

Physical Education – Telling Stories Through Gymnastics

Speakers:

Heidi Bohler, Robert Rausch, and Kate Stanne – Westfield State University.
Students – Nick Adams, Alex Baker, Casey Dombkowski, Peter Knowles, Ryan Nickerson, Kevin Nicols, Tim Rich, Jake Storey,

Imagine students using balancing, rotations and traveling to tell stories. Forward rolls become balls, log rolls are fallen trees, balances can be trees, but students use their imagination to tell stories using gymnastics skills they have learned. Participants will be guided through creating sentences using gymnastic sequences and then putting these together to tell a short story. It is expressive, creative, and compliments interdisciplinary work with language arts in an educational gymnastics unit.

Background for Presentation:

The idea for this presentation grew out of an educational gymnastics class that our undergraduates at Westfield State University take. The students teach their peers various skills such as upright and inverted balances, rotational movements, gymnastic and animal walks and mounts/dismounts on a low balance beam. They are expected in their teaches to have students create sequences using the various skills they have learned. All these classes are recorded.

So, following the second teach given, the student asked everyone to create a story using the skills they had learned to date. It was never determined how asking them to do a sequence was translated into creating a story, but somehow that occurred. Clearly they needed a clarification as to what a sequence is, and that was made, fully expecting the next teaches to be followed by these. However, after the next teach, students again asked their peers to create stories. They tend to follow the leader.

I was again asking myself how it was that they were not doing sequences when it dawned on me that what the students were creating in these stories was actually really very clever not to mention creative. That is how this presentation was conceived. We have taken the concept further in looking at how to make it more interdisciplinary. Know that it can be as simple as a group creating a story as they did in my class, to presenting them with material to interpret. By the way, my students did finally get what a sequence was and creating stories has been added to my educational gymnastics unit.

My thanks to the Analysis II class of 2012 for the inspiration and to the Analysis II class of 2013 for continuing the ideas that helped form this presentation. I want to thank my colleagues Dr. Bob Rausch and Dr. Heidi Bohler for their participation and support in this presentation. I especially want to thank our students who represent both of the Analysis classes for their part in planning and delivering this workshop.

Kate Stanne

Overview:

As mentioned above, students created their own stories in the gymnastics class. What will be done in this presentation is we will have you create stories guided by poems, pictures, and/or music. We have found that it is a little easier for students to create their own stories using the skills because they don't have a "plot" to follow and may find it easier to match the skills to their own narration. However, we offer flexibility in the skills to be able to make them work within what is provided. With that stated, consider these options:

1. Students can make modifications to the skills (i.e. they could make antlers while doing a forward lunge)
2. For this presentation we will require you to choose skills in 3 different areas but it is certainly within your prerogative to have actions that only require balances (in fact some of the poems below are written for this).
3. If you work with K-2/3 you can use balances on patches and points vs. the standard "gymnastic" balances we have provided.
4. And finally, expand this in ways that work for your classes and share what you are doing. 😊

Format for Handout:

This handout provides poetry and the lyrics for the music. For pictures we suggest you find ones that work for you or have students bring in what they may have drawn in an Art class. The first looks at literacy through different poetry forms. We are providing poems from various resources we have selected as well as some that we have created. With each poem, we have included ideas that we had for telling the stories, but our suggestion would be to see what students create. The ideas are provided only to give you a starting point if you want one. We follow the examples with a "clean" copy of the poem in a larger font in case you would like to copy it.

Example 1: Haiku Poetry

What we are doing in these examples is working with a traditional Japanese pattern that has 3 lines with a pattern of 5-7-5. These numbers indicate sound units known as "on" or morae. This pattern consists of 17 "on" sounds. Note: There is a lot more one can learn about haiku. In the Haiku and alliteration, the first line is the line for the poem and the bullet under it in *italics* is the idea for what can be done to tell the story.

Trees stand tall and firm 5

- *Have upright balances like front attitude, passé, arabesque, etc.*

Winds blow tumbleweeds scatter 7

- *Could have forward rolls or egg rolls*

Bows bend to the wind 5

- *Have front scale or side scale from other balances*

Example 2: Haiku Poetry

Rocket arm pitcher 5

- *Go from Coupé to a front scale for the pitcher*

Catchers poised for force of ball 7

- *could have tripods or low squat balance depending on age*

Balls from mound to plate 5

- *go into front scale, make dynamic from coupe to scale while tripod person goes back and forth between tripod and being in position to get ready but on toes*

Example 3: Poem titled “Alice” by Shel Silverstein

She drank from a bottle called DRINK ME
And up she grew so tall,
She ate from a plate called TASTE ME
And down she shrank so small
And so she changed, while other folks
Never tried nothin’ at all.

We see this as a poem for young children to practice big and small, and this could be done with balances on patches and points perhaps at three different levels.

Example 4: Poem titled “Play Ball” by Shel Silverstein (this is the inspiration for the Haiku poem in example 2 above)

Okay, let’s play, I think that we
Have everyone we need.
I’ll be the strong-armed pitcher
Who can throw with blinding speed.
And Pete will be the catcher
Who squats low and pounds his mitt,
And Mike will be the home-run king
Who snarls and waits to hit
One, loud and long and hard and high,
Way out beyond the wall.
So let’s get start – What? You? Oh, yes,
You can be the ball!

