Circus Smirkus

Curriculum Guide

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Introduction

Life Lessons from the Circus –
The Circus Smirkus Educational Philosophy
CIRCUS SMIRKUS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Circus Smirkus residencies are dedicated to enhancing learning skills and character education through the inclusive teaching of circus arts.

Enhancing Learning Skills

Students are coached, in a variety of circus arts, to employ 10 important learning skills: TRY, TRY AGAIN, TRY A NEW WAY, GO SLOW, STEP-BY-STEP, STOP AND VISUALIZE, WATCH, WAIT, READ, AND LISTEN. These are learning tools that can be used in any curriculum throughout a student's life. By the end of the residency, all students will know these learning strategies and will have had physical, tangible experiences of using them in action. It's a tool-kit for life.

Character Education

Through learning circus arts, students develop their powers of concentration, focus and persistence. They gain confidence and strength for dealing with challenges. Circus arts help awaken qualities of problem solving and will power that will be called upon in adulthood. Students learn patience and how to work through temporary frustration to achieve success. Our intent is to encourage and empower students to set and achieve goals and reach personal excellence at their own levels.

Inclusion
The level of difficulty of the activities ranges widely enough to foster a sense of self-confidence as well as set forth reasonable personal challenges for all students. And while we seek to challenge all participants, we also emphasize a non-competitive approach. With competition removed, each new student is freed to learn new skills at his or her own level and pace. We strongly believe in full inclusion, and make whatever accommodations possible to help each individual be their best.

**Approach**

It is the mission of the Residency program to: share both the skills and the spirit of circus arts through positive interaction, enthusiastic instruction, and passionate example; create a cooperative, non-competitive, inclusive atmosphere; and give each child a positive, lasting experience to carry beyond the Residency.

Our approach is to work with you to set up a customized residency that works best with your school community to meet your needs, respect your limitations, and help you fulfill your own mission.
Chapter I

The Circus Context
### A Timeline of Circus History

- **1768** Philip Astley is the first person to bring together the elements of circus.
- **1793** John Bill Ricketts presents the first circus in America in Philadelphia on April 3rd.
- **1797** Philip Lailson sends his performers in costume out into the streets of Philadelphia hoping to drum up business for his circus – the first circus parade is born.
- **1810** Traveling animal menageries become popular, offering audiences rare glimpses at exotic beasts.
- **1825** J. Purdy Brown is the first to order a canvas tent for his circus. Brown realized he would have the ability to move his show every day with a tent and could therefore reach more people and make more money.
- **1829** Trained animal acts begin to appear with circuses.
- **1835** Circus wagons begin to appear in circus parades. The very first was a bandwagon carrying the circus band.
- **1857** The steam calliope is a unique and loud addition to circus parades.
- **1872** P.T. Barnum, together with William C. Coup and Dan Castello, move their entire shows in railroad cars. Small circuses are still traveling by wagon.
- **1882** Jumbo, the elephant, is brought to the United States by the Barnum and London Show. The word “jumbo” comes to be used as a synonym for large.
- **1883** William F. Cody, or Buffalo Bill, performs in the first “wild west” show at the Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition.
- **1884** Al, Otto, Alf, Charles, and John Ringling give their first performance as Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows in Baraboo, Wisconsin.
- **1891** The Adam Forepaugh Circus features Miss Carlotta and Colonel Boone in the first wild animal act presented in an arena.
- **1891** Phineas T. Barnum dies on April 7th.
- **1892** Frank Menches, while selling food concessions, runs out of link sausages. He asks his assistants to form ground sausage into patties and sell them as sandwiches. The hamburger is born.
- **1896** Barnum & Bailey Circus exhibits a horseless carriage in their circus parade.
- **1907** The Ringlings purchase Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth.

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1 This is a controversial matter—there are several “birthplaces of American circus” throughout the U.S., making this an interesting topic for research.
• **1919** Ringling Bros. Circus and Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth are combined into one giant circus, The Big Show.

• **1924** Seils-Sterling circus takes to the road in motorized vehicles.

• **1927** The Circus Fans Association of America is founded.

• **1929** The Great Depression begins and circuses are struggling – people have no money to use for entertainment.

• **1941** Walt Disney Pictures releases *Dumbo*. World War II makes it difficult for circuses to find young men to work. However, the war gives industries a boost that provides Americans with the money to attend the circus more often. Business is booming.

• **1942** Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus donates a block of seats at each performance to war bond buyers.

• **1944** The Big Show performs a show on July 6th. During the show, the tent catches fire and within nine minutes collapses. Many are injured or killed in the fire. Six officials are sent to prison, large fines are paid, and new fire codes for public places are put into place.

• **1956** The Big Show does its last tented show on July 16th. The show is performed exclusively in arenas after this date.

• **1968** Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey open Clown College.

• **1970** The first women are accepted to Clown College.

• **1974** Philippe Petit walks a tight wire strung between the twin towers of the World Trade Center, 1,350 feet above the sidewalk.

• **1977** The Big Apple Circus, a one-ring European style circus, is founded by Paul Binder.

• **1984** Cirque du Soleil is founded by Guy Laliberte.

• **1987** Rob Mermin founds Circus Smirkus.
Circus Lore
Condensed from the CircusWeb website, www.circusweb.com

Going to the Circus

As you near the circus lot, you’ll notice the tent set up on a large parking lot or empty field, a small city set up in the middle of nowhere. You enter the grounds via the midway, which is an area outside the main entrance lined with concessionaires, rides, and in many shows a sideshow or menagerie. You buy your tickets at the ticket wagon, and get in line to enter the big top.

When you are ushered into the big top, you’ll notice the performance rings in the middle of the tent, surrounded by a hippodrome track. Surrounding this track are grandstand seats, with special box seats down in front. As you take your seat, concessionaires will start selling everything from peanuts and cotton candy to souvenirs and programs.

The performance itself is conducted by a ringmaster, traditionally attired in colorful top hat and tails, who uses a whistle to signal the start of each new act. A live band, heavy on the brass, plays lively music. A typical circus performance will start with an opening parade around the hippodrome track.

There is typically a 15-minute intermission approximately halfway through the performance, during which complex rigging is set up, often for the lion or flying trapeze acts. Most performances conclude with the circus elephants. Following the show (the “blow off”) you’ll have an opportunity to re-visit some of the sites on the midway that you may have missed on the way in.

Circus Life

Circus life is not nearly as glamorous or carefree as it may seem. Circus folk typically work 11 straight months without a day off, with the show shutting down only for a few weeks around Christmas to ready for the new year’s edition.

A typical circus day starts with a late-night drive into town and a few hours sleep before set-up begins. Set-up is the most grueling aspect of circus life; the equivalent of a small town is erected in the span of only a few hours before the public starts arriving for the first performance. Crews handle the tent, the seating, the electrical generator and wiring, the animals, and the various midway concession stands. Performers are typically responsible for setting up their own rigging at the appropriate time. Typically there will be one or two performances on set-up day, two on weekdays, and three on weekends. Immediately following the last show at a particular location, everything is dismantled and packed into trucks, after which everyone hits the road to the next town. Many circuses perform this entire ritual every day, and of course it goes on regardless of weather, fatigue, or the presence or absence of any paying customers.

Circus folk form a very close-knit community. Children are schooled by their parents, typically following correspondence school curricula. Holidays are often celebrated en masse, and weddings in the center ring are not uncommon. The community tends to be very liberal and tolerant of diversity among its members, but untrusting of outsiders (“townies”).

There is never any shortage of excitement on the road. Every day deals up new and unusual events, from blowdowns and accidents to a performer losing an article of
clothing during a performance. Coupled with the colorful range of personnel attracted to such a life and the non-stop rhythm of life on the road, this makes circus life unique.

The Circus Lot

The layout of a circus stays relatively constant. The entrance to the big top will typically be placed at one end of the main tent, and the performers’ entrance (“back door”) placed at the middle of one of the long sides of the tent. The midway will be organized outside the big top entrance.

The sideshow and menagerie tents, if present, will be placed along the midway, along with the concession stands and rides. The ticket wagon will be placed toward the entrance to the midway. Performers, equipment, trucks, and animals not in the menagerie are organized outside the back door to the big top, in an area off-limits to the public (the “back yard”).

The Circus Tent

Although many circuses have moved into indoor arenas, several shows still travel under canvas. Most large tents are erected by way of “bale rings.”

A bale ring tent is set up as follows. Metal or wooden tent stakes are first driven into the ground around the entire circumference of the tent, often the day before the show arrives. On set up day, the canvas is unrolled, then stitched together with rope and fastened to the stakes. The center poles are then raised and secured. Around the bottom of each center pole is a metal ring, a bale ring, which is attached to the top of the pole with a pulley. The canvas is fastened around each bale ring, and then hoisted up using the pulleys on the center poles. Finally, sidewalls, flat canvas panels, are fastened around the perimeter of the tent. A marquee, a small entrance tent, may be added at the main entrance to provide a sheltered entry for the public.

Circus Superstitions

• Never look back during a parade. (Some shows fined those who transgressed.)
• Never sit on the ring curb facing out.
• Never whistle in the dressing room.
• Peacock feathers are bad luck.
• Accidents happen in threes.
• Elephants must always have their trunks up in pictures.
• Hair from the tail of an elephant is good luck.
Circus Glossary

The circus has a long and interesting history and, over the years, it has developed its own "language" which reflects its rich history and culture. Here are some words you might hear under the big top.

A

ABA-DABA- Any dessert served in the cookhouse
ADVANCE MEN- Men who go into towns ahead of the circus to put up heralds and posters publicizing the arrival of the circus.
ALFALFA- Paper money.
ALL OUT AND OVER- Entire performance is concluded
ANNIE OAKLEY- A complimentary ticket or free pass.
AUGUST CLOWN- A clumsy, slapstick clown who wears no traditional costume.

B

BACK DOOR- Performer's entrance area to the Big Top
BACK YARD- Outside area behind the Big Top, not for the public
BALLY- A platform used by spielers to give the crowd an idea of the show to be seen inside
BALLYHOO- The spiel shouted in front of the sideshow to attract attention
BIBLES- Programs or souvenir magazines
BIG TOP- The main tent used for performances
THE BIG ONE- Ringling Bros. And Barnum & Bailey Circus
BLOWDOWN- When tents are blown down by a storm
BLOW OFF- The ending, kicker, or punch line to a clown gag
BLUES- The "cheap seats."
BOSS CANVAS MAN- The man whose job it is to decide exactly where and how the tents should be put up at the new circus lot
BOSS HUSTLER- The one who traveled ahead of the mud shows to mark the way for the caravan
BUNCE- Profits
BUTCHER- Refreshments merchants, peddler of lemonade, candy, etc.

C

CALLIOPE- A musical instrument with steam whistles, activated by a keyboard. (pronounced Kally-opy)
CARPET CLOWN- A clown who works either among the audience or on the arena floor.
CATCHER- A member of a trapeze act who catches the flyer
CATTLE GUARD- A set of low seats placed in front of the general admission seats to accommodate overflow audiences
CENTER POLE- The first pole of the tent to be raised. It's about 60' high, weighs about a ton, and holds the peak of the tent

CHARACTER CLOWN- A clown who usually dresses in a tramp costume

CHARIVARI- A fast paced demonstration of various circus skills by numerous artists; often an opening act

CHERRY PIE- Extra pay for extra work

CLOWN ALLEY- An area where clowns keep their trunks and props, usually near the back door, so they can make numerous easy entrances to the ring

CLOWN STOP- A brief appearance by the clowns while the props are being changed

CLOWN WALK-AROUND- A parade of clowns during which time they stop and do their acts

COME-IN (also the pre show)- The period before showtime when the public is let into the Big Top, and are informally entertained by the clowns

D

DOG AND PONY SHOW- A derisive term for a small circus

DONIKERS- Restrooms

DOORS!- A call meaning to let the public into the show

DOWN THE ROAD- At the end of the season, circus folk never say goodbye, it’s always “see you down the road.”

DRESSED- When tickets are distributed so that all sections are filled with no obvious empty areas

DUCAT GRABBER- Door tender or ticket collector

DUKEY OR DUCKIE-BOX LUNCH- The first circus cookhouse was known as “Hotel du Quai” When pronounced quickly it sounded like “dukey” and the name stuck

DUKEY RUN- Any circus run longer than an overnight haul

E

EN FEROCITE- The term used by European circuses to describe American wild animal acts, as opposed to their “tableau” presentations

ENTRÉE- A featured clown act, anywhere from eight to fifteen minutes in length

F

FINK OR LARRY- A broken novelty, such as a torn balloon

FIRST OF MAY- A novice performer, first season on tour; (Referring to a time of year the old truck and wagon shows would hit the road for a new season.)

FLATTIES- People

FLYERS- Aerialists, especially those in flying return acts

FLYING SQUADRON- The first section of the circus to reach the lot

FRAMING A SHOW- Planning a circus production

FUNAMBULIST- Rope Walker. From Latin: “funis”—rope, and “ambulare”—to walk

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org 802-533-7443
**FUNNY ROPES**- Extra ropes added to regular ones, usually at angles, to give extra stability and spread to canvas tent

**FRONT END**- The midway, ticket, and concession area

**G**

**GAFFER**- Circus manager

**GALOP**- Fast tempo band melodies used in certain exits and entrances

**GILLY OR TOWNER**- Anyone not associated with the circus. An outsider

**GILLY WAGON**- Extra small wagon or cart used to carry light bits of equipment around the lot

**GRAFT**- A piece of work, sometimes easy, sometimes hard

**GRAFTERS**- Gamblers who often trail a show

**GROTESQUE**- A type of clown who wears exaggerated costume and carries outlandish props

**GUYS**- Heavy ropes or cables that help to support high wire rigging

**H**

**HARLEQUIN**- A clown of the *commedia dell'arte* who dressed in a diamond-patterned costume and who wore a black mask

**HERALDS**- Circus advertisements, approximately 9X12 inches which can be posted or handed out. They are not in color and consist of type and pictures

**HEY RUBE!**- Traditional battle cry of circus people in fights with townspeople

**HITS**- Places such as walls, of barns, buildings, or fences on which heralds and posters were pasted

**HOME RUN**- The trip to winter quarters after the last stand of the season. (Bill posters often pasted the posters upside down.)

