spelling of short vowel words as well as appropriate first grade level word wall words.

Our RTI block is 30 minutes a day, five days a week. This 30-minute block also includes time for students to get to and from their regular classroom so instructional time is approximately 25 minutes. During the RTI block, we work on story comprehension elements and reading fluency. My goal for this unit is to use elements of the Arts to increase student engagement in the curriculum and to increase student reading comprehension.

Students learn all academic subjects in the first grade classroom. These subjects are Language Arts (Reading and Writing), Math, Science and Social Studies. This allows for incorporating different standards from different subjects into one lesson. It is not uncommon to have Social Studies standards addressed in a Language Arts lesson and vice versa. This integrated approach to instruction lends itself well to integrating standards for the Arts such as Theater, Music and Dance into the lessons.

I envision this unit to last at least four weeks of the eight-week RTI cycle. This time frame will allow for students to learn different aspects of performance, become comfortable performing one of our stories and the time to videotape it. This will also make sure that I have a consistent group of students so that, when a story is read, those students will still be in my intervention group when the performance is given.

I do expect that there will be issues with this unit as the students transition from a more structured environment to one of performance. I expect that some students will be shy, others extroverted and finding a common ground where all students can feel comfortable will be a priority.

Concepts

Why teach the Arts in conjunction with other subjects? According to Linda Crawford in Lively Learning: Using the Arts to Teach the K-8 Curriculum, there are six reasons to integrate the arts into your daily curriculum:

1. The arts make the content more accessible.
2. The arts encourage joyful, active learning.
3. The arts help students make and express personal connections to content.
4. The arts help children understand and express abstract concepts.
5. The arts help stimulate higher-level thinking.
6. The arts build community and help children develop collaborative work skills.²

Stephen Beal, the president of the California College of the Arts, argues that science and art go hand in hand. He reminds us that “the studio and the laboratory are learn-by-doing, learn-by-making educational experiences.”³ He challenges us to change the educational buzzword of the day from STEM - science, technology, engineering and math to STEAM by including the arts. The Dana Foundation, a private philanthropic organization that supports brain research through grants, publications, and educational programs, says that “researchers in the social sciences have described links between increased creativity and increased productivity, which underscores an appealing goal for business and other leaders who want workers trained to meet 21st-century needs.”⁴ If STEM is about having our students “college and career ready”, then STEAM instruction will only enhance their capabilities.

In Lynette Overby’s book, Interdisciplinary Movement Through Dance: 101 MOVEntures, she writes that “Thinking tools learned in the arts...are transferable to other disciplinary areas so that recognizing and forming patterns in dance enhances the understanding of patterns in social studies or mathematics.”⁵ Music and Dance are patterns. Math and Science and History are patterns. When students can see, hear, feel and think about these patterns it is bound to increase their understanding.

In this Integrating Arts unit we will be teaching concepts of the Performing Arts of Dance and Movement, Theater, and Music. I am not a trained dancer, actor or musician so how can I teach those arts to my students? I am also not a novelist or poet yet, as a teacher, I already teach the Literary Arts which include novels, poetry, short stories, and creative writing and think nothing of it. We will now combine elements of different artistic expressions to further our students’ understanding of the curriculum. While I do not incorporate any Visual Arts instruction during my unit lessons, it is common for students to illustrate their writing activity, to incorporate drawing in their Science observations and while problem solving in Math. At some time in the future I may add drawing and or painting instruction to my Arts Integration Units through either my own instruction or cooperative lesson planning with my Art teacher.

Dance

In our seminar, we started off with Dance and Movement and this is how I will start my unit, as well. Many first graders are familiar with some sort of popular dance whether it is the Hokey Pokey or the Cha-Cha Slide and will, in a heartbeat, get off the floor to dance when the music starts. These “old stand-bys” also imply to students that dancing has rules that you follow to do it right. Rules are important for my first graders because first and foremost I need my students to be safe.

