

4-1-1987

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Recommended Citation

O'Bruba, W. S. (1987). Reading Through the Creative Arts. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 27 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol27/iss3/3

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READING THROUGH THE CREATIVE ARTS

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A major problem in education today is that there are students who are deficient in many academic tasks because they do not have the necessary reading skills needed in order to complete those tasks. For this reason detection and remediation of reading problems should begin early, when the problem is identified. It is important that teachers toward rather than away from reading. This means having good motivators which will encourage the child to want to learn to read. Teachers might look away from the traditional methods of motivation, toward some more non-conventional methods. Using various aspects of the arts in motivation of reading is a primary example of a non-conventional method which can be used by the teacher. There are four major areas of creative arts which can be utilized in the reading classroom to enrich and enhance the reading program. These are music, poetry, puppetry, and graphic art.

Music as a Motivator to Reading

It has been found that the use of music in the teaching of reading, especially in the elementary school, may motivate and build the ability of children, whether or not they are musically talented or intellectually above-average. Using music for the language deficient child is based on the idea that child-initiated language increases when creativity and imagination are stimulated. The affective domain serves as a bridge into the cognitive domain. The emphasis in a music-education curriculum for the language deficient child is on building language skills and English vocabulary while presenting musical concepts. Using music as a tool for teaching of reading not only secures music in the curriculum but also enhances the outcome of reading instruction.

Before setting up a music education program for the language deficient child it is important to recognize the

similarities between music and reading, also the advantages of introducing beginning reading activities through music. Music and reading are similar in that they have symbol structure which can be decoded into sounds which have meaning. They both are in a left-to-right plan or framework. They both require visual and auditory discrimination. Because of these similarities music can be used fairly well to enhance reading skills. The basic advantages of introducing beginning reading activities through music are:

1. it broadens reading into a multisensory experience
2. it heightens interest and involvement
3. it brings variety and pleasure to the experience
4. it reduces the tedium of repetition and drill

Music can be used in beginning reading programs for stimulation and inspiration. The beginning months of the school year can be spent in "whole child" activities, such as group singing, charades, and pantomime. At this point children use their whole body in participation and movement. Music can also be coupled with dance. This builds on the concept that movement may be the initial way in which a child begins the creative process. This can be linked to building better reading skills. As language use broadens and skills become further developed and expanded, specific language-oriented activities can be incorporated into the program. Some activities which the teacher may want to incorporate into the program are accompaniment of poetry and stories by rhythm instruments or having students plan small skits to include songs, music, and dance in their production, to be presented for each other or other classes. It is important for the teacher to recognize that the use of a different book, a different subject may catch a child off guard and cause him to sing words he would be reluctant to read if asked.

Little children use great amounts of poetry for their own purposes. They use borrowed poetry, or poetry of their own making in their games and dances. They adapt poems to the music they hum and sing or simply make up the words. In solitary play they mumble over learned snatches of verse and create vast amounts of rhythmic verbal patterns. Poetry comes easily to children. Although they don't call it poetry, they do use it more than they ever will at any

later period in their lives.

Take advantage of the natural interest and enthusiasm for poetry and apply it to teaching and enjoying reading in the classroom. Poems are excellent, readily available sources of literature for reading. Reading and writing poetry in the classroom can serve numerous purposes:

1. Plays a significant role in shaping behavior and attitudes of children.
2. Provides opportunities for children to share their thoughts and feelings in a non-threatening manner, and serve as a release for those feelings.
3. Heightens children's desire to read.
4. Sensitizes children to sound, rhythm, patterns, repetition, alliteration and melody.
5. Teaches plot and story.
6. Promotes an understanding of symbolism and imagery.
7. Sensitizes children to various writing styles.
8. Increases children's vocabularies, both oral and written.
9. Helps children develop a sense of humor, and find enjoyment through reading--here is an area in which nonsense and make-believe have a place in learning.
10. Takes children to far-away lands, different seasons, back to their earlier childhood or into the future.
11. Sparks creativity and imagination.

