

Unit 11: Theatre for Children

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| Unit code: | J/502/5128 |
| QCF Level 3: | BTEC National |
| Credit value: | 10 |
| Guided learning hours: | 60 |

● Aim and purpose

This unit allows learners to explore and develop material for children's theatre, applying drama, dance and music skills in the creation of a suitable piece of theatre for a target age group.

● Unit introduction

Theatre for children can inspire a child's first interest in the performing arts and there are opportunities and openings for artists to be part of this challenging world. Companies may operate from established theatre bases and offer TIE (theatre in education) work; they may tour to schools, nurseries and community centres. Artists also perform in street theatre events and at festive occasions. The content can cover social issues, local community history, seasonal entertainment, contemporary or classical literature, the teaching of skills or information, school set texts or support the curriculum.

This unit focuses on the selection, adaptation and shaping of material to make it suitable for an audience of children. Drama, dance, singing and music skills will be developed and applied in the creating of performances, specifically aimed at a young audience

Learners will explore likely and suitable material, whether published text or based on a stimulus, then select and shape it according to the target age group, its suitability, the audience needs and the purpose of the performance. Performances could be educational or just for entertainment and fun.

Roles will be shared out and taken on according to each learner's abilities and skills, so that everyone can contribute to the performance. There will be opportunity for interaction with the audience through practical workshops, forum theatre, post-show question-and-answer sessions, and to evaluate the performance experience for themselves, the audience and other adults involved in the care of the young audience.

Learners must participate in one large-scale performance (30 minutes minimum) or two small-scale performances (15-20 minutes each).

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know how to research, select and refine suitable material for children's theatre
- 2 Be able to devise and shape material for children's theatre
- 3 Be able to perform in children's theatre.

Unit content

1 Know how to research, select and refine suitable material for children's theatre

Considerations: potential groups eg play groups, nursery groups, primary and secondary schools, youth clubs, special needs, summer schools

Purpose: eg to entertain, inform, educate

Suitability: determined by age group, timescale, centre or school needs, venue

Selection of material: storylines eg classics, myths, legends across cultures, fiction, non-fiction, adaptations of children's stories, history, documentary

Educational subject matter: real-life situations such as bullying; information and awareness eg road safety, personal safety; related to the curriculum eg history, regions, societies and cultures

2 Be able to devise and shape material for children's theatre

Skills: adaptation and interpretation of script or source material through the use of techniques eg improvisation, physical theatre, dance and movement, song, puppetry, masks

Forms: eg storytelling, musical numbers, narration, dialogue, chorus, ensemble, forum theatre, audience participation

Production features: legal requirements; Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks; health and safety considerations; costume; lighting; sound; set design; props

Age considerations: appropriateness; concentration span; comprehension level; language development; educational level; emotional level

Review: evaluating effectiveness of ideas; discussion/consultation; performance techniques; meeting original brief; responding to feedback; providing feedback; making adjustments; reworking

3 Be able to perform in children's theatre

Performance skills: vocal and physical qualities; response and communication with audience; energy; focus; adaptability; confidence; sensitivity and flair

or

Production skills: eg scriptwriting, choreography, musicianship, designing, preparing lighting and/or sound, props, using construction and craft skills

Teamwork: discipline; commitment; giving and accepting criticism; discussion; responding and making improvements; remaining creative

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

| Assessment and grading criteria | | |
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| To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to: | To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to: | To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to: |
| P1 describe the suitability of material for a children's audience [IE] | M1 explain the potential and suitability of material for a children's audience | D1 analyse appropriate material for children's theatre, with creative ideas for developing its potential |
| P2 develop and shape material for children's theatre responding to ideas offered [CT, TW, EP] | M2 actively shape and develop material for children's theatre, offering creative, realistic and appropriate ideas | D2 shape with commitment the material for children's theatre, showing an appreciation of what can be effective and appropriate for performance |
| P3 perform a role in a piece of theatre for children using performance or production skills competently. [TW] | M3 perform a role in a piece of theatre for children using performance or production skills confidently. | D3 perform a role in a piece of theatre for children using performance or production skills with confidence, interpretation and flair. |

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

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| Key | IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers | RL – reflective learners TW – team workers | SM – self-managers EP – effective participators |
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For this unit, learners could investigate the special features of children's theatre using videos, theatre visits and programmes or website information on professional children's theatre companies and performances. Learners are required to take part in individual and group research, lectures and discussions to identify key features of style and content. The target audience should dictate the selection of material used throughout the unit, rather than the converse.

There must be detailed research and discussion regarding the needs or requirements of a selected audience and age range. For example, a survey could be undertaken to establish the curriculum needs of a school or organisation. The selection of text or source material will determine the possibilities for creative interpretation, so its development should be considered, along with the opportunities afforded for using a range of skills. The potential of the material should also be appraised in terms of its entertainment, informative or educational values.

Learners should take part in experimental workshops to develop a range of methods of communicating with children through performance. The focus should be on how to tell a story or convey information in an exciting way. The emphasis should be on stimulating children's imagination through energy, colour, action, sound, movement and image, as well as dialogue and, frequently, comedy. Learners should take part in devising workshops, rehearsals and production meetings and be continuously encouraged to develop and modify material in response to their own evaluation and that of others.

Arrangements for working in an interactive way with children should be made where appropriate, to enable learners to plan suitable workshop activities, or to encourage performance participation if required. How best to stimulate discussions, or ask leading questions of an audience, will need to be tackled in the course of study. Ideally, experience would be gained from working with some children or observing others work with them, but simulated activities, such as learners role-playing as children, can be useful with some tutor guidance.