“Dance is the oldest of the art forms and has been used throughout history for many purposes: as a form of religious expression, as a means of celebration, as a rite of passage, and as a means of passing cultural and social traditions on to the next generation.”⁶ Now we will add encouraging creativity and self-expression, facilitating comprehension and extending thinking to these uses. I envision a reluctant student who becomes comfortable with dancing with his peers may transfer that “risk-taking” to his thought process during questions in whole group instruction and to his writing during individual assessments.

It is important that students follow the rules of the classroom even as they engage in the physical activity of dancing and moving. Students should be taught and reminded about the concept of personal space. They should also be made aware that, just as they should not touch other students (or teachers), they should also avoid desks, walls, carts, etc. A safe and orderly classroom will encourage all students to engage in the activity and allow everyone to have fun.

As with every discipline, Dance has its own vocabulary. In Interdisciplinary Learning Through Dance, that vocabulary is collated in one place along with definitions of the terms. Space, Time, Force or Dynamics, The Body, Relationships, and Creating are the terms and these are broken down into user-friendly sections and terminology.⁷ The book Movement-Based Learning by Rhonda Clements and Sharon Schneider give a variety of movement-based concepts skills and challenges. They offer suggestions for explicitly teaching locomotor skills like how to walk, run, jump, hop, gallop, sidestep, skip, and leap.⁸ Some concepts in these books may be advanced for your grade level to understand but, by using a common language, students will be exposed to the concepts of dance and movement, and your instruction will truly integrate dance and movement into your teaching, which is one of the goals of Integrating Arts into your curriculum.

Music

“Oh, the noise! Oh, the noise! Noise! Noise! Noise! That's one thing he hated! The NOISE! NOISE! NOISE! NOISE!”⁹

That's a refrain I am sure that many first grade teachers can relate to. When I was first contemplating my unit I had no interest in integrating Music into my instruction. I play music everyday, such as Beethoven piano sonatas to start the day, dance music when we need to get our wiggles out and I try to bring the funk on Fridays. We have songs on YouTube that we watch that explain mathematical concepts such as two and three-

dimensional shapes, money and skip counting. There are songs and videos from “The Electric Company” and “Between The Lions” that target phonics skills that we watch and sing along to every week but the thought of having the children create their own music or, what I would normally call noise, in the classroom is not an idea that I readily embrace. After learning about integrating Music into our curriculum and I realized that I was doing my students a disservice if I did not try this approach.

According to Bonnie Baer-Simahk in the Responsive Classroom Newsletter, students should not just sing songs they learn in the classroom but they should also experiment with sounds, and the process of creating, controlling and varying them. Just as we let students create with other art materials, we should encourage them to explore with sound.¹⁰

In our seminar, we did just that. We used found objects to give characters from the classic story “The Three Little Pigs” their own sound. As the story was read a loud, we tapped or clapped or stomped or rustled to give each character a signature sound. Eventually the story was retold only using sound. What a powerful way for my students to represent characters and retell a story! We learned the vocabulary of music before we did this so we knew the concepts of tempo, rhythm, tone, dynamics and timbre among others. This allowed us to apply them and differentiate between the characters and the action.

We used our music vocabulary when listening to a piece of music and then we used the story the music “told” us and wrote down our own creative narrative piece. What an interesting way to have reluctant writers approach the craft of writing. When the writing is finished, the piece is read along with the music so the appropriate action in the writing is reflected by the action in the music.

In Lively Learning, Linda Crawford gives examples of how to integrate music activities into your day. Her ideas include creating a rhythm that students will repeat while they transition from one activity to another such as morning greetings via rhythm and song and activity breaks where students sing a song and do a movement based upon the repetition of a word or words.¹¹ By doing these activities, your class of reluctant musicians will get comfortable expressing themselves musically.

Andrea Antepencko, a 5th grade teacher, writes some “Practical Tips for Getting Started Using Music”. Her tips include: collaborating with your Music teacher, always think about how you can use the music you hear around you everyday in your classroom, use the internet, specifically search engines such as Google to find appropriate song lyrics music to highlight different eras of American history.¹²

Theater

Recess, there is theater everyday at recess. Drama, comedy, heartbreak, injustice, wrongs righted, friendships won and friendships lost, this happens everyday in first grade and it

happens big and it happens loud. Put the students in front of the room and most become shy. Add a piece of paper with writing on it and the loud whole group interactions are replaced with the nervous glances of the unsure. So how does one bring the energy and vitality, the abandonment of shyness and self-criticism found in the games at recess to the front of the classroom?

