



Near and Far, High and Tiny

Looking and listening in our Bay

EYFS Expressive Arts and Design

Becs Ensoll, Ruth Squires and Dr Nathan Jones

South Walney Infant and Nursery School

Specialist knowledge for teachers

This place-based sequence of learning uses the concept of looking at the beach closely to support children in making a connection with their locality. It provides opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the environment of the beach. It offers children the chance to notice features of the natural world through the concept of near and far. It helps children to define colour, shape, texture in their own words. Throughout this resource, teachers will be provided with examples of artists who are exploring concepts such as animalia, developing soundscapes and macro images, to use within their settings or to expand their own knowledge. The series of ideas explored in this sequence include:

Seeing in more-than-human ways and becoming animal

Enabling humans to think in “more-than-human” ways is an exciting possibility of art today, and links art to place. The social scientist turned curator **Bruno Latour** thinks of the gallery as a “planetary observatory”. He says that art helps “imagine that you are connected to everything you hear, feel or smell right now.” Some of that work can be found on the MBC Moodle and includes:

- **Using sound** recording, video and mixing to listen to a whole forest across seasons
- **Using colour and light** to portray how a forest senses changes in the air
- **Drawing and tracing** natural patterns at large and small scales
- **Using immersive installation** to experience seeing life “from within” the world
- Latour also provides creative provocations for observing: “Next time you see an insect, take a moment to observe it. Follow it wherever it goes and keep a record of your discoveries”

Other art practices think about ways of “**becoming animal**”. Artists employ creative and playful techniques such as mimicry of sound and movement, making costumes and performing. These activities are often close to **folk traditions**, and myths about humans crossing over into animal form. Artists who do this include **Hannah Tuulikki** behaving like birds and seals, and Marcus Coates using video to portray people **singing and jerking like birds**, or taking part in **ritualistic animal imitation**, eg. **Marshmallow Laser Feast** uses VR to be In **The Eyes of an Owl**. We also see human-animal cross overs in cartoons, such as Ponyo.

The nature of the landscape and the native species

Observe patterns of animal behaviour, and the human constructed and naturally formed landscape, see the environment is structured and creative! In the case of Walney: the **grey seal** songs, den-making, the fancy dress of birds like the **little egret** and the **shelduck**, the dance of **shore crabs**, the way that **hermit crabs** fashion new shells and the way that **sea snails** doodle on the sand. The channels in **the estuary** follow a pattern that seems random, but actually shares the same branching structure whether we trace large channels or tiny rivules on the beach. Microscopic detail of sand shows it is made of bits of shell and jewel-like stones, but also brick and glass.

A Seasonal Place Based Approach to Gathering

Teachers will want to know which animals and natural patterns to emphasise **depending on the seasons**. And how to celebrate these moments with parents through simple folk rituals with food, fire, and song, at the summer and winter solstice for example, aligned to the Celtic “**wheel of the seasons**”.



Using Media to See and Be Inside Nature

The increasing affordability/availability of technologies for seeing “near and far”, “fast and slow”, “big and small” are usable in the environment.

- The macro-lens that can be attached to iPad cameras, allowing us to take photos and videos on the beach in microscopic detail
- Satellite or drone imagery allowing us to see the earth from a birds-eye-view

Taking pictures and video can help us to be in the environment with different scales of awareness, and can help us in class to have a “virtual nature connection” with our place.

- Video software enables us to speed up and slow down imagery of natural phenomena, to appreciate the different timescales on which they operate
- We can animate our own movements as ‘stop-frame’, or change their speed
- Sound and light projections allow us to merge virtual and real space in class
- Digital printing allows us to combine photos and tracings into new maps



Examples in practice

Prior learning

Children to talk about their previous experiences of and understanding linked to the beach and what they have seen, felt and heard when they have previously visited.

Key vocabulary

Beach, shore, sand, pebble, stone, rock, sea, lichen, seaweed, shell, near, far, close up, microscopic, macro-lens.

