

Ballet Class Activities

Ballet 1A, 1B, 2, and 3

Video Playlist: [The Little Mermaid](#)

Orchestral Music: Not available

Under the Sea Port de Bras

While many of us think of the animated movie of The Little Mermaid for this story, many professional companies set their ballet version of this fairy tale to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. The tale is much more somber than the animated story—the little mermaid does not get the prince in the end—it is still a beautifully told tale your beginning ballet and older students can enjoy.

The tale of The Little Mermaid begins under the sea, where we meet the little mermaid for the first time. For your students' port de bras exercise in today's class, have them imagine they are standing under water as they port de bras. They should think of how they would carry their arms under the water. Would they be quick or sharp? No! They would move fluidly. You can use your current lesson plan's port de bras combination, or simply have students move through the positions with their arms—smoothly and gracefully.

Optional: Before having students work on their port de bras while standing, have them lay on their backs on the floor and do the same port de bras they will do standing. They should still imagine they are moving their arms under the water. After they've done their port de bras while lying down and standing, ask them if their arms felt different with the two different ways. It can be interesting for students to do this exercise. Their arms will feel different because of where they are in relation to gravity.

Under the Sea Improvisation

At the end of class, play a track of music your students will improvise to. Let them listen to the music and think about how they will dance. Tell them they are dancing under the sea and should be doing ballet steps, but everything else is up to them. After they've listened to the music, play the music again and let your students dance as if they are under the sea. Next, ask them why they danced as they did. Did your students move in a way they might under water? (Or did they not?) What quality did their movements have because they were under the water.

Do this activity at the end of class a second time and see if your students' ballet improvisation changed at all after the first round and discussion. You can ask them the same types of questions at the end of their improvisation again.

Seashore Improvisation

You can take the Under the Sea Improvisation activity a step further by repeating it as the little mermaid after she has become human. How might she move differently when she first becomes human compared to under the water? How about after she's gotten the hang of having legs? Ask similar discussion questions at the end of the first time your students go through the exercise. Have them repeat it again in another class and see if their improvisation has changed any after discussion. Also, remember, this is a ballet improvisation. While it is improvisation, it should still be ballet-based.

A Broken Heart

In the Andersen version of The Little Mermaid, the prince marries a princess and the little mermaid's heart is broken! Review correct ballet posture with your students. As you do, have them imagine they are a princess marrying a prince! (Or a prince marrying a princess, for boys.) They are happy and proud but also relaxed. Next, have them stand incorrectly—as someone who is sad, with a broken heart. They might slump or look down. Have them go back and forth between the princess/prince (correct posture) and heart broken mermaid (incorrect posture).

Sailing at Sea

The little mermaid first sees the prince as he's sailing on a ship. When ships are at sea, they can rock side to side—especially as a storm may be approaching. Work on balancés or preparation for balancés (depending on your students' level). Have your entire class stand in center. Divide the room into two halves. One half will go, then the other half will go, executing the day's balancé or preparation for balancé combination. Students can imagine they are on a ship at sea rocking from one side to the other!

The Little Mermaid and Her Sisters

In both the modern-day animation and the original fairy tale, the little mermaid is the youngest in her family. In the modern-day story, she has 6 older sisters. In the original, she has 5 older sisters.

Divide your students into groups of 6 or 7. One student at a time will be the little mermaid. The others in the group will be her sisters. The little mermaid student will show a step. Her sisters must copy her. Have students take turns being the little mermaid. At the end of the activity, can each group create a short combination? Allow each student to be the little mermaid and pick one to three steps for their group's combination.