



Circle of Life Drama: Creative and Expressive Learning

From soggy, leaf litter to lush, leafy canopy, the amazing cycle that nutrients play out daily in the tropical rainforest is enacted in this imaginative drama.

This engaging and fully participatory activity encourages creative and expressive performance through a highly original medium. From a bud springing into leaf in the canopy feeling the warmth of the sun, then shriveling and falling onto the dark, damp forest floor, decomposing and being absorbed back into the tree to begin the cycle all over again, your pupils will act out the cycle of nutrients in the forest. This drama, performed to music, can take place in a classroom, a school hall or outside. Using music to encourage movement around the 'circle of life' this activity incorporates ideas from the party game 'musical chairs'. Pause the music and pupils stop where they are in the circle expressing through drama the stage they are at. Are they curled up tightly as a bud, slowly opening out to the warmth of the sun, only to get pooped on by a bird flying overhead, or are they lying on the forest floor slowly changing into the nutritious mulch that will once again work its way as nutrients into the tree. Are there centipedes walking over them or millipedes nibbling them?

This engaging activity will challenge and inspire pupils complimenting both science and expressive arts components of the curriculum.

At a glance, you will need:

- A gym hall, classroom or school playground
- Masking tape or twigs, leaves and pebbles to mark out a large tree on the ground (optional)
- Some atmospheric mood music (maybe Vivaldi's 'Autumn' from the 'Four Seasons')

Workshop	Activity	Pre/Post	Suggested CfE Stage
A Journey into the Rainforest	Circle of life Drama: Creative and Expressive Learning	Pre/Post	First/Second

Learning Intention

We are learning about the life cycle of nutrients in the rainforest.
We are experiencing the energy and excitement of performing.



Task

We are going to perform a drama. We will pretend we are a leaf that grows, dies, falls off the tree, rots on the forest floor and gets sucked up back into the tree as nutrients.

Success Criteria

- Pupils will gain an appreciation of the skills involved in expressing themselves through drama.
- Pupils will learn to apply different skills and activities to enhance learning.

CfE Capacities

Successful Learners

- with enthusiasm and motivation for learning
- able to link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations

Confident Individuals

- able to achieve success in different areas of the activity, gaining confidence through self awareness and relating to others
- able to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle through the medium of expressive arts – drama.

Effective Contributors

- able to communicate in different ways and in different settings
- able to create and develop a drama sequence about the cycling of nutrients in a tropical rainforest

CfE Outcomes

Sciences – Biological systems

By investigating the lifecycles of plants and animals, I can recognize the different stages of development. SCN 1-14a

Expressive Arts – Participation in performances and presentations

I have experienced the energy and excitement of presenting/performing for audiences and being part of an audience for other people's presentations/performances. EXA 1-01a/EXA 2-01a

Expressive Arts – Art and Design

I can create a range of visual information through observing and recording from my experiences across the curriculum. EXA 1-04a

Expressive Arts – Drama

I enjoy creating, choosing and accepting roles, using movement, expression and voice. EXA 1-12a

Description

Each child should act out the following stages of a leaf's life cycle:

- 1: Being a bud
- 2: Opening and growing into a green leaf
- 3: Soaking up the Sun's rays
- 4: Shriveling and dying
- 5: Falling to the forest floor
- 6: Decomposing into mulch
- 7: Being re-absorbed back into the tree and turning back into a bud



All stages should be acted out with each child doing their best to express the thoughts and feelings that come to them while concentrating on their imagined environment. The children should act out all these stages physically, using only their own bodies to express what is going on.

This drama can be performed either as a stationary activity if space is limited within the classroom or in a more active manner outdoors or in the gym hall. If stationary, each child should remain in one spot throughout, beginning on the floor, curled up like a bud. If the activity is being performed outdoors the children could even use twigs and branches or some other medium to mark the shape of a large tree out on the ground. They could then move around this tree as the drama progresses, for example; budding in the canopy and moving down to the roots when acting out the decomposition phase. Pupils could be encouraged spread throughout the tree so that different stages can be acted out simultaneously!

The teacher could pause the drama at points using music such as Vivaldi's 'Autumn' from the 'Four Seasons'. During these pauses each child should imagine and express one thing that they might see or experience at this point. For example, an open leaf might feel really warm in the sun, or it might get pooped on by a bird, whereas a dead leaf on the forest floor might feel really wet and smelly, or it might be walked all over by centipedes or be nibbled on by slugs.

This activity reinforces the nutrient cycle within a forest in a simple and very visual way. You may want to extend this activity to look at the impact on plant life if this cycle is restricted or even stopped completely through deforestation for example. It also need not be a tropical rainforest environment that you concentrate on, maybe there is woodland near the school? Comparisons could even be made between a tropical rainforest and forests from more temperate regions such as our own.

Web Resources

For information and images on:

The rainforests

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A925913>

<http://rainforests.mongabay.com/congo/>

<http://www.amazonconservation.org/>

Trees

<http://www.british-trees.com/links/home.htm>