**HOME-SWEET-HOME**- The last stand of the season when bill posters usually pasted one pack of posters upside down

**HORSE**- One thousand dollars

**HORSE FEED**- Poor returns from poor business

**HORSE OPERY**- Any circus (jokingly)

**HUMAN ODDITY**- Sideshow of abnormal persons

**I**

**IRON JAW TRICK**- An aerial stunt using a metal bit and apparatus which fits into the performer's mouth. Thus suspended s/he performs the trick

**J**

**JACKPOTS**- Tall tales about the circus

**JONAH'S LUCK**- Unusually bad weather or mud

**JUMP**- The move between towns
JUMP STAND- An additional booth near the front door used to sell extra tickets during a rush by spectators

K
Kicking Sawdust- Joining up with or following the circus
Kid Show- A sideshow
Kiester- Wardrobe trunk
Kinker- Any circus performer. (formerly only an acrobat)

L
Lacing Canvas- Joining the large sections of canvas on the ground, before the tent raising. (Canvas is still the term, although modern tents are made of fireproof vinyl.)
Layout Man- The lot superintendent who decides the location of the various tents
Lot- Land leased by the circus for performances
Lot Lice- Local townspeople who arrive early to watch unloading of the circus and stay late
Lunge (also Mechanic) – The mechanic is the safety belt worn for dangerous tricks. It is attached to the Lunge rope, which is held slack by an assistant outside the ring. It does not aid in the performance of a trick, but will catch the performer in the event of a “miss.”

M
March, The- The street parade
Midway- The area near the main entrance where the sideshows are located and concessionaires sell refreshments and novelties
Mud Show- Circuses that traveled by wagon, referring to the muddy dirt roads between towns and circus lots. Also derogatory term for a modern circus considered sub-standard.

N
Nanty- Nothing

O
On the Show- Performers and all others connected with the circus
Opposition Paper- Advertising posters which were put up by competing circuses

P
Parlari- Circus people talking
Perch Act- A balancing act involving use of apparatus which one person is performing while being balanced by another
Picture Gallery- A tattooed person
Pie Car- The dining car on a show train. (Also a fond term for the cookhouse on the road)
PITCHMAN (PITCHER)- One who sells merchandise, with flamboyant demonstrations
PLANGES- Aerialist’s body swing over in which on hand and wrist are placed in a padded rope loop
PONGER- An acrobat
POSSOM BELLY- An extra storage box attached underneath a work wagon or railway car

R
RAISING THE TOP- The Big Top goes up
RAT SHEETS- Advance posters or handbills with negative slant toward the opposition
RAZORBACKS- The men who load and unload railroad cars
RED WAGON- Box Office wagon, main office of the circus. Also the money wagon. This was usually painted red, but could be any color
REPRISES- Short two-minute clown acts to cover rigging setups or costume changes
RIG- To put up aerial rigging
RIGGING- Apparatus used for aerial acts
RING BARN- Regulation-sized circus ring for practice at winter quarters
RING CREW- Assistants who move props in and out for each act
RING CURB (ALSO RING FENCE)- The wooden ring establishing the performance area
RISLEY ACT- Three acrobats lying on their backs who toss a fourth acrobat from one to another
ROUSTABOUTS- Circus workers and crew
RUBBERMAN- One who sells balloons

S
SHANTY- The person who works the lights
SHILL- A circus employee used as a decoy, he stands in line to make the box office look busy
SKY BOARDS- The decorated boards along the top of cage wagons used in parades
SLEDGE GANG- The crew of roustabouts who pound in the tent stakes
SMIRKO- Any Circus Smirkus trouper, camper or staff member.
SOFT LOT- A wet or muddy lot
SPEC- Short for spectacle. A colorful pageant which is a featured part of the show; formerly used as opening numbers, now presented before intermission
SPIELER- An announcer
SPASH BOARDS- Decorated bottom edge of cage wagons used in parades
STAND- Any town where the circus plays
STAR BACKS- More expensive reserved seats
STRAW HOUSE- A sold-out house. Straw was spread on the ground for spectators to sit on when all the seats were sold
SWAGS- Prizes
T

**TROOPER**- A circus performer

**TRACK GAGS**- Quick gags performed by clowns, usually in front of one section of seats, while on the track (open area between the seats and the ring.)

U

**UNDER CANVAS**- A tent show. Even though modern tents are made of vinyl, taking the tent on the road is still “going out under canvas.”

W

**WALK-AROUNDS**- Clown gags often based on a comic prop or costume; a sight gag with no story-line

Z

**ZANY**- An impish clown; the comic foil to a Mountebank (or snake-oil salesman).
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Chapter II

Circus Smirkus
Lesson Plans
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The circus can be in your school all year long! The lesson plans and curriculum ideas in this section offer myriad opportunities to extend the circus arts throughout the school year in a wide variety of subject areas, at all grade levels. These standards-based lessons have been developed by teachers who have hosted Circus Smirkus residencies in their Vermont schools. The lessons can be used before, during or after your Smirkus residency to take full advantage of the learning inherent in circus arts. Additional support materials can be found on our website at www.smirkus.org.

This section begins with a table of contents for the lesson plans by subject area and a cross-reference by grade level. Following the lesson plans there is a list of additional curriculum ideas in several subject areas. A special section for physical education teachers completes this chapter.
# LESSON PLANS BY SUBJECT

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LANGUAGE ARTS
Lesson Overview

This lesson involves reading a number of books about the circus, then composing an ABC book about the circus.

Instructional Objective

Students will learn about what they will see or have seen at a circus.

Vermont Framework of Standards Alignments

1.1 Students use a variety of strategies to help them read.

Grade Level

K

Length of Lesson

Two 20-minute periods

Materials

• Various books about the circus
• Easel paper- use for brainstorming
• 26 pieces of 8 X 10 paper
• Crayons
• 2 pieces of 8 X 10 oak tag- front and back cover of the book
• Black marker
• Stapler
• Book binding machine and binder (optional)

Guiding Questions

• What things have you seen at the circus?
• What things did we learn about from our books?
• What are the ABC’s?
Circus Book

Instructional Plan

This lesson would be used as a culminating lesson. After a week or two of discussing the circus using books and other materials, create an alphabet book with the knowledge that the students had gained.

1. Read various stories about the circus.
2. Use the easel paper to list the alphabet in the margin.
3. Go through the letters of the alphabet and with the black marker make a list of things that the students learned about the circus.
4. Have each student choose a letter that they would like to draw about.
5. Students illustrate the letter that they choose.
6. Students tell the teacher what they drew and the teacher uses a black marker to write the words for the students.
7. When students have finished the book, the teacher compiles the illustrations in alphabetical order, use the two pieces of oak tag for the front and back cover and staple the book together or bind it with a book binding machine.
8. Students write their names on the cover of the book.
9. Teacher writes the title on the cover of the book.
10. Teacher shares the book with the whole class.
11. Teacher sends the book home with each student to share with their family.
12. Teacher puts the book into the classroom library for everyone to enjoy!

Extensions

• Students can write their own words.
• Students can create alliteration on each page.
• Students could type and print their own words onto a computer.
• Students could write their own circus story - teacher may have to scribe.

Author

Amy Wilkie, Charleston Elementary School
Circus Books in the Library

Lesson Overview
This lesson involves using the library as an ideal venue to encourage further learning of an interesting and “hot” topic for students. Circus-related children’s literature allows students to broaden their Circus Smirkus residency experience.

Instructional Objective
Students will make connections with the Circus Smirkus residency by exploring children’s literature related to the circus.

Vermont Framework of Standards Alignments
1.4 Students comprehend and respond to a range of media, images, and text for a variety of purposes.

Grade Levels
K-5

Length of Lesson
30 minute library class

Materials
Books:
• Kindergarten – Miss Bindergarten Plans a Circus for Kindergarten, Joseph Slate
• Grade 1 – Emeline at the Circus, Marjorie Priceman
• Grade 2 – If I Ran the Circus, Dr. Seuss
• Grade 3 – Olivia Saves the Circus, Ian Falconer
• Grade 4 – Ballet of the Elephants, Leda Shubert
• Grade 5 – The Day the Circus Came to Town, Melody Carlson & Ned Butterfield

Guiding Questions
• Have you ever been to a circus?
• What does the word “circus” mean to you?
• What do you already know about the circus?
Instructional Plan

Discuss student knowledge of the circus and what they have learned with Circus Smirkus. Read the title, make connections, discuss new learning, compare and contrast information.

Extensions

• Activity sheets available by grade level for students to take home
• The after school Nutrition Through Literature program can use this theme for its book and snack activity.

Related Resources/Websites

Circus titles from Circus Smirkus

Various related library titles: magic, juggling, etc.

http://www.surfnetkids.com/circus.htm

Author

Enosburg Elementary School
The Art of Being a Clown

Lesson Overview

This lesson will take a close look at the art of clowning. This will include how a clown dresses and the make-up that is applied to make a clown look funny or stupid or to play a specific character. We will draw three different types of clown faces: the auguste clown, the whiteface clown and the tramp clown. We will paint our faces to represent one of these clowns and perform a scripted clown act.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will gain an understanding of what a clown is and how clowning has developed through history.
2. Students will show an understanding of the different types of clowns: their dress, make-up and characteristics during a performance.
3. Students will choose a clown type and perform a scripted skit.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

1.13 Students listen actively and respond to communications.
1.15 Students use verbal and non-verbal skills to express themselves effectively.
1.16 Students use a variety of forms, such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts, to create projects that are appropriate in terms of the following dimensions: Skills Development, Reflection and Critique, Making Connections, Approach to Work.

Grade Levels

1 & 2

Length of Lesson

40 minutes for the first part, which would include the instruction and drawing the three types of clown faces; 45-60 minutes for part two, which would include the make-up and performances.

Materials

• Templates of clown faces for the students to fill in (see Appendix)
• Face paint
• Scripted skits for the students to perform

Guiding Questions

• What is a clown?
• When did the art of clowning begin?
The Art of Being a Clown

• What are the characteristics of a clown?
• What are the three main clown types?

Instructional Plan

1. Sitting comfortably in the storytelling/reading area, the teacher begins by asking the students if they have ever seen a clown. Responses are elicited.

2. Then the teacher proceeds to talk about what a clown is, the roots of clowning, clowns as they relate to the circus and the characteristics of three types of clowns: the whiteface clown, the auguste clown and the tramp or hobo clown. The three types of clown faces will be drawn on paper or the board.

3. Discussion follows where questions are asked, answered and information is reviewed.

4. Basic drawings of clown face outlines are given to each student. They are expected to draw in the characteristics of one type of clown – auguste, whiteface or hobo – per outline. With guidance each student will draw all three clown types.

5. In another session the drawings will be studied, reviewed and then each student will select one type of clown to be made up as.

6. Each student will wear the makeup of a specific clown type and be given a scripted skit befitting that clown’s characteristics to be performed for the group.

Assessment

Assessment of student learning occurs in three ways in this lesson sequence.

• Each student will show an understanding of the three types of clown faces that were presented in the lesson by drawing them on a basic clown face template.

• The teacher will observe the students during the post discussion to determine who has an understanding of the specific clown characteristics and new vocabulary that was introduced.

• Expressive performances of clown characteristics by the students will be assessed.

Extensions

If the students are comfortable, the performances may be presented to a larger audience such as peers in the other first grade classes.

Related Sources/Websites

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
The Art of Being a Clown

"Clowns and Clowning”, by Joseph W. Rogers, Ph.D. www.circusfans.org


Author

Alicia Benoit-Clark, Hardwick Elementary School
Appendix: Clown Faces
The Art of Being a Clown

Whiteface Clown
The Art of Being a Clown

Character Clown - Hobo

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
The Art of Being a Clown
Lesson Overview
Students will gain an understanding of how and when the circus was born and will discuss some of the elements of the circus.

Instructional Objectives
1. Students will gain an understanding of the development of the circus.
2. Students will show an understanding of the elements of the circus through group discussion and the book that is read aloud.

Vermont Framework of Standards Alignments
1.1 Students use a variety of strategies to help them read.
1.4 Students comprehend and respond to a range of media, images, and text for a variety of purposes.
1.13 Students listen actively and respond to communications.

Grade Level
1.

Length of Lesson
60 minutes

Materials
• *Clifford at the Circus*, by Norman Bridwell
• A word search of new vocabulary (see Appendix)
• Chart paper or a board to write ideas about the circus

Guiding Questions
• When was the first circus?
• Where was the first circus?
• What is a circus?
• How did the circus get its name?
The History of the Circus

Instructional Plan

1. Students will sit in the storytelling/reading area. The teacher will ask if anyone has ever been to a circus or has any prior knowledge about a circus.

2. Ideas and vocabulary words will be written on chart paper as the students share their experiences.

3. Next, the teacher will tell about the first circus, relate the history of the circus, and present elements of the circus will.

4. The book Clifford at the Circus will be read aloud. Discussion will follow.

5. The chart outlining prior knowledge will be compared to what we now know. New vocabulary will be introduced from the book and written on the chart paper.

6. A word search containing new vocabulary will be given to each student to complete.

Assessment

Pre-assessment will be a discussion of prior knowledge. Post-assessment will include discussion of new vocabulary words, identification of some of the elements of the circus, and completion of the word search.

Extension

Drawing a picture of a circus including the elements discovered through the telling of the history of the circus as well as the story of Clifford.

Author

Alicia Benoit-Clark, Hardwick Elementary School
The History of the Circus

Appendix: Clifford at the Circus Vocabulary Word Search

Name____________________ Date__________________

Clifford at the Circus
by Norman Bridwell
Vocabulary Word Search

Find the words.

t c o s t u m e s  d w m p n d
i e i p w r i n t m b b t g
h a b m d e l i o p s g m q y
r a l d a l x a o i p y k y q
o p l w m a x x f r n n s b m
p f o a m n p s f c y t c a c
e i o y o i j i e u v a q p g
h s a o m i a j a m o k v z y
x q m u n z i f o w t s a a w
x z u n n z q y x m b a j m p
a x h t i s e k v e f r o z o

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From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
The History of the Circus
The Acrobats

Lesson Overview
In this lesson, students practice handwriting and spelling by copying a circus poem.

Instructional Objective
Students will practice copying from a model.

Vermont Framework of Standards Alignments
1.6 Students’ independent writing demonstrates command of appropriate English conventions, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Grade Levels
3-4

Length of Lesson
Two to three 10-15 minute blocks

Materials
- Handout of poem “The Acrobat” (see Appendix)
- Copy from model student journals

Instructional Plan
Have students copy the poem in manuscript or cursive, depending on their academic ability and readiness.

Assessment
Teacher review, looking for errors in copying the model and handwriting.

