

Teaching Philosophy: The purpose of theatre education is to cultivate and inspire curiosity and self-expression. I approach student engagement by leading with positivity and encouragement and creating a safe and judgement-free environment. I encourage curiosity by exploring different approaches that result in new discoveries and perspectives. This leads to each student finding their own path to self-expression. I maintain that every student has equal opportunity and shall be treated as such, therefore, the materials we explore will resonate with every kind of student that walks into a classroom. I balance rigor, play, and social/emotional learning by opening up discussion with students in the classroom about what they are learning. Allowing and investigating questions fully with students will promote curiosity, exploration, and motivation to find out answers.

Program Title: Improv Basics

Learning Goals: Students will be able to create characters and place them into an improvised scene with others by developing characteristics and focusing on storytelling.

Session 1: What is Improv?

Class Size: 7-15

Age Group: 3rd-6th Grade

Topic: Creating the Foundation of Improv

Themes: Collaboration, Listening, Storybuilding

Activities:

1. Students gather and introduce themselves to one another with an ice-breaker game, such as the name game. (10 mins)
2. The teacher explains what Improv is to the class, explaining the themes that will be explored during the session. (10 mins)
3. Students play the first game, Machine. 1. Start with one student making a noise and a simple repeatable gesture. When the student has a rhythm and another student has an idea for a movement which connects to the first gesture, that student joins the first student by making a new noise and movement which connects to the original gesture. Each student joins in with a new noise and gesture and connects to the others in some way until all students are involved in creating the machine. Play this game a couple times with different machines based on different topics or items. (20 mins)
4. Discuss Machine with the students and relate the game back to improv. (10 mins)
5. Exit with the Number Game. Students must sit in a circle and one at a time, at random, count to 20. If more than one student says the same number, they must start over. (10 mins)

Session 2: How do I Create A Character?

Class Size: 7-15

Age Group: 3rd-6th Grade

Topic: Character Creation

Themes: Creativity, Characteristics, Identity

Activities:

1. Open with the Number Game. Students must sit in a circle and one at a time, at random, count to 20. If more than one student says the same number, they must start over. (10 mins)
2. Discuss the challenges and objectives of this activity with students as it relates to improv (10 mins)
3. Hand out an activity paper where students get to create their own superheroes. Have students fill this sheet out (10 mins)
4. In small groups, have students walk across the room in their created characters. Suggest different emotions or challenges they could run into as they walk across the space. (20 mins)
5. Discuss the character creation with students, and how this could be implemented into improv scenes. (10 mins)

Session 3: How do I Tell a Story with Improv?

Class Size: 7-15

Age Group: 3rd-6th Grade

Topic: Storytelling Through Improv

Themes: Storytelling, Reactivity, Creativity

Activities:

1. Play One Word Story with students. Students will gather in a circle and one by one say a word that creates a cohesive and clear story. Do this activity a few times, and have students discuss characters and topics that were created from the stories. (20 mins)
2. Hand out Madlib's stories to students, put them in groups, and have them fill them out. Students will then present their Madlib to the class until all Madlibs have been presented. Discuss with students how the stories were affected by the intrusive additions. Did students like it? Did these additions throw off or interrupt the story? (30 mins)
3. Put students in two groups and play the Picture Book Game. Give each group a classic fairytale with three main plot points to explore from that fairytale. Students must create three pictures with their bodies to tell the story of each plot point. Have each group present and the other group at the end guess what story they are trying to tell. Discuss. (10 mins)

Session 4: Let's Improv!

Class Size: 7-15

Age Group: 3rd-6th Grade

Topic: Creating Characters and Stories for Improv Games

Themes: Character Creation, Storytelling, Collaboration

Activities:

1. Play Zip Zap Zop with students to warm up and create energy for the rest of the session. (10 mins)
2. Introduce the game, Late to Work. One player leaves the room. The host gets suggestions of why they were late for work, how they got there, and what their job is. When the person re-enters they apologise to their boss, while trying to guess the reasons suggested. The rest of the improvisers play their colleagues, and mime the reasons. (20 mins)
3. Introduce the game, Park Bench. Place two chairs together to create a makeshift park bench. One person sits on the bench and a second person sits next to them. The newest person to sit must provide a reason for the first person to get off the bench. They are not allowed to ask, "will you get off the bench" and they are also not allowed to physically push the person off the bench. Once the person gets off the bench the second person shifts over and a new person appears attempting to get the current bench sitter off of the bench. This game cycles so play multiple rounds. Challenge yourself to discover new ways to get the person off the bench both positive and negative. Remember to follow the improv rule of "yes and" and react accordingly to the person trying to get you off the bench. If you stay on the bench, the game stops. (20 mins)
4. Discuss how the games played during the session use character creation, storytelling, and creativity. (10 mins)