In her book, Lively Learning, Linda Crawford, gives examples about how to incorporate theater games into your classroom. She uses a pantomime game called “Energy Ball” to show what a game would like and she also gives an excellent idea on how to redirect students who become over-exuberant. “Energy Ball” starts with the teacher pulling an invisible ball out of an invisible box, giving it shape, weight, and texture by his motions and then changing the attributes before passing it along to a student. Each student makes the ball her own by changing one or more attributes. For example the basketball becomes a piece of bubble gum, becomes a punching ball etc. as it is passed from student to student.¹³

In Creative Drama in the Classroom, author Nellie McCaslin offers some definitions, which may prove useful. “Dramatic play is the free play of very young children, in which they explore their universe, imitating the actions and character traits of those around them.”¹⁴ This is the play we now see only on the playground and, in the past, that was encouraged in the early elementary classroom by the inclusion of kitchen sets, mailboxes, lab coats, and stuffed animals. As school administrations worry more about classroom “rigor”, this essential part of early child development has been taken from the classroom and replaced with purely academic overly structured activities.

Creative drama and playmaking “goes beyond dramatic play in scope and intent. It may make use of a story with a beginning, middle, and an end. It may, on the other hand, explore, develop and express ideas and feelings through dramatic enactment. It is, however, always improvised drama.”¹⁵ According to McCaslin, the content may be taken from a story but the dialogue is not memorized or written down. This creative drama activity will truly show whether students understand the concepts of the story they have read and with collaboration from their fellow actors, students will be able to help each other reach that understanding.

As we learned in our seminar, theater also refers to the activities of pantomime, narrated pantomime, tableaux and puppetry among others. Pantomime is the silent acting out of words or concepts. Many of us already do this with our vocabulary words or by playing the game of charades. Narrated pantomime is where a story is told and the actors silently (or mostly silently) provide action to accompany the narration. A tableaux is where students reenact a scene from a piece of literature or from history as a static picture. Students then can express the point of view of their character, how he, she (or it) views the action or circumstances of the scene. Puppetry can be used for any of these activities, including dramatic and creative play. It is an easy way to engage students in higher level thinking (and the targeting of Common Core State Standards) as they identify character traits and create their character to best represent these traits.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of this unit is to help students with their reading comprehension. Reading in this case also refers to listening comprehension. In first grade we are still learning how to read. We have targeted phonics instruction that highlights a skill or two every week. As students become more fluent readers, we also target reading comprehension skills. The group that I am teaching this unit to has very good reading skills. Because many of our texts are more complex than an even above average first grader can read, the stories that we will read will be read aloud to the whole group with students following along as we are able to procure multiple copies of the texts. Arts concepts and vocabulary will also be instructed whole group.

The reading comprehension strategies that are being taught and assessed are character traits, setting, problem, solution, and retelling. We will be working with stories about Anansi the spider-man from West African folklore. Who are the main characters in the story? What do we know about them as related in the story? Describe the setting. Is there a problem in the story? If so, was it solved? How and how do you know? What happened in the beginning, the middle and the end of our story?

Students will use dance and movement, aspects of theater such as creative play, pantomime, and tableaux and they will perform a retelling with sound to show that they understand the reading comprehension concepts. Students will also be graded on a rubric as to how they incorporate their understanding of the appropriate art form into their reading comprehension activities. Finally, students will be assessed with a written or other tangible task to see if they are able to transfer their understanding from the artistic medium. Graphic organizers will be used from http://www.fcrr.org/curriculum/PDF/GK-1/Archive/C_Final.pdf. Although specific standards for both English Language Arts and the various Arts may or may not be mentioned in the lessons, others may be approached as our class discussions and proficiency in our “art” dictate. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Delaware State Standards for Dance, Theater and Music can be found in the appendices.

Classroom Activities

Unit Introduction: This should take one class period.