Author
The Green Mountaineer Team, Johnson Elementary School
Appendix:

I'll swing by my ankles,
she'll cling to your knees,
as you hang by your nose
from a high-up trapeze.
But just one thing, please,
As we float through the breeze-
Don't sneeze!

By Shel Silverstein
Lesson Overview

Students listen to and discuss the story *Jumbo*, by Judy Blumberg. Afterwards, they will write a Response to Literature.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to vocabulary, make predictions using story elements, and use story vocabulary to make connections with story structure.
2. Students will write a response that is evidence of clear thinking about a text.

Vermont Framework of Standards Alignments

1.7 Students show understanding of reading; connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues; and make judgments about the text.

5.13 Students respond to literary texts and public documents using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes.

Grade Levels

3-4

Length of Lesson

45 minutes each

Materials

- Organizer on chart paper for probable passage
- Copies of the organizer for writing
- Copy of the book *Jumbo*

Guiding Question

How does Jumbo change in the story?
Instructional Plan

Prior to first reading of the story

1. Introduce key vocabulary from the story to students, choosing vocabulary that represents various elements of the story.
   - England’s Royal Zoological Gardens
   - officials
   - sell
   - Jumbo
   - P.T. Barnum
   - New York City
   - tantrums
   - stubborn
   - Matthew Scott
   - keeper
   - signaled
   - hired

2. Have students use the key vocabulary to create probable sentences to predict each element in the story. Use a Story Map (Appendix A) to facilitate this process.

3. Encourage students to share their predictions with the class.

4. Read the story to confirm or modify original predictions.

After first reading of the story

1. Prompt: How does Jumbo change in the story?

2. Reread Jumbo. While reading, students jot down ways that Jumbo changes throughout the story.

3. Students discuss with their groups changes that were noted during the rereading.

4. Discuss with the whole class ways that Jumbo changed in the story.

5. Students write their response using the attached organizer (Appendix B).

Assessment

- The response uses a controlling idea to analyze some aspect of the text.
- The response establishes enough context about the text so that anyone can make sense of the piece and follow the writer’s thinking.
- The response elaborates on its controlling idea with frequent references to the text itself, using direct quotes from the text when appropriate.

Note: I used this as a pre-assessment for writing a response to literature, but it could be used as a post-assessment.
The Story of Jumbo

Extension
Students could sketch a picture of their favorite scene.

Related Resources/Websites
Jumbo, Judy Blumberg

Author
Elaine Gendron, Hardwick Elementary
Appendix A: *Jumbo* Story Map

Key Vocabulary:

- England’s Royal Zoological Gardens
- officials
- sell
- Jumbo
- P.T. Barnum
- New York City
- tantrums
- stubborn
- Matthew Scott
- keeper
- signaled
- hired

Instructions: Using the words above, create a probable sentence to predict each story element.

**Setting:**

**Characters:**

**Problem:**

**Solution:**
The Story of Jumbo

Appendix B: Organizer

One way that Jumbo changes in the story is ________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Another way that Jumbo changes in the story is____________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

A third way that Jumbo changes in the story is______________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

In conclusion

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

By__________________________________
The Story of Jumbo
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter

Lesson Overview

With this plan, students write a friendly letter in which they describe their experiences with Circus Smirkus.

Instructional Objectives

Students will follow the correct form of a friendly letter and use the five steps of the writing process to write a personal letter that they will send to a relative or friend.

- Identify the characteristics of a good friendly letter
- Pre-write
- Draft
- Revise
- Proofread
- Publish

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

1.5 Students draft, revise, edit, and critique written products.
1.6 Students’ independent writing demonstrates command of appropriate English conventions, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Grade Levels

3 & 4

Length of Lesson

Five 40-minute lessons

Materials

- Collection of picture books relating to the topic of the circus
- Writing Logs
- Friendly Letter Guidelines handout (Appendix A)
- Writing a Friendly Letter Information Template (Appendix B)
- Lined paper
- Envelopes & postage stamps
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter

Guiding Question

What are the elements of a friendly letter?

Instructional Plan

Prior to the Circus Smirkus presentation: Ask students what words come to mind when they think of a circus. Write the words on a large piece of chart paper titled “Circus Words”. Gather a collection of circus-related picture books and display them on a table. Have students choose picture books to read. As they come across new circus words in their reading they add them to the chart. During the residency students will encounter many new words for acts and circus equipment that they should add to their Circus Words chart. This chart will serve as a word bank for their letter writing.

Day 1

Introduce the format of a friendly letter.

At the end of the exciting circus residency, explain to the students that they will now write to a friend or relative to share the news of the recent fun they had and what they learned. Tell them that they will actually send these letters so they will want to use the correct format.

Explain that a friendly letter has five important parts: Heading, Date, Greeting, Body, Closing, and Signature.

On chart paper or a white board write a sample friendly letter discussing the five essential parts. Label the five parts with a colored marker in the margins.

Pass out Writing a Friendly Letter Guidelines handout (Appendix A). Discuss each point.

Have students get out Writing Logs or pass out lined paper for note taking.

Ask students to think of special experiences they had during the residency that they might like to share. Tell them to jot down at least three ideas including sensory descriptors. Have students turn and talk to a partner about these experiences. At this point they may have gained new ideas that they can add to their notes. Now call on students to share with the whole group. After everyone has had a chance to share, students can once more add other experiences to their notes if they wish. Have them save these notes.

Day 2

Review and discuss the parts of a friendly letter. Refer to sample on chart paper from Day 1. Also refer students to Writing a Friendly Letter Guideline handout (Appendix A). Ask students questions about the different parts of a Friendly Letter.

Pass out the Friendly Letter Information Template (Appendix B). They will use their notes from Day 1 to help fill in the Friendly Letter Information Template. Now students are ready to draft their own friendly letter in their Writing Logs using the correct format.
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter

Day 3
Ask students to check their drafts against the guidelines to see how they can revise their letter and make it better. Students then conference with partners for additional ideas and make revisions. Assign homework: Students ask parents for correct address of the person to whom they are writing.

Day 4
Staple address (homework assignment) to draft of friendly letter. Students review their friendly letters, proofreading for punctuation, capitalization and spelling accuracy. Remind students to refer to Guideline handout for correct use of commas. Conference with students.

Day 5
Students write their final draft onto lined writing paper. Students then read their letters from the Author’s Chair. Make copies of their letters to add to their portfolios.

Demonstrate how to address an envelope by drawing a large model on the white board. Emphasize the difference between the mailing address and the return address and demonstrate where each is placed on the envelope. Show them where to place the stamp. Pass out envelopes and postage stamps. Students use the form of the teacher’s model to address their envelopes (stress that they write the correct mailing address—the one attached to their draft). Finally, mail the letters and encourage students to share any replies.

Assessment
• Information template completed.
• Friendly letter read to peers for peer feedback.
• Letters will be sent through the mail. Any letters returned by the post office will be readdressed and sent again.

Author
Angela Russ, Newark Street School
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter

APPENDIX A: Writing a Friendly Letter Guideline

~ A friendly letter has five important parts.

1. The **heading** shows the address of the letter writer, and the **date** the letter was written. A comma is needed between the city (town) and the state. A comma is also placed between the day and the year in the date.

2. The **greeting** names the person receiving the letter. A comma follows the person’s name.

3. The **body** is the message that shares news, ideas, or a special experience. It can be one or more paragraphs.

4. The **closing** says good-by to the person being written. It is always followed by a comma. You could use “Your friend,” “Your nephew,” or “Love,” as closings.

5. The **signature** is where you write your name. It shows who wrote the letter.

~ Indent the first line of each paragraph in the body.

~ Friendly letters are usually written in informal language, as if you were talking with a friend.

~ Tell the events in order. Stay on the topic, and explain the meaning of any circus-related words you think the reader may not understand.

~ Use exact words and sensory details to give your reader a clear mind picture.

~ Try ending with a question or a comment so that your reader will want to write back to you.
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter

APPENDIX B: Friendly Letter Information Template

I will write my letter to_________________________________________
My address___________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
Date________________________________________________________
Greeting_____________________________________________________
Topic_______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
Important events I want to share________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
Closing______________________________________________________
Signature_____________________________________________________

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org     802-533-7443
Writing a Friendly Circus Smirkus Letter
**Acrostic Circus Poetry**

**Lesson Overview**
This lesson involves using circus vocabulary to create poetry about the circus.

**Instructional Objective**
Students will learn how to use relevant vocabulary to write an acrostic poem.

**VT Framework of Standards Alignments**
1.23 In writing poetry, students use a variety of forms.
5.11 Students use literary elements and devices including theme, plot, style, imagery, and metaphor to analyze, compare, interpret, and create literature.

**Grade Levels**
3 & 4

**Length of Lesson**
One to two 45-minute blocks

**Materials**
- Various examples of acrostics
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Circus Smirkus vocabulary handout

**Guiding Question**
How can we use poetry to show the excitement and other feelings we experience at the circus?

**Instructional Plan**
1. In a previous lesson, review vocabulary which might best fit with your students’ experiences with the circus.
2. Introduce students to the idea that a poem can be written about a particular activity using vocabulary related to that specific activity. Show examples of acrostics pointing out how the letters of the topic word are used to begin the lines of the poem.
3. Possible dialogue: “Now I want you just to listen for a little bit while I think aloud and write an acrostic poem about the circus using some of the words and
Acrostic Circus Poetry

phrases from our collection. Of course I am probably going to need some other words and I will have to add them where I think they are needed."

4. Begin a think-aloud focusing on writing a poem. Emphasize how specific circus phrases/words are to be used to create the poem. When creating the poem, vary using circus terms and adjectives to start the line but always attempt to include the circus vocabulary in the line. For example here are acrostic poems using C I R C U S.

Crazy Ponger doing flips
Impish carpet clown joking
Red headed Spieler
Carefully raising the top
Unbelievable catcher
Stupendous march
Character clown tumbling
Impressive kid show
Raising the top
Calliope playing wildly
Under canvas, ready
Spieler waiting to begin The Big Show

5. Finish poem and read the poem aloud. Tell the students you are checking to make sure the phrases sound good together. Point out that each line creates an image in the reader’s mind.

6. Review steps taken during the process. Record them on the white board or chart paper.

• Choose a topic activity
• Write the topic name one letter at a time – top to bottom
• Write a short phrase starting with each letter of the topic using vocabulary from the topic activity
• Read your poem to yourself to check that the phrases work together and make a picture in your mind

7. Tell students they will be using the same steps for writing a poem. Then, with the whole class, write a second poem using a circus topic and circus terms. Use popsicle sticks to call on students. Finish and choral read the poem aloud as a class.

8. Once again review steps taken during the process and tell the students it is their turn to write poetry. Encourage collaboration but remind students that their poem should be different than their classmates’.

9. Check for understanding by asking for thumbs up, then use the popsicle sticks to call on students to review the assignments and restate the steps for writing their poem. When all questions are clarified, have students begin writing.

10. Circulate around the class observing and asking students to talk about their thinking and to read their work.

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org   802-533-7443
Acrostic Circus Poetry

11. Finally after everyone has completed at least one poem, call the students together and share out as many as possible. You may want to do this on a second day. Also, at another time have students try writing longer phrased acrostic poems with partners.

Assessment

Formative assessment techniques: Red, yellow, green cards; thumbs up; no hands up/popsicle sticks to share poems and demonstrate understanding of vocabulary

Extensions

Students can write other poetry forms such as A.B.C. and shape poems.

Related Sources/Websites

www.poetry4kids.com/
http://www.gigglepoetry.com/

Author

B. Hurlbert, St. Johnsbury School
Acrostic Circus Poetry
Concrete Circus Poetry

Lesson Overview
This lesson links circus themes to the study and creation of concrete poetry. Students create their own poem using a circus word as the theme of their poem.

Instructional Objectives
1. Students will explore many types of concrete or “picture” poems.
2. Students will create a class list of circus words for the word wall.
3. Students will create their own circus word concrete poems.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
1.23 In writing poetry, students use a variety of forms.

Grade Levels
4-6

Length of Lesson
Two to three 45-minute blocks

Materials
Examples of concrete poems:
• “Between the Cracks”, by Brad Burg
• “Dove’s Song”, by Court Smith
• “Shaped Salmon”, by Court Smith

Guiding Question
What is a concrete poem?

Instructional Plan
1. Talk about what constitutes a concrete poem. After discussion, hand out some examples to the class and continue to discuss how the words take the shape of the topic.
2. Create a word wall of circus words.
3. Have each student choose a word that they would like to write about. Have them jot down a list of descriptive words about their chosen word.
Concrete Circus Poetry

4. Have them lightly sketch the shape of their word, then fill in the shape with words or outline with words.

5. Finally, to get a clean copy without the lines, have the students trace the words onto another sheet.

Assessment

Completed concrete poem using circus language.

Related Sources/Websites

http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/Shel-Silverstein/13482
www.poetry4kids.com/
http://www.giglepoetry.com/
http://sunniebunniezz.com/poetry/cirupoem.htm

Author

Sara Russell, Bridport Central School
Lesson Overview

This lesson uses juggling as the subject of prose and poetry writing. Skills foci include writing from multiple perspectives and establishing point of view.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will learn to juggle or will practice and improve their existing juggling skills.
2. Students will write poetry or prose, taking a single moment or experience and writing it from different perspectives.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

1.5 Students draft, revise, edit, and critique written products.
1.6 Students’ independent writing demonstrates command of appropriate English conventions, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.
1.9 In written narratives, students organize and relate a series of events, fictional or actual, in a coherent whole.
1.23 In writing poetry, students use a variety of forms.
5.11 Students use literary elements and devices including theme, plot, style, imagery, and metaphor to analyze, compare, interpret, and create literature.
5.18 Students demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the English language.

Grade Levels
5 & 6

Length of Lesson
Two 45-minutes periods, or shorter increments over the period of one week

Materials

- Juggling rings, balls, and scarves
- Writing materials
Juggling Perspectives

Guiding Question
How can a moment of physical activity be captured in words?

Instructional Plan

Please note: This lesson is written for a class of students who already have experience juggling, many of whom can successfully juggle three balls or rings. However, it can be done with beginning jugglers as well.

Day One or Step One:
The first day the class is asked to create a piece of writing, either prose or poetry, about their experience juggling. One way of helping students to get started on this piece of writing is to ask them to answer one of the following questions:

- “How does it feel to juggle?”
- “How do you feel when you finally get three balls in the air repeatedly, and you have established a rhythm?”
- “What does it feel like when you are juggling and the rhythm is both natural and effortless?”
- “Describe what it looks like when a juggler is juggling rings, scarves, or balls?”