Session 5: Short Form vs Long Form

Class Size: 7-15

Age Group: 3rd-6th Grade

Topic: Learning the Difference Between Short Form and Long Form Improv

Themes: Story, Character, Reactivity, Listening

Activities:

1. Students play Mindmeld. The goal is for two people to say things together until they reach the same word. It begins by one person saying “one,” the second person saying “two,” and then both people counting to three together. They then say anything at all – a person, place, idea, concept, phrase: anything. Then we think what the common thing between those two things or associated with those two things would be. We repeat the one, two, three and try to use the two previously stated things to arrive at a third, common one. We keep trying each time until we say the same word. When we finally arrive at the same word we sing and dance to “It was a mind meld, it was a mind meld, it happens all the time, it was a mind meld.” (10 mins)
2. Teacher discusses the definitions and differences between Short Form and Long Form improv (10 mins)
3. Students play Freeze & Justify. Two students will start improvising a scene based on a prompt. A student outside of the scene will shout “Freeze!”. The players freeze in their position, and the student takes the place of one of the players, creating an entirely different scene based on their physicality in the moment. Discuss how this game relates to Short Form improv (20 mins)
4. Students play Swipe. Split the class into three groups. Each group is given a prompt that they will have to improvise a scene about. At any time the teacher can “Swipe” the scene to another point in time in the context of the scene. For instance, if the players are improvising as Santa’s elves at the workshop, the Teacher could “Swipe” to when the elves are on vacation in Hawaii. Have each group complete two or three Swipes. Discuss how this game relates to Long Form improv. (20 mins)

Sample Workshop: Let's Improv!

Lesson Plan Purpose Statement

Students will work together to be able to create characters and stories that are clear and consistent through improvisation.

Input

Character - Brainstorming, creation, and application of characters

Storytelling - Creation and continuation of a cohesive story

Ensemble - Collaboration of students through teamwork

Guided Practice

Warm Up: Students play Mindmeld. The goal is for two people to say things together until they reach the same word. It begins by one person saying “one,” the second person saying “two,” and then both people counting to three together. They then say anything at all – a person, place, idea, concept, phrase: anything. Then we think what the common thing between those two things or associated with those two things would be. We repeat the one, two, three and try to use the two previously stated things to arrive at a third, common one. We keep trying each time until we say the same word. When we finally arrive at the same word we sing and dance to “It was a mind meld, it was a mind meld, it happens all the time, it was a mind meld.” **(10 mins)**

Character Activity: Students will play Park Bench. Place two chairs together to create a makeshift park bench. One person sits on the bench and a second person sits next to them. The newest person to sit must provide a reason for the first person to get off the bench. They are not allowed to ask, “will you get off the bench” and they are also not allowed to physically push the person off the bench. Once the person gets off the bench the second person shifts over and a new person appears attempting to get the current bench sitter off of the bench. This game cycles so play multiple rounds. Challenge yourself to discover new ways to get the person off the bench both positive and negative. Remember to follow the improv rule of “yes and” and react accordingly to the person trying to get you off the bench. If you stay on the bench, the game stops. **(20 mins)**

Storytelling Activity: Put students in two groups and play the Picture Book Game. Give each group a classic fairytale with three main plot points to explore from that fairytale. Students must create three pictures with their bodies to tell the story of each plot point. Have each group present and the other group at the end guess what story they are trying to tell. Discuss. **(10 mins)**

Ensemble Activity: Students play Mirrors. Divide the students into groups of 3 and have them form a triangle. (If the group is not divisible by 3, you might have a couple of groups of 4, in which case they stand in a square.) Ask all the students to look in one direction and tell them that the person who is at the front and can't see anyone else is the leader. Have them

rotate together until they are looking at another leader in their group. One more rotation, and each person has been in the leader position. Now put instrumental music on and have the current leader begin a movement that the others can mirror. Tell them that the leader should rotate to one direction or the other after a minute or so. When the leader can see another person in the group, that person becomes the new leader. When a person can no longer see another group member, s/he has become the leader. The music for this one can be slow, but fast music also works if its rhythm is predictable. **(10 mins)**

Improv Activity: Students play Swipe. Split the class into three groups. Each group is given a prompt that they will have to improvise a scene about. At any time the teacher can “Swipe” the scene to another point in time in the context of the scene. For instance, if the players are improvising as Santa’s elves at the workshop, the Teacher could “Swipe” to when the elves are on vacation in Hawaii. Have each group complete two or three Swipes. **(20 mins)**

Reflection Strategy

Students at the end of the workshop will be able to identify how storytelling, character, and ensemble create improv.

Student Facing Materials

MY SUPERHERO

Name: _____

Superhero Name:

Power:

Weakness:

My Enemy is...

My Sidekick is...

What I look like

My likes:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

How did I get my Powers?

MACHINE

IMPROV GAME

What did you imagine the machine you created was?

What was your part in making it?

How could we make the machine better?

Was it difficult to keep your concentration until everyone was creating the machine?