Students could take the role of each of the players above. The pitcher could alternate between a few of the upright balances that students believe illustrate the throw. We generally teach official gymnastic balances like the front scale and arabesque for example, but certainly students can create their own balances. Whichever they do, they would be creating a balance sequence within the story as they move from one balance to another to illustrate the pitcher. The catcher can again created her or his own balance to illustrate that position and the same applies to the batter. The “ball” could be someone doing forward or backward rolls in between.

Example 5: Alliteration

Patches and points, perfect for balance

- *could be given time to do a number of balances*

Large parts small parts, hold your pose

- *same as above, maybe read these lines together*

Like Miss Piggy on 4 points. (or could be 1, 2 or 3)

- *have final balance on number of points given*

Example 6: Alliteration

Balance like bears, balance like bees

- *let them create bear on 2 or four feet and bees as would hover*

Balance on bottoms and balance on knees

- *allow for balance creations on bottoms and others on knees*

Balance tall, balance small,

- *allow them to create each in own way and pause after reading line*

Balance because it's just a ball.

- *Another time to let them choose what it would look like to have fun with balance*

Example 1

Trees stand tall and firm

Winds blow tumbleweeds scatter

Bows bend to the wind

Example 2

Rocket arm pitcher

Catchers poised for force of ball

Balls from mound to plate

Example 3

She drank from a bottle called DRINK ME

And up she grew so tall,

She ate from a plate called TASTE ME

And down she shrank so small

And so she changed, while other folks

Never tried nothin' at all.

Example 4

Okay, let's play, I think that we

Have everyone we need.

I'll be the strong-armed pitcher

Who can throw with blinding speed.

And Pete will be the catcher

Who squats low and pounds his mitt,

And Mike will be the home-run king

Who snarls and waits to hit

One, loud and long and hard and high,

Way out beyond the wall.

So let's get start – What? You? Oh, yes,

You can be the ball!

Example 5

Patches and points, perfect for balance

Large parts small parts, hold your pose

Like Miss Piggy on 4 points. (or could be

1, 2 or 3)

Example 6

Balance like bears, balance like bees

Balance on bottoms and balance on
knees

Balance tall, balance small

Balance because it's just a ball.

Here are lyrics for Down by the Bay

<p>Verse 1 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever see a moose Kissing a goose?" Down by the bay</p>	<p>Verse 2 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever see a whale With a polka dot tail?" Down by the bay</p>
<p>Verse 3 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever see a fly Wearing a tie?" Down by the bay</p>	<p>Verse 4 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever see a bear Combing his hair?" Down by the bay</p>
<p>Verse 5 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever see some llamas Eating pajamas?" Down by the bay</p>	<p>Verse 6 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do My mother will say "Did you ever have a time When you couldn't make a rhyme?" Down by the bay</p>
<p>Verse 7 Down by the bay Where the watermelons grow Back to my home I dare not go For if I do</p>	<p>Raffi Version</p>

This provides another look at how you may create verses.

The song lyrics usually are as follows:

"Down by the bay,
Where the watermelons grow,
Back to my home,
I dare not go,
For if I do,
My mother will say:"

Usually follows some kind of variation on "Did you ever see a _____, _____ing a _____", with rhyming words, for example:

- "Did you ever see a fox, hiding in a box?"
 - "Did you ever see a fish do a hula in a dish?"
 - "Did you ever see a duck in a pickup truck?"
 - "Did you ever see a bee, with a sunburnt knee?"
 - "Did you ever see a snake baking a cake?"
 - "Did you ever see a cat, wearing a hat?"
 - "Did you ever see a moose, kissing a goose?"
 - "Did you ever see an ant, climbing a plant?"
 - "Did you ever see a whale, with a polka-dot tail?"
 - "Did you ever see a bear, combing his hair?"
 - "Did you ever see a mouse, building a house?"
 - "Did you ever see llamas, eating their pajamas?"
 - "Did you ever see a goose, kissing a moose?"
- "...down by the bay?"

References:

1. Pictures for the presentation came from Sports Illustrated.
2. There is a free app called Story Starters – Ideas for Writing by Jarod Robinson
3. Create a Rain Forest in the Gym – title of an article in the February issue of Strategies 1995. It has a wonderful reference list and combines gymnastics with teaching about the rain forest. I found this while searching other resources for this presentation.
4. Teaching FUNdamental Gymnastics Skills by Debby Mitchell, Barbara Davis, and Raim Lopez. Illustrated by Stormy Gunter. Human Kinetics 2002. Some pictures of gymnastics balances and animal walks used in the presentation were from this text. This text offers excellent descriptions of the skills.
5. Teaching Children Gymnastics 3rd Ed. By Peter Werner, Lori Williams, and Tina Hall. Human Kinetics 2012 – Some pictures of gymnastics balances and animal walks used in the presentation were from this text. This text offers great suggestions for sequences and ideas for experimenting with patches and points.
6. Down by the Bay Lyrics – traditional children’s song. We googled the lyrics, the first set came from the table and was attributed to how Raffi sings it. The second was from Wikipidia