

UNIT 1: TEXT 2: WHALE SONG

RESEARCH STAGE

We watched a videotape called 'Whale song'. It was about sea mammals' behaviour, hunting and general information. While I watched I saw the dolphins creating patterns with their movements.

The hunting and killing of the whales and dolphins was quite graphic and stirred many of our thoughts because it is such a controversial and terrible thing. It made me feel deeply sad.

It was a good stimulus because it gave me plenty of ideas, all from different angles.

Some of the class looked at a book called 'Whale Nation' as another stimulus. I didn't because I had seen enough to be able to know about it.

We then discussed in an off-text lesson the material and our initial thoughts and ideas.

From watching the mammals swim through the ocean a lot of the class got 'movement' as part of the final piece. We also spent the rest of lesson on a kabuki session for information. We taught those who didn't know how to do kabuki how to do it.

I'd done it before in a drama workshop. We all were 100% calm and silent. I found it really relaxing and enjoyed it a lot.

I felt I was quite good at it too because I used variety of levels and positions.

I lay on my back and stretched out my feet. Our teacher said it looked like the whale's tail and it did.

I wish we could do kabuki every lesson to make us focused for work.

RESPONSE PHASE 1:

We had decided it was a good idea to come in for a full day to do the work on the 'Whale song'.

We began the lesson listening to different music in order to review them and sort out the best pieces to use. I found most of us wanted to go for sad, mournful songs. I felt most of the class had the whaling and death in mind.

We picked:

We then divided into 4 groups of 3 to develop our initial responses to the research.

- SPIRIT OF NATURE
- WHALE SOUNDS
- RELAXATION
- CLASSICAL CHILL OUT

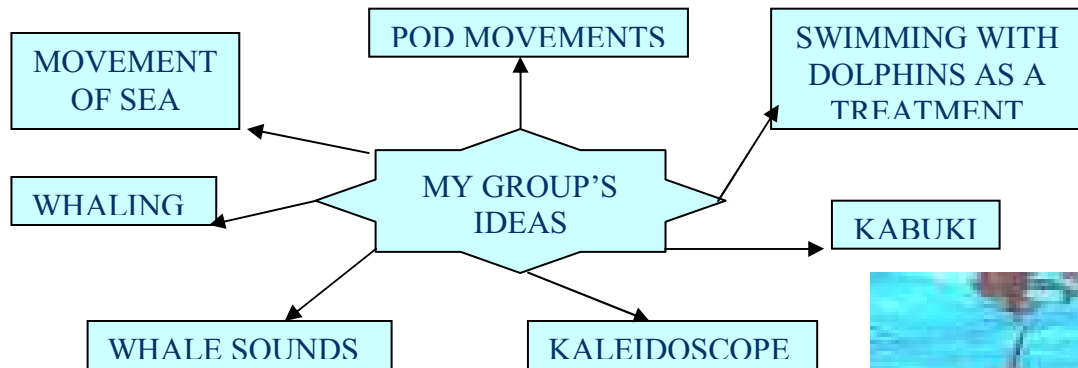
GROUP 1 = DAVID, LAURA D AND LAUREN

- 2 people as whale
- Dolphins on 1-side fishermen on other.
- Whale split.
- Products from carcass.
- Kabuki to save whale.
- Whole class as whale to represent different products.
- Communication/sea.



GROUP 2 = EMMA, DANIELLE AND LAURA B (ME)

My contribution was the kabuki and kaleidoscope effects which I got from watching the whales slow movements and the patterns that the dolphins made, as though dancing. I also noticed the mournful sounds of the whales.



My group narrowed our ideas down to: -

- Class as a kaleidoscope- kabuki of whale and sea movements
- 3 Groups to show interaction of creatures
- Become 1 whale distressed
- Whale sounds



GROUP 3 = JAMIE, HAYLEY AND DANI

- Kabuki-happy
- 1 group targeted by fishermen
- Other distressed
- Captured group highlight products

GROUP 4 = KATY, HAYLEY AND LISA

- Complicite
- Comparison of humans and whales
- Cross-cutting
- Movement of whales-everyday movement
- Travel-emigration by sea
- Fishermen-terrorism/prejudice
- Home-home



RESPONSE PHASE 2:

I found a pattern of ideas (whale products) & (splitting of whale). We decided group 4's ideas weren't practical, as they would involve us travelling on top of the sea and on top of the creatures below it. (We wouldn't be able to achieve those levels in the studio.)

The groups joined and made 2 large groups of 6. My group brought together the kaleidoscope idea to show surface movements and the idea of the whale being split. We also wanted to do a mournful dance of other creatures.

The other group wanted to base theirs' around movement and different techniques of showing movement.

I was looking forward to negotiating and extending the ideas. It was going to be interesting as we were going to end up with 2 final pieces for evaluation.

We were also going to have an opportunity to direct our other classmates as they joined with our piece. For their piece they would direct us.

