

**Unit:**  
**Introduction to**  
**Improvisation**

Subject: Drama

Grade: 8

Potential Dates: March 7-12

School: St. Jean Brebeuf

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## **Rationale**

Drama is a subject that promotes teamwork and accountability. It can be used to highlight each student's unique skill set. It develops communication skills and encourages creative thought. It allows a student to become courageous and empathetic. Drama allows students to build trust with their classmates and community by promoting open-mindedness. It presents choices and consequences that the students can learn from and can often be a good form of tension release. It develops positive concepts that can be used in other subjects. Drama allows students to work through their fears, come up with strategies while exploring their own emotions. It encourages bravery, courage and laughter. Drama allows a time to relax and de-stress while encouraging self-reflection. It exposes students to the arts in their own community as well as others. Most importantly Drama can be fun and can help develop a range of skills like listed above that students can use in everyday life.

Improvisation is important in developing the skills listed above. Improvisation has an emphasis on building characters and on spontaneous, collaborative storytelling. This unit will allow the students to establish a platform in understanding how to work as a team while learning skills that are applicable to most aspects of Drama.

Not only is Drama a long-lived art form but it's also an outlet that allows students to learn and educators to teach in the most creative ways.

"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being"

- Oscar Wilde

## **Unit Objective and skills required to achieve the objective.**

Improvisation is a great way to develop acting skills especially when first being introduced to Drama as a subject. Improvisation can be used from grade 7-12 drama classes. It allows the student to engage creatively, comprehend dramatic terminology and solve problems on the spot. When the students learn these skills that require quick thinking it will apply to most other work related to acting. Improvisation works in the foundation of teamwork as well as collaboration. It involves concentration and the ability to listen to instructions and peers. The unit provides opportunities for students to improve their observational abilities and acting skills by encouraging both the giving and receiving of constructive criticism. In this unit students will be able to learn a variety of improvisational games and work together as a team

## **Top Skills to expect the students will work on in this unit:**

### **From Improvisation and Acting in Teachers Resource Manual**

- 10. Use Essential story elements in spontaneous and planned scenes  
*(Lesson 4,5,6)*
- 13. Recognize the techniques of offering, accepting, advancing and blocking  
*(Lesson 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)*
- 14. Use varied stimuli for character development  
*(Lesson 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)*
- 15. Use body and body language to enhance characterization  
*( Lesson 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)*
- 17. Select and use language appropriate to a given character and situation  
*(Lesson 2, 4, 5, 6)*
- 18. Enter and Exit in Character  
*(Lesson 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)*
- 21. Sustain a Character throughout an exercise or scene  
*(Lesson 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)*
- 25. Demonstrate understand of focus and the processes of sharing, giving and taking  
*(Lesson 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)*

## **Improvitational Unit Overview**

Lesson 1-

### **TSW establish the definitions of accepting, blocking and advancing**

Blind walk, Purposely block and whim in groups of 2 to make a scene, only accept in groups (always say yes) to make a scene, Advance block and accept in groups in a scene. Topics or themes might be provided for them

*Improvisation (Junior High) 13, 15, 18, 25*

Lesson 2-

### **TSW play and understand Party Quirks**

Review from previous class, talk walks, bus stop, Party Quirks

*Improvisation (Junior High) 13,14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 25*

Lesson 3-

### **TSW play First Line, Last Line**

Two question quiz on Accepting, blocking and advancing, Character walks, Introduce foils, In pairs practice foils, First line last line

*Improvisation (Junior High) 13, 14, 15, 18, 21*

Lesson 4-

### **TSW establish the parts of a story and Play conducted story**

Vocal warm-ups, Beginning Middle and end, One word story, One sentence story, Conducted story

*Improvisation (Junior High) 10, 13, 17, 21, 25*

Lesson 5-

### **TSW create a scene in groups to present to the class**

Warm-up, Quick review of parts of the story, Quick review of foils, Create scene with beginning middle, end and characters

*Improvisation (Junior High) 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 25*

Lesson 6-

### **TSW present their final scenes**

Warm-up, Review their scenes, Present scenes

*Improvisation (Junior High) 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 25*

# Lesson examples

## Improvisation Lesson #1

**Grade: 8**

**Subject: Drama**

**Topic/ Unit: Improvisation Lesson #1**

**Duration: 40 Minutes**

### **GLO :**

- To acquire knowledge of self and others through participation in and reflection on dramatic experience.

### **SLO:**

- Recognize the techniques of offering, accepting, advancing and blocking.
- Use the body and body language to enhance characterization.
- Use voice variety to enhance a character
- Demonstrate understand of character motivation

### **Students will:**

- Demonstrate how to offer, accept and advance a scene.

### **Materials:**

- A wide open space.

### **Introduction: (5 mins)**

- Walk around the class normally. Walk around the class greeting your classmates. Walk around the class high fiving whomever you make eye contact with
- Blind walk- Have the students go into pairs, one classmate will lead the other classmate who has their eyes closed. They will then switch. This will allow the students to build a trust between each other much like in improvisation scenes.

### **Body: (30 mins)**

#### **Activity 1 – Purposely Block a scene**

- Explain and define blocking to students.
- Blocking- Rejecting information or ideas offered by another player. One of the most common problems experienced by new improvisers. Blocking is