

Creative Adventures with Literature

#5: *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees

Introduction

The *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 months* focuses on three components of the **Domain: Creativity and Aesthetics**. The components are: **Music and Movement, Visual Arts, and Drama**. In the book, *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees, there is a focus on **Music and Movement**. Children are also involved in activities that support the **Domain: Social and Emotional Development**.

In this delightful book, Gerald, the giraffe, is sad when he thinks about the Jungle Dance which is held each year in Africa "because when it came to dancing he was really very bad." Children will relate to Gerald and his plight in this rhyming read-aloud with bright and bold illustrations that so beautifully support the text.

Connection to Curriculum

Consider using this curriculum guide as a supplement to the **Adventures in Learning** Topic of Study: Animals in the Jungle.

Story Preparation

- Become familiar with the book, *Giraffes Can't Dance*. Practice reading it aloud so that you can convey the different feelings expressed in the story.
- Practice reading the poem, "The Giraffe" aloud.
- Locate a picture of a giraffe (use a web search on Google images for "giraffe.")

Story Presentation

Learning Goals:

- LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)** (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)
- EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences** (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)
- EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories** (*story comprehension*)
- EL2.1 Notices and manipulates the sounds of language** (*rhyme*)
- EL3.1 Responds to the features of books and print** (*book knowledge, print knowledge*)

Book: *Giraffes Can't Dance*

First Reading of *Giraffes Can't Dance*

- Say the poem, "The Giraffe." As you say the last line, show children a picture of a giraffe.

"The Giraffe"

I went walking one sunny day
And guess what I saw coming my way?

I saw an animal walking toward me
Eating the leaves off the top of a tree.

He had the longest neck I've ever seen
As he ate the leaves that were so very green.

This animal I saw was really quite tall
With legs so thin I thought he might fall.

This strange looking animal was a sight to behold.
This very tall animal was a giraffe, I'm told.

-Dot Brown

- Invite children to tell you what they know about giraffes. Ask questions such as, "Have you ever seen a giraffe?" "Where did you see a giraffe?" "What are some things you noticed about the giraffe?" "How tall do you think a giraffe might be?"
- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator.
- Invite children to look at the cover and describe what they see.
- Ask children if they think giraffes can or can't dance and to explain their answers.
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Allow children to comment on what they see on the pages.
- Follow up with questions such as, "Were you right? Could Gerald the giraffe dance? What music did Gerald dance to?"

Second Reading of *Giraffes Can't Dance*

- Show the cover and give the title, author and illustrator.
- Invite children to recall what they remember about the story.
- Begin to read the story, pausing on the pages that show all of the animals and the sign JUNGLE DANCE.
- Point to the sign and state that this says “JUNGLE DANCE.”
- Point to the different animals on the pages and Invite children to name those they know. Name others that are familiar to you.
- Point to Gerald and ask children how they think he is feeling.
- Read the next four pages and involve children in naming the different animals as they are dancing.
- Continue with the story to the end.
- Follow up by showing the appropriate pages and asking questions such as, “How do you think Gerald felt when the other animals called him clumsy and weird?” “Who was it that helped Gerald learn to dance?” “How do you think Gerald felt when he danced and the animals said, ‘Gerald’s the best dancer that we’ve ever seen’?”
- Invite children to describe how they feel when someone calls them names or makes fun of them. How do they feel when someone helps them learn to do something? Support them in their feelings.

Teacher Note: Do a web search on Google images for jungle animals and see if you can locate pictures and names of the animals in the book that are unfamiliar to you. Print the pictures on cardstock if they are not copyrighted.

Additional Learning Goals:

SE2.1 Experiences, expresses, and regulates a range of emotions (*emotion expression*)

SE2.2 Interprets and responds to the feelings of others (*empathy, emotion understanding*)

Third Reading of *Giraffes Can't Dance*

- Show the cover and ask children to recall the title of the book.
- Give the author and illustrator and ask children if they remember what each does. Give them prompts if necessary.
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Discuss the sounds Gerald heard in the jungle: grass and trees swaying, cricket playing the violin.
- Explain to children that they will be going on a listening walk. This means they will need to be very quiet so they can hear all the sounds around them.
- Ask children to predict what sounds they think they might hear on their walk.
- Take a walk around the playground, the neighborhood or the school grounds.
- Return to the classroom after the walk and ask children to recall all the sounds they heard on their walk. Were their predictions correct?
- Record on a marker board, chalkboard or chart sheet the sounds the children heard. Here is an example of how to write what the children might say.