DEVELOPMENT STAGE PHASE 1:

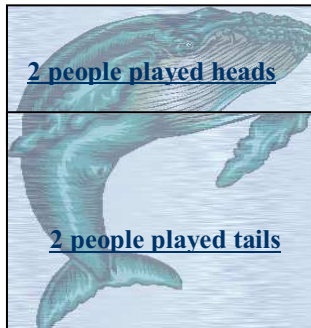
For 30 minutes my group built a basic structure of events and a sequence, which we would later share with the rest of the class. I directed part of this.

We started by Emma and me acting as directors. We explained to the class the idea being the kaleidoscope. Emma and I wanted to keep this in because it suited the video of the dolphins dancing through the water, like a mirrored image. We wanted to achieve this effect.

One person in the centre led the movements, the centre 3 copied (mirroring) and the 2 behind the centre people copied them.

We created a mirror image from centre outwards. I led the mirroring. It was quite confusing but eventually everyone got the hang of it and it worked well.

We then went onto direct the class into 4 of us representing 2 whales.



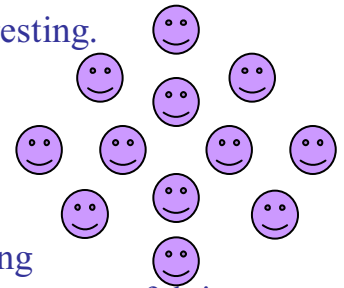
The tail person lay on their backs and lifted their legs up and down. The head person sat up and slammed their arms up and down as fins.

I think this worked quite well. From an audience's point of view, it would have looked like a whale's movements. I was a head and felt my role was quite effective; I tried to put everything into my arms and keep the rest of my body still.

4 people were whales and 4 were fishermen. The 4 fishermen figured out a harpooning sequence. It was quite interesting.

- David was the harpoonist
- He swung back Katy and Lauren
- They hit Lisa on the back
- She jumped forward (as a harpoon) to kill the whale nearest the ship.
- We then decided the whale would roll in towards the boat to show it being pulled aboard. The 2 whales were symbolic of 1 whale but representing to ways of dying, so we see 2 sides of what could happen to the harpooned whale.
- The other whale becomes distressed (me and Dani showed this by making our movements quite violent).
- 4 dolphins, symbolically, pick up the whale (me and Dani were picked up.)
- Cushion whale's death
- Spun slowly around, laid down to rest in peace.
- Dolphins mourned death by doing a slow, graceful dance.

This is the pattern we found worked best for the kaleidoscope



This was my idea and I was really proud of it. It was really effective and actually created a calm, peaceful atmosphere.

My group used symbolism, physical theatre, choreographed movements, kabuki, role-play, music, space and levels.

Lisa directed the other two group's piece. She placed four people in the middle (as whales) that then performed a slow choreographed kabuki. 1 person represented fins, 1 as the tail, 1 as the body and 1 as the blowhole. Then there was a group of 4 around them. I was one of that 4, a dolphin.

We did fast movements in a counter rhythm to the whale. Me, Emma, Dani and Danielle made up the movements so they would look like dolphins jumping out of the surface of the water. We got our inspiration from the 'Whale song' video.

The other 4 stood at the corners of the group as the sea surrounding the creatures. They did wavy movements to look like rippling waves.

I got confused because of the counter-rhythm and found it hard even though it was only a simple movement.

Lisa then explained the concept of the fishing sequence. 6 of us role-played the fishermen on a boat. I was the lookout for the whales. We put me on a block to make me higher than the others (like in a crow's nest). We decided to sing sea shanties, the specific one we choose was 'Hoorah and up she rises'. We sang the chorus repetitively and quickened the pace when I spotted the whale, played by the other 6 in the group, to build up tension. The whale then rolled to us to show we'd captured it and we encircled it speeding up the song.

First we walked then quickened our pace around the whale as though we were hawks circling our prey. We reached a pinnacle and in complicité we began to mime the cutting up of the whale. We then froze and, in turn, each fisherman turned and walked to the front to hold up a piece of card with a whale product on it and acted out an advertisement.

I chose face cream, in particular L'Oreal, so I could say 'because your worth it' in an American accent. The accent seemed to go down well with everyone else as it made them laugh. The whales then got up and became protesters and forced us back into a scared heap on the floor. I liked this piece because the beginning movements looked really effective. I also liked the way the whales became protestors and overcome the fishermen.

This group used physical theatre, cross-cutting, choreography, contrast & counter-rhythm, kabuki, symbolism and role-play.

DEVELOPMENT PHASE 2:

We discussed phase 1 and sorted out any problems. We also added & timed music. Sad music for death scenes, sonar for fishermen when they're tracking the sea for whales. We didn't have too many problems.

DEVELOPMENT PHASE 3:

We rehearsed the kabuki to music that helped keep rhythm. We tidied up the whale rolling to the fishermen and altered how Dani and I were to be picked up to make it more comfortable and more effective.

We also developed the mourning dance so it made a final tableau of Dani and I lying next to each other, to look like one and the dolphins around us with heads bowed. We performed it for evaluation. It went really well and the death scene was calm and had a quiet atmosphere. I liked this piece.