Opportunities for follow-up evaluative work are strongly recommended for this unit since much professional practice in this area calls for it, often as a funding requirement. To this end, it would be ideal for learners to have further opportunity to perform a piece of children's theatre, having revised the work in the light of audience feedback.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

| Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment |
|---|
| Introduction to the unit and structure of the programme of learning. |
| Introduction to the nature and purpose of theatre for children – presentations from tutor, discussions, viewing examples on DVD, practical activities. (Learning outcome 1) |
| Individual and group research into the key features of Theatre for Children eg plot, stylistic devices, characters, production/technical features. (Learning outcome 1) |
| Exploring suitable material Theatre for Children through discussions and practical activities – investigating a range of different starting points eg myths, children's literature, historical stories, national curriculum, social issues. (Learning outcome 2) |
| Exploring performance skills suitable for Theatre for Children through discussions and practical activities – developing appropriate acting, music and/or dance skills, audience interaction and participation. (Learning outcome 3) |
| Investigating a range of forms and techniques for Theatre for Children through practical activities eg narration, use of music, use of dance, dialogue, chorus. (Learning outcome 3) |
| Assignment – Panto (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research into possible source material.• Selection of material.• Development of source material to shape the work.• Rehearsals and production preparations.• Performances. |
| Feedback from assignment. |

Assessment

Evidence of consideration of the suitability of source material for a children's audience could include a research log, written reports and oral presentations. For the selection of materials learners could present a list of possibilities for discussion, or research in detail the potential of one or more ideas. Group discussion and evaluation should be a formative part of making final decisions. To achieve P1 learners must provide an unelaborated description of the how source material would meet the needs of a target audience. For M1, learners should be able to consider the potential of source material explaining why it would be suitable and how it could meet the needs of the target audience. To achieve D1 learners should be able to evaluate source material making imaginative suggestions for how it could best be developed to meet the needs of the target audience.

Evidence of the development and shaping of material and ideas should be evidenced in learner logs, supported by tutor observations, self and peer group assessments and recordings of devising, rehearsing and making activities. To achieve P2 learners should play a part in the developmental process offering some ideas and responding appropriately to suggestions made by others. For M2, a more active contribution to the process must be made. Ideas offered should be inventive and practical and should be suitable for the needs of the target audience and help to shape the key features of the piece. To achieve D2 learners must make an enthusiastic and focused contribution to the development process. Ideas and suggestions should be imaginative and inventive and should show a firm understanding of the key elements of children's theatre and the needs of the target audience.

Learners should participate in at least one large-scale performance (30 minutes minimum) or two small-scale performances (15–20 minutes each) in a performance and/or production role. Performances should contain some devised elements even where they are based on a published script or text. To achieve P3 learners should make a competent contribution to performances in a performance or production role. For M3, contributions should demonstrate a secure and assured use of appropriate skills. To achieve D3 learners should demonstrate a proficient and creative use of performance and/or production skills and should show imagination and a feel for the nature of the piece.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

| Criteria covered | Assignment title | Scenario | Assessment method |
|--|------------------|---|---|
| P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 | Pantomime | Form a performance company and research target audiences; research into possible source material for a children's panto; select and develop material and take part in rehearsals, other preparations and a performance. | Process log to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> research log summary of findings notes on development activities rehearsal or production diary. Tutor observations. Video of performance(s). |

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

| Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Preparing Work for an Audience | Performing Scripted Plays | Devising Plays |
| Presenting Work to an Audience | Acting Skills and Techniques | Theatre in Education |
| | Devising Plays | Performing with Masks |
| | | Principles of Acting |
| | | Applying Acting Styles |
| | | Storytelling as Performance |

Essential resources

This unit requires that a performance can be rehearsed and presented to an audience of children, either at the children's school/centre or at the learners' centre, with tutor supervision and the opportunity for follow-up evaluation work with the audience.

Either space should have adequate health and safety procedures and technical facilities. A budget to cover the cost of construction or hire of transport, any set, costume, props and effects may be required.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Contact with professionals working within the field of children's theatre would be advantageous. The assignment should be set within a vocational context with work mirroring that of a professional company as far as is practicable.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Performing Arts Student Book* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906787

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Teacher Resource Pack* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906794

Cooke D – *Arabian Nights* (Nick Hern Books, 1999) ISBN 9781854594617

Duffy C – *Collected Grimm Tales* (Faber Children's Books, 2003) ISBN 9780571221424

Johnstone K – *Impro for Storytellers* (Faber and Faber, 1999) ISBN 9780571190997

Johnstone K – *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (Methuen Drama, 1981) ISBN 9780713687019

Rushdie S – *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Puffin Books, 2001) ISBN 9780140366501

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|------------------------------|--|
| Independent enquirers | considering the suitability and potential of material for children's theatre |
| Creative thinkers | selecting and developing appropriate material and ideas for children's theatre |
| Team workers | making a contribution to the performance of a piece of children's theatre. |

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|----------------------------|--|
| Reflective learners | considering the skills developed during the unit |
| Self-managers | meeting deadlines. |

● Functional Skills – Level 2

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|---|---|
| English | |
| Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts | discussing the potential and suitability of source materials for children's theatre |
| Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions | reading and selecting play scripts and/or stories |
| Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively | writing a script for a piece of children's theatre. |