

Billie Butterfly's Adventure

Ideas for dance and drama with infant classes

The material below is divided into four 25 to 30 minute lessons. Each lesson contains between two and four separate activities. In *Billie Butterfly's Adventure*, young children engage in the imaginative and creative exploration of freedom, responsibility and independence. The lesson material was inspired by, and is loosely based on, Adria Meserve's picture

book, *Cleopatra Silverwing*. This book is currently out of print. *Billie Butterfly* can be female or male.

Suggested resources

✦ Music can be used to create mood and to control the action e.g. classical music such as *Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5 in E Minor* or

Mozart's Symphony No 40 in G Minor K550.

- ✦ Colourful toy/origami butterfly (instructions can be found at www.ganymeta.org/~darren/origamidiagrams.php?diagram=butterfly).
- ✦ Hat (or other role signifier) to signify Teacher in Role (TiR) as *Billie Butterfly*.
- ✦ Open space required.

Lesson one

1. To begin (5 mins)

Individuals find a space and curl up (as small as possible) before stretching out (closing and opening movements) in a variety of ways. Children are encouraged to name animals/insects that curl up and open out (refer to the life cycle of butterfly).

2. Introducing *Billie Butterfly* (5 mins)

Teacher narrates as children mime the story's introduction:

"One day Billie Butterfly was curled up tightly in her chrysalis. She was growing and she was beginning to feel squashed. Spring came and she began to feel even more squashed. So, she squiggled and squirmed and slowly she began to break out of her chrysalis. She stretched her colourful wings and began to fly for the first time. At first, she was a little bit shaky . . . but she quickly got the hang of it. Then, feeling tired, she came to rest on a flower

which was the very same colour as her wings . . . so nobody could see her."

3. *Billie Butterfly's* first adventure (15-20 mins)

Children, as *Billie Butterfly*, pick a body part from which to 'suspend' from another flower/tree/plant. As they are 'dangling' from that flower/tree/plant they look in the direction of another flower/tree plant before travelling ('flying') safely to it and suspending with another body part. This action can be repeated several times. Children can also be encouraged to travel along a variety of pathways e.g. curved, linear, zig-zag etc.

Next, the children choose two ways of dangling from a flower/tree/plant. They then choose how and where they might travel from one position to the other before travelling to rest again on the flower (above). They are given time to practise this sequence. Then, the class is divided into two halves and each half watches

the other half perform. The children are encouraged to notice and talk about any interesting shapes/pathways (understanding and appreciation of dance). This activity could be repeated with musical accompaniment and children could talk about any changes they noticed (in mood or movement).

Lesson two

1. *Billie Butterfly* begins to dream (10 mins)

Children, as *Billie Butterfly*, 'rest' on a flower and close their eyes.

Instrumental music could be used to set the mood for the following guided imagery: the children are asked to imagine the colour of the flower they are sitting on; what they see/hear/feel/smell; what adventures they are dreaming of; where they would like to go; who they would like to meet? etc.

In pairs, the children tell each other about their imagined adventures. Feedback is taken from some individuals.

Individually, the children, as *Billie Butterfly*, resume their favourite dangling position (from the previous lesson). Then, as the teacher taps them gently on the shoulder, individuals recall their dreams of adventure (thought-tracking).

The teacher circulates among the children narrating the next part of the story (developing dramatic tension):

"Billie Butterfly was really excited and was just about to set off on her big adventure when she heard her dad calling: 'Billie Butterfly, there's a storm coming. You're not even to think about going on any adventures today. It's far too windy and much too dangerous.'

Thought-tracking of *Billie Butterfly's* reactions to this news can follow: as *Billie Butterfly*, what are you thinking now?

2. To go or not to go? (15 mins)

This part of the lesson uses the technique of conscience alley: individuals, facing each other, form two parallel lines; those on one side of the 'alley' argue in favour of a particular course of action and those on

✦ Young children engage in the imaginative and creative exploration of freedom, responsibility and independence ✦





the other side argue against it.

Setting up conscience alley:

In **pairs**, one child is assigned the role of petal and the other the role of leaf. The teacher explains that the leaves will persuade Billie Butterfly not to go on her adventure while the petals will persuade her to go; the children are given a few moments to decide what they will say. When they have decided (invite show of hands), they are given time to think of something else to say (in case another leaf or petal has the same idea!). Each child then stands opposite her/his partner to form the conscience alley.