Vocabulary: Anansi, Africa, dance, movement, music, theater

Standards: CCSS: RL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.10, SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 Delaware State Standards for Music: 9.2

Content Objectives: Students will understand that comprehension of a story can be expressed in different ways.

Day One:

Opening: Where do stories come from? I will ask the class and we will discuss their answers.

Instructions: As students enter the classroom I will play some music from Africa such as piece from King Sunny Ade. When students are settled in I will have someone locate Africa on the map. I will read out loud A Story A Story an African tale retold and

Illustrated by Gail E. Haley to the class. In this story, Anansi, the spider man, goes to the Sky God to get stories for the people on Earth. The Sky God gives Anansi three challenges to complete in order to get the stories. Anansi completes the challenges and gets the stories for the people.

We discuss whether this story is fiction or nonfiction and where it came from. Why does it say the author retold this story and not just by? We will discuss the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Students will complete a graphic organizer where they sequence the events in the story. They will explain what happened first, next, after that, and finally.

We will discuss their answers in class. I will ask them if there are other ways that we can show our understanding of what happened in the story or must we always talk about it, draw it and/or write it down? We will then discuss how we could show our understanding through dance and movement, music, and theater.

Assessment: Formal: Graphic organizer. Informal: conversation between students and students and teacher.

Lesson One: Movement. This lesson will take three or four class periods, depending on how comfortable students are with moving around the classroom.

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Dance: 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3, CCSS: SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Art Objectives: Students will control their bodies to safely perform different learned movements in the classroom. Students will put these movements together to perform a dance.

Day One:

Vocabulary: personal space, personal bubble, general space

Opening: Tell students that we are going to learn to use our bodies to retell a story that we have read or listened to. In order to do this, we must learn some rules about how to interact with each other in our classroom.

Instruction: Using Chapter 5 of Linda Crawford's Lively Learning: Using the Arts to Teach the K-8 Curriculum, "Getting Comfortable With Movement"¹⁶, as a guide, I will go over how we will safely integrate movement into our classroom.

First, we will clear a space large enough for the students to move around freely, but small enough that I will be able to control a group of 20 plus first graders. Then I will ask students to position themselves around the area so they are not touching any other students. We will discuss personal space, that area around you that provides a comfortable buffer between you and another person. I will model the idea by taking a student and encroaching in their personal space; as I get closer, the student will back away demonstrating this idea. I will explain to students that when we move we must always be in control of ourselves and not interfere with others. If a student cannot stay in control, they will be asked to sit out and watch.

Next, as in the chapter, I will ask a student to move while staying still. Did they touch anyone? If so, what could they do? Next I will ask everyone to move while staying in one

place. Again, if they touch someone else I will ask how they can solve that problem. After that, we will incorporate movement. I will have one student walk around the area with his hands at his sides. Again, the same questions, did he touch someone? How can he solve the problem? Then, half the class will go and then be joined by the other half. I will remind students that part of being in control is being silent while we are doing the activity. We will add arm movements to this activity. Finally, I will clap a steady beat and have students move to the beat, as I increase the tempo, they will increase the speed of their movements and as I decrease it, they will decrease their speed. Were there problems? How did we solve them? The area around the students as they move is called their “personal bubble” and the area within which we move as a class is called our “general space”.

Days Two and Three and Four:

Vocabulary: levels, body shapes: curved, straight, angular, twisted, narrow, open closed, locomotor: walk, run, jump, hop, leap, gallop, slide, skip, nonlocomotor: rotate, stretch, bend, push, pull, shake

Opening: Today we are going to take what we learned yesterday and add to it different ways to move.

Instruction: We will learn the different body shapes, locomotor and nonlocomotor movements as described in Lynette Overby’s Interdisciplinary Learning Through Dance 101 MOVEventures by doing the lessons 10 “Who Can? I Can!” and 11 “Do the Locomotion”¹⁷. In our general space we will practice, in control, the movements described in the lessons. Students will make shapes with their bodies and learn and execute the different locomotor and nonlocomotor movements. Students will move at different levels, up high, in the middle, and down low. Students will learn the difference between a hop – using one foot, and a jump - using two feet, and a leap – a long run. Students will put various movements together in patterns and then students will put these patterns together to create a dance.

