Flyin' Bob

Teacher's Study Guide

About the Performance

Flyin' Bob's show involves the balancing or juggling of many different objects. From a simple catch of a handful of coins to adventure on the highwire, the intentions are to surprise, and to demonstrate the value of exploration and taking chances.
The Flyin' Bob character is always pushing himself to the limits of his ability, sometimes succeeding, sometimes just barely getting by, sometimes failing completely, he expresses a range of emotions that reveal his character and his feelings about what he is doing. Many times he talks to the audience directly about his feelings. They become aware that, even though he is doing something amazing, he still feels variously confident, mischievous, insecure, scared — very much like themselves. In this way they feel more relaxed about being involved, and can also imagine themselves doing the same skills. The presentation of the show opens up possibilities for the students. Highlights of the show are always the unexpected interactions with the audience, where no one, including the performer, is quite sure what's going to happen.

Themes:

- *Acrobatics*
- *Balance*
- *Comedy*
- *Concentration*
- *Confidence*
- *High wire*
- *Juggling*
- *Movement*
- *Phys Ed*
- *Safety*

Pre-Show Activity — Quick performances

Everybody has an entertaining skill or a little trick they can do that can be turned into a performance. (e.g. talk like a duck, rolling the tongue, standing on one leg, doing a cartwheel, etc.) Each student thinks of a little trick like the ones mentioned above. Form a circle, take turns presenting each skills. Talk as a group about how each person's skill can be turned into a quick performance. Possibly two people's tricks can be combined to create a team performance.

Pre-Show Activity—Balancing Objects

Some circus skills are actually easier than they look. A good example is balancing. Many times you see a performer balance something on his hand or chin. (Flyin' Bob balances a big stack of chairs on his chin.)

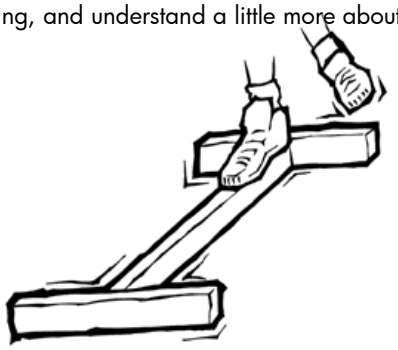
Have the students try two different objects, one long and one short. For example: a pencil and a metre stick, or, a spoon and a broom. First put the small object in the flat of the hand and look only at the top of the object, the point farthest away from your hand. Slowly let go with your other hand, and while continuing to look at the top of the object. If it starts to fall one way, move the hand in the same direction. Try it a few times. What happened? Was it easy or hard? Now try the long object. Do every thing the same. What happened this time? Was it easier or harder than the short object?

After practicing balancing objects on the hand, have the students try other parts of the body. The knee and foot are a little more difficult to balance on. The chin, nose, and forehead are much easier to use than one would think.

As a general rule, long things are easier to balance than short things. Great things to balance are: a flower with a long stem, apeacock feather, pool cue (heavy end on top).

K-7 POST-SHOW ACTIVITY — "TIGHTROPE" WALKING

In this activity, you'll construct a tightrope setup, learn the basics of tightrope walking, and understand a little more about the physics behind balancing.



Materials

- one 8'-long two-by-four board
- two 4'-long two-by-four boards
- sandpaper
- hammer
- 3" nails

Place the two-by-fours on their thinner edges, forming an H (see illustration). Center and nail the shorter boards onto the ends of the longest two-by-four. Sand down the entire surface, making sure there are no rough edges or slivers.

Place the "tightrope" a soft, grassy area or on the gym floor surrounded by tumbling mats. If you put it on cushioned mats, make sure there is enough padded area to protect the entire body in case of a fall.

First, have students try walking from end to end very slowly. Ask them to notice where they instinctively hold their hands and arms. Have them try holding their arms still; first straight out from the body, then overhead, then stiff by their sides. How do these different positions affect their balance? Why?

Variation 1

- Two half-gallon plastic jugs filled with water (or other objects 1-2 kg with handles)

Try these same positions holding a filled plastic jug in each hand. Does the added weight make balancing easier or harder? Why?

Variation 2

- 3' long pole
- 6' long pole
- Broom

Have students walk the tightrope with the longer pole. Have them move their hands together until they touch in the middle of the pole and walk the tightrope holding the pole horizontally. Next, have them spread their hands as far apart as possible on the pole and walk the tightrope again. Does their hand position affect their ability to balance? How? Why? Try the two hand positions again with a broom. Is there any difference? Why?

Using the hand position they found to be the best for balancing, have them walk the tightrope first with the short pole, then with your long pole, then with the broom. Which length helps them balance better? Why?

Variation 3

Tie the filled plastic milk jugs to the ends of your long pole and walk the tightrope again. Do the weights affect their balancing ability? How? Why?