

When Dinosaurs Dance by Moonlight Lesson Ideas
Compiled by Mary Langille for Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

PREMISES, PREMISES! (from Sheree Fitch)

Yes! The word is premise not promise but a good premise promises to get your imagination bumper started! By premise I mean the idea that the story or play is built upon. A good way to come up with a premise is to begin with the magic words

...what if.... ?

For example, here is the premise for this play:

What if a boy woke up in the middle of the night and discovered a dinosaur parade passing by his bedroom window?

Answering the question is how I "found" the story.

For you to do:

a. Make a list of ten what if questions. Let your imagination go!

Example:

What IF?

what if it rained sunflowers?

what if I spent a night on the moon?

what if the earth turned to gingerbread?

what if I was a leaf being blown by the wind

what if I met an angel?

b. Read the list. As it is, it could be your what if poem!

c. Start to answer one of your what ifs. It could be a story idea.

Characters in your neighbourhood (from Sheree Fitch)

Most of the characteristics of the dinosaurs in this poem are taken from the people or characters in my own neighbourhood. Example: a marathon runner, a musician, a real estate agent! Take a look around your neighbourhood. Start taking notes on what you observe.

For you to do:

Write your own dinosaur poem based on people you know. Your teacher, for example, or your mother or father. Include what they wear, the colour of their hair, a hobby they might enjoy. Share the poems.

Write Away Your Fears! (from Sheree Fitch)

The boy in this story is afraid of dinosaurs at first. When he sees a dinosaur in trouble he overcomes his own fear and tries to help. Sometimes, writing about what we are afraid of helps us not be so afraid.

For you to do:

Make a list of things you fear. Example, spiders, snakes, speaking in public, war. Begin a story with someone who has the same fear and has to conquer it. See what happens.

A Dino Dialogue (from Sheree Fitch)

A monologue is when someone talks out loud to themselves in a play. A dialogue takes two. You have dialogues every time you talk with someone. Writing dialogue, however, is not as easy as it seems!

For you to do:

Imagine you are both the boy in this play and one of the dinosaurs. You are on a bus traveling to Halifax. During the trip, you talk and get to know each other. What do you find out about each other? Write it as a dialogue.

Group Story (from Sheree Fitch)

Two or more brains are better than one!

For you to do:

Write a class story together. Here is a possible start for your story:
Rex was lonely. He was as lonely as the very last dinosaur on earth.
That's because he was. In the morning, when he woke up...

Word play (from Sheree Fitch)

Poetry does not always have to rhyme but it is a playing with sound of words. Here is my favourite word play exercise.

For you to do:

- a. Pick a letter from A-Z in your head.
 - b. Have someone keep time for one minute.
 - c. When the time keeper says go, start writing as fast as you can, all the words you can think of that start with that letter.
 - d. When the minute is over, read your list. It's a tongue twister!
 - e. Using your words and maybe adding to them, write a tongue twister nonsense sentence or paragraph.
-

Word Search (from Sheree Fitch)

The boy who suggested that the proper names of dinosaurs were small poems was right! If we look at the proper names for animals, or plants or rocks, you find some amazing ones as well.

For You to Do:

Look in science books and encyclopedias for the proper names of animals, plants or rocks. For example, look up marsupial. There's a delicious word!! Look up the proper name for the koho salmon. Look up the other name for certain herbs you find in the garden, or weeds, or trees. Write a story with a character that uses these proper names. See what happens.

WORD WALL (from Sheree Fitch)

Discovering new words and experimenting with them rolling off my tongue is something I do all the time as a writer. You could say I am a word collector. It's great fun for anyone.

For you to do:

Make a word wall in your classroom. Every time some one finds an exciting word, print it in large letters, say it together, learn its meaning and put it on the word wall. Test them!! There might be some words even your parents do not know! Invent a fun name for your word wall.

Dinosaur Acrostic (from Sheree Fitch)

An acrostic is an unrhymed poem that uses the letters of a word to describe what that word is.

D--angerous

I --guanadon

N--ow extinct

O--nly found in museums

S--tories in their fossilized bones

A--rchaeologists search for them, paleontologists study them

U--nder tons of earth

R--eally cool

S--uper cool dinosaurs.

