

September 2017

CRAZE OF THE MONTH

STRICTLY COME DANCING

Once again, the award-winning Strictly Come Dancing will dominate Saturday night television screens as it launches into the show's 15th series this September. Since 2004 the show has inspired viewers by pairing celebrity amateur contestants with professional partners and asking them to compete in a Latin and ballroom dance competition.

Each couple learns and performs a different style of dance each week. They are then scored by a panel of judges and voted for by the British public. After ten weeks of intense competition, dance offs and a visit to the renowned Tower Ballroom in Blackpool, one of the couples is crowned the winner and receives the Strictly Come Dancing glitter ball trophy.

How can Strictly Come Dancing be used for teaching literacy?

We know that tapping into children's interests is a great way of engaging them in learning. Our research shows that children who enjoy writing very much are seven times more likely to write above the level expected for their age compared with children who don't enjoy writing at all¹.

Our Craze of the Month aligns to children and young people's personal interests in order to improve their literacy outcomes. The activities featured here relate to the English Programmes of Study from the National Curriculum in England².

Spoken language

Pupils should be taught to:

- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.

Writing – composition

Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:

- writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)
- writing about real events
- writing for different purposes



Using Strictly Come Dancing in the classroom

Strictly Come Dancing offers great opportunities for cross-curricular learning, with particularly strong links to P.E. Here, we'll focus on how it could be used to promote literacy in the classroom. Each activity provides opportunities for Key Stages 1 and 2 and can also be extended to Key Stage 3.

Meet the class of 2017

Each year the professional dancers are teamed up with a celebrity amateur contestant. Ask pupils to select a celebrity contestant to write about from the [celebrity profile page](#) on the BBC Strictly Come Dancing webpage. Once they have chosen their celebrity, they should use a range of sources to find out more about their background and what makes them a celebrity. They can then choose to present this information in a number of ways – such as a wanted poster or a feature article for their local newspaper. They could also include information about their hopes and fears for the competition by watching the [in their own words](#) clips.

Alternatively, they could create a set of top trump cards and play the celebrities and [professional dancers](#) against one another.

First step predictions

Ask pupils to watch the celebrities' [first impressions](#) and [first steps](#) clips to learn more about how they felt taking their first steps on the dancefloor. Pupils should work out how the contestants are feeling based on their reactions and make a prediction based on this conclusion. They should be able to justify their reasons about who they think will dance their way to the final and who will be the first one to walk off the dancefloor.

Head judge in the hot seat

This year [Shirley Ballas](#) will replace Len Goodman as the Head Judge and will have the casting vote in the dance-off. Ask pupils to read her profile on the website and think of questions they would like to ask the new judge. In pairs, pupils should then take it in turns to sit in the hotseat and role play her response to the questions.

In addition, ask pupils to set up a judging panel and judge the contestants [first dance together](#). You could also ask them to judge their own dances they have made up on the playground or in P.E. Not only should they score the dancers out of ten, but they should write a new set of phrases for the judges to say throughout the competition. After all – there will be no 'ten from Len' again this year!

Stepping onto the dancefloor

The dances that are learnt on Strictly Come Dancing vary from the waltz to the rumba. You can find out more about the different styles [here](#). Encourage pupils to write a descriptive passage about one style of dance and ask their partner to guess which one they are describing.

Alternatively, they could write a diary extract from the point of view of one of the professional dancers as they are about to step onto the dancefloor and perform their favourite style of dance in front of the nation for the first time. They should express how the dancer would be feeling, not only performing their favourite routine with an amateur dancer, but also in front of a live studio audience and at home. For younger pupils, you could share the story *Giraffe's Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae and ask them to retell the story from Gerard's point of view.

Dance poetry

Play a number of the songs from last year's [Strictly Come Dancing playlist](#) and ask pupils to write, draw or move to express how it makes them feel. Ask them to generate words and phrases about how they want to move to the music. You can use the [movement word bingo](#) to inspire ideas.

They could then select one style of dance to illustrate by writing a poem – a shape or sound poem would work particularly well for this. Encourage them to use alliterative phrases, e.g. swinging slowly, to express the movements in more detail. Additionally ask them to select their favourite dance each week and write a poem about it for homework. By the end of the series they will have an anthology of ten poems showcasing the different styles of dance.

Further reading

Pupils who are interested in different styles of dance might like to try some of these titles, which can be used to promote reading for enjoyment:

- *Mad about dance* by Judith Heneghan
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae
- *Saturday Night at the Dinosaur Stomp* by Carol Diggory Shields
- *Drumbeat in our Feet* by Patricia Keeler
- *Tanya and Emily in a Dance for Two* by Patricia Lee Gauch and Satomi Ichikawa
- *How can you dance?* By Rick Walton and Ana Lopez-Escriva
- *Dance* by Bill Jones and Susan Kuklin

The [National Literacy Trust](#) membership supports schools to develop outstanding literacy provision by providing schools with tools, resources and inspiration. [Join now](#)

- 1 Clark, C. (2017). [Writing for Enjoyment and its Links to Wider Writing](#). Findings from the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey. London: National Literacy Trust
 - 2 DfE (2013). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document.
-



Movement word bingo

1. Select nine movement words from the list below and write one in each square of your bingo card
2. If one of your words is called out, cover or cross-out the word
3. Call **STRICTLY** if you cover a row across or down. Call **DANCE-OFF** if you cover your whole board.

For bonus points: As you call out your words, put them into a sentence.

Extra sparkle: Add an adverb to your sentences to make them even better *e.g. Bruce twirled graciously across the dancefloor.*

BINGO		

tiptoe	leap	swing	gallop	pounce
twirl	lunge	stomp	glide	spiral
whirl	shimmy	twist	slide	roll
float	sway	spring	wiggle	tap