

YOUR FOURTH GRADE EURYTHMY EXERCISES

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Notes on the videos

In these lessons I am offering a few eurythmy exercises for you to do with your fourth grade students. Please begin by watching the Introduction to Eurythmy for Homeschooling Video, to orient yourself to the purpose and scope of this exciting opportunity.

Fourth Grade Developmental Overview

To understand the Waldorf school curriculum for the fourth grade, it is important to reflect upon what the child went through in third grade. In my third grade curriculum overview, I described how the nine-year old child can be described as someone who is now aware of being cast out of paradise, even as Adam and Eve were, and sent out into the world, to learn to deal with earthly things and build culture upon the earth. This is the beginning of the great journey into life, into individuation and self-actualization.

The healthy fourth grader now begins to embark on this earth adventure with a sense of engagement, although we can often see that many children still feel overwhelmed and a bit scared at the prospect of what lies ahead.

The first main lesson block for fourth graders is often the so-called human and animal block. We can remember that first graders were told fairy tales in which animals were their friends and companions and gave them wise counsel. Second graders were taught about animals through folk tales and fables, and learned to appreciate how characteristic archetypes live in each of the various animals of the world, including cleverness, slyness, faithfulness and the like. I like to think of this in almost a Jungian sense, knowing that the child is being prepared to come to terms with the animals archetypes that we all carry in our own personal soul lives.

In third grade, Noah of course had to take the animals all with him on the arc as he prepared for the civilization that would exist after the great flood subsided. And so it is that the fourth graders then study the multiple relationships of humans and animals, in their first so-called science block. They learn the way that each animal has a genius of specificity in their capacities, making each uniquely suited to their own ecosystem. The human has none of these body-bound specificities. Precisely through being generalists in our

body and our abilities, we are able to rise above our merely animal nature and understand the world through our mental activity. And although it takes us a whole lifetime to understand this miracle, the seeds for it are planted in the fourth grade curriculum.

Having landed on the earth, so to speak, fourth graders are now happy to learn local geography. They learn to map their own school campus, their home, their block, their neighborhood. They learn to know about how the native people lived in their ecosystem, and thereby come to honor the deep relationships we have had and must re-discover on a new level with our environment.

The eager fourth grader is also ready to get down to details and start figuring things out. Mathematics becomes fun for them with fractions, understanding how things that are broken down can still be reassembled into a whole ($\frac{1}{2}$ plus $\frac{1}{4}$ plus $\frac{1}{4}$ will return to 1).

They are able to start figuring out the fractional parts of speech as well. Now able to read and write with increasing ease, they are able to examine the building blocks of language through grammar, recognizing how verbs bring activity and nouns are like standing stones, whereas adjectives and adverbs describe and embellish the words they refer to and prepositions direct our attention to the relationships of the things in the story line. These can all be brought together in a fun kind of dramatic activity in movement, and in classroom eurythmy we practice running with verbs, standing in nouns, bowing with adjectives and using indicating directions with prepositions.

The great mythology of the fourth graders can be found in the stories of the Norse gods and goddesses. These tales tell of powerful deities who lived in the kingdom of Asgard with Odin, the sun god. Through deeds of deceit and trickery, the gods were led to engage in the mighty battle Ragnarok. The stories culminate in the dramatic fall of the gods, but not before they are vouchsafed a glimpse into a future in which a new god of love and of light will arise. The gods challenge and struggle with each other throughout the story, but they must also learn to live together. Fourth graders can sense in this story their own struggle with the “old world” that they are born into, their discovery of their own power of deceit and trickery, the sad acknowledgment that these may lead to the end of “paradise,” and the unconscious assurance that in fact, a better world can arise in an unknown future time. As was seen in the Old Testament stories of the 3rd grade, these tales give the children courage and orientation as they leave the womb of childhood and embark on the long and uncertain journey of becoming conscious human beings on the earth.

The Norse myths were told in the great epic narrative called the Edda. If we research the style of this ancient poem, we see that the Norse used the element of *alliteration* to tell their tale. This means that throughout the entire poem, they repeated strong sounds again and again, as if driving their story into language. An example would be the first words of Ragnarok, which read “Behold, there Breaketh the Day of Doom. Darkness descendeth.” We experience here the repetition of the B and the D sounds. You as teacher should practice speaking these sounds with a controlled and powerful voice, and then let your children learn to do so. They may imagine themselves to be a bard standing in the midst of a great storm and needing the strength of their voice to combat the destructive forces around them. They are asked not to shout, but to speak with firm power. They then can learn to take one strong and very firm step with each alliterated sound (B, B, D, D, D, D), grounding themselves as firmly as they can against the wind that buffets them.

The fourth grade eurythmy curriculum continues the journey begun in fourth grade by focusing on moving ever more complex forms in space. Conscious and masterful concentration exercises and rod exercises, accompanied with challenges in stepping and speed control create the foundation for the young heroes to challenge and master their own bodies.