In the other piece we re-organised the ending to make it more choreographed. Our song was more together and we knew when to start cutting the whale. We also added sonar for the fishermen searching for the whale.

I, as lookout, spotted the whale and yelled out 'Thare she blows'. This signalled us circling the whale. We also made protest/advertisement banners. We then performed it for evaluation. This also went well and I liked the movements at the beginning.

DETAIL OF AN ACTING EPISODE:

As the lookout in the second piece I needed to be in a crows nest so I got a block to give myself height. When the piece started I was bent over, as though an old man, and was squinting, through a mimed telescope, out at the sea. I searched for a while by moving from one side of the room to the other. During this there were sonar sounds booming out. After the third sonar beep the character caught the glimpse of water being blown from a blow hole. I stopped with my head facing forward as though trying to focus on the whale then paused and shouted out 'thare she blows' in a pirate type voice. I thought my character was quite believable here as I actually felt as though I was in role. I stooped and used my voice to create a character of my very own.



EVALUATION:

I really enjoyed the actual devising of my group's piece. I liked the mourning scene because of the calmness and sad atmosphere in the performance.

I also liked the other group's piece. Especially the advertisement section because I've always wanted to say 'because your worth it' in an American accent. I thought the beginning with the movements looked really good.

I didn't like the end of the second piece though because it was a bit boring. The 1st piece's ending was dramatic and you actually knew it was the ending.

I think we could have worked on the kaleidoscope section in the 1st piece because it was confusing and a bit messy. I think we should have made up an actual choreographed sequence so that everybody could have got used to the movements and be able to learn them instead of having to copy.

I liked my performance in the 1st piece better than in the second piece because it involved me being a focus point so I felt more important in the piece. I felt I did more in the 1st piece (acting as the whale). In my mind, when I was playing the whale, I saw a graceful intelligent creature being brutally and inhumanly killed.

I kept the actions as simple as possible because we wanted to keep the focus on the actual killing, as this was the important thing. As I was the head of the whale I kept my head up and slapped my arms on the floor in a rhythm to represent fins slapping the surface of the water.

When the harpoon fired and was meant to have hit the whale I began to slightly thrash around and increased the speed of the slaps on the water. I tried to show how being harpooned had messed up the natural RHYTHM of the ocean. When Dani and I were picked up I kept still with my head down and was put on the floor where I lay down with Dani, dead. It was a simple role but it was important because it symbolised the whole of the piece's meaning, the way a whale should die, in the ocean with all the creatures. Not cut up out of its natural habitat.

I kept my composure in the death scene, which was hard as it was quite uncomfortable being lifted up and I was in an awkward position throughout.

I think everyone else worked well together and everybody was clearly focused. Everyone's ideas flowed well and both the final piece's were quite polished off.

In our lessons during the week we usually just manage to become focused and we'll be working hard and then the end of the lesson comes and its time to go. Yet, because we had the whole day everyone concentrated and didn't mess about. I also really enjoyed the day.

EVALUATION CONTINUED:

LAURA BEACH

In the second piece the dolphins (Emma, Dani, Danielle and me) didn't keep in time and our pace was all wrong. I think this was because we were finding it hard as the whales were doing a counter rhythm to us and we couldn't keep in time with each other because we couldn't see one another.

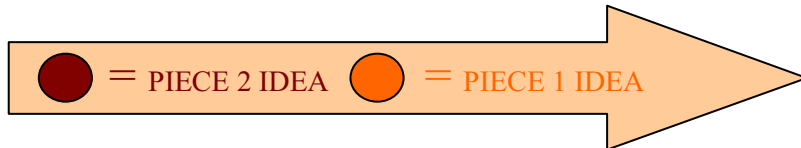
The whales had their part polished off though because as part of that group's development they had choreographed the sequence. So, they knew their sequence and didn't have to concentrate on the actual movements so they made it look graceful. I did like this sequence though because it looked quite effective because there was so much going on.

Also, in the final part where we were advertisers of a product made from whales I think all of us could have made it better. I think we could have made it seem more like an advert as that was what it was supposed to be. I think we should have thought about what product we were selling and came up with an advert from T.V. that showed a similar product and try to act out that advert.

I tried to do this as I picked a L'Oreal advert. For example somebody who picked lipstick could have tried to act out a Maybeline advert. It would have made the ending of a good piece more interesting.

I generally preferred the 1st piece because of the atmosphere and symbolism. But, if I didn't have to pick and we'd had more time I would have took the best parts from each piece and merged them together to make a really good final piece.

I would have done it like this: -



1. Kabuki & counter rhythm.
2. Fishermen searching for whale.
3. Splitting of whale and harpooning.
4. Circling of fishermen around whale.
5. Whale death.
6. Mourning dance.

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This would probably of been our next step if we'd had time to do it.

As my favourite I would pick the 1st piece because of the reasons I stated above. Also was actually based around the whales' movements and interaction with each other.

It was also based around their world and environment, this is what I saw when I first saw the stimulus so it was exactly what I thought the piece should be about.

The second piece was based around the products that the whales ended up as and the human world on whaling.



