

Expressive Arts Games and Activities

Art

Draw on your back

One child draws an object, letter, number on the back of another who has to guess what it is.

Variation 1: the 'receiving' child has to draw the object. Variation 2: The object is 'passed on' down the line like Chinese whispers with the final child guessing or drawing the object.

Back to back

2 children sit back to back, the 'viewer' picks an object in their view and describes it to the listener without key words, who has to guess what it is. Variation: the listener has to draw the object.

Draw this

Similar to Back to Back, but one child is given a picture to describe to the other who then has to draw it.

Drama

Pass the Clap

Everyone stands in a circle, a 'clap' is passed around but only by making eye contact. Clap can go either way. Variation 1: add another clap. Variation 2: pass the clap across the circle.

Count to 20 (with eyes closed / facing outwards)

Children (standing or sitting in a circle is best) count to 20 (or another number), each saying only 1 word, no one else is allowed to speak. Keep going, trying to get faster and faster. Variation 1: do it with eyes closed. Variation 2: stand further apart or face outwards. Variation 3: Use another language – Welsh, French, Spanish etc.

Story Rounds

Children tell a story one sentence at a time. Variation 1: for older juniors, children only use one word – children are allowed to / need to add punctuation (ie. one child will say full stop, question mark etc IF it makes sense). Variation 2: try to keep the sentence / story going for as long as possible without reaching a full stop.

Freeze Frame / Action Clip

Children work in groups of approximately 5 and are secretly given a scenario to act out (getting dressed, walking the dog etc – can be topic related). Children then work on creating a still life of the action. After specified time, all children watch each 'freeze frame' in turn trying to guess what is happening. Variation Action Clip: same as Freeze Frame but children can move, but must still remain silent.

Family Portraits

Same as Freeze Frame except that all groups are given the same theme – to act out a family portrait. The families should be animal based to begin with – dinosaurs, chickens, ducks, etc. Once you know your groups well and are confident with their family dynamics and life experiences, you could introduce human families doing a particular activity, but do this with great sensitivity.

Charades / Who am I?

Class charades game. Variation: post its on heads of famous people with 20 questions style questions.

Grandma's Footsteps (plus clothing)/ Dragon's Treasure (also good for Dance)

Children try to creep up on Grandma / Grandpa / Dragon sitting on a chair at the front. If Grandma hears a noise, she turns, and the children freeze. Anyone moving has to go back and start again. First one to touch Grandma's chair becomes the next Grandma. Variation 1: put obstacles in the way. Variation 2: children have to put on items of clothing before touching chair. Variation 3: play it outside on a noisy floor surface.

Mirror Game

Children work in pairs, one copying the movements / facial expressions of the other one. You can introduce an element of competition if you want.

1 2 3 substitute

Similar to Count to 20 but with a much lower number (4, 6, 8 all work well) and once the rhythm is set up, you substitute another word or sound instead of a particular number. Add more and more sounds.

Make a Shape

Children work in groups to make a shape then freeze frame it.

Nightwatchman

Similar to musical statues, except that one child is the nightwatchman, the other children are moving statues that have to stay still when the nightwatchman is looking. Extension: the nightwatchman appoints a Museum/Art Gallery Director and they then position the 'statues' to make the best display. Take a photo at the end.

Sound Stories (also good for Music)

Children come up with a variety of sound effects and put these to stories. Stories can be whole class, made up on the spur of the moment with a 'sound team' providing effects. Sound team and narrators then swap over.

Sculptor and Statue (also good for Dance)

Children work in 2s or 3s. One child is the statue, the other(s) the sculptor. The sculptor has to mould the statue into shape without touching it. Children reflect on the various statues at the end.

Music

Sing it high, sing it low

Good for starting a singing session; a singing version of My Turn, Your Turn, that sees children repeating back high notes, low, notes, quiet, loud, singing patterns etc.

My turn, your turn (call and response) Can be used in a multitude of situations and is useful for maintaining homogeneity in class.

A simple call and response activity; teacher gives a pattern/phrase, children repeat back.

Follow-my-leader

Nominate a child to be leader, they set a pattern, rhythm etc and the others have to join in and follow. Leadership is then passed onto someone else. Choose carefully to begin with, then add less confident children as confidence levels rise.

In the style of... (also good for drama)

Good for singing/oracy/diction – repeat a phrase or passage in the style of different characters – pirate, opera singer, pop singer, very young child, stern parent, animals etc.

Find the beat

Children have to find the beat and tempo to a piece of music. Play the music, children ‘march / walk’ around the hall/room. Vary the speed/tempo. If this is too difficult, begin by banging a drum in a regular beat.

Clap the rhythm

Similar to My Turn Your Turn, but with clapping only. Variation: add body percussion.

Don’t clap this one back

Practise the rhythm ‘Don’t clap this one back’, then play ‘My Turn, Your Turn’ with children listening to avoid playing the rhythm, Don’t clap this one back. Children have a forfeit if they play the rhythm by accident.

Classical Music to make an impression

Holst, Mars <https://youtu.be/vzXX9XFyemg>

Mussorgsky, Night on a Bald Mountain

Mussorgsky, Pictures at an Exhibition
 Saint-Saens, Carnival of the Animals
 Mendelssohn, Fingal's Cave
 Sibelius, The Swan of Tuonela
 Prokofiev, Peter and the Wolf
 Dukas, The Sorcerer's Apprentice
 Strauss, Also Sprach Zarathustra
 Dvorak, New World Symphony (2nd and 4th movements)
 Bach, Toccata and Fugue in D minor
 Bach / Gounod, Ave Maria
 Grieg, In the Hall of the Mountain King

Holst, Mars https://youtu.be/vzXX9XFyemg Mussorgsky, Night on a Bald Mountain	Art focus – listen to the music all the way through, then children draw how it makes them feel.
Mussorgsky, Pictures at an Exhibition Saint-Saens, Carnival of the Animals Prokofiev, Peter and the Wolf	All have a narrative element to them, Peter and the Wolf is fully narrated, the others involve movement. Carnival of the Animals for example, can be played, one section at a time, children guess the animal then draw them and use to make a collage. This could then be used as a display or a starting point for fact-finding about the animals or a narrative class / individual story.
Mendelssohn, Fingal's Cave Sibelius, The Swan of Tuonela	Good for topics on water. Could also be used as a start for art.
Holst, Mars https://youtu.be/vzXX9XFyemg Mussorgsky, Night on a Bald Mountain Mussorgsky, Pictures at an Exhibition Saint-Saens, Carnival of the Animals Mendelssohn, Fingal's Cave Sibelius, The Swan of Tuonela Dukas, The Sorcerer's Apprentice Strauss, Also Sprach Zarathustra Dvorak, New World Symphony (2 nd and 4 th movements) Grieg, In the Hall of the Mountain King	Good as a start for story-writing, story-board, cartoon strip, using as a starter for film-making.
Strauss, Also Sprach Zarathustra	Good for topic on Space

Holst, Mars https://youtu.be/vzXX9xFyemg	
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