When reading or studying poetry, or having the children write their own, keep form in mind. There are various forms of poetry, so try to provide a wide variety of experiences with all types, for each has its own place and purpose. These forms of poetry include:

1. Single line - Exactly as its name implies, simply one line of verse.
2. Rhymed Couplet - Two lines of equal length, where the last word in each line rhyme.
3. Free verse - The most popular form, a free style with no set form or pattern. It may be as long, short, or rhythmic as its author chooses.
4. Limerick - A humorous, light form with a set pattern of rhythm and rhyme. (They typically begin in the style, "There once was a doctor named Bill . . ."
5. Four Line Quatrain - Four lines of verse with the last words in alternating lines rhyming.
6. Haiku - A traditional Japanese form of poetry, usually

associated with one of the four seasons of the year. Most of their images come from nature or man's interaction with nature. It is made up of 17 syllables divided into three lines. Lines one and three have five syllables, and line two has seven.

7. Tanka - A Japanese form of poetry. The first three lines are the same as a Haiku, then there are two more lines of seven syllables each.
8. Sijo - A three sentence poem divided into six lines of seven or eight syllables each.
9. Cinquain - Has two forms: a) A five line poem in which line one is a one word title, line two is two words that describe the title, line three is three words that express action, line four is four words that express feeling, and line five is one word for the title; second form, also a five line poem in which line one contains five words, and each line following contains one less word.
10. Typographical - A form of poetry in which the poet arranges the words to add to the effect of the meaning, and imagery (i.e., a poem about snakes in the shaped of a snake).

When using poetry in the educational environment, either reading it or having the children create their own, make sure their contacts with poetry are meaningful and pleasurable experiences, especially initial contacts. There are several important aspects to keep in mind. Without a conscious effort in these areas, it is very easy to turn children off permanently to this rich and enjoyable facet of literature.

Provide poems with familiar content and words, especially in the beginning.

Don't over dramatize.

Practice reading poems before presenting them to the class.

Speak in a clear, moderate voice, with vitality and enjoyment.

Don't try to make a lesson out of every poem.

Don't be obsessed with finding hidden meanings in every poem.

Don't overstress rhyme.

Don't approach poetry solemnly or with an aura of awe and mystery.

Encouraging every effort the children make to express themselves through poetry.

Try to get a poet to come in and speak to your class, this will bring poetry to life.

Do incorporate other areas of the curriculum; drawing, painting, rhythmic exercises, drama and music accompany poetry quite naturally.

Childhood is a time when children need to experience the delight of listening to poetry. By reading several poems daily, children will share many pleasurable moments. Under the guidance of a teacher who shares a love of poetry, children will be free to write their own poems, and may even choose poetry as a form of expression as frequently as prose.

Art

Using art as an enhancer of the reading program can provide the extra stimulation and motivation that many young readers need. Art provides an outlet for the creativity of the young child. By using their imagination and experiencing the "hands on" approach children become intrinsically motivated to read. Following are twelve ideas for art lesson plans that can be incorporated into a reading program.

1. Have students make sand table scenes, illustrating events in their books.
2. Have children work in small groups. Each group selects and reads a book. They discuss the different settings where parts of the story take place. The group designs and builds each setting in a shoe box. The bottom of the box serves as the back of the setting; cut away the top side.
3. Make a small peephole in each side of a shoe box. Place each hole at a different level. Cut out drawings of people, animals and objects. Arrange and paste them on the interior sides of the box so that they suggest a story. Tape the lid on the box. A child peeps through each hole and then writes a story for the pictures.
4. Tell a version of the "Tin Soldier" to the children. Show them pictures of the tin soldier. Supply each child with geometric shapes. Have the children arrange and paste the shapes to form a picture of the Tin Soldier. Then color additional features in with crayons.
5. Read a favorite story to the children. Help them make a

construction paper cylinder a little larger than an index finger. The children then attach construction paper head shapes. Using bits of colorful yarn, felt and paper, the children complete the finger puppet to represent a character in the favorite story. Have the children dramatize the story with their puppets as you read it again.