Assessment: Informal: observations, conversations

Lesson Two: Anansi in Dance. This lesson will take up to five class periods.

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Dance: 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, CCSS: RL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.10, RF 1.4, SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Art and Content Objectives: Students will retell the story using movement and dance. Students will show the beginning, middle and end of the narrative as well as key details of the characters and events in the story.

Day One:

Vocabulary: tug o’ war, grumbled, chuckled, challenge

Opening: We will read Anansi and the Tug o’ War and we will retell the story through movement by creating a dance.

Instruction:

I will introduce the book Anansi and the Tug o’ War as told by Bobby and Sherry Norfolk. We will talk about what we learned about Anansi in our first story and predict what events will happen in this story. Students will read the story on their own and highlight words that they do not know with their highlighters. We will come back together and talk about the story and any words they did not know.

Day Two:

Opening: Today I will read Anansi and the Tug o' War as you follow along.

Instruction: I will read the story to them as they follow along. Students will fill out a graphic organizer describing the events of the story.

Day Three and Four:

Opening: Today and for the next few days we will discuss and come up with ways to retell the story via movement.

Instruction:

We will discuss how we can tell this story using movement, especially using body shapes and the nonlocomotor and locomotor skills we learned previously. We will review how to move within the classroom and we will review our movements. I will model shapes and movements that can be used to describe each character and to retell the narrative. I will ask students to provide other examples of shapes and movements. Should Anansi be big or small? How does a spider move? What kind of movements would Anansi, the spider man, have? How can we show Elephant? Killer Whale? How can we show what their character traits are? How can we show, safely and in dance movements, the action of a tug o' war? How can we make sure that the dancers are moving together? Do they need a drumbeat to keep organized?

Students will work in teams of three or four to come up with a dance that tells the story of Anansi and the Tug o' War. The dance should include a beginning, middle and an end. A variety of body shapes, nonlocomotor and locomotor movements should be included. They will have one day to come up with the dance and practice and, if necessary, part of another day to practice.

Day Five:

Opening: Today we will perform our dances. You will be assessed on your dance, your participation and how you act in the audience.

Instruction:

Students will perform their dance for their classmates and be graded on a rubric available in the appendix. Students will then fill out another graphic organizer describing the events of the story. We will compare the first organizer with the second and see if adding movement to our lesson helped increase understanding.

Assessment: Formal: rubric, graphic organizers. Informal: conversations, observations.

Lesson Three: Music: This lesson will take two class periods.

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Music: 2.1, 3.1, 6.1 CCSS: SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Vocabulary: beat, tempo, rhythm, call and response, dynamics, percussion

Art Objectives: Students will have a basic knowledge of musical terms necessary to perform a retelling of a story.

Day One:

Opening: Tell students that today we are going to learn some musical terms and put them into practice.

Instruction: Students will get in to our general space and move through out the area as I clap a sustained beat. I will increase the tempo and decrease the tempo. We will discuss how the claps are called the beat and the speed is called the tempo. Students will sit in a circle on the carpet and will clap along as I clap. I will clap a rhythm, a regular repeated

pattern, and have the students copy that rhythm. Students will be called upon to provide a rhythm and their peers to copy it. I will then model a call and response scenario such as “shave and a hair cut”, “two bits”. We will then create our own call and response sequences. We will also talk about dynamics, how we make a percussion instrument, an instrument that makes sound by being struck – our hands, louder or softer.

Day Two:

Opening: Today we will take what we learned yesterday and use different percussion instruments to change the sounds that we make.

Instruction: I will hand out rhythm sticks or other items that can be used as percussion instruments. As we strike different object: the floor, the carpet, another stick, our thigh, we’ll discuss the different sounds that they make or their timbre, “the quality of the sound made by a particular voice or musical instrument.”¹⁸

Using the “Stone Rhythms” idea from Linda Crawford’s Lively Learning,¹⁹ we will make a variety of rhythms on the carpet, including echoing and call and response. We will create and keep a tempo and rhythm while passing our sticks around the circle a la “The Cup Song”. For inspiration on cooperation and perseverance we will watch the Irish Cup Song video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFtfk0bZVRM>).