Day Two or Step Two:
Ask the students to read what they wrote the day before to themselves – revising for content as they read. Ask if there is anyone who would like to read their piece of writing aloud to the group. Can the group identify the point of view from which the piece was written? This should be rather straightforward.

Ask the students what point of view or perspective they chose to write from and record those perspectives on a chart that everyone can see. Ask the students to name other perspectives that might work, even if they haven’t written from them. Students should be encouraged to add to this list as ideas come to them.

They are now to take this piece of writing, this moment in time, and rewrite it from a different perspective or attitude or a new point of view. This time they may write from the perspective of the equipment they are juggling – the scarves, for example, or the rings, maybe from the mat’s perspective, with the balls repeatedly landing with a thud, from the perspective of someone watching the performance as a seasoned circus performer or a young awestruck audience member.
Juggling Perspectives

As they write it is important to remind them to “show” their audience what they are writing about rather than to “tell” their audience. Throughout this piece, using precise language, sensory detail, imagery, simile and metaphor the students will create vivid snapshots of the same moment, but it will be seen completely differently.

Day Three or Step Three:

On the third day, have the students do the same activity, but again choosing a different perspective to write from.

Start the class the same way you did the day before asking if anyone would like to read their piece of writing aloud. Ask the same questions as yesterday guiding the discussion. Check to see if anyone has a new perspective to add to the list of ideas.

Day Four or Step Four:

Finally, after each student has three distinct pieces of writing, they are to choose one to bring to a final draft level. They may choose any one of their three pieces to continue working on. Through revision and conferencing with the teacher and peers, students will create a strong and vivid piece of writing stemming from their own experiences with juggling. Some students may choose to bring all of their pieces to final drafts, thus creating a trilogy of perspectives from one moment in time.

Assessment

These pieces of writing can be assessed using a rubric of the teacher’s own design, or school or Vermont state rubrics, depending on the genre of the piece of writing.

Extensions

• This type of writing could be done using pictures of circus scenes, digital photographs of students using circus equipment or any experience the students might have had with circus.

• This lesson could end in a culminating performance, with each student performing their piece of writing while juggling. The students could also create a performance by creating a set of the scene where the juggling took place.

Author

Heidi W. Ringer, Warren Elementary School
Juggling Perspectives
Exploring Circus: A Series of Easel Tasks

Lesson Overview
These lessons are designed as short, daily easel tasks over a period of several weeks.

Instructional Objectives
Students will be introduced to the elements of a circus prior to the Circus Smirkus residency.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
1.1 Students use a variety of strategies to help them read.
1.4 Students comprehend and respond to a range of media, images and texts for a variety of purposes.

Grade Level
7

Length of Lesson
Short easel tasks (5-15 minutes each); posters may take longer

Materials
Books are listed below under Instructional Plan.

Guiding Questions
Questions vary with each task. They revolve around theme, figurative language, author’s craft, illustration, lyrics, vocabulary.

Instructional Plan
Day 1: The Man Who Walked Between the Towers, by Mordicai Gerstein.

Day 2: If I Ran the Circus, by Dr. Seuss

Day 3: Louella and the Yellow Balloon, by Molly Coxe

Day 4: “Be A Clown”, lyrics of song by Cole Porter for the 1948 film The Pirate (adapted for the song “Make ‘Em Laugh” from the film Singing in the Rain)

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
Exploring Circus: A Series of Easel Tasks

Day 5: “The Python”, by Ogden Nash

Day 6: A mini-lesson on the chief muse, Calliope, and her connection to the instrument, the calliope, used in many 19thc/early 20thc circuses.

Day 7: Read and discuss poem “A Circus”, by Linda A Copp, especially as it mentions the calliope (http://sunniebunniezz.com/poetry/circupoem.htm)

Day 8: Circus jokes (http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212441/fun.html)

Day 9: Short story - “Prodigy Circus”, by Dr. S. Mohan Raj (The Hindu, Sunday, May 15, 2005)

Day 10: Poem “The Middle Air” anonymous (metaphor and simile)

Day 11: Looking at Circus posters (http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212441/posters.html)

Day 12: Making a poster for our circus


Assessment

• Observations
• Journal entries
• Teacher-made worksheets

Extensions

Connections: text to self, others, and wider world of ideas
Exploring Circus: A Series of Easel Tasks

Related Resources/Websites

http://sunniebunniezz.com/poetry/circupoem.htm
http://library.thinkquest.org/CRO21441/fun.html

Authors

Ingram/Sprout, St. Johnsbury School
Le Cirque en Français

Lesson Overview

In these lessons, students practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking French, and learn about French culture related to the circus.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will engage in a cultural exploration of circus.
2. Student will accrue new vocabulary on the theme of circus.
3. Students will discover how French has influenced circus language.
4. Students’ will relearn some key circus phrases, this time in French.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

5.2 Students demonstrate how literature, philosophy, and works in the arts influence and reflect their time and their local and regional culture.
5.19 Students speak and listen in a non-native language.
5.20 Students read a non-native language.
5.21 Students write a non-native language.

Grade Levels

K – 4

Length of Lesson

5 class periods, four prior to the residency and one following the residency period

Materials

English-French dictionary
Le Cirque en Français

Instructional Plan

Vendredi

1. Révision de tout que nous savons

2. Faisons une liste des mots importants au sujet du cirque
   As a class, the students brainstormed important “circus” words they might like to know in French.

3. Apprenons les mots du cirque
   I then put the translations for these words on the board. Any words I didn’t actually know myself, we looked up together in a dictionary. We repeated the vocabulary orally together. Students put the vocabulary in their notes.

4. Devoirs: research Cirque du Soleil
   Each student was asked to research Cirque du Soleil on their own over the weekend.

Lundi

1. Discutions Cirque du Soleil
   As a class, we discussed each student’s finding, how one could interpret the name, why this was relevant to French, what Cirque du Soleil means in French.

2. Jouons avec les mots du cirque
   First we reviewed all of the students’ circus words orally. Next, I had the students review in small groups. We played Charades with their circus vocabulary. We played “win, lose, or draw”…sort-of, with the circus vocabulary.

Mardi

1. Jouons avec les mots du cirque
   Again we reviewed all of the students’ circus words orally. Next, I had the students review in small groups. We played Charades with their circus vocabulary. We played “win, lose, or draw”…sort-of, with the circus vocabulary.

2. Devoirs: Draw, color and label a circus picture in French.

Mercredi

1. Discutons les images de devoirs
Le Cirque en Français

I had students list, in French, the items in their pictures. We then talked about the elements.

2. Jouons avec les mots du cirque

I had the students review in small groups. We played Charades with their circus vocabulary.

Week of Circus Smirkus residency: During class time we attended instruction with the Circus Smirkus artists-in-residence.

Lundi

1. Révisions des mots du cirque

We reviewed the circus words that we had already learned, orally and on the board.

2. Faisons une liste des phrases du cirque

We brainstormed a list of key “circus phrases” the students had learned. I then translated these into French on the board. Students copied them into their notes. We repeated the list orally.

3. Discussion of key “circus” words with French roots

Alleyoop was Allez-hup!

4. Jouons avec les phrases du cirque

I had the students review in small groups. We played Charades with their circus sayings.

Authors

Nedra Dunton, Richford Jr./Sr. High School
SOCIAL STUDIES
Circus Posters
A short history, some information, and art

The circus was invented in ancient Rome.
It consisted of chariot races, equestrian shows, staged battles, displays featuring trained animals, jugglers, and acrobats.
The Gypsies brought the Circus back to Europe in the 1300s.
In China, the circus dates back to 108 BC.
The modern circus has existed since the late 18th Century, and became very popular in England.
The first circus building opened in America in Philadelphia in 1793.
George Washington attended a performance there later that year.
P.T. Barnum revolutionized the circus in America in the early 1800s, adding oddities such as the exhibition of humans as a freakshow or sideshow.
This popular circus became the Barnum and Bailey’s “Greatest Show on Earth”
The circus reigned as one of the most popular pastimes for Americans through the 1800s and 1900s until the 1960s and 1970s
Circuses merged together to stay afloat, for example, Ringling Brothers, the Moscow Circus and The Big Apple Circus
A new modern circus called Le Cirque du Soleil became popular in the 1970s and still is today
Led by a Ringmaster, who speaks to the audience and keeps the show moving
Circuses take place in a ring
Circuses usually have their own band
Common acts include a variety of acrobatics and gymnastics including tightrope walking, aerial acts such as trapeze and cradle, and a variety of floor routines. Juggling is also a common act in circuses; the combination of juggling and gymnastics is called equilibristics and includes acts like plate spinning or the rolling globe.
Clowns are common to circus acts
Daredevil Stunts are common
A variety of animals have historically been used in acts. While the types of animals used vary from circus to circus, big cats, elephants, horses, birds, sea lions and domestic animals are the most common.
In recent years, animal acts have become controversial
Circus Posters were a popular form of art and advertising
There are countless examples of circus posters
Here are a few posters, photographs, and illustrations…
Circus Wagons and Carts
A brief history with Photographs and Illustrations

Circus Wagons carried every animal and performer in a circus to and from their performances.
Each type of animal and performer had their own wagon
Before the invention of the automobile, circus wagons were drawn by horses
Eventually, the circus train replaced this method of transportation

Today circus carts or wagons are icons that remind people of the circus
They are often used by artists to tell the audience that the art or event is "circus-related."
Following are a few photographs and illustrations of Circus Wagons…
Lesson Overview

This lesson lets students explore their ethnic heritage and make a (paper) quilt reflecting elements of their heritage.

Instructional Objectives

Students will identify elements of their ethnic heritage.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

6.8 Students analyze the factors and implications associated with the historical and contemporary movements and settlements of people and groups in various times in the local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations worldwide.

6.13 Students understand the concept of culture, including the cultures of indigenous peoples, in various times in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations worldwide.

6.19 Students understand the variety of influences and impacts of the construction, preservation, and change of identity, within families, other social structure, and nations.

Grade Levels

6 – High School

Length of Lesson

30-45 minutes

Materials

• Blank paper
• Markers or colored pencils
• Books about heritage, flags, names

Guiding Questions

• What are my roots?
• Where does my family come from?
Instructional Plan

1. Explain that elephants in the circus have quilts on their back. The quilt is based upon someone’s heritage in the circus. Show pictures of some of these elephant quilts.

2. Discuss the ideas of heritage and ethnicity and items that represent one’s heritage.

3. Have students create their own heritage quilts on paper, representing items from their heritage (e.g., for Greece, an olive tree with family names and the colors of the flag).

Assessment

Students will demonstrate knowledge of their heritage by representing elements of it in their quilt design.

Extensions

Interview family members.

Related Resources/Websites:

www.ringling.com

Author

Lani Stagner, Springfield LEAP Program (adapted from Ringling Bros. Heritage Blanket lesson)
My Circus Job – A Technology Task

Lesson Overview

This project will be the culmination of the Circus Smirkus week-long residency. Students read about and research a circus job of their choosing. From the information gathered and photographs taken, students write a report, illustrate the circus job, create and present it in a PowerPoint presentation.

Instructional Objectives

Students will gain knowledge about report writing and various jobs associated with the circus and present it to the class in a PowerPoint presentation.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

1.8 In written reports, students organize and convey information and ideas accurately and effectively.

1.18 Students use computers, telecommunications, and other tools of technology to research, to gather information and ideas, and to represent information and ideas accurately and appropriately.

1.19 Students use organizational systems to obtain information from various sources (including libraries and the internet).

5.24 Students solve visual, spatial, kinesthetic, aural, and other problems in the arts.

6.1 Students examine complex webs of causes and effects in relation to events in order to generalize about the workings of human societies, and they apply their findings to problems.

6.3 Students analyze knowledge as a collection of selected facts and interpretations based on a particular historical or social setting.

6.7 Students use geographical knowledge and images of various places to understand the present, communicate historical interpretations, develop solutions for problems, and plan for the future.

Grade Levels

3-8

Length of Lesson

2 weeks
My Circus Job – A Technology Task

Materials
- Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
- Reference Books
- Encyclopedias
- Internet
- Computer
- Computer Programs

Guiding Questions
- What do you think of when you think of the circus?
- If you could work for the circus for just one day, what job would you choose?

Instructional Plan

Introductory Lesson:
Students brainstorm circus vocabulary words. After brainstorming, words that represent jobs are highlighted. They make 3 x 5 cards with these vocabulary words representing the jobs on one card and a brief definition on another. When all cards are ready they play memory trying to match the name of the job with the definition. Each child takes a turn flipping over two cards at a time. If they match they keep them, and go again until they don’t get a match. If the cards don’t match, they flip them upside down in the same spot. This initial activity should take about an hour, but can be continued as a game for a center during free time.

Activities for students:
- Select a circus job
- Research – collect information
- Create a graphic organizer (Kidspiration)
- Write report
- Edit report
- Use digital camera to take pictures of activities while Circus Smirkus is here for their residency
- Create first page of report by copying a picture from the Internet and pasting it to the slide, and use Word Art to create the title for the report
- Create second page and scan in report
- Create third page and draw circus portrait on computer or draw on paper and scan into document
- Combine their slides into a class PowerPoint
My Circus Job – A Technology Task

• Create a Table of Contents for the class using pictures of their explorers as the buttons

Assessment

The report will be assessed using the state’s third grade (or whatever grade level) writing benchmarks for reports and the report rubric.

Extensions

This could also be done as an individual PowerPoint, where each student develops their own PowerPoint to present to the class or their families. If a video camera is available it could also be incorporated by videotaping the Circus Smirkus visit and using clips in the presentation.

Related Sources/Websites

www.ringlingbrothers.com

Author

Patricia Moyer, Charleston Elementary School
MATH
Lesson Overview

This lesson engages students in solving math problems related to circus themes.

Instructional Objective

Students will use a variety of strategies and representations to solve math problems.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

2.5 Students produce solutions to mathematical problems requiring decisions about approach and presentation.

7.6 Students understand arithmetic in computation, and they select and use, in appropriate situations, mental arithmetic, pencil and paper, calculator, and computer.

7.8 Students use function and algebra concepts.

Grade Levels

3-4

Instructional Plan

Some of the following material is adapted from the MathLand program.

Problem #1: Popcorn! Peanuts! Hot dogs!

