

# Ammonites

Watch the short videos made by our colleagues at the Horniman Museum and Gardens to find out all about ammonites and fossils – the science and the folklore!

Before you start, make sure you have space around you to move freely and are wearing comfortable clothing.

You will need some paper and pencils for drawing and writing.



## Touch

By dance artist **Julian Lewis**

1. Imagine how the ammonites feel to touch. Think about their:
  - **Size**
  - **Shape**
  - **Properties**
  - **Texture**
2. Print out or have a go at drawing a picture of an ammonite and fill the outline of the object with ammonite related descriptive words. Alternatively, create a mind-map of your ideas.
3. Using the words you have written, start moving one body part in a way that reflects the word you have chosen. For example, if your word was curved, can you make curved shapes with your arm?
4. Now try putting the movement into different body parts, and then into your whole body. Do this for each of your words, starting with one body part and then using your whole body. You could even put some music on whilst you are moving!
5. Keep this exploration of your words going, if you try something that you really like, remember it – perhaps it could lead to creating a short solo of movement or a choreography that you could direct with other dancers.

## Spirals

By dance artists **Julian Lewis and Daisy Farris**

1. Choose five different body parts and write them down.
2. For each body part, create a spiralling movement. Take your time to explore all the different ways you can create a spiral with that body part.
3. Once you have your five movements – put them together to create a phrase. Think about how you will get from one movement to the other. Could your movements connect and flow smoothly and continuously to create the feeling of a ‘never-ending’ spiralling ammonite?
4. Choose your beginning and ending position. Practise your phrase, when you are happy with it, you could perform it for someone!

### Extension Task

5. You could also create another version of your sequence that begins high and gradually spirals down to the ground. Explore your space, try out making the biggest spiral pathway you can and then try to make the smallest spiral pathway possible.



## Finding objects in nature

By dance artist **Julian Lewis**

We know that ammonites are extinct marine molluscs that are related to octopuses, squid and cuttlefish. However, there is a lot we don't know.

1. Head outdoors, this could be to your garden, to a park or another public space, and search for your own curious natural object – take a photograph or draw the object. You can do this for as many objects as you like.
2. Look at the shape and outline of the object, or see if there are any patterns or marks. Try tracing these outlines or patterns in the space around you with your hands.
3. Once you have traced the outline or the pattern with your hands, think about how you can develop the movement. See if you can make the movement bigger or smaller. Can you change where your hand is in space and make the shapes high or low? See if you can choose another body part to trace the shapes in the air. Can you use your elbow or your knee? Can you use two body parts at the same time?

### Extension Task

4. You could create a solo or group dance, based on the movement you have explored, this could be performed for friends and family or even made into a dance film!
5. If you are creating something to be performed or filmed – think about the objects and your ideas in everything you create. If you are moving around your space, could your pathway be inspired by the shape of the object? Could the colour of the object be reflected in the costume you wear?

## Preserving treasure

By dance artist **Daisy Farris**

The ammonites lived between 240 and 66 million years ago, because they have been fossilised, it means we can look at them today and learn about life millions of years ago.

1. Collect a few items that you think would sum up today's world if they were fossilised and discovered by future humans.
2. If you are doing this with someone else, you can talk about them and discuss why you have chosen your object and why it is important to you.
3. Think about whether the object has a use or a purpose. If it does, what is the action of that use? For example, if you have chosen something from the kitchen, what movement do you do when you use it? If you have picked a TV remote, you raise your arm and point it at the TV when you want to use it.
4. Try out the action of your object and keep repeating it. Can you make this action bigger or smaller or change the speed of it – make it really slow and then really fast? Could you do the action with another body part – for the remote, could you raise your leg or shoulder and point it outwards?
5. Keep exploring the different actions of all your objects and change something about the movement to make it more interesting.



## Water

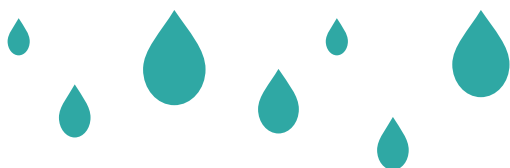
By dance artist **Rachel Newby**

Ammonites lived in shallow sea beds, moving around by squirting jets of water from their bodies.

1. Think about the feeling of being in water: floating, drifting, the water supporting you.
2. In your space sitting, standing or lying, start moving a body part imagining you are in water. Keep this feeling and then change the body part you are using.
3. Can you take this feeling and let it move you around your space?
4. Can you take the movement up high and down low?
5. Try moving your body in response to these water words:
  - **Splash**
  - **Flowing**
  - **Whirlpool**
  - **Waves**
  - **Ripple**
6. Using the feeling of being in water you have explored and the water words, create a sequence of 5 movements that link together.

### Extension

7. If you have completed the 'Touch' activity task, try joining together your 'Touch' movement with your 'Water' movement. Think about what order you want to put them in, how you will link the two sequences together, and how you can show a contrast between your 'Touch' movement and your 'Water' movement.



## St Hilda Spell

There are lots of folklore and stories about where ammonites came from.

▶ [Watch the video of Olivia, the storyteller, to find out more.](#)

Thousands of years ago some people believed ammonites were snakes. These wriggling and writhing snakes were said to have been found in Yorkshire, an area where lots of ammonites were discovered. Brave St. Hilda was said to have cast the snakes away and turned them into stone.

### Game

1. Go outside with some friends and play the St. Hilda Spell game.
2. Take turns for one person to play brave St Hilda.
3. Try moving around like a snake. Can you twist and turn and spiral like a snake does?
4. What about walking and running in the shape of spirals like the snakes or wriggling your arms and legs so that they slither and slide?
5. But don't forget that St Hilda is here to cast the snakes away and turn them into stone! When St Hilda shouts her name the snakes must freeze where they are and the very last person to turn to stone is out. Keep going until just one snake is left.
6. Well done for escaping the St Hilda Spell!