Lesson Four: Anansi in Music. This lesson will take three class periods.

Day One:

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Music: 2.1, 3.1, 6.1, CCSS: RL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.10, RF 1.4, SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Content and Art Objectives: Students will use the musical ideas from the previous lesson to retell the beginning, middle and end of a narrative as well as show key details of the characters and events in the story.

Opening: Today we will read Anansi Goes to Lunch.

Instruction: I will introduce the book Anansi Goes to Lunch as told by Bobby and Sherry Norfolk. We will talk about what we learned about Anansi in our other stories and predict what we think will happen in this story. Students will read the story on their own, and highlight words that they do not know with their highlighters. We will come back together and talk about the story and any words they did not know.

Day Two:

Opening: Today I will read Anansi and Goes to Lunch as you follow along. While I am reading, think about how we could show different animals through sound.

Instruction: I will read the story to the students as they follow along. Students will then fill out a graphic organizer describing the events of the story.

Day Three:

Opening: Today we will use what we have learned about sound and music to make different sounds and rhythms we can use to represent the characters in Anansi and Goes to Lunch.

Instruction: Students will work alone to create different sounds and rhythms to represent what happens in the story. After 10 minutes, we will come back together. I will ask students to play their idea for each character and how they will relate the different actions that happen in the story via sound. Students will perform their ideas accompanying a video of the story found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eob6eU7hceI>. The video

will be played without sound. After the video is finished, I will ask students if they thought their sounds represented the characters and actions appropriately and why or why not. Students will then fill out a new graphic organizer describing the events in the story and I will compare this organizer with the previous one.

Assessment: Formal: Music rubric, graphic organizer. Informal: conversations, observations.

Lesson Five: and Six Theater and Anansi through Theater. These lessons will take 5 class periods.

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Theater: 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 6.3, CCSS: RL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.10, RF 1.4, SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Art and Content Objectives: Students will show how to express actions and ideas by using the theatrical devices of pantomime and tableau. Students will use pantomime and/or tableau to retell the beginning, middle, and end of a narrative. Students will show key details of the characters and events in the story.

Vocabulary: pantomime, tableau, creative drama

Day One:

Opening: In this lesson we will learn some theater skills such as pantomime and tableaux and we will culminate or lesson with a “creative drama” puppet show.

Instruction: Students will read the story Anansi Goes to Dinner told by Bobby and Sherry Norfolk on their own, highlighting words that they do not know with their highlighters. We will come back together and talk about the story and any words they did not know. Students will fill out a graphic organizer about character traits.

Day Two:

Opening: Today we will learn about pantomime.

Instruction: I will start the class period talking about pantomime and how we use that to help with some of our unknown words. We will play the Energy Ball and Transformation Walk games from Linda Crawford’s Lively Learning.²⁰ In Transformation Walk, the teacher calls out something for the students to express through movement or expression while moving through general space. After students have been walking and showing the idea for a few steps, the teacher says “freeze”, the students stop and the teacher says “melt” and the students start walking normally until directed to show another idea. We will discuss how we use our whole bodies including facial expressions and body language to depict the idea that we are trying to show.

Day Three:

Opening: Today we will pantomime the action in an Anansi story.

Instruction: I will read Anansi Goes to Dinner as told by Bobby and Sherry Norfolk to the class. We will discuss what different actions we can do to show the character traits of Anansi and Turtle and the events in the story. The students will do a narrated pantomime to the story – I will reread it while they silently act it out.

Day Four and Five:

Opening: Today and tomorrow, using Anansi Goes to Dinner, we will learn about tableau. When we pantomime, we are telling a story while we are moving. Can we tell a story while we are perfectly still?

