

# On Your Marks!! Encouraging mark making- developing writing



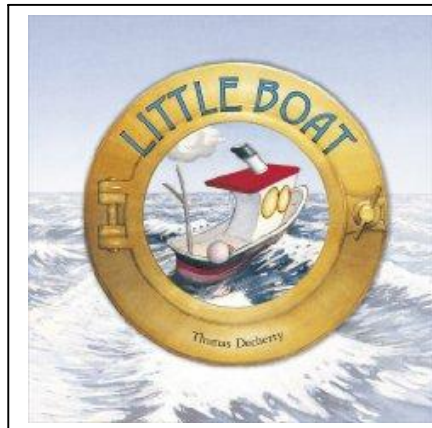
## 'Write Dance' 2: children moving and making wave marks

**Write Dance** is a well-established scheme, originally developed in Holland, to develop children's awareness of writing patterns through movement and dance.

Put simply. *Write Dance* is a series of ideas to help children learn the patterns of writing through stories, music, singing, rhyming, dance and movement. Each writing pattern has suggested stories, rhymes, songs and movements, and ideas for how children can transfer these movements into writing. As in 'Brain Gym' many of the activities encourage children to use both hands at the same time, and to move limbs across the 'midline' of the body. Many practitioners and teachers in the UK testify to the major influence *Write Dance* has had on children's awareness of handwriting and handwriting skills.

However many practitioners have found it necessary to adapt the programme, and particularly the music, stories and songs, to make them more relevant to UK children.

Here is an example of a session that we created for four-year olds in Luton.



### **Theme: 'Waves'**

**Vocabulary:** Sea, waves, surf, under the waves/above the waves, various sea creatures, boats, submarine.

**Music:** 'Trumpet hompipe' (Theme from 'Captain Pugwash'); 'Albatross' by Fleetwood Mac; 'Yellow Submarine' by The Beatles

**Books:** 'The Little Boat' by Thomas Docherty; 'Commotion in the Ocean' by Giles Andreae and David Wojtowycz; information books about the sea, boats and sea creatures.

**Materials:** For the movement activity: A parachute, large sheets of paper and stubby crayons, cloth streamers.

### **Activities to put the 'Write Dance' activity in context:**

In a large water tray, show children how to make waves. Add boats and see if the children can make small waves that move the boats without them capsizing and sinking (nice words!). Add a submarine, and various wind up toys such as divers and swimmers (I found these in the 'bath time' section of my local toyshop. Add sea creatures and support the children in play and fantasy.

Share the stories and poems, and talk about pictures from the information books.

### The 'Write Dance' activity

*In class*, read 'The Little Boat', show pictures of waves, and remind the children about the waves they have made in the water tray. Talk about being in a boat, and how it bobs up and down on the waves. Describe waves that are gentle and those that are fierce. Play the music of your choice, and show the children how to make wave patterns with both hands. (Both arms outstretched. Making small wave movements, both hands move towards each other in front of you (but not touching), and crossing your midline they move as far as they can, almost to a hugging position, before moving back again to an outstretched position.) Repeat this movement until the music finishes.

*In the hall*, play parachute games. A simple wave activity is to ask the children to sit down with their legs outstretched under the parachute. Tell a story about sitting in a boat on calm seas. Gradually the wind started to pick up and the waves got stronger and stronger, and then suddenly stopped! As you say this, the children will spontaneously make waves with the parachute. Drop a few soft toys onto the parachute and they will bounce up and down!

If you have streamers, ask the children to make wave patterns: first standing still, and then moving round the room.

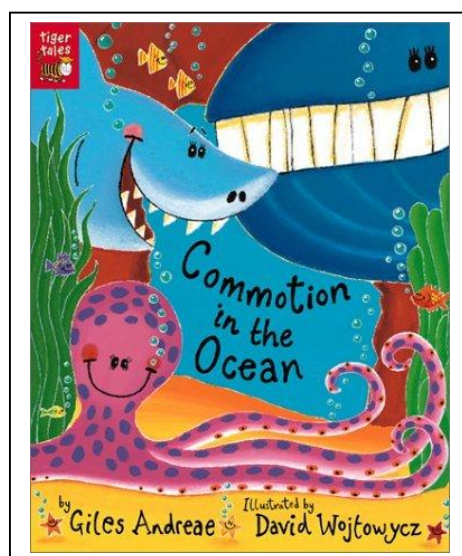
Play the music, and children move around the room, making wave movements.

Give each child a large sheet of paper and two crayons. As you play the music, show the children how to make wave patterns with both hands, moving in opposite directions. (If they kneel on the edges of their sheets of paper, this stops the paper from slipping away.)

### Extension activity

Make a display of the sea, with waves as the backdrop. Using pieces of candle, show the children how to make wave patterns on the large sheets of white paper (they could even do this in another Write Dance activity, but replacing the crayons with candles.)

Using a watercolour wash, help the children to paint all over their paper. The wax waves will stand out, making a nice 'wax resist' effect. This could be the backdrop for a seascape: with creatures, shipwrecks, rocks, submarines etc under the sea, and boats, swimmers seabirds etc on the waves and in the air.



*Write Dance: a pre-writing programme for children 3 to 5*

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