

Pretend and Play!

Easy drama activities you can do at home with young children

By Joanna Parkes

Joanna Parkes is The Ark's John Coolahan Early Years Artist in Residence 2019/2020. She has created this activity sheet to help you enjoy easy drama fun at home with little ones.

Happy Habitats

During Joanna's Seedlings Early Years workshops in February 2020 as part of her residency, the children and adults who participated became explorers. We imagined going to three different parts of the world to create a perfect home and habitat for a polar bear, an orangutan and a koala. Would you like to have a similar adventure at home?

Stage 1: Research

- Does your child have a soft animal toy they particularly like? Have they ever thought about where that animal actually lives? Maybe you could create an ideal home or habitat for that animal in your home.
- Do some online research with your child – show them pictures of where the animals naturally live. You might find out: what kind of home, shelter or den do they live in? What kind of food do they eat? How long do their young stay with their mother?

Example: Polar bears live on frozen ice caps at the top of the world. They are good swimmers. They eat fish and seals. They make their den in the ice and their young cubs stay in the den when they are young. They stay with their mothers until they are 2 years old.



Stage 2: Creating the habitat



- Collect materials you can find to make the habitat for your chosen animal e.g. for the polar bears you might collect white or silver materials, sheets, towels, crepe paper – cut into streamers.
- Ask your child for suggestions as to how they might make the den? Is there a small table, chairs, cushions, rugs you could use? Could you cover everything with your white or silver materials? You could cut out some fish shapes that could be coloured in for the polar to catch when he's swimming.
- In another part of the room you could create a different habitat for another animal soft toy.

Example: For the orangutan's rainforest I used green and brown materials – for the tree and the nest where they sleep. I cut out green leaves, made flowers, cut out shapes of parrots (which could be coloured in) and found fruit for the orangutan to eat. Look around the room – how could you make a nest? Is there a high up shelf or bookcase where the nest could be as if it's at the top of the tree?



Stage 3: Exploring

When you have created the habitat it's time to become the explorers.

- You could start the journey in another room.
- Before you set off on the expedition you could make some binoculars from toilet roll tubes, tape and string, and you could print out a map.
- Explain that as explorers you have to go on an adventure to check on the animal's habitat to make sure they have everything they need.
- Think about what kind of clothes you might need to wear to go to the different habitats.
- As explorers, look at your map – make a plan as to how you might get there? Will you have to take a plane, boat, or go on foot or skiing or on a sled?

Example 1: North Pole

So, if going to the North Pole to check on the polar bear, pretend to put on a warm coat, hat, scarf, boots etc. What might you need to pack in your pretend bag? Maybe something warm to drink, extra socks. What else?

How might you get there? Use a couple of chairs as aeroplane seats to pretend you're flying there from Ireland perhaps. Then you might use a rug as your sled. The last part of the journey might be on skis so you could 'ski' down the hall, or climb up the stairs as if they're an iceberg.

When you get close to where the animal lives, lie down still and camouflage yourselves. Use your binoculars to look for the animal in their natural habitat. Very quietly and carefully, make your way forward for a closer look. If you are very quiet the animals might not run away. You might get very close and even crawl into their den to hang out with them. Maybe you could have your explorer's picnic lunch in the polar bear's den!

Example 2: Rainforest

If going to the rainforest, you could pretend to put on light clothes and a sun hat. You might pretend to spray yourself with insect repellent, pack your pretend bag with equipment you might need for the rainforest and set off climbing your way through the undergrowth. You might need to imagine chopping down a path for yourselves through the forest. You might need to shelter from a heavy rain shower or freeze if you hear a snake hiss. As before, when you get close to the orangutan's nest, freeze, camouflage yourself and get out to binoculars to see what you can see.



After that it's up to you as explorers to continue to play and pretend!