Teacher indicates his/her role as Billie Butterfly by wearing a hat or other role signifier. S/he then walks through the alley and back again as the leaves and petals give their advice. Occasionally TiR stops to ask questions and make comments. Finally, TiR ponders the advice given (dramatic tension) before announcing that she will go on the adventure.

Lesson three

1. Setting off (15-20 mins)

a) A version of the game 'Grandmother's Footsteps' is played. One of the children (or the teacher) plays Billie Butterfly and stands at base (a wall or line) with her back to the other children who stand in a line facing her. The aim of the game is to sneak up on Billie Butterfly and touch her back. Billie Butterfly can turn around at any time and when she turns the other children (her dad) must be 'frozen'. Any dad spotted moving by Billie Butterfly must return to base. If someone reaches Billie Butterfly without being caught, that person replaces her. The game can be played a few times and the children can be encouraged to travel at various levels and to freeze in interesting shapes.

b) The children are divided into **pairs** (Billie Butterfly and her dad). Billie Butterfly's dad secretly follows her as she prepares to set off on her adventure. She looks around from time to time (sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly) and each time her dad is 'frozen'. Children are encouraged to travel along a variety of pathways and to look and freeze in a variety of ways (e.g. behind a tree) and at various levels (e.g. under a shrub). The roles can then be reversed. As in

lesson one, the children could be given the opportunity to practise and set their movement sequences and to look at and respond to each other's work. Musical accompaniment could also be added.

2. Up, up and away (5 mins)

Teacher narrates:

"And, when s/he was quite sure that she was not being followed, Billie Butterfly set off. She hadn't gone far at all when an enormous gust of wind caught her and blew her over the tops of the trees. Then it blew her over the mountains and higher and higher, over the snowy mountains and into the thick, fluffy clouds. Her wings became frozen. Then, all of a sudden the wind dropped her SLAP, BANG right in the middle of a prickly tree."

Each child creates a still image (photograph) of Billie Butterfly stuck in the prickly tree. Any children who wish to articulate how Billie Butterfly is feeling may do so as the teacher walks past them (a variation on thought-tracking). Each half of the class can then be invited to look at and respond to the other half's still images: What do you notice? What shapes do you see? How do the images make you feel? How do you think her dad would feel if he could see Billie Butterfly now?

Lesson four

1. The rescue (10 mins)

The children are divided into **pairs** (Billie Butterfly and a forest creature). The forest creatures are given some time to decide who they are, what sizes/shapes they are, what sounds they make, how they move etc. while Billie Butterfly works on recreating her still image from the previous lesson; she is stuck in a prickly tree.

The forest creatures then make their shapes/movements/sounds for their partners who guess who/what they are.

Next, the forest creatures stand at a distance from their partners who resume their positions in the prickly tree. The forest creatures approach Billie Butterfly slowly. Rescuing her is a difficult task; she is stuck in the middle of a very prickly tree! At last, they manage to rescue her but she is very tired and very frightened and the forest creatures must find a way to support her physically (which may be difficult if they are smaller than she). The rescue can be practised a few times and each half of the class could be given the opportunity to look at and respond to the other half.

2. The journey home (8 minutes)

- a) Reflecting on drama: What dangers might Billie Butterfly and the forest creature experience on the journey home?
- b) In **pairs**, and beginning with a replay of the rescue above, the forest creature leads Billie Butterfly home, telling her about and enabling her to physically negotiate the dangers along the way. At last, Billie Butterfly is home safely.
- c) Reflecting on drama: What was the most difficult part of the journey? Forest creatures, how did you feel when you got Billie Butterfly home safely? Billie Butterfly, how did you feel when you got home?

3. Billie Butterfly and her dad (7 mins)

The children form a circle to work in pairs (Billie Butterfly and her dad). Billie Butterfly tries to persuade her dad that she won't go off on windy days until she is much older. Her dad begins the conversation with: "You're safe . . ." The teacher allows the conversation to run for a few minutes. Then, every pair picks and practises a line each from their conversation. These are then performed, in turn, for the whole class (spotlighting).

4. Final reflection (5 mins)

Do you think Billie Butterfly went on other windy day adventures? Why/why not?

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