Our Listening Walk

John said, “I heard birds singing.”

Maria said, “I heard an airplane.”

Jake said, “I heard a dog barking.”

- Read their dictation back with them.

Additional Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

ST1.1 Engages in the scientific process to collect, analyze, and communicate information (*observations, questions, and predictions*)

Creative Art Extensions

Learning Goals:

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*print knowledge*)

CA2.1 Explores, manipulates, creates, and responds to a variety of art media (*exploration of art*)

Activity: Things We Heard on Our Listening Walk

Materials: art media such as crayons, markers, variety of collage materials, paper, scissors, glue

Directions:

- Discuss with children the things they heard on their listening walk.
- Read to them the dictation that they wrote after the walk.
- Invite children to draw pictures of what they heard on their listening walk.
- Write on their drawing their dictation about the walk if they request this.

Creative Drama and Dramatic Play Extensions

Learning Goal:

CA3.1 Explores feelings, relationships, and concepts through imitation, pretend play, and sociodramatic play (*exploration of drama*)

Activity: Dancing Prop Box

Materials: dance costumes, ballet and tap shoes, clip-on bow ties, storage box with list of contents taped to the inside of the cover, full length mirror securely mounted on the wall, old camera

Directions:

- Collect props and develop a dancing prop box
- Place the prop box in the Dramatic Play Center.
- Observe children to see how they play with the props, Do they dress in the costumes and look at themselves in the mirror? Do they take each other's picture in the costumes? Do they dance?

Creative Music Experiences

Learning Goal:

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement, music and movement concepts*)

Activity: Dancing Children

Materials: *Giraffes Can't Dance*, CDs of different dance tunes (see below for suggested list of CDs that feature dance music for children, CD player

Directions:

- Show pictures and read the text in the book, *Giraffes Can't Dance*, that names the different dance steps that the animals are dancing to.
- Explain to children that you are going to play some dance tunes and invite them to listen to them and move like the music tells them to move.
- Play one dance tune and observe the children. Do they seem to be responding to the tempo they are hearing?
- Explain to the children that you're going to play a different tune and invite them to listen to this one and move like the music tells them to move.
- Observe children to see if they respond differently to the second tune than they did to the first one.

Teacher Note: *Involve children in dance activities throughout the year.*

Learning Goal:

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement, music and movement concepts, musical expression and appreciation*)

Activity: Dancing Guest

Materials: CD and player (if requested by guest)

Directions:

- Invite a parent or a dance instructor to come in and demonstrate different types of dances.
- Discuss with the guest in advance strategies for involving the children in the dances.
- Seek out dance groups in the community who might come in and demonstrate and involve the children in different types of dances. For example a square dance group or a group at the local school who can demonstrate an Irish jig or clogging are possibilities.

CDs of Dance Tunes for Children

“Dance Medley.” *We all Live Together*, Volume 4, Greg & Steve, Youngheart Records

“Dancin’ Machine.” *We All Live Together*, Volume 3, (1979). Greg and Steve, Youngheart Records

“Kids in Action”, “Bop Till you Drop” and “Get Ready, Get Set, Let’s Dance.”, *Kids in Action*. (2000). Greg & Steve, Greg & Steve Productions

“Now We’re Dancing.”, *Children Love to Dance and Sing*, The Learning Station

“The Twist,” “The Chicken,” and “Alley Cat”, *All-Time Favorite Dances*. (1995). KIMBO Educational

Get Funky and Musical Fun with the Learning Station. (2003). Monopoli//The Learning Station

Kids in Motion, (1987). Greg & Steve, Youngheart Records

Additional Books

Barn Dance by Bill Martin, Jr. & John Archambault, illustrated by Ted Rand

Dance Away by George Shannon and Jose Aruego

Dancing Feet by Lindsey Craig, illustrated by Marc Brown

Hilda Must Be Dancing by Karma Wilson, illustrated by Suzanne Walls

Jazz Baby by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Laura Freeman

Rumble in the Jungle by Giles Andreae, illustrated by David Wojtowycz

Additional “Giraffes Can’t Dance” Ideas

- Post pictures of a giraffe and other animals in the jungle in the dramatic play area and in the Art Center.
- Locate fabric with animals in the jungle, make a tablecloth and place it on the table in the Dramatic Play Center.