

The Sea

This would be a good project for the Summer Term and would be particularly appropriate as part of a cross-curricular study.

Resources

Well in advance, ask the children to collect two groups of sea pictures, 'calm' and 'stormy'. In late spring to early summer, many suitable 'calm' illustrations will be found in magazines and holiday brochures. Stormy scenes will be less abundant and are more likely to be found as book illustrations or art prints. Suitable poems and descriptions would also be helpful. This resource describes work on two scenes most likely to be familiar to children of this age, depicting the sea as it is viewed from the shore. If you have strong stimuli for sound pictures of other scenes, it can be adapted, accordingly.

Sound sources: Voices and any available instruments. An electronic keyboard will have many sounds worth exploring. A General Midi keyboard has a sound entitled 'seashore'. Tell the children that this is not available to them. Instead, they should listen to the sound and decide what it is about the sound that makes us think of the sea.. Then, they can use the same principle(s) when playing other sounds or instruments.

Lessons 1 and 3 should be as exploratory as possible. Ideally, every child would have the opportunity to try 'painting' each feature but this may only be possible if pupils have access to instruments outside of time-tabled music lessons.

Lesson 1 - Calm Day on the Seashore

- relate sounds to visual or literary images
- select appropriate instruments

Look at appropriate images and discuss any visits pupils have made to the sea on such a day. How did their surroundings affect their mood? What did they hear, see, touch, smell? Draw attention to the gentle ebb and flow of the waves and any features in the picture/s such as rock pools, crabs, shells, children paddling, sunlight reflected on the water, boats on the fore-shore, etc..

Tell the children they are going to paint a 'picture in sound'. An artist tries, not only to reproduce the objects in a scene but, also, to capture a mood. Likewise, they can create an atmosphere in their 'painting'. The background of the painting will be the sea quietly lapping on the shore. Experiment with ways of using voices and pitched instruments to create this background.

Take each feature of the scene, in turn, and ask the children to suggest an instrument and method of playing suitable for this part of the picture. Try out the suggestions and select an instrument, or group of instruments, to represent each feature in an improvised 'sound picture' of the scene. Those not using voices and/or instruments, for other purposes, provide the vocal 'background'.

Record the improvisation.

(If you have sufficient space and resources, the class could be divided into groups, each creating its

own scene with each group member responsible for a different feature.)

Lesson 2 - Reviewing and Improving

- explore and explain their own ideas and feelings about music using expressive language and musical vocabulary
- improve their own and others' work in relation to its intended effect
- learn how the combined musical elements of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and silence can be organised within musical structures.

Listen to the recording made last week. Which instruments and ways of playing were most successful? Consider the part played by each musical element.

Take each feature, in turn, and try out any suggestions. Discuss these modifications.

Make a new recording, incorporating any improvements.

Have another group(s) improvise and compare the versions.

Lesson 3 - Stormy Weather

- relate sounds to visual or literary images
- select appropriate instruments

Has anyone been to the coast in stormy weather? Has anyone seen a stormy scene in a film or on T.V.? Look at pictures of stormy seas - what would it be like to be there?

In order to 'paint' this new scene, how do we need to change our background? What are the features of the storm scene? Develop these ideas, following the pattern established in Lesson 1.

Encourage the children to explore a wide range of classroom instruments and to use their imagination - they made need help to get beyond a first "Storms make a lot of noise" response! If some play other instruments, encourage them to find ways of incorporating them.

As in Lesson 1, create a class 'painting' of the scene and record it.

Lesson 4 - Reviewing & Improving

- explore and explain their own ideas and feelings about music using expressive language and musical vocabulary
- improve their own and others' work in relation to its intended effect
- learn how the combined musical elements of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and silence can be organised within musical structures.

Review and edit the storm scene, following the pattern established in Lesson 2.