Teaching Artist Lesson

Exploring Literature and Language with Instruments

Developed by: Cynthia “Miss Cynthia” Elek
Artform(s): Drama, Music, Storytelling

Description

Using the book *Max Found Two Sticks* by Brian Pinkney, students will use non-verbal rhythm to tell a story.

Learning Objectives

Students will:
- Sequence events in the book *Max Found Two Sticks*.
- Develop fine motor skills by playing found-object instruments in book.
- Verbalize rhythmic patterns.
- Experience the sounds made by different materials.

Students’ Prior Knowledge Necessary For This Experience

- Names of body parts for warm-up, e.g., head, shoulders, hips, knees, toes, etc.
- How to form letters of the alphabet.
- Setting, characters, and sequence of events in the book *Max Found Two Sticks*.
- Use of sticks as percussion instruments; practice making an “X” with sticks.

Vocabulary

Arts Vocabulary:
- Found objects
- Beat
- Rhythm
- Dynamics (loud, quiet, crescendo)
- Pitch (high, low)
- Timbre—the quality of sound made by different materials
- Snare drum, drumsticks

Curriculum Content Vocabulary:
- Letters, alphabet
- Observation (e.g. show me the letter “X” with your sticks)
- Setting
- Character
- Top, bottom, side, upside down
- Wood, plastic, cardboard, glass, metal

Materials Needed

- *Max Found Two Sticks* by Brian Pickney (Sources: Amazon paperback edition, $7; local public library; pre-K or kindergarten classrooms in student’s school).

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- There are several readings of the book on YouTube and Vimeo you can use if you are unable to find the book: Ms. Paula's Place, Sky Campbell, and Lincoln Loves Literacy (read by Mrs. Rubbins). Each reader, and presentation, has a different take on the story.
- Rhythm sticks (2) or something comparable made from wood, such as chopsticks, pencils, or rulers.
- Bucket (1) or other round plastic container (Tupperware, Glad) that can be turned upside down so the bottom can be struck.
- Clothing box (1) made of cardboard with a lid (a hat box is used in the story; a shoe box—with shoes inside—would suffice).
- Glass jars (3) or drinking containers—anything made of glass.
- Trash can (1) or another container made of metal.
- Drawing materials

Lesson Plan

Pre-Set

Place two sticks and all the other items the student will be playing (see below) in front of him/her, just out of reach. Choose an item the student would wear, inside the box. If it's a shoebox, put shoes inside. If it's a generic cardboard box, you can choose a different item of clothing: gloves, socks, etc. Note in the script that the bottles (or glass containers) need to be filled with different levels of water, so you might want to place them on a tray.

Introduction & Warm Up

- Welcome students:
  - "Hi! My name is Miss Cynthia, and we are going to play special instruments today." Sing: "Good morning, everyone." "Now you sing to me: 'Good morning, Miss Cynthia.'"
- Practice drumming on floor with palms to prepare for drumming with sticks.

Main Experience

- Review story, *Max Found Two Sticks* (Max is bored. He catches two sticks falling from the tree. He uses them to drum his knees.)
- Guide the students through the process of using their sticks to play the same, or very similar, objects that Max plays. The following is a detailed script that walks you through the steps you might want to include. Feel free to change the wording or repeat a step if a student is having trouble with the activity. If time is an issue, or the student's attention is wandering, you can shorten the exploration of each object and go straight to the playing of the rhythms. Playing each object Max plays is the major objective!

We are going to drum like Max, using the two sticks in front of you.

Let's practice using the sticks by making the letter "X."

When I say "show me your letter 'X,'" you need to stop whatever you're doing and cross your sticks, like this.

(This is an important control device.)

When Max plays his sticks, his sticks say different things.

First Max plays his thighs. Let's practice drumming on our thighs, like this. Show me your "X!" Ready? 1-2-here we go. When Max plays his thighs, his sticks say Pat . . . pat-tat. Say those words with me: Pat . . . pat-tat. Let's play our thighs and say the words while we play. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go: Pat . . . pat-tat.

Who does Max see, and what is he doing? Max sees his grandpa washing the windows. When his grandpa is finished, Max plays his grandpa's bucket.

Take your bucket (or plastic container) and turn it upside down. Let's drum the bottom, like this. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go. Max's sticks play the sound of rain on windows: tippy-tip . . . tat-tat. The rain is quiet, so we have to whisper the words. Whisper those words with me: tippy-tip . . . tat-tat. Let's play the bucket quietly and whisper the words while we play. Ready? 1-2-here we go: tippy-tip . . . tat-tat.

Who does Max see next, and what is she doing? Max's mom comes home from the store, carrying a round cardboard box. I'll show you Max's mom's box and what's inside. Ready? 1-2-3-surprise! Max's mom bought a hat, and she brought it home inside this round cardboard box.

You have a box, too, but it's probably a different shape with something to wear inside. Are you ready to see what's inside your box? Let's count 1-2-3-surprise!

Let's whisper, then get louder and louder—that's a crescendo. Then open up your box. Ready? 1-2-3-SURPRISE. Tell me what's inside.

Now put the lid back on the box, and let's drum the lid, like this. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go. When Max plays his hatbox, his sticks say: Dum . . . dum-de-dum. Say those words with me: Dum . . . dum-de-dum. Let's play our cardboard boxes and say the words while we play. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go: Dum . . . dum-de-dum.

Now who does Max see, and what are they doing? Max sees his friends drinking soda. When his friends finish, Max plays the soda bottles. The bottles are made of glass, so he has to be very careful not to break them. We're going to play soda bottles, too, but there's something different about our bottles: they have water inside! Play the bottles on the sides, like this. Let's play our glasses the same way. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go. When Max plays his bottles, they sound like bells. They say: ding . . . dang . . . dong. Say those words with me: ding . . . dang . . . dong. Let's play our glasses and say the words while we play. Ready? 1-2-here we go: ding . . . dang . . . dong. Do all the glasses sound the same? Why or why not?

Who does Max see, and what is he doing? Max's father is putting out the trash. After his dad goes to work, Max plays the trash can. The trash can is made of metal, and Max plays the sides, like this. Now you play your trash can. Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go. When Max plays his trash cans, they say cling . . . clang . . . da-BANG. Say those words with me: cling . . . clang . . . da-BANG. Let's play our trash can and say the words while we play. Ready? 1-2-here we go: cling, clang, da-BANG.

What does Max see next? While Max is playing his trash can, a marching band passes by. A drummer is playing a snare drum with drumsticks. This is my snare drum, and this is what it sounds like: THUMP-DIDI-THUMP. Say those words with me, using your loud voice: THUMP-DIDI-THUMP.

You don't have a snare drum, but you can play your trash can and say the words while we play. Ready? 1-2-here we go: THUMP-DIDI-THUMP.

Wrap Up

- Congratulate students:
  - *You did a great job! When someone does a great job, we say "Bravo" and give them a round of applause with our hands. Let's clap our sticks together and say "Bravo." Show me your "X." Ready? 1-2-here we go!*
  - *That's all we have time to play today. Make an "X" with your sticks and put them on the floor in front of you.*
  - *Now wave to me and sing goodbye! And I'll wave to you and sing goodbye.*

Intentional Questions

Open-Ended
- How does Max feel at the beginning of the story?
- How does Max decide what he wants to do?
- How does Max feel at the end of the story?

Problem Solving
- How does Max figure out how to play each object he chooses?

Factual Questions
- Who are the characters?
- What is each character doing?
- What objects does Max play?
- Where did Max find these objects?