



GINA BALE

Gina Bale is the owner of “Littlemagictrain.” She has qualifications of teaching movement and dance from the Royal Ballet School, Trinity College and Royal Academy of dance and has spent 27 years in the mainstream.

**Did you know
Movement
and Music can
be a Gateway
to the World?**

Movement and music bring us joy, but if you add some extra ingredients and a little bit of magic, it can become a gateway to the world!

I am passionate about the use of movement and music to create a fun multi-sensory experience that extends the learning process using play.

For example, when we go on our “Amazon Adventure”, we get out our binoculars to see what we can find as we push our way through the Amazon. Why not become monkeys, snakes, jaguars, and parrots – think of all the opportunities to develop their physical literacy and communication skills!

From such a simple idea you can find so many ways to extend the children’s knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

Creative sessions that use movement allow you to

approach things from a different way and capture their imagination. Remember a moving child is a learning child!

I thought it could be nice to give you some examples on how you can extend your little ones learning, on an “Amazon adventure” in a creative and fun way.

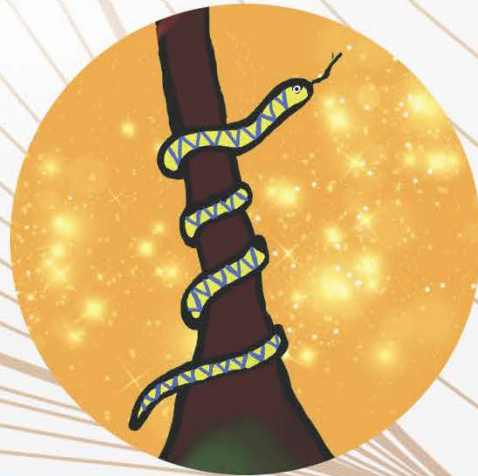


Hold on tight this is going to be fast!

What will we pack?

Talking about clothes enables you to discuss the environment and weather. But most importantly, for me, you need clothes that spiders and snakes can't crawl up or in!

Don't forget a pair of binoculars to spot and avoid the creepy crawlies and any sleeping or scary animals in the Amazon!



No 1: Build the excitement

Where is the Amazon?

Create a map with the journey from your setting to the Amazon rainforest in South America. Discuss the different countries that the Amazon spans across: Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. The older children can find these countries on a globe or search for the countries in an atlas.

Put the landmarks around the room so the children feel the excitement of travelling so far away from home.

How will we get there?

Of course, I use my Little magic train, as he is my magical bridge between the real and the imaginary world. This is a great opportunity to discuss different types of transport you can use, and which would be the fastest and most environmentally friendly.

Emotions

How will they feel being so far away from home? Are they excited or a little bit scared?

**You can see that there are so many learning opportunities before you even start your adventure.*

No 2: Set the scene

When you arrive at the edge of the Amazon Rainforest, get out your binoculars (imaginary or made from loo rolls) and look for lots of different creepy crawlies and beasts to keep safe!

**This is the perfect opportunity to talk about the different animals that live and can only survive in the Rainforest.*

Using Movement and Music as you enter the Amazon

Put on the music and “look out!” as you step over, under and around the trees, branches and rocks in the rainforest. So many opportunities to use positional language as you make your way to safety.

A little bit of extra sensory fun and learning

1. Create an obstacle course. Rescue some old tights, stuff them, and hang them from the ceiling so the children physically push their way inside the Amazon as they travel over the obstacle course. Don't forget to keep searching for animals and creepy crawlies as you move further and further into the Amazon.
2. Fill a spray bottle with warm water and spray the children as they enter so they can feel the humidity and warmth of the Amazon.
3. Create a “Scavenger Hunt” sheet to tick the animals they see as they enter the Amazon.

When you go further into the adventure and become the monkey. Move to the music jumping

from tree to tree. Play a game of hide and seek.

This is an ideal springboard to learning about the different monkeys that live in the Amazon. What they look like, where they live (which countries of the Amazon), sleep, and what they eat.

Why not compare the food we eat to the monkey's diet. Did you know some monkeys are vegetarian, and some are carnivorous just like us? This is a great opportunity to feed in new words such as “carnivorous”, “vegetarian”, “vegan” and my personal favourite “folivorous”.

Folivorous is a diet that mainly comprises leaves, soft fruits, flowers, and buds and is the diet of the Howler monkey. The Howler monkey is doing his bit for the environment and a more pleasant diet compared to that of the Tufted Capuchin monkey who eats eggs, insects, small mammals, birds, squirrels, small reptiles, nuts, nectar and they are a confirmed predator of the Titi monkey. Not very nice!

There is so much to discover when you add a little bit of imagination combined with movement and music. They are having fun while developing their cognitive skills. Most importantly the world becomes a magical and engaging place, so they are ready to learn.



No 3: A little bit extra

Here are just a few of the ideas, focusing on knowledge and understanding of the world, shared with me by some wonderful early year's practitioners. This very short list will give you an idea of how much children can discover when they are taken on a multi-sensory adventure with a little bit of magic!

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Talk about hibernation
- The environment in the Amazon
- Issues of extinction and rainforest
- Life cycles (butterfly kit)
- Weather in the Amazon home
- Trees in the Amazon and the levels of the canopy
- Species of trees here and in the Amazon
- Grow plants/veg with the children and compare them to the plants/food in the Amazon
- What do animals make to live in - webs/nests/burrows etc
- What do the animals eat?
- What sounds do the animals make?
- Where do the animals live?
- Introduce them to the Harpy Eagle
- Recognizing different animals and speeds
- Walking through the jungle – DANGER
- Hot/cold air – our environment compared to Amazon
- Compare the rainforest to our woodlands
- Importance of the Rain Forest and why we need to protect it.
- Recycling – why do we do it?
- Look at our own pets: Guinea pigs and their relatives the Capybara