On your birthday your parents took you and 5 friends to the Circus Smirkus show in Greensboro! It was great fun! On the way out your parents said that you and your friends could each buy one souvenir. The choices were a funny clown hat, juggling balls, a pinwheel, or a Circus Smirkus t-shirt! 1/3 of you chose the juggling balls, 1 person chose the funny clown hat, and 1/2 of you chose the t-shirt. Use words, diagrams, or number sentences to show how many people chose each item. Remember to make a key!

Problem #2: Circus Tickets

Ms. Allen, Mrs. ABC and Mrs. Gendron’s classes are studying about the circus. At the end of their study they will go to see Circus Smirkus! Ms. Allen has 16 students and 3 parent helpers, Mrs. ABC has 12 students and 7 parent helpers, and Mrs. Gendron has 18 students and 5 parent helpers. If student tickets are $2.00 each and adult tickets are $5.00 each, how much will it cost to buy the tickets for everyone? Show all your work.
Problem #3: Circus Fans

Circus Smirkus performed 3 times in Greensboro this summer. They sold 376 tickets for the first show in July. The second show they sold 425 tickets, and the final show in August was sold out at 480 tickets. How many tickets did they sell?

Problem #4: Funtastic Three-Ring Circus!

Materials Needed: Class chart of tickets, souvenirs, and refreshments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cost per Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tickets</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popcorn</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Cream</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffed Animals</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clown Hats</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trick Flowers</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set of Juggling Balls</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant Pinwheels</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson: Today we are going to be solving a problem with money. Let’s pretend that you can take two friends with you to a circus show. Since you are such good friends, you are all going to buy exactly the same things! You have been saving bottle money and have a total of $50.00 to spend! Your challenge is to record your choices and try to spend all $50.00. Remember you all get the same items. Show all your work! Do you think there is only one way to spend all the money?

Notes:
- Since 50 is not a multiple of 3, students will not be able to spend the entire amount.
- This lesson is a good opportunity to show how to set up a table to record their choices.

Problem #5: Elephant Parade

One of your favorite parts of the circus show was the Elephant Parade! The elephants were dressed with beautiful blankets and headpieces. There were 10 elephants in the parade. On each elephant’s costume were dangling bells. There were 5 bells on the headpiece and 10 bells on the blanket. How many dangling bells were there altogether? Show your work.
Problem #5: Clowning Around

As you were approaching the circus tent, you saw 3 clowns outside holding colorful balloons. Each clown held 5 balloons in each hand. How many balloons were there? Show your work as you solve this problem. Try to solve the problem in more than one way.

Assessment

Have students share their work and the representations and strategies they used.

Related Resources

- Mathematics in the Circus Ring, Vincent O'Connor
- The Flimflam Man, Darleen Beard
- P.T. Barnum, King of the Circus, Lynn Gro
- The World's Greatest Elephant, Ralph Helfer
- Circus, Peter Spier
- Sidewalk Circus, Paul Fleischman and Kevin Hawkes
- Mirette on the High Wire, Emily Arnold McCully

Author

Hardwick Elementary School, with activities adapted from the Mathland curriculum
Circus Math
Lesson Overview

A carnival isn't a circus, but the two are related. Circus is a performance with a seated audience; a carnival is a touring assemblage of rides, concessions, and games of skill presented to a strolling audience. Both feature touring entertainment for the public, including amazing sights, laughter, and popcorn! This lesson explores mathematical probability through the use of carnival games.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will explore probability with spinners.
2. Students will record data with tally sheets.
3. Students will learn the language of probability.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

2.14 Students plan and organize an activity.
7.9 Students use statistics and probability concepts.

Grade Level

4

Length of Lesson

3-4 weeks with this lesson being the culminating event

Materials

- Spinners, paper clips, brads
- Construction paper or oak tag
- Other materials to make the games that the children choose

Guiding Questions

- Are the games fair or unfair?
- How could we make the games fair?
Carnival Games: Are They Fair?

Instructional Plan

1. The children will spend some time leading up to this activity looking at spinners and deciding if they are fair or unfair. They will look at some of the games at a carnival and talk about the fairness of them. Then they will create their own carnival game to share during class.

2. I used the Mathland Unit on Probability to create carnival games in my classroom. I spent a week or so just looking at spinners and seeing if they were fair or unfair. For example, I looked at spinners that were divided in half, fourths, and sixths to see if the kids could see if they were fair. They were colored differently so some were fair and some were unfair. Then we took some time to talk about carnival games. We talked about some of the different games that you would find at the carnival and talked about the fairness of each and if they have ever won before.

3. Then I had the children create their own carnival games using the following guidelines:
   a. Make a game of chance involving a spinner.
   b. Write directions for the game.
   c. Make prize tokens, which have pictures or descriptions of the prizes.
   d. Make a sign for the game.
   e. Make some playing tokens for your game.
   f. I had the children make a game of any sort as long as it had a spinner involved. I had games of bowling, hiding beans under cups, and some elaborate wooden games. I left it up to the children as long as it involved a spinner.

4. The children worked on the games for about a week or two and decided if they were fair or unfair. I gave them the opportunity to play them in class with each other. Then we had a “Carnival Day.” We invited the preschoolers and some of the other classes into our room. I dressed up as a clown and we had a popcorn machine and made popcorn. We tried to make it as much of a carnival theme as possible. We had decorations and games. The other children walked around to the different games and got tokens at the games that they played. Then when the carnival was “done” the children left. As the children left they handed in their tokens for a little gift bag. I went to the dollar store and bought little items that were appropriate for the little children and gave them out as they left.

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide

www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
Carnival Games: Are They Fair?

5. It has been a fun and popular event each year. This is one of my favorite units to teach.

Assessment

Are they able to create a game with a spinner and tell if it is fair or unfair? Are they able to explain their answer and tell how they could make it fair if it wasn’t already?

Author

Deb Tague, Eden Central School (adapted from Mathland)
The Circus and the Senses

Lesson Overview
This lesson engages students in using their knowledge of the five senses to explore the circus.

Instructional Objective
Students will use knowledge of the five senses to make observations of different circus elements and to use observations to make an artistic representation.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
7.13 Students understand the characteristics of organisms, see patterns of similarity and differences among living organisms, understand the role of evolution and recognize the interdependence of all systems that support life.

Grade Levels
K-2

Length of Lesson
45-60 minutes

Materials
- Books about the circus
- Popcorn
- Other circus objects
- Drawing paper
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Chart paper divided into five sections (sight, smell, taste, hearing, touch)
- Individual pages with same five headings

Guiding Questions
- What are our five senses?
- How can we use our five senses when we are at the circus?
- How might their senses help circus performers during their acts?
The Circus and the Senses

Instructional Plan

1. Review the five senses with the class.
2. Hand out popcorn to each of the students and have them make observations using their five senses.
3. List all observations under the appropriate heading on the chart paper.
4. Using observations draw a picture of the popcorn and write favorite observations around the drawing.
5. Brainstorm with the class a list of things they might see at the circus. Students can also look through the books about the circus to get ideas.
6. Each student should choose one object to “observe” using their five senses and list their observations as the class did earlier.
7. They will then illustrate their circus object and write their favorite sense observations around their drawing to help it come alive on paper.

Assessment

• Were the students able to identify a specific circus element?
• Did they successfully make observations of their circus element using their five senses?
• Were they able to illustrate their circus object and include words to describe it?

Extension

The students could write a poem using the five sense observations.

Author

Gina Gaidys, Warren Elementary School

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
Lesson Overview

This lesson explores the effects of microgravity in space. Students consider the effects microgravity might have on circus activities and draw a circus act in space.

Instructional Objective

Students will demonstrate understanding of the condition of microgravity in space by drawing a circus act in space.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

7.12 Students understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.

Grade Levels

1-4

Length of Lesson

45 minutes

Materials

- Colored pencils/markers
- Space stickers (stars, moons, planets)

Guiding Question

How are the effects of microgravity in space different from the effects of gravity on earth?

Instructional Plan

1. Provide background information from NASA website (www.nasa.gov):

   Just about every city in American has ongoing construction projects. The International Space Station (ISS) is a big construction zone 250 miles (402 kilometers) away from Earth. The Space Station is an enormous structure and will only grow larger as we add on. Working in space is different than working on Earth. In space, there is not enough gravity to hold you down; you have to anchor yourself to the structure. The astronauts’ clothing is made to protect them for minimal atmosphere. Helmets and padded suits with plenty of pockets allow the astronaut to work out in space. Tethers are used to allow them to stay close to the ISS. They also have to be careful not to drop any tools. Stray items are simply lost in space and become space trash.

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide

www.smirkus.org     802-533-7443
Circus in Space

Think about playing a board game in space. You’d have to tie every loose piece down, and you’d be moving pieces in a bulky space suit. Think how much longer it would take to do even the simplest task. Astronauts have to practice working without gravity before they go into space. A lot of training is done underwater in a large swimming pool. Gravity is reduced – that’s why you float – and movement takes on a different feel. The Space Station is a big laboratory in space that allows long-term exposure without gravity. The Space Station will allow us to step off the planet and to improve life on Earth.

2. Discuss with students the effects of being in outer space.

There is very little gravity in space. You simply float around, and it can be pretty cold. The astronauts have to wear inflated spacesuits. This makes it hard to bend and move arms, legs and fingers. Individual items have to be tied down. For example, a wrench would have to be secured in a pocket. The astronaut also has to be careful not to drop the wrench. It is like being underwater.

3. Show students the pictures of the ISS and astronauts working in space.

4. Tell students to think of the ISS as a small town, and a circus is coming to visit.

5. Have students predict how conditions at the ISS would affect a space circus.

6. Have students draw their own space circus.

7. In a class discussion, ask students if their space circus looks different than a circus would on Earth.

8. Ask the students to list things that are the same and things that are different in the circus act in space from one on Earth. List responses on the board.

Assessment

Students draw a picture of a space circus including a caption about the effects of microgravity on the space circus.


Related Sources/Websites

NASA site: Build it with Spacewalks
NASAexplores article: “Space: Under Construction”

Author

Martha Perron, Coventry Village School
Circus in Space
Lesson Overview

This lesson utilizes spinning plates as the vehicle to plan and carry out experiments designed to observe motion. It helps if students are already familiar with how to conduct experiments so that this sequence can focus on learning about motion concepts. Specific concepts focused on in this sequence include the use of a force to start motion or affect motion and the effects of friction on motion.

Instructional Objectives

Students will describe the forces that create, sustain, and change motion within a circus skill.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

2.2 Students use reasoning strategies, knowledge, and common sense to solve complex problems related to all fields of knowledge.

7.1 Students use scientific methods to describe, investigate, and explain phenomena and raise questions.

7.2 Students design and conduct a variety of their own investigations and projects.

7.12 Students understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.

Grade Levels

3-6

Length of Lesson

Three to five 90-minute blocks

Materials

- Circus Motion Lab Information Pages handout (Appendix A)
- Circus Motion Lab Report handout (Appendix B)
- Circus tools (plates & sticks)
Circus Motion Lab

Guiding Questions

- What starts the motion needed to perform this circus skill?
- How does the motion continue?
- What affects the motion during the performance?
- How does the motion end?

Instructional Plan

After students have had some experience with a variety of circus tools and have settled in to practice their skills using the plates and sticks, begin this lesson sequence. Steps 1, 2, 3 will be repeated for each research topic. Typically, each topic can be completed in 90 minutes or less.

1: Initial Discussion

Engage students in a discussion describing the motion required to successfully perform with the plates and sticks. Students will likely mention the need to spin the plate and describe the various ways the spinning gets started (big spider spin, whirling on top of the stick, balance and tap). They will also probably mention that in order to keep the plate spinning, the performer needs to keep giving it a “boost.”

Let students know that they will be designing and conducting science experiments to find out more about the motion involved in plate spinning. Using handouts and transparencies of the Circus Motion Lab Information Pages (Appendix A) and the Circus Motion Lab Report (Appendix B), go over the procedures and expectations for the experiment. Based on knowledge of the class and previous science work, the teacher will need to decide:

- whether to assign teams or let students choose
- how much to structure the experiment

2: Planning and Performing the Experiment

Once students are arranged in teams, ask them to begin filling out their lab reports. The directions on the Information Pages will assist both the teacher and the students through the lab procedure. The teacher will need to ensure time for students to document their work as the experiments are performed.

3: Reflection

Following each class period of experimentation, discussions among the various teams will bring out the learning. Teachers may choose to structure these discussions in several ways. Some suggestions appear below.

- Create discussion groups consisting of two or three teams meeting to share their findings.
Circus Motion Lab

• Post research questions on large poster paper around the room. Ask students to walk around with markers writing down their observations relevant to each question without talking to others. After students have had ample time to respond in writing to the questions, invite them to visit each question and review the responses.

• Collect lab reports and shuffle them. Hand the reports out randomly and ask students to read through the reports just handed to them. Use a sticky note to respond with comments and questions about the findings.

Regardless of the method chosen, wind up with a whole-class discussion of what students saw as common findings or interesting differences, as well as further questions they’ve thought of. This discussion is a good one to record on large chart paper under the topic heading.

Assessment

Assessment of student learning occurs in three ways in this lesson sequence.

• Student documentation of lab experiences on the lab reports (making it essential that each student complete the reports with a degree of independence, regardless of conducting the experiments in a team format).

• Teacher observation during experiments and especially during discussions following the experiments. Teachers may want to use the included observation form (Appendix C).

• Application of learning as described in analysis of devil stick motion.

Extensions

Students may extend their learning to analyze any of the circus skills. This can be done informally through discussion, or other labs can be created and carried out. Additionally, students may find it interesting to analyze other motions with which they are familiar. These might include typical playground behaviors such as swinging, playing tetherball, running, sliding, and various aspects of playing kickball.
Circus Motion Lab

Related Sources/Websites

www.brainpop.com (motion videos)

http://sciencespot.net/Pages/kdzphysics.html (lots of references and activities for teachers and students)

http://pbskids.org/dragonflytv/show/mattermotion.html (science video clips for kids, starring kids)

Circus plates and sticks can be purchased from Circus Smirkus at www.smirkus.org.

Author

Tracy L. Longchamp, Shoreham Elementary School
Circus Motion Lab

Appendix A: Circus Motion Lab Information Pages

Lab 1

Topic: How is motion started?

Get Ready: With your partner, discuss how the plate gets moving. What changes the plate from holding still to spinning? Why does the plate fall instead of spin sometimes? Why do you think that? Do you and your partner agree about how the motion would be affected? Write a specific question on your lab report in the section labeled, “My specific question.” Your question might be: Will _____ cause the plate to start spinning? or How strong of a start does the plate need in order to spin? or Will the same way of starting cause the plate to fall instead of spin?

Get Set: Choose a spot to start your lab experiment. Make sure you have all of your materials (plate, stick, and anything else you need) in a spot where you have plenty of room. Draw the set-up and write how it looks and what you plan to do in the sections labeled, “Drawing of the experiment” and “Explanation in words of the experiment.”

Go: When you and your partner are ready, place the plate on the stick and use your chosen method to start the plate spinning. Watch what happens. You'll want to find a way to record your observations in the section labeled, “What I found out” so you can compare them to the work in the next step.

Go Again: Repeat the experiment several times using exactly the same set-up to check your observations. When you’re sure about what happens, change your set-up in just one way. Run the experiment several more times using this set-up. Collect your observations and record them in the section labeled, “What I found out.”

Think: Using your observations, what did you learn about how to start the motion of the plate? Write your thoughts in the last section, “The answer to my specific question.”
Circus Motion Lab

Lab 2

Topic: How is motion affected?

Get Ready: With your partner, discuss how the plate stays spinning or falls. What changes the plate from spinning to falling? What is needed to keep the plate spinning? Why do you think that? Do you and your partner agree about how the motion would be affected? Write a specific question on your lab report in the section labeled, “My specific question.” Your question might be: Will _____ cause the plate to fall? or Will _____ keep the plate spinning? or Does the plate spin the same on my finger as on the stick?

Get Set: Choose a spot to start your lab experiment. Make sure you have all of your materials (plate, stick, and anything else you need) in a spot where you have plenty of room. Draw the set-up and write how it looks and what you plan to do in the sections labeled, “Drawing of the experiment” and “Explanation in words of the experiment.”

Go: When you and your partner are ready, place the plate on the stick and use your chosen method to start the plate spinning. Use your planned action to test the ongoing motion of the plate. Watch what happens. You’ll want to find a way to record your observations in the section labeled, “What I found out” so you can compare them to the work in the next step.

Go Again: Repeat the experiment several times using exactly the same set-up to check your observations. When you’re sure about what happens, change your set-up in just one way. Run the experiment several more times using this set-up. Collect your observations and record them in the section labeled, “What I found out.”

Think: Using your observations, what did you learn about how to affect the motion of the plate? Write your thoughts in the last section, “The answer to my specific question.”
Lab 3

**Topic:** How is motion stopped?

**Get Ready:** With your partner, discuss how the plate stops spinning without falling.

- *What changes the plate from spinning to stopped while it’s still on the stick?*
- *What is needed to stop the plate’s spinning?*
  - Why do you think that? Do you and your partner agree about how the motion would be affected? Write a specific question on your lab report in the section labeled, “*My specific question.*” Your question might be: *Will _____ cause the plate to stop?* or *Will ____ stop the plate spinning?* or *Will the plate stop the same way on my finger as on the stick?*

**Get Set:** Choose a spot to start your lab experiment. Make sure you have all of your materials (plate, stick, and anything else you need) in a spot where you have plenty of room. Draw the set-up and write how it looks and what you plan to do in the sections labeled, “*Drawing of the experiment*” and “*Explanation in words of the experiment.*”

**Go:** When you and your partner are ready, place the plate on the stick and use your chosen method to start the plate spinning. Use your planned action to test stopping the motion of the plate. Watch what happens. You’ll want to find a way to record your observations in the section labeled, “*What I found out*” so you can compare them to the work in the next step.

**Go Again:** Repeat the experiment several times using exactly the same set-up to check your observations. When you’re sure about what happens, change your set-up in just one way. Run the experiment several more times using this set-up. Collect your observations and record them in the section labeled, “*What I found out.*”

**Think:** Using your observations, what did you learn about how to stop the motion of the plate? Write your thoughts in the last section, “*The answer to my specific question.*”
Appendix B: Circus Motion Lab Report

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________

I’m researching this topic:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

My specific question:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Drawing of the experiment:

Explanation in words of the experiment:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

What I found out:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

The answer to my specific question:
______________________________________________________________________
### Circus Motion Lab

Appendix C: Observation Form

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Circus Motion Lab

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
Lesson Overview
This lesson engages students in several activities that center around the idea of balance and the role balance plays in everyday life and circus arts.

Instructional Objectives
Students will engage in balance activities and conversations about how balance concepts can be applied to other situations.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
1.8 In written reports, students organize and convey information and ideas accurately and effectively.
2.2 Students use reasoning strategies, knowledge, and common sense to solve complex problems related to all fields of knowledge.
7.1 Students use scientific methods to describe, investigate, and explain phenomena and raise questions.
7.12 Students understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.

Grade Levels
3-6

Length of Lesson
Three one-hour blocks of time

Materials
In addition to the materials listed for each activity/task, teachers should purchase Science Is..., by Susan V. Bosak.

Guiding Questions
• What role does balance play in circus acts?
• How does balance come into play in “real life experiences”?
• What needs to happen for balance to occur?
• What role does center of gravity have with balance?

Instructional Plan
Circus Balance

Each of the following activities/demonstrations taken from *Science Is…* by Susan V. Bosak will follow a similar format. This book is recommended as a teacher resource. It is filled with science activities, interesting facts and information, and the science behind the activities.

Some of the activities have been slightly adapted to a circus theme and each includes:

- an introduction or description of the task,
- an opportunity for students to try the task,
- a discussion/debriefing about the elements of balance and other factors in attempting the task, and
- an opportunity to show understanding through journal entries.

**A. Alligator Pit, from *Science Is…*, by Susan V. Bosak**

Materials: a cushion or mat

1. “Safety: The “island” shouldn’t have any sharp edges or protruding objects, and should be a stable structure. The “water” should be a soft surface, such as a carpet, mat, or grass. A couple of people should act as spotters to cushion people who fall.

2. “Set the scene:” In *Science Is…* the scene is the waters surrounding the island are infested with alligators. To adapt for a circus theme, you could show students the large balancing ball and explain that three people were going to balance together on the ball as part of a circus act.

3. “The challenge:” Everyone has to fit onto the “practice ball.” Explain that you’ve identified an area that represents the size of the space the three would have to stand on the ball but before the ball is used the three will need to practice on a cushion or mat.

4. Set a goal for balancing on the “ball” (mat or cushion that represents the ball) – 10 seconds to start, then the goal can be increased.

**B: Balancing the Impossible, from *Science Is…*, by Susan V. Bosak**

Materials: Pencil, potato, fork

It will be helpful if students have had opportunities to balance feathers and then have more opportunities following this activity.

1. Have students balance a pencil on their finger. In the first example the pencil is horizontal, resting on a fingertip.

2. Using the pencil again, balance with the sharpened end on a fingertip.

3. Stick the sharpened end of the pencil into a slice of potato. Again, balance the pencil on your fingertip as in #1.

4. Stick the sharpened end of a pencil through a potato slice, stick a fork onto the edge of the slice. With the fork hanging down from the potato, balance the point of the pencil on the edge of a table or desk.

From the *Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide*  
[www.smirkus.org]  802-533-7443
C: Body Balancing, from *Science Is…*, by Susan V. Bosak

Materials: chair, coin, wall

Scripted instructions:

1. “Hopper: Put your feet together, bend over, and grab hold of your toes with both hands. Can you hop forward? In order to hop, you have to lean forward to shift your centre of gravity ahead of your feet- but you can’t do this because you are hanging onto your toes.”

2. “Stand Up: Sit in a chair with your back straight, feet flat on the ground and arms straight back at your sides. Now try to stand up, using no hands and without leaning forward. It’s not possible. Your centre of gravity is over the chair; to shift your centre of gravity over your feet- which you need to do to get up- you have to lean forward.”

3. “Coin Sniff: Kneel on the floor with your knees together. Put your arms on the floor in front of you, with your elbows against your knees. Put a coin on the floor at your outstretched fingertips. Kneel upright. While holding your hands behind your back, try to touch the coin with your nose. If you have a low centre of gravity, it should be easier for you to touch the coin.”

4. “Leg Up: Put your right arm and foot against a wall. Try to lift up your left leg. You won’t be able to do it. To balance on your right foot, you have to shift your centre of gravity directly over that foot, which means leaning in that direction. Since you can’t lean through the wall, you need your left foot on the ground to keep your balance.”

Sequence for each of the above activities

*Introduction*: Begin by introducing what students will be attempting to do. If a task is impossible, don’t tell students at this point. Remind them of the overall focus: while attempting the task, students should be considering the role balance plays in the task/activity.

*Attempting the task*: Each student should be given an opportunity to try each of the tasks first hand. Assign students to groups or areas where they will be able to have conversations and share ideas while they are attempting the tasks. These unstructured conversations in small groups will help students prepare for a class discussion.

*Reflection and Class Discussion*: Hold a class discussion around the following questions, What happened? What did you notice? Why do you think that happened? What role does balance play in what you were trying to do? What would be other examples of this? Can
Circus Balance

you think of times when this would be important? How might circus artists use this idea in their performances?

Journals: The session should end with students making a journal entry of the activity/task. The journal entry should include a detailed and labeled drawing of the task(s). The entry should also include a description of what happened and the role that balance plays. Students should end their journal entry with applications or places in the “real world” where this can be found.

Assessment

Assessment of student learning occurs in two ways in this lesson sequence.

• Teacher observation during tasks/activities and especially during class discussions following the tasks/activities.

• Assessment for journal entry.

Author

Heather Best, Shoreham Elementary School, with activities adapted from Science Is… by Susan V. Bosak
Balance and Gravity

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces gravity as a force, Newton’s law of universal gravitation, and center of gravity and applies this knowledge to Circus Smirkus activities.

Instructional Objectives

Students will be able to…

1. Weigh various objects.
2. Find the center of gravity of a linear object.
3. Find the center of gravity of an irregular object.
4. Show the effects of distance and mass on the force of gravity.
5. Show how an object can be placed in orbit around the earth.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

7.12 Students understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.

Grade Levels

5-8

Materials

• Balance scale
• Poster board and push pin
• Washer and fish line

Guiding Questions

General

• Did you ever hear that story about the guy that had an apple drop on his head? Who was that guy? What was that all about?
• What does gravity have to do with the circus?

Gravity

• What is gravity?
• How do we detect gravity? Can we see it? Hear it? Feel it?
• Does gravity push? Pull? What’s the difference?

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide

www.smirkus.org 802-533-7443
Balance and Gravity

- Where does gravity come from?
- What does not have gravity?
- How does gravity get from one place to another?
- Does gravity travel at a certain speed?
- What does the force of gravity depend on? What makes it stronger or weaker?
- How can we measure the force of gravity?
- How is weight different from mass?

Universal Gravitation
- Is gravity just on earth?
- How is gravity important to our solar system? Galaxies?
- Where is gravity trying to pull us?

Instructional Plan

Circus Smirkus Activities:
Students participate in the following activities during the residency:
- balancing a spinning plate on a stick
- unicycle
- human pyramid
- Pedalo
- balancing (standing) on a large ball
- mini trampoline jumping
- Diablo
- Rola Bola

Do Assessment Probe: “Talking About Gravity” (See Related Sources/Websites below.)

Assess prior knowledge and provide background information needed: force, motion, speed, velocity, acceleration, inertia, momentum, Newton’s Laws of Motion

Class discussions using Guiding Questions:
Class can discuss as a whole.

Students can discuss in small groups then share responses with whole class.
Students can do QuickWrite responses to prepare for a class discussion.
Balance and Gravity

Students can do QuickWrite responses after discussions as a formative assessment.

Reading:

Textbooks and internet sites on Gravity, Center of Gravity, Isaac Newton, Universal Gravitation, and orbits can be assigned or read to students.

Class Activities:

Weight
Practice using a balance scale to weigh various classroom objects. Make a table to record data.

Center of Gravity (Mass)
Practice finding the center of gravity of a variety of linear objects in the classroom (pencil, marker, ruler, meter stick, broom).

Practice finding the center of mass of an irregular, flat, shape:
1. Draw an irregular shape, then cut it out of poster board.
2. Hang it from one of its edges, on a push pin stuck in a bulletin board, so it swings freely.
3. Hang a plumb-bob from the push pin using a washer tied to fish line.
4. Draw the plumb line on the shape.
5. Repeat, plumb-bobbing and line drawing from several edges or points.
6. All lines will intersect at the center of gravity.

Discuss each circus activity (from above) in the context of center of gravity (as a class or in groups that report out):
• Which activities require controlling the center of gravity to be successful?
• Which activities require controlling the center of gravity of the object?
• Which require controlling your own center of gravity?
• Where is the center of gravity in each case?

Drawing & Diagramming
These can be done in a variety of ways. Individual students can pick activities, groups can work together, the whole class can collaborate on a circus mural, etc.

Drawings & diagrams should include:
• colorful artistic work for public display
• name of the activity
Balance and Gravity

- markings (arrows, lines, etc.) showing the lines of force at work, the center of gravity of the balancing object, and the center of the earth
- a written paragraph describing the activity in relation to center of gravity

Effects of Distance & Mass

Diagram the effects of distance and mass on the force of gravity.

Universal Gravitation

Diagram how an object can be placed in orbit around the earth.

Assessment

Annotated diagram and written paragraph explaining center of gravity.

Related Sources/Websites


http://csep10.phys.utk.edu/astr161/lect/history/newtongrav.html

Circus plates and sticks can be purchased from Circus Smirkus at www.smirkus.org.

Author

Newark School
Lesson Overview

This lesson engages students in circus activities followed by reflective questions that reveal the scientific principles of center of gravity and base of support.

Instructional Objective

Students will learn about center of gravity and how a stable base of support helps keep things upright.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

7.12 Students understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.

Grade Level

8

Length of Lesson

Two to three 45-minute blocks

Materials

• Juggling Pin
• Spinning Plate
• Big Balance Ball
• Boogie Board
• Unicycle
• A Chair

Guiding Question

How do circus activities work with gravity and base of support?
Circus Tricks: Center of Gravity and Base of Support

Instructional Plan

In Circus:
Students will spend 45 minutes using the circus equipment. As they play, teachers will circulate and interact with students, emphasizing points like balance, spin, and stability. It is important that the teachers are seen playing with the equipment also.

In Classroom:
After the hour, students return to the classroom setting. Teachers lead discussion, first of the equipment, leading into the physics principles behind them.

Suggested questions:
• What equipment did you enjoy?
• What tricks did you find hard? Easy?
• What do you want to learn more about...do more of?
• What is the hardest circus trick you have ever seen?
• How did that spinning plate work? (Point out to students that the plate has most of its weight below the balance point.)
• How can you stand on that ball? (Discuss keeping your center in line with the ball’s.)
• What makes you balance on the boogie board? What makes you fall?
• What makes you balance on the unicycle? What makes you fall?

Toss a pin in the air, discuss its spin, point out its center of gravity. Define “center of gravity.”

Activities:

Play pushover: Two people face each other about two feet apart. Feet together, hands up in front of shoulders. The object is to push the other over...make him move a foot. You may only push your opponent’s hands, they may move them, you cannot push their shoulders or chest. You try to push harder, or force them to miss when they push hard.

Why do people fall?

Introduce Base of Support. Define it.

Pick up a chair: Place your toes up against the wall. Step backwards, toe to heel, two steps. Place chair in front of you, lean against wall with your head against the wall, back horizontal. Pick up chair and stand up. Usually girls and women can do this, but boys cannot. Girls have a lower center of gravity, down by their hips. Boys have a higher center of gravity, up

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org 802-533-7443
Circus Tricks: Center of Gravity and Base of Support

by their shoulders. When we add the mass of the chair, it pulls the boys’ center of gravity out in front of their toes, in front of their base of support, and they cannot get their head off the wall. Girls’ center of gravity stays over their feet; they can stand up.

Assessment

• Finish with quiz about: Center of Gravity, Base of Support
• Discuss where the center of gravity is on some of the circus equipment they used earlier.

Author

Brighton Elementary School
ART
Design a Circus Wagon (Mixed-Media Collage)

Lesson Overview
This lesson combines art history with art making. Students are introduced to the concept of a circus and provided with photos and images that give them a basic understanding of the general aesthetics of circus art and circus wagons from the late 1800’s through current times. They are asked to choose one act or animal to focus on for their own artwork. Students then design a circus wagon using a variety of media that has visual/aesthetic elements reminiscent of typical circus wagons and art. The circus wagons are then displayed in a long line as if they were all part of a circus train.

Instructional Objectives
1. Students will explore the concept of a circus.
2. Students will become familiar with common visual elements in circus art and design (i.e., lettering on posters from the past century) and common visual elements of circus wagons.
3. Students will apply their learning as they create mixed-media collages.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
1.18 Students use computers, telecommunications, and other tools of technology to research, to gather information and ideas, and to represent information and ideas accurately and appropriately.
5.26 Students develop and present basic analyses of works in the arts from structural, historical, economic, and cultural perspectives.
5.28 Students use art forms to communicate, showing the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.

Grade Level
6

Length of Lesson
Two 90-minute blocks
Design a Circus Wagon (Mixed-Media Collage)

Materials

- PowerPoint presentations (available on the Circus Smirkus website, www.smirkus.org)
- Assignment Sheet (see Appendix)
- Various mixed media: Pipe cleaners, buttons, etc.
- Colored construction paper
- Access to the internet for research images
- Magazines to look for photographs for collages

Guiding Questions

- What might one expect to see at a circus?
- What are (historically and currently) some common visual elements of circus art?
- What are (historically and currently) some common visual elements of circus wagons?
- What is an icon?
- How might a student design a circus wagon that focuses on one act and that reflects the art history of circus art and design?

Instructional Plan

1. Lesson begins by teacher facilitating a brief discussion with students about the circus, asking them questions like, “What is a circus?” and “What types of things might you expect to see at a circus?”

2. Next, show students a PowerPoint presentation (available at www.smirkus.org) that provides them with general information about the circus: a brief history of the circus, common acts (I found this general information on Wikipedia), and several slides of circus posters and photographs of circus-related activities. Discuss what common visual elements are prevalent in the artwork.

3. Show students a second PowerPoint presentation (available at www.smirkus.org) focusing on circus wagons as a genre. Describe the original purpose, and discuss the fact that in many ways the image of a circus wagon has become an icon for the circus.

4. Hand out assignment sheet (see Appendix) which goes over the specific requirements of this project and review with students.

5. Go over materials that are available to use in their collages.
Design a Circus Wagon (Mixed-Media Collage)

6. (Minor research) Give students the opportunity to explore circus images online and to choose an act that they are interested in focusing on. Students must gather a few images of that act in order to inform their own artwork.

7. Students create their circus wagons using available materials.

Assessment

Student self-assessment/reflection piece: Students must write a few paragraphs answering the following questions:

- How was my artwork influenced by artwork that is commonly used in circuses?
- How effective is my artwork in communicating what I learned about circuses?
- What choices did I make that resulted in my final product?

Related Sources/Websites

www.smirkus.org
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circus

Author

Kristen Huntington, Concord School
Appendix: Assignment Sheet

Challenge: Design a Circus Wagon

• Your wagon must relate to the traditional circus in some way - you should choose one aspect (i.e., the clown car)
• Approximately 11”x9”
• You choose the media—paper, paint, magazines, tissue paper, glitter, pipe cleaners, …
• It is very likely that your circus wagon will be made of 2 separate pieces, and then attached:
  o Interior (contents of the wagon, i.e., tiger)
  o Exterior (decorative red/gold wagon)
• You have 2 days only

You are limited only by your imagination!

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org   802-533-7443
PHYSICAL EDUCATION
Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to various balance stations. Students learn how each balance station relates to some aspect of a circus. Students also learn that balance is one of the most important characteristics that circus performers share.

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to various components of what make a circus.
2. Students will understand how to maintain balance on a balance beam.
3. Students will understand how to keep objects balanced on various body parts.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

3.5 Students make informed healthy choices that positively affect the health, safety, and well-being of themselves and others.
3.6 Students demonstrate competency in many and proficiency in a few of the skills and concepts needed for a lifetime of physical activity.

Grade Levels

K-2

Length of Lesson

45 minutes

Materials

- balance beam(s)
- 3-6 noodles
- 2 clown costumes (large shoes, red nose, wig/hat, oversized shorts, oversized shirt)
- 3-5 duck walkers
- 2 sets Lo Jax Stilts
- Cones
- Circus Music CD
Circus Balance Stations

Guiding Questions

- What types of things do you see at a circus?
- What makes the circus so exciting?
- What do tightrope walkers do at the circus?
- What do circus performers have in common when they perform their acts?

Instructional Plan

Welcome students to the class. Ask class to describe what a circus is and what types of things you see at a circus. Why is a circus so exciting? Discuss what a three-ring circus is and what the ringmaster does at the circus.

Explain to students that they will be pretending to be circus performers in a five-ring circus (5 stations) and that I will be the ringmaster. Each station has a common element, balance. Demonstrate the following stations:

**Station 1: Tightrope Walker**

Discuss with students what a tightrope walker does at a circus. Discuss what is necessary for someone to be successful at walking a tightrope (balance) and how they keep themselves balanced (looking forward, back straight, using arms to maintain balance, moving slowly, etc.). Explain that some tightrope walkers use a balance pole and may perform the act with or without a safety net. Students will try to walk across the beam without losing their balance. Students can challenge themselves by moving across the “tightrope” backwards, sideways, stopping and balancing on one foot, etc.

**Station 2: Noodle Balance**

Explain that many times performers in a circus not only balance themselves, but also balance objects on various parts of their body. At this station, students will balance the noodle first on the palm of their hands. Then have them move while balancing the noodle on their hand. Students can then progress to other balance challenges, such as balancing the noodle on the back of their hands, arms, elbows, thigh, nose, forehead, and foot. After balancing the noodle on a part of their body, they can then pop it in the air and try to balance it on another part of their body.

**Station 3: Duck Walkers**

Explain to students what a rola bola is (plank on a cylinder(s) which rocks back and forth while trying to balance on it) and that circus performers often use rola bola’s while performing other skills (juggling, devil sticks, hula hooping). Explain to students that duck walkers give a similar feel to what it is like to balance on a rola bola. Students will use the duck walkers to rock side-to-side, spin, or actually walk like a duck.

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
Circus Balance Stations

Station 4: Stilt Walking
Ask students if they have ever seen anyone walking on stilts. Explain how stilts are used as part of the circus performance. Demonstrate to students how to walk on stilts (legs straight, not bent, use arms to lift legs, keep back straight, and try looking straight ahead).

Station 5: Clown Dress Relay
Discuss the role of clowns during a circus. Explain that they will have a chance to dress like a clown. Students will start at a cone and run to the other cone where the clown clothes are. Students have to put on clown shoes, a red nose, a wig/hat, oversized shorts, and oversized shirt. After doing that, students will run back to the original cone and take the clown outfit off. The next student will then dress in the clown outfit and run to the other cone and take the outfit off.

Assessment
Teacher will observe student performance and provide positive and specific feedback on how student can be more successful with their performance.

Related Sources/Websites
- [www.pecentral.com](http://www.pecentral.com)

Author
Brian Gallagher, Concord School
Lesson Overview
This lesson addresses the development of motor skills through juggling. Through practice, repetition and patience, students work on crossing the midline, sequencing, rhythm, problem solving, and multi-tasking.

Instructional Objectives
1. Students will increase their hand-eye coordination.
2. Students will refine their skills in tossing and catching.

VT Framework of Standards Alignments
3.6 Students demonstrate competency in many and proficiency in a few of the skills and concepts needed for a lifetime of physical activity.

Grade Levels
1-6

Length of Lesson
45 minutes

Materials
3 scarves per student

Guiding Questions
• Where might you see someone juggle?
• What kinds of objects can be juggled?
• What can we do if we drop a scarf?

Instructional Plan
1. Toss and catch one scarf with right hand. Toss and catch one scarf with left hand. Practice until achieving three successful catches before moving on to the next step.

2. Hold one scarf in each hand. Toss scarf #1 in right hand diagonally up to head height. Toss scarf #2 in left hand diagonally up to head height. Catch scarf #1 with left hand. Catch scarf #2 with right hand. Practice until achieving three successful catches before proceeding to the next step.

3. Add a third scarf in dominant hand. Toss #1 scarf up diagonally with right hand to head height. Toss scarf #2 up diagonally with left hand to head height. Catch scarf #1 with left hand. Toss scarf #3 up diagonally with right hand to head height. Catch scarf #2 with right hand. Catch #3 scarf with left hand. Repeat sequence.

Assessment
Rubric: 1-No attempt, 2-Shows some success, 3-Juggles 3-4 times, 4-Juggles fluently

Extensions
- Use three juggling balls using same process as scarves
- Partner juggle
- Tricks

Related Sources/Websites
http://jugglenow.com
http://funnyjuggler.com

Author
Leigh P. Clark, Warren Elementary School
Juggling Objects

Lesson Overview

This unit allows students to develop an understanding of the basics of juggling and the skills involved with juggling.

Instructional Objectives

Psychomotor – Students will be able to toss and catch a set number of objects following a specified sequence. In the process, they will learn to:

1. Increase hand-eye coordination
2. Improve tossing and catching skills
3. Develop better reflexes and rhythm

Cognitive – Students will be able to understand all of the options they have in a circus unit and find something that they will enjoy. In the process, they will learn to:

1. Understand that there are many different types of objects involved in juggling
2. Realize that there is more than one way to juggle
3. Learn the strategies of keeping many objects up in the air
4. Understand the importance of balance
5. Understand the importance of rhythm
6. Understand the benefits of juggling

Affective – Students will be able to interact productively with other students while learning the skills of juggling. In the process, they will learn to:

1. Participate with others in a safe and friendly environment
2. Encourage others to work on their skills
3. Help others to try to meet their personal goals
4. Get along with one another no matter who they are grouped with
5. Respect themselves and their classmates when working on the skills
6. Act responsibly when using equipment

VT Framework of Standards Alignments

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
2.8 Students demonstrate a willingness to take risks in order to learn
2.9 Students persevere in the face of challenges and obstacles.
3.3 Students demonstrate respect for themselves and others.
3.6 Students exercise regularly, demonstrating competence in many and proficiency in a few of the skills and concepts needed for a lifetime of physical activity.
3.10 Students perform effectively on teams that set and achieve goals, conduct investigations, solve problems, and create solutions.
Grade Levels
Secondary school

Length of Lesson
Five 90-minute sessions

Materials
- Juggling scarves, balls, bean bags, clubs and rings
- Diablos
- Balance Board
- Chinese Jump Ropes
- Stacking Cups
- Unicycle
- Stilts
- Peacock Feathers
- Music

Guiding Question
What are the fundamental skills and objectives involved in juggling objects?

Instructional Plan
Day 1:
- Cascade
- Columns
- Shower
- Reverse Cascade
- Bean Bags, Balls, Clubs, Diablo, Devil Sticks, Bucca Balls

Day 2:
• Review Skills
• Cup Stacking
• Chinese Jump Rope
• Bounce Juggling
• Trick Juggling
• Partner Juggling
Day 3:
  • Introduce Balance
  • Peacock Feather
  • Balance Board
  • Unicycle
  • Stilts

Day 4:
  • Juggle to Music
  • Practice your skills
  • “What can you do?”

Day 5:
  • Juggling Test
  • Self-assessment
  • Try new things

Assessment
  Juggling Test/Presentation of Skills

Author
  Richford High School
Additional Circus Curriculum Ideas

Language Arts

• Write a diary from the perspective of a circus performer.
• Use circus lingo to create Mad Libs, crosswords, and word searches.
• Prepare questions and interview the artist-in-residence when he arrives.
• Write letters requesting information from different circus organizations.
• Observe hyperbole used on the old circus posters and discuss advertising techniques. Follow up with reports given in "barker style."
• Read *If I Ran the Circus* by Dr. Seuss. Have students create their own fantasy circus.
• Write a paragraph or story using circus jargon (see glossary).
• Read and write circus poetry.
• Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper about whether or not you believe animals should be part of a circus.
• Write a performance review describing a trapeze act.

Mathematics

• Division: Study time management and “time math” by timing and scheduling acts in a three-ring circus. Figure the number of possible acts in a circus.
• Graphing: Make graphs about circus facts: use ticket sales, numbers of shows per tour, performer info., or anything you can think of.
• Addition: How much does a circus weigh? Research weights of animals and equipment and find a total.
• Multiplication: How much food (in cost or weight) is consumed per day, per performer or animal, per tour?
• Geometry: Study the use of space (i.e., the size of the ring, how many chairs will fit, how many elephants will fit, how many standing people, etc.).
• Geometry: Study various shapes and areas needed to put on a circus show; look at angles of cables, floors, ceilings, ramps, etc.
• Geometry: Create and decorate a clown car from a large cardboard box. Estimate how many will fit in it, then try it out.
• Accounting: Use of money, costs of food, circus tickets, parking for cars, subway fares, concession sales, etc. What does it cost to run a circus? How much income does it generate?
• Accounting: Using available resources, compare average costs for circus supplies such as apples, hay, meat, and carrots in different markets. Have students research suppliers and costs in different cities. Create a wise purchasing plan.
• Geometry: Discuss dimensions of a circus ring in radius and diameter.
• Statistics: At the end of the season, use real or made-up data to compile tour stats.