The eurythmyonline curriculum offers only a small step in fourth grade beyond what is offered in 3rd grade. However, you are once again invited to host a workshop in your area with Cynthia Hoven by

contacting her at info@eurhythmyonline.com, requesting live lessons in the expanded curriculum you can teach your fourth graders.

General Fourth Grade Movement Exercises

The fourth grade child should now be ready to move freely in space. The child should be able to face forward, and then move geometric forms in all directions while continuing to face forward. That means that the child will be able to move forwards, backwards and side to side without turning to face the different directions. The child thereby learns to be very much at home in self-movement, in bodily proprioception.

These are skills that are only possible when the child has “come down to earth.”

These exercises match the curriculum by supporting geometry, fractions, and grammar: in short, everything that has to do with structure. In the language arts curriculum, the child has “come down to earth,” the “gods have fallen” from their lofty home in the Norse kingdom of Valhalla. The age of fairy tales is behind us now: the child is eager and ready to become grounded.

If your child has not reached certain movement benchmarks, which lay the foundation for being able to stand tall, sit quietly, and move freely in all directions, they are probably having difficulties with the senses of movement and self-perception. These are very often the foundation for a host of other troubles, including what are called ADD, ADHD, and also problems with reading, writing, mental imagine, and math skills. If you are concerned about these things, I strongly encourage you to consult the website of developmental pediatrician Dr. Susan Johnson, at youandyourchildshealth.org.

How do I learn the exercises?

It is very important that you begin by learning the exercises yourself. Consider it your own path of eurythmy, your own journey for self-development! (After all, as a homeschooling parent, you get to work on your own skills as well as on your child's!)

Then, once you are confident that you can model the exercises, turn off the video, and teach the child out of your own experience. **It is important not to let the child watch the videos!**

And remember: don't let the child speak while moving. And remember: don't let the child speak while moving. **You** should speak, and the child should pour all of their “consciousness”, their etheric presence, into their movements.

We are thereby truly encouraging mindful movements.

How do I teach my child?

When you practice with your child, stand in front of him or her, about 3 feet away. Speak gently, expect participation, and work with a light touch. Be sure that you do the exercises correctly, but don't correct the child. A standard guideline in eurythmy is that you should only correct 1 in 9 mistakes. Don't hesitate to repeat each exercise up to 7 times, but never pedantically.

Don't expect your child to be able to master everything at once. Build skills sequentially, starting with the easier exercises in the first weeks of eurythmy. Practice each one about 20 times (that number is flexible), with good will and fun. Add verses or poems if you can, to make the movements more engaging.

Once an exercise can be done smoothly, only do it about seven times, and then move on to the next exercise. Encourage engagement, but avoid boredom!

How long should we do eurythmy?

This exercise sequence takes about 10-15 minutes to accomplish. As with all of my grade sequences, you can do it every week, all year long, or you can alternate it with other opening series. In that case, I would recommend doing it for 7 weeks in the autumn, 7 weeks in the winter, and 3-7 weeks in the spring. If the child had an opportunity to work with a trained eurythmy teaching, they would have lessons all year long, and learn a multitude of musical and poetic pieces, building on the spatial skills you are learning here.

The Fourth Grade Eurythmy Exercises

Your curriculum package includes videos and pdfs for each of the exercises described above. I suggest you learn them in the sequence in which I have listed them.

It also include videos and pdfs describing the reason behind learning to move in space fluidly (“How to move in etheric space”) and how we use rod exercises (“About Copper Rods”), as well as General Guidelines for how to do eurythmy at home.

To close your session:

At the end of every eurythmy experience, stand very quietly for 15-30 seconds or longer. I always say “no wiggling, no jiggling, no squiggling, no giggling,” in a firm but friendly voice.

The child should now be standing straight, tall, and centered.

It is not unusual for a child at this age to struggle a bit with the structured nature of the eurythmy exercises. They will respond well to you, however, if you are also learning the exercises and doing them with engagement and good will. Be earnest, but playful! Help the child *want* to do it.

What is essential?

To be a eurythmy teacher, we have to learn to pay attention to what is essential. The *learning process itself* is more important than immediate success. It is fine to make mistakes in the beginning, as the child learns to coordinate the unruly limbs, and to move smoothly with beauty, grace and style. Confidently, firmly but gently repeat the exercises often enough (perhaps 20 times when learning, and then 7 times once learned), until the child has “mastered” them and can do them well.

Remember, we are *building etheric strength through repetition!* Practicing the integrative movements of eurythmy is analogous to playing a piano: one has to repeat things often enough until the body can do them skillfully. Thereafter, the soul can build upon the foundations to *feel* and *bring self-perception* to them.

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