6. Read a story aloud. Have the children lie on large sheets of brown paper while other children trace their body silhouettes. Encourage them to assume positions representing the actions of the story character. The children cut out their silhouettes and draw or paste paper clothing on them to represent the characters in the story. Cut out the characters and tape them on the walls.
7. **On the chalkboard list the following: Happy sound, sad sound, loud sound, summer sound, and strange sound.** Have the children copy the phrases on separate sheets of paper and then find magazine pictures that suggest the sounds in the list. The pictures are cut out and pasted on the appropriate papers. Help the children fasten their papers together between construction paper covering. Decide on a title for the booklets. Place the booklets on a table, encourage the children to read each other's booklets.
8. Using discarded magazines, have the children cut 50 or more words that they know. Next, they arrange the words on black construction paper to form a short story. When complete, the short story is pasted in place.
9. Have the children fold 9x10 manila paper into two rows of three boxes each. Tell them to make up a story and draw a picture sequentially in each of the six boxes to illustrate the story. Have the children write a character's conversation in only one of the boxes to accompany the illustration. When finished, they paste their story boards on larger construction paper and exchange boards.
10. Collect newspaper comic strips. Each child selects and cuts out a comic strip that has two or more panels. They glue small construction paper scraps over the name of the strip and the conversations in the panels. Then the children cut the panels apart and arrange them in order on manila drawing paper. Have the class draw and add one or more panels on the paper, leaving space for their own panels. Have them give their strip a new title. Have children exchange and read each other's story boards.
- 11 & 12. Over a sheet of construction paper, have the children

hold a piece of crayon in position for drawing. Tell them to close their eyes and follow these and other directions: "Move your crayons around and around on the paper. Now move them back and forth, left and right. Now move them up and down, slowly."

Remind the children to keep their eyes closed as they doodle. After your final direction, they open their eyes and study their doodling for a story idea. They may add other lines to their paper, as they search for or think of a story idea. After coming up with an idea, the children can write their stories.

Dramatics

Identifying with others, whether in real life, stories, or poetry, enables the child to reenact life patterns he sees about him. Culturally deprived children need help in this. So do some handicapped, some gifted, physically disabled, or mentally retarded. All children respond eventually, if not at once, to dramatics.

Today, dramatics is thought of, in educational circles at least, as an activity for the classroom. There children can play instead of giving plays, improvise scenes from favorite stories, and role play or pantomime characters. They can act out anger or fear or surprise, and blow off steam. They have fun, and for a few minutes they can step into the skin of another human being.

The best method is to let the children make up their own play based on a story they know well and like, one they have read together or one you have read to them. The story should have these two elements:

Both male and female characters.

Lots of characters since every child who wants to participate should have a part.

The simpler the plot the better. Fairy tales work extremely well and have two advantages; most children already know them, and they often include crowds of people.

It all starts when the class reads a story together or when you read one of them. The reading should be leisurely and pleasant. Afterward, ask which scenes the class like best. Have them retell that particular scene. If the children leave out something important do some prompting of your

own. Most likely, though, someone else will remember.

Now the acting comes out. First have the children think about the character's state of mind, whether he is young or old, bold or shy, mean or kind, and how these things affect the voice, walk and gestures. On the third or fourth day, act out the entire scene from beginning to end, with no stops.

The children will not only look forward to reading stories now, but will look at reading as being fun and somewhat challenging.

Poetry is also a possibility for dramatic play. Most children enjoy poetry. They are sensitive to the rhythm of it and enjoy the repetition of sounds, words, and phrases. For this reason, poetry can be used in creative dramatics, often with highly successful results. Folk tales, legends and fables are recommended materials for use on all levels. For younger children, stories should be simplified.

In conclusion, creative dramatics may be viewed as a way of learning, a means of self-expression, or an art form in which many learnings are possible.

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