Social Studies

• Explore circus history from Ancient Greece to Europe to the United States.
• Make a timeline of circus history.
• Study the sideshow and why it died out. Look at the changing American attitude about people with differences.
• Explore the culture of the circus community - modern circus life. Discover how children on tour with the circus go to school.
• Become reporters and create news briefs about the upcoming show. Write press releases and send to local newspapers.
• Research the Ringling Brothers' tour of North America and map it out.
• Study the impact of the train on the circus.
• Study the impact of major world historical events on the circus (such as WWI, WWII, the Great Depression, etc.).
• Learn about all of the different careers with the circus and research their qualifications.
• Create a skit about P.T. Barnum's life.
• Study economics and business management using circus as a model.
Science

- Discover what riggers and circus performers need to know about physics to keep the equipment and the acts safe.
- Explore the senses and the circus.
- Experiment with center of balance and center of gravity.
- Study generators as a source of energy for the traveling circus.
- Discover what makes popcorn pop.
- Study the science of lighting and color in performances.
- Study electricity, circuits, and wiring by diagramming a circus site for a show.
- Study the rate of speed at which objects fall (juggling balls, clubs, people).

Physical Education

- Make pyramids and practice tumbling.
- Strengthen hand-eye coordination through juggling.
- Discuss and demonstrate the importance of stretching prior to performance.
- Develop balance skills by use of pedalos, the balance beam, and rola-bolas.
- Encourage students to create acrobatic or dance routines set to music.
- Place a line of masking tape on the floor and have students pretend it is a tight wire. Have them develop routines on it.

Music

- Watch the musical, “Barnum.”
- Listen to traditional circus music. Discover why “Stars and Stripes Forever” is rarely played under the big top.
- Explore the origins of the three types of calliope. What is a calliope, and how is it played? What is the cultural significance of this instrument?
• Create instruments and march in a circus parade.
• Study the evolution of the circus band and circus music.
• Learn about how circus has used music as advertisement.
• Circus music is 120-132 beats per minute. What does this mean? What does this sound like? Why is this tempo used?
• Explore these questions: What was the role of the keyboard player in the circus band? The drummer? Why live musicians? What can they do that recorded music cannot do?
• Write a song about growing up in a circus family.

Art

• Build props and paint a backdrop for the upcoming circus show.
• Design and produce tickets for the upcoming circus show.
• Discover the three clown face types. Design clowns and use faces as canvas.
• Explore circus poster art and lithographs. Create posters for a circus show.
• Study folk art as found on horse-drawn circus wagons. Recreate a circus caravan in miniature.
• Compare art in advertising the circus from the beginnings of circus to present times. Create an advertisement for a new circus act.
• Discover the many circus arts and related arts and skills, such as mime, dance, gymnastics, puppetry, theater, street performing, etc.
• Make a puppet circus using stick, hand, or finger puppets. Create figures and acts, and create a circus show.
• Use shoeboxes to make circus wagons.
• Trace students’ bodies on banner paper, then paint on clown costumes or circus artist outfits.
• Using paper grocery bags, make great top hats by rolling up the opening, then decorating.
• Make ribbon streamers by attaching long ribbons to small dowels with a small eye screw and fishing line swivel.
• Make affordable (and equitable) circus costumes for everyone. Get long strips of colored cloth, perhaps a different color for each grade. Students then tie these on as
belts, sashes, headbands, arm bands, etc. Get everyone to wear blue jeans and a white shirt. This allows for uniformity and individual creativity at the same time.

**Multi-Media**

- Use digital cameras to photograph the practice and final performance of the Circus Smirkus residency. Download the photos onto the computer and add text to create pages for the school yearbook.
- Film the final Circus Smirkus production. Import to a computer, edit the film, and add music, titles and transitions. Create a DVD and review and critique the film with the class.
Chapter III

Circus Arts in School: Teaching Resources
Circus Reading List

*Ballet of the Elephants*, Leda Schubert

*Be A Clown: Techniques from a Real Clown (Quick Starts for Kids!)*, Ron Burgess

*The Busy World of Richard Scarry: Lowly Worm Joins the Circus*, Richard Scarry

*Cats that Roar*, Kimberly Weinberger

*Circus*, Roxie Munro

*Circus*, Jack Prelutsky

*The Circus*, Lindsey Michael Miller

*The Circus Alphabet*, Linda Bronson

*Circus! Circus!*, Lee Bennett Hopkins

*Circus Family Dog*, Andrew Clements

*Circus Fun*, Margaret Hillert

*Circus in a Suitcase*, Reg Bolton

*The Circus is Coming*, Hilary Knight

*Circus Smirkus: A True Story of High Adventure and Low Comedy*, Rob Mermin

*Clifford at the Circus*, Norman Bridwell

*The Day the Circus Came to Town*, Melody Carlson & Ned Butterfield

*Emeline at the Circus*, Marjorie Priceman

*Eugenio*, Marianne Cockerpot

*A Field Full of Horses* (with audio), Peter Hansard

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide

[www.smirkus.org]  802-533-7443
From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide

www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443

The Greatest Show on Earth, John Prater

How the Camel Got Its Hump, Justine & Ron Fontes

How the Zebra Got Its Stripes, Justine & Ron Fontes

If I Ran The Circus, Dr. Seuss

Jumbo, Rhoda Blumberg

Last Night I Dreamed a Circus, Maya Gottfried

Mirette on the Highwire, Emily Arnold McCully

Miss Bindergarten Plans a Circus with Kindergarten, Joseph Slate

Morris and Boris at the Circus, Bernard Wiseman

My Mother's Secret Life, Rebecca Emberley

Oliver, Syd Hoff

Olivia Saves the Circus, Ian Falconer

Peter Spier's Circus, Peter Spiers

Pippi Goes to the Circus, Astrid Lindgren

The Saggy Baggy Elephant, K. & B. Jackson

Starring Mirette and Bellini, Emily Arnold McCully

The World's Greatest Elephant, Ralph Hefner

This is My Trunk, Stephen Michael Harris

To the Big Top, Jill Esbaum

Twenty-One Elephants, Phil Bildner

Up Goes the Big Top, Bernard Barbutt
A Very Young Circus Flyer, Jill Krementz

Who Put the B in Ballyhoo?, Carlyn Beccia

Yellow Elephant, Julie Larios

You See a Circus, I See..., Mike Downs
Websites, Videos and More

Websites

www.smirkus.org
- Teaching resources including much of this very curriculum packet! Plus lots of information about Vermont’s famous youth circus and circus camps. Circus equipment available for purchase.

www.bigapplecircus.org
- Many great resources for teachers and kids

www.ringling.com
- Lesson plans, projects, and more for many school subjects, at different education levels

www.circusfans.org
- Tons of great stuff for teachers, kids, and fans of the circus

www.circusworldmuseum.com
- Information, videos and lesson plan ideas for history, science, music, social studies, math, language arts, technology, geography, and, if you can believe it, more.

www.circusweb.com
- Information, history, and lore about circuses and circus organizations around the world

www.circusfit.com
- Physical education program for teaching circus skills, including goal-setting, with on-line support

Videos

Videos marked with an asterisk (*) are available to be borrowed by contacting Robert Kitchen, 29 Damon St., Fall River, MA 02720-0388. Others can possibly be purchased or borrowed from Circus Smirkus, (802) 533-7443.

*Be A Clown-1 (80 min)
*Circus Nostalgia - 3 video set 1930’s- present (60 min. ea.)
*All American Mud Shows - 2 video set, 1950’s-1980’s (2 hrs. ea.)
*Circus Worlds
*Circus and Man on a Flying Trapeze- one tape (120 min.)
Kidsongs: A Day at the Circus (30 min.)
*Modern Day Circuses

From the Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide
www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443
*Winterquarters* - off-season at the circus

*Elephants and Cherry Pie* - award winning documentary

*Barnum’s Big Top* - documentary

*200 Years of Circus in America* - documentary (95 minutes)

*Alphabet Factory at the Circus* - ages 2 and up

*Circus Smirkus* - performances as available

**Other Resources**

Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus  
P.O. Box 127  
DeLand, FL 32721-0127

Teaching unit, produced in 1990

Circus of the Kids  
926 Waverly Rd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32312

Curriculum guide for circus theme units

Circus Hall of Fame  
P.O. Box 700  
Peru, IN 46970

Many resources available

Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum  
San Antonio Public Library  
2109 W. Market St.  
San Antonio, TX 78205

List of material available upon request

Educational Book Distributors  
Box 551  
San Mateo, CA 94401

Three book set of K-3 circus books available

Circus Fans Association of America  
C/o Robert Kitchen
Videos and other resources about the circus
Make Your Own Low-cost Circus Equipment

Devil Sticks
To make low-cost devil sticks, you will need six newspaper sections, one magazine, and masking tape.

• Lay a newspaper section on top of another newspaper section.
• From the long side, start rolling them up as tightly as you possible can. RESULT: a “stick” the length of a newspaper section.
• Wrap the “stick” with masking tape.
• Do this two more times, so you have three “sticks.” IMPORTANT: wrap them tightly, so they are stiff, not limp.
• Tear off 20 pages of the magazine.
• Crumple a page over the end of one stick. Then, one by one, crumple nine more pages over the same end. RESULT: ten pages, crumpled in a ball at the end of one stick.
• Repeat with the remaining ten pages on the other end.
• Tape the balls to the stick using masking tape.

Juggling Scarves
Easy. Just use the plastic bags that the grocery store bags your food in.

Juggling Balls
1. Take an old tennis ball and cut a one-inch slice in it.
2. Squeeze the ball so the slice becomes an opening.
3. Pour birdseed or popcorn into the ball using a funnel.
4. Glue the slice shut.
5. You can leave it like this, but to make sure the slice never opens, cut the necks off two balloons, and stretch them, one at a time, over the ball.
ROLLA BOLLA

A piece of PVC pipe one foot long with a diameter between six and twelve inches can serve as the rolling base. A wooden board cut slightly longer than the width of the user’s shoulders and about one foot wide will be adequate for the balancing board. If “breaks” are desired, strips of wood can be attached on either end of the bottom of the board.

WIRE

*Only a professional rigger can rig a real tight wire. However, a sturdy piece of pipe wrapped in athletic tape is a terrific substitute. You can lift it a short way off the ground by propping it on blocks (make sure you secure the ends so it doesn’t roll).*

EXTRA ITEMS TO MAKE YOUR CIRCUS FUN:

- Hula hoops
- Popcorn
- Balloon animals
- Flags
- Beach balls
- Homemade circus posters
- Rubber chickens
- Music or homemade instruments for a circus parade
- Wide ribbon attached to short dowels to dance/move with
Clown Costume Ideas

You can create a clown costume from your own closet, or from a thrift store! Here are some suggestions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oversized pants</td>
<td>an adult’s big shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fuzzy slippers</td>
<td>giant shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hat</td>
<td>any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extra short pants</td>
<td>big or bright tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mismatched shoes</td>
<td>big boxer shorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pajamas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruffles</td>
<td>suspenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bloomers</td>
<td>colorful shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extra short pants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mismatched shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pajamas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruffles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bloomers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wild animal hat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can also use anything with a funny design on it, put a pillow in your pants to make a big tummy or bottom, or sew big buttons or colorful patches onto old clothes.

**For the top of your head!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headwear</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>any wig</td>
<td>headband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>top</td>
<td>mop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big bow</td>
<td>scarf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shade</td>
<td>lamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flowers</td>
<td>feathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any hat</td>
<td>ponytails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Try a character clown!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cowboy</td>
<td>pirate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police officer expert</td>
<td>firefighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>ballerina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use some make-up!**

*Remember to use water-based make-up!*

**Whiteface clown**: White covers entire face, ears, and neck. Colors go on next, usually a red nose and mouth. Add eyebrows and accents around the eyes.

**Auguste clown**: White around eyes and mouth. A red nose. Eyebrows painted higher than your own. Mouth can be red or black, but not scary.

**Character clown**: Can be as simple or complicated as you want it to be: could be just freckles, rosy cheeks, or a goofy smile.

From the *Circus Smirkus Curriculum Guide*  
[www.smirkus.org](http://www.smirkus.org)  
802-533-7443
Try not to . . . Put red around your eyes. Use too much black. Paint your top lip any color but white. Look scary. Choose a design that is too difficult to apply.

Remember to . . . Pick a design you like. Apply light colors first, then dark. Powder after applying white, and between any colors that touch each other. Wipe make-up off your hands before using powder. Clean up. Have fun!
Circus Suppliers

Aerials/Balance
• Conover Custom Built
  467 Krepps Road
  Xenia, OH 45385-9350
  513-372-7281
• Renegade
  P.O. Box 406
  Santa Cruz, CA 95061
  408-426-7343
  renegadejuggling.com

Costumes/props
• Under the Big Top
  P.O. Box 807
  Placentia, CA 92670
  714-579-1144

Hats
• The Hat/Cap Exchange
  P.O. Box 377
  Betterton, MD 21610
  410-348-2244
• Zauders Hats
  10 Henry Street
  Freeport, NY 11520
  516-379-2600

Juggling/Manipulation
• Circus Smirkus
  1 Circus Road
  Greensboro, VT 05841
  802-533-7443
  www.smirkus.org
• Magic, Inc.
  5082 N. Lincoln Avenue
  Chicago, IL 60625
  312-334-2855
• Tannen Magic
  6 West 32nd Street
  New York, NY 10001
  212-239-8383

Make-up/Wigs
• Bob Kelly Cosmetics
  151 W. 146th Street
  New York, NY 10036
  212-245-2237
• Mehron Make-up
  100 Red Schoolhouse Road
  Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977
  914-426-1700
• Steins Cosmetics
  10 Henry Street
  Freeport, NY 11520
  516-379-2600

Unicycles
• Juggle Bug
  800-JUGGLE-1
• The Unicycle Factory
  Tom Miller
  2711 N. Apperson
  Kokomo, IN 46901

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www.smirkus.org  802-533-7443