Instruction: according to Webster’s dictionary a tableau is “a scene that typically shows an event in history or literature and that is created on a stage by a group of people who

are dressed in costumes and who do not speak or move.”²¹ In a tableau, we take a moment from our story and freeze it, just like we could with a DVD, and then we deconstruct what is happening at that moment. What is each character doing? How do they feel? What objects are important? Can we describe the scene from each character’s point of view? How about the point of view of an object? Why did the student choose that pose and facial expression? We will practice creating tableaux using events from the class day. Students will show getting into line, at recess, sitting on the bus, etc. to get an understanding of how to create a tableau. I will then group students into groups of three to five and they will construct a tableau of what is happening in the beginning, middle or end of our story. I will ask each participant to describe what is happening in the story from their character’s perspective and how their character is feeling at that moment. I will take pictures of each tableau in case students have difficulty maintaining their frozen positions and then they can describe their choices and thoughts while looking at the picture on the SmartBoard.

Day Six and Seven:

Opening: We will take our story Anansi Goes to Dinner and using creative drama and playmaking, students will retell the story.

Instruction: According to Nellie McCaslin in Creative Drama in the Classroom, creative drama and playmaking is always improvised and not designed for an audience. The story is played many times and “is done for the purpose of deepening understanding and strengthening the performers rather than perfecting a product.”²²

Students will make paper bag puppets of the characters in the story and reenact the story with a partner. Students will take turns playing both Anansi and Turtle. Using what they have learned through pantomime and tableau about the characters and the plot, students will create their own version of the story Anansi Goes to Dinner with improvised dialogue. Students will fill out a graphic organizer about character traits and compare that organizer with the earlier one.

Assessment: Formal: Pantomime rubric, tableau rubric, graphic organizer Informal: conversations, observations.

Lesson Seven: Anansi through the Arts

Standards: Delaware State Standards for Dance: 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3 or Delaware State Standards for Music: 2.1, 3.1, 6.1 CCSS: SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 or Delaware State Standards for Theater: 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 6.3 and CCSS: RL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.10, RF 1.4, SL 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Art and Content Objectives: Using what they have learned throughout the unit, students will create and perform a retelling of a story using Dance, Music and/or Theater.

Opening: Students will read an Anansi story and then create a Dance, Music, or Theater retelling of the story using the concepts that they have learned.

Instruction: We will re-read A Story a Story. Students will be split into groups of four or five and decide how they want to retell the story. Students will come up an appropriate retelling and perform it for the class.

Assessment: Formal: Appropriate rubric.

Appendices

Appendix A

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects²³

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details:

RL 1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL 1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

RL 1.3 Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

Craft and Structure:

RL 1.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

RL 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

RL 1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

RL 1.10 With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

Reading: Foundational Skills

Fluency

RF 1.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration:

SL 1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- b. Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion

SL 1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL 1.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood. Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

SL 1.4 Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

SL 1.6 Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

Appendix B

Delaware State Standards for Dance²⁴

Standard 1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing arts.

- 1.1: Perform axial movements (e.g., bend, stretch, twist, turn, swing, collapse)
- 1.2: Demonstrate accuracy in moving to a musical beat and responding to changes in tempo
- 1.3: Demonstrate eight basic locomotor movements (e.g., walk, run, hop, jump, leap, gallop, slide, skip) traveling forward, backward, sideward, diagonally, turning
- 1.6: Execute basic movement phrases individually and in a group

Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes and structures

- 2.1: Demonstrate basic partner skills (e.g., copying, leading and following, mirroring)
- 2.2: Improvise, create and perform dances based on original ideas and concepts from other sources
- 2.3: Use improvisation to generate movement for choreography
- 2.4: Create and identify the sequential parts of a dance phrase (e.g., beginning, middle, and end)

Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning

- 3.1: Take an active role in a class discussion about interpretations of and reactions to a dance

Standard 4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

- 4.2: Discuss how skills developed in dance are applicable to a variety of careers
- 4.3: Observe and discuss how dance is different from other forms of human movement (e.g., sports, everyday gestures)

Delaware State Standards for Music²⁵

Standard 2: Performing on instruments independently and with others a varied repertoire of music

- 2.1: Imitate rhythmic and melodic patterns on pitched and unpitched instruments

Standard 3: Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments

- 3.1: Improvise rhythmically with voice or instruments

Standard 6: Listen to, describing and analyzing music and musical performances

- 6.1: Express changes and contrasts in music through movement

Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to diverse cultures, times and places

- 9.2: Listen to music from various periods and diverse cultures by genre or style