Resources

Phone/Tablet with camera facility and a macro lens which can easily be clipped on/off. These are purchasable for a reasonable price from a variety of retailers or online.

Locality-based experience

- After talking to children about their own knowledge of and experiences of the beach, a visit to the beach together should be carried out. Children should have the opportunity to look closely and in detail at what they see. Children should be encouraged to look at things they can see close to them and things that are far away. Children should then be asked to look for a pebble close up and then far away. This could be done vertically and then children should lie down upon the beach and do this horizontally. Pupils should be encouraged to look carefully and feel close to the environment they are in. Children should look and listen and then take the opportunities to talk about what they have seen
- Children should then be given the opportunity to work in small groups using a macro lens to look very closely. Children could be asked to imagine that this is what the beach would look like if they were a small beach creature such as a crab
- Children should be encouraged to describe what they see- looking closely at colour, texture and shape and exploring the vocabulary they know linked to this in their descriptions
- After time to explore the technology and familiarise themselves with the lens through guided adult support, children should look closely for things of interest and take photographs and video recordings of what they find
- These can be taken back to the classroom and used to develop the learning experience

Curriculum aims and objectives

Our sequence of learning centres around young children exploring and experiencing the Bay using their senses. Children will be supported to look and listen in a focused way to really see and hear the special and unique characteristics of the environment around them. Children will then be supported to capture their findings through creative media and with digital technology being used in a positive and purposeful way.

This learning is intended for children aged 3-5 years in Early Years settings and schools around the Morecambe Bay area. The focus of the work is Expressive Arts, aiming to develop children's artistic representation and creativity from making meaningful connections with the natural environment around them. It encompasses opportunities across the EYFS curriculum with other key areas covered, including developing vocabulary, knowledge of the world and opportunities set up within the provision, to explore the concepts. It actively promotes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning in the Early Years, Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking critically.

Head

To promote engagement with a more diverse set of artists through primary school, taking learning beyond representative art, traditional art forms, and the white male canon. Allow children to discuss and respond to diverse art so that it can inspire their thinking and creativity.

Heart

To help children make personal connections with their locality and to love the place they are in. To help parents experience connections with the ecologies of the place they live through and with their children.

Hands

To provide opportunities for children to work creatively and collaboratively and engage children in kinds of expressive art practice that promote awareness and kinship with their environment.



'Atmospheric Forest' by Rasa Smite, 2020

Adaptations to extend impact

In the locality

To widen their experiences of beach landscape children should be taken to different beaches where the rocks and sand particles will have different colour and textures for them to explore.



In the classroom

- Children's images will be printed and used to create a display of their artwork to share with their parents/ carers. Children can provide an explanation of the processes and art for their grown ups
- Children can be encouraged to discuss how their images look and talk about their likes/dislikes and which perspective they prefer to use to look at things – near or far
- Children can revisit the vocabulary explored on the beach and now linked to their artwork and create poetry/spoken word in response to their discoveries
- Children's images can be printed and spread out upon the ground to create a play landscape for small beach creatures which the children could make using clay/ dough/junk and use to generate storylines and possibly linked stop animations



Extension Ideas

The beach landscape can be explored from a different view perspective with the concept of drone footage being explored and a bird's eye view of near and far, if resources allow.

Further Links and Sustainability goals

- Children's learning can be enhanced in their provision with links to the beach environments and creatures being made. Small world set ups of a beach using sand, pebbles and small purchased creatures could be recreated
- Children can use magnifying glasses and beach objects such as shells or stones to continue their focus on careful observation. They could be provided with art medium paint/pastel/pencil to record their observations in a different way and without technology
- In addition, a range of beach themed stories could be enjoyed including stories where beach environments are being damaged by human impact and how we can help to preserve the beauty such as Clean Up by Nathan Bryon



This work aligns with SDGs:

