



UNIT TWO: IMPROVISATION BASICS

By LINDSAY JOHNSON

In this unit, students will learn, practice and apply three important rules of improv: accepting and building on offers, quick thinking, and strong offers. For each step, they will work with the Improvisation Rubric by both giving and receiving feedback. Students will also start to practice techniques to improve their vocal clarity. The unit culminates in a performance assessment in which students will play an improv game in front of an audience.

1 - Accepting & Building on Offers

In this first improvisation lesson, students will work with the definitions of the key vocabulary terms by adding their own offers to improvised exercises and accepting and building on peer offers. Students will also give written and verbal peer feedback on the first row (ACCEPTING AND BUILDING ON OFFERS) row of the Improvisation Rubric, using language such as "improvisation" and "offers."

2 - Quick Thinking

In this second improvisation lesson, students will practice accepting offers, building on offers, and thinking quickly in improvisation exercises. Students will also give written and verbal peer feedback on the second row (QUICK THINKING) of the Improvisation Rubric, using language from the Rubric.

3 - Strong Offers

In this third improvisation lesson, students will practice accepting offers, building on offers, thinking quickly and giving STRONG OFFERS in improvisation exercises. Students will also give written and verbal peer feedback using language from the Improvisation Rubric.

4 - Performance Quiz

In this fourth improvisation lesson, students will participate in a mock improv assessment in small groups. They will also give partners written feedback on the entire Improvisation Rubric. Students will learn the exercise that will be used for their final improv assessment.

5 - Intro to Projection and Volume

In this fifth improvisation lesson, students will learn the definition of "projection." With partners, they will practice quick thinking, improv, and volume in performance. Afterward, students will give verbal feedback on the Improvisation Rubric and the VOLUME section of the Vocal Clarity Rubric.

6 - Intro to Projection and Enunciation

In this sixth improvisation lesson, students will practice in partners quick thinking, improv, and enunciation in performance. Afterward, students will give verbal feedback on the Improvisation Rubric and the ENUNCIATION section of the Vocal Clarity Rubric.

7 - Review for Improv Test

In this seventh lesson, students will practice their skills for the Lesson 8 test using a tongue twister (from Gilbert and Sullivan) as well as the improv game. Students will self-assess, and give/receive peer feedback.

8 - Improv Test

In this final lesson for this unit, students will participate in the improv game Hitchhiker as part of a peer and teacher assessment on the Improvisation Rubric.

9 - Posters

8 posters for the drama classroom, to support the objectives of the Improvisation Basics unit.

Standards Connections

National Core Arts Standards

Perceive and analyze artistic work - Grade 8

TH:Re7.1.8.a - Apply criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

Perceive and analyze artistic work - Grade HS Proficient

TH:Re7.1.HS1.a - Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 6

TH:Pr5.1.6.a - Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr5.1.7.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

Refine new work through play, drama processes and theatre experiences using critical analysis and experimentation - Grade 6

TH:Cr3.1.6.b - Identify effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.

Refine new work through play, drama processes and theatre experiences using critical analysis and experimentation - Grade 7

TH:Cr3.1.7.b - Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work

Common Core

Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

California VAPA Standards (2019)

8.TH:Re7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

8.TH:Re7 - Apply appropriate criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

Prof.TH:Re7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Prof.TH:Re7 - Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

6.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

6.TH:Pr5.a - Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr5.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

6.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

6.TH:Cr3.b - Identify effective physical and vocal traits of characters in a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

7.TH:Cr3.b - Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.

Florida Sunshine State Standards

Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.912.C.1.5 - Make and defend conscious choices in the creation of a character that will fulfill anticipated audience response.

TH.912.C.2.7 - Accept feedback from others, analyze it for validity, and apply suggestions appropriately to future performances or designs.

TH.912.C.2.8 - Improve a performance or project using various self-assessment tools, coaching, feedback, and/or constructive criticism.

Innovation, Technology & the Future

TH.912.F.3.3 - Exhibit independence, discipline, and commitment to the theatre process when working on assigned projects and productions.

Skills, Techniques & Processes

TH.912.S.2.8 - Strengthen acting skills by engaging in theatre games and improvisations.

TH.912.S.3.3 - Develop acting skills and techniques in the rehearsal process.

Georgia Performance Standards 2017 - Theatre Arts

Grade 6 - Creating

TA6.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process., b. Interpret a character's motivation by understanding the relationship between their background and their behavior., c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters., d. Identify, define, and classify character traits., e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance., f. Use resources to identify and create technical elements of theatre.

Grade 6 - Performing

TA6.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Execute character creation in a performance., c. Demonstrate a variety of types of theatre performances.

Grade 6 - Responding

TA6.RE.1 - Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member., a. Identify the role of the audience in different environments., b. Analyze the relationship between an audience and a performer., c. Create guidelines for behaviors appropriate to a theatre experience., d. Model appropriate audience behaviors.

Grade 7 - Performing

TA7.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Execute effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills in performance (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement)., b. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or theatre performance., c. Engage in various performance styles.

Grade 8 - Creating

TA8.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Differentiate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a variety of characters., b. Compare the relationships and interactions between characters by analyzing character motivation (objectives, obstacles, strategy, action, stakes, outcome)., c. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., d. Connect theatre vocabulary to the application of theatre performance., e. Identify and demonstrate both ensemble and leadership skills in the rehearsal process., f. Evaluate the effectiveness of artistic and technical elements used in a theatre production., g. Design and create scenery, props, costumes, lighting, and sound., h. Assume different roles and responsibilities in the rehearsal process.

Grade 8 - Performing

TA8.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character in different types of theatre performances (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, motivation, physical movement)., b. Demonstrate appropriate ensemble skills throughout a performance., c. Use appropriate listening and response skills during performances.

Grades 9-12 - ACTING LEVELS I-IV - Performing

TAHSA.PR.1 - Act and direct by communicating and sustaining roles within a variety of situations and environments., a. Examine and implement the voice, body, observation, and imagination as tools of the actor in presentations of formal and informal theatre., b. Research and assess the development of acting skills for character creation and performance including historical movements, personal experience, and cultural influences., c. Act by developing, communicating, and sustaining roles within a variety of situations and environments., d. Identify and examine the responsibilities and tasks of an actor in relationship with directors, designers, and technical crew., e. Use the skills and tools of a director to conduct rehearsals for performance.

Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Creating

TAHSFT.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse., b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., c. Recognize and interpret artistic choices in performance.

Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Performing

TAHSFT.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Observe and demonstrate aspects of verbal and non-verbal techniques in common human activity for performance (e.g. voice, breathing, posture, facial expression, physical movement)., b. Construct and interpret artistic choices in performance including the objectives, decisions, and actions of characters., c. Explore various acting methods and techniques (e.g. Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, sense memory, emotional recall) for the purpose of character development., d. Perform acting choices for an audience based on critiques.

North Carolina Essential Standards

Beginning High School Standards - Communication

B.C.1.2 - Apply vocal elements of volume, pitch, rate, tone, articulation, and vocal expression.

B.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization in a variety of theatre exercises.

Beginning High School Standards - Culture

B.CU.2.1 - Illustrate appropriate theatre etiquette as a member of an audience, as a performer, and as a technician.

Intermediate High School Standards - Communication

I.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization, to demonstrate given situations.

Proficient High School Standards - Communication

P.C.1.2 - Apply vocal elements of volume, pitch, rate, tone, articulation, and vocal expression to develop characters.

Advanced High School Standards - Communication

A.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills to perform for a formal audience using prompts provided by the audience.

Tennessee Theatre Curriculum Standards

GRADES 6-8

2.0 Character Acting - Students will develop basic acting skills by portraying characters in improvised and scripted scenes.

GRADES 9-12

2.0 Character Acting - Students will act by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and in informal or formal productions.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts

MS 117.211 LI - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.D - develop an understanding of the mechanisms of vocal production.

MS 117.211 LI - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.A - demonstrate safe use of the voice and body.

MS 117.212 LII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

B.1.E - demonstrate knowledge of theatrical vocabulary and terminology.

MS 117.212 LII - Creative Expression: performance

B.2.A - demonstrate safe use of the voice and body.

MS 117.213 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

B.1.B - explore preparation and warm-up techniques.

B.1.D - demonstrate an increased understanding of the mechanisms of vocal production.

B.1.E - apply knowledge of theatrical vocabulary and terminology.

MS 117.213 LIII - Creative Expression: performance

B.2.C - create characters, dialogue, and actions that reflect dramatic structure in improvised and scripted scenes, individually and collaboratively.

B.2.D - express thoughts and feelings using effective voice and diction.

HS 117.315 LI - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.F - demonstrate a working knowledge of the language of theatre such as stage terminology, elements of theatre, or theatrical conventions.

HS 117.316 LII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - develop and practice theatre warm-up techniques.

C.1.C - demonstrate effective voice and diction.

HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.A - model safe, appropriate techniques to allow for physical, vocal, and emotional expression.

C.2.B - explore creativity as it relates to self and ensemble.

C.2.C - demonstrate effective voice and diction to express thoughts and feelings.

HS 117.317 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - apply theatre preparation and warm-up techniques effectively.

C.1.C - distinguish the proper techniques such as diction, inflection, and projection in the use of voice.

HS 117.317 LIII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.A - employ safe, appropriate techniques to allow for physical, vocal, and emotional expression.

C.2.B - analyze creativity as it relates to self and ensemble and its effect on audience.

C.2.D - experiment with improvisation and scripted scenes of various styles to portray believable characters.