For you to do:

Write your own acrostic using dinosaur or a word related to dinosaurs like prehistoric or paleontology or Argentinasaurus.

Playing with Hard Words (from Sheree Fitch)

Many of the names of dinosaurs are very difficult for both adults and children to say. Have students play with the hard words, and think of others that they might know (spaghetti, aluminum, chimney, hospital, helicopter, etc.) and use these words in a story or poem of their choice.

Make your own Dino (from Sheree Fitch)

You have a personal invitation from the author of *When Dinosaurs Dance by Moonlight* to invent your own dinosaur! Don't forget that it needs a special name that only you can create! Then you can write a poem of your choice to describe its features. Don't forget a picture!

Poems, Songs and Stories (from Mary Langille)

Now that students have had a taste of just what can be done from a little What If... question, and they have seen an example of what a poem, or story can become,

here are a few ideas for writing activities. I suggest leaving some choice for students as to what they might like to do.

- Make your own poem or song about a dinosaur (or a group of dinos)
 - Make your own story, poem, song or play about your favourite species
 - Make your own story, poem, song or play about your favourite animal (i.e.: dogs, you can list the different kinds, what they look like, how they act, maybe what jobs they play in society - like seeing-eye dogs for example, just as Sheree did with dinosaurs)
 - Make your own story, poem, song or play about your favourite living thing (trees, flowers, fish, etc.)
 - Make your own story, poem, song or play about your favourite non-living thing (rocks, sand, buildings, signs, etc.)
-

Full of Picture Ideas (from Mary Langille)

See if you can draw a picture of the dinosaur from the descriptions given in the play

Mix and Match, Memory game (from Mary Langille)

Create mix and match cards (Picture of the dinosaur, description and name), have students play memory games with the dinosaur cards.

Ladder through time with Dinosaurs (from Mary Langille)

Create a board game taking you on a trip back into the time of the dinosaurs. Have students think about things that would be different between our time and the time of the dinosaurs, use these ideas in their board game. Think of big changes that happened (creation of electricity) and events in history.

Who Am I? (from Mary Langille)

Create a dinosaur profile (interesting facts and details about the dinosaur)
Use these profiles to play a who-am-I game.

Puppets! (from Mary Langille)

After seeing just what kind of cool creations can be made from the characters in the story *When Dinosaurs Dance by Moonlight* maybe the students have ideas of their own. You could have students make up their own dinosaur puppets (a whole new animal or maybe a combination of dinosaurs that they know, a 3-horned long neck for example) or create a model from their Who am I profile of their dinosaur.

Some puppet ideas:

- Paper bag puppet
- Sock puppet
- Papier Mache model
- Clay/plasticine model or scene

Use whatever you can find to make the characteristics of the dinosaurs. You can have students each bring in something to use and share within the class.

Possible materials for decoration: coloured and blank paper, paint, buttons, cotton balls, sequins, pasta pieces, cut up pieces of paper towel rolls, etc. Glue guns and thread could be helpful to affix decorations to the models.

Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Where do you live?

Create a model of your dinosaur's environment.

Some Writing/Journal Activities (from Mary Langille)

- What would it be like if dinosaurs lived today?
- What would it be like to live in the time of the dinosaurs (what would we be missing, what might we have access to then, that we don't have now? How would your life change?)
- What role might dinosaurs play in our society if they lived now?

Food Chain Ideas (from Mary Langille)

- Consider that dinosaurs ate different things - lead into the unit of meat eaters and plant eaters (carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores, etc.)
- Link to the food chain (make a food chain from the time of the dinosaurs)

Literature Links (from Mary Langille)

Compare to *Sleeping Dragons All Around*. Consider the style, tone, etc.

Poetry Pictures (from Mary Langille)

Write a poem in a shape of your favourite dinosaur

Musical Melodies (from Steven Naylor)

If you listen carefully, you'll notice several different styles or moods of music, depending on which character the music supports.

Try to pick out some of the styles we use - and see if you can hear how the music 'goes with' a particular character or with what's going on in a scene. Listen for the rhythms, especially when the dinosaurs are dancing! Or try to identify the instruments making the sounds, listening for ones you know already, and for ones you have never heard before.

And finally, try to notice which sounds are high, which ones are low - and which ones are so low that you feel them more than you hear them!