Delaware State Standards for Theater²⁶

Standard 1: Improvising and writing scenes, scenarios and plays

- 1.1: Identify the foundation of playmaking in real life and fantasy
- 1.3: Develop an improvisation utilizing characters and setting that creates tension and suspense, with a subsequent resolution

Standard 2: Acting in improvised and structured presentation

- 2.1: Employ variations in movement, gesture and vocal expression (pitch, tempo, tone) to create characters
- 2.3: Identify character motivations through research and analysis and be able to articulate how they affect the character's actions
- 2.4: Portray a believable character with effective performance techniques (use of voice, facial expressions and body movement) in both improvised and structured presentations

Standard 6: Comparing and integrating art forms

- 6.3: Incorporate elements of dance, music, and visual arts to express ideas emotions in improvised and structured scenes

Appendix C

Rubrics

Dance:

Standard	Not Observed	Basic	Developed
1.1: Perform axial movements.			
1.3 Perform locomotor and nonlocomotor movements			
1.6: execute phrases in a group:			
2.2: improvise create and perform dance			
2.4: Create and identify the sequential parts of a dance phrase			

Student was on task during performance.			
Student was a good audience member.			

Music:

Item	Not observed	Basic	Developed
Each character had a distinct sound and/or rhythm.			
Did rhythm, dynamics and/or timbre change as the story developed?			
Student was engaged appropriately in the activity.			

Theater

Pantomime

Item	Not observed	Basic	Developed
Each character had a distinct look and/or action.			
The character's look and/or action changed over the course of the story.			
Student was engaged appropriately in the activity.			

Tableau

Idea	Not observed	Basic	Developed
The character had a distinct look appropriate to the plot.			
Student explained why the look was chosen.			
Student explained the action in the plot at that moment chosen.			
Student was engaged appropriately in the activity.			

Creative Play Puppet Show:

Item	Not Observed	Basic	Developed
Puppet relayed the essence of the character.			
Puppet actions reflected actions in dialogue.			
Dialogue retold the story.			
Student was appropriately engaged.			

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Curriculum Unit Title

Anansi Through the Arts

Author

David Ostheimer

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

The Performing Arts can help our students with their reading comprehension.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

How can Dance, Music and Theater help deepen our understanding of the characters and the plot of a narrative.

CONCEPT A

Dance and movement can convey the meaning of a story.

CONCEPT B

Music and sound can help distinguish story element concepts.

CONCEPT C

Elements of Theater can help us strengthen our understanding of key details in a story.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

How can different kinds of movements help add meaning to a narrative work?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How can a variety of sounds help us understand the characters and the action in a story?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How does performing a pantomime, tableau, or creative play using improvised dialogue help us understand the characters and the action of a story

VOCABULARY A

personal space, personal bubble, general space, levels, body shapes: curved, straight, angular, twisted, narrow, open closed, locomotor: walk, run, jump, hop, leap, gallop, slide, skip, nonlocomotor: rotate, stretch, bend, push, pull, shake

VOCABULARY B

beat, tempo, rhythm, call and response, dynamics, percussion

VOCABULARY C

pantomime, tableau, creative drama

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

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Anansi the Spider is one of the great folk heroes of the world. He is a rogue, a mischief maker, and a wise, lovable creature who triumphs over larger foes. In this traditional Ashanti tale, Anansi sets out on a long, difficult journey. Threatened by Fish and Falcon, he is saved from terrible fates by his sons. But which of his sons should Anansi reward? Calling upon Nyame, Anansi the Spider is one of the great folk heroes of the world. He is a rogue, a mischief maker, and a wise, lovable creature who triumphs over larger foes. In this traditional Ashanti tale, Anansi sets out on a long, difficult journey. Anansi is or was a trickster god. According to a legend, Anansi was a trickster god. He fashioned the Anansi Totem, which allowed its bearer to harness the spirits of any animal. The totem was given to a warrior named Tantu. The Anansi Totem was passed down through generations in Zambesi, eventually ending in possession of Mari. While Mari had read about Anansi in the encyclopedia, she was not aware of totem's powers until adulthood.