HS 117.318 LIV - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.C - model proper techniques such as diction, inflection, and projection in the use of effective voice.

Alberta, Canada

Speech Drama 10

1 - demonstrate vocal relaxation and warmup techniques

2 - apply effective breathing techniques

3 - recognize the effect of good posture on voice

Improvisation Drama 10

1 - use warmup techniques for preparation of body, voice and mind

15 - initiate a dramatic situation in response to a given stimulus

16 - make logical choices spontaneously within the boundaries of situation and character

17 - demonstrate the ability to accept, advance, offer or block thought and action, quickly and effectively

3 - maintain concentration during exercises

32 - sustain a character throughout a scene or exercise

8 - tell a story spontaneously

9 - use appropriate stage directions

Improvisation/Acting Level III - Advanced

26 - pick up cues effectively

Junior Orientation

communicate through use of voice and body

demonstrate a willingness to take calculated and reasonable risks

demonstrate trust by becoming comfortable, physically and

emotionally, with others

focus concentration on one task at a time

generate imaginative and creative solutions to problems

listen effectively

offer and accept constructive criticism, given specific guidelines, with a desire to improve

recognize the purposes of and participate in warmup activities

share ideas confidently with others

speak, move, and generate ideas spontaneously

Speech Level I - Beginning

1 - speak spontaneously

2 - use vocal relaxation and warm-up techniques

3 - use effective breathing techniques

Speech Level II - Intermediate

10 - demonstrate effects of intonation, rate, pause and phrasing on the meaning of words

11 - use pitch to effect quality of voice production

9 - use volume, articulation and projection to achieve clarity

Improvisation/Acting Level I - Beginning

1 - use warm-up techniques for preparation of body, voice and mind

11 - create a dramatic situation in response to varied stimuli: objects, pictures, music

12 - make logical choices within the boundaries of situation and character

5 - create and tell a story spontaneously

7 - use stage vocabulary: stage areas, body positions and crosses

8 - demonstrate appropriate rehearsal behaviours and routines

9 - communicate a clear beginning, middle and end in spontaneous and planned scenes

Improvisation/Acting Level II - Intermediate

13 - recognize the techniques of offering, accepting, advancing and blocking

14 - use varied stimuli for character development

15 - use the body and body language to enhance characterization

21 - sustain a character throughout an exercise or scene

Junior Goal I Objectives

develop a positive self-image

develop a sense of responsibility and commitment

develop self-confidence

develop self-discipline

develop the ability to initiate, organize and present a project within a given set of guidelines

develop the ability to interact effectively and constructively in a group process

develop the ability to offer and accept constructive criticism

develop the willingness to make a decision, act upon it and accept the results

extend the ability to think imaginatively and creatively

strengthen powers of concentration

Senior Goal I Objectives

apply imaginative and creative thought to problem-solving situations

extend the ability to concentrate

increase self-confidence

increase self-discipline

Orientation Drama 10

demonstrate self-discipline, self-direction and a sense of responsibility

listen to self and others

offer and accept constructive criticism with a desire to progress

share ideas confidently

work cooperatively and productively

British Columbia (2018)

GRADE 6 - ARTS - Exploring and creating

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

GRADE 6 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

GRADE 6 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting

Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

GRADE 7 - ARTS - Exploring and creating

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

GRADE 7 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

GRADE 7 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting

Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

GRADE 8 - ARTS - Exploring and creating

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

GRADE 8 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop, refine ideas, and critically appraise ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

GRADE 8 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting

Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

Ontario, Canada

Grade 6 - Creating and Presenting

B1.1 - engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on identifying and examining a range of issues, themes, and ideas from a variety of fiction and non-fiction sources and diverse communities, times, and places

B1.3 - plan and shape the direction of the drama or role play by introducing new perspectives and ideas, both in and out of role

Grade 7 - Creating and Presenting

B1.1 - engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on examining multiple perspectives related to current issues, themes, and relationships from a wide variety of sources and diverse communities

B1.3 - plan and shape the direction of the drama by working with others, both in and out of role, to generate ideas and explore multiple perspectives

Grade 8 - Creating and Presenting

B1.1 - engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on examining multiple perspectives and possible outcomes related to complex issues, themes, and relationships from a wide variety of sources and diverse communities

B1.3 - plan and shape the direction of the drama by negotiating ideas and perspectives with others, both in and out of role

Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to accept criticism and build consensus)

C.3.3 - demonstrate an understanding of theatre and audience etiquette, in both classroom and formal performance contexts (e.g., as a performer: show willingness to take direction and behave appropriately towards other actors; as a viewer: demonstrate respect for performers and other audience members by paying attention, not interrupting or talking, and applauding when appropriate)

Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - Presentation Techniques & Technologies

A.3.2 - use a variety of voice and movement techniques to support the creation of character or atmosphere during rehearsal (e.g., use voice and movement to suggest an airport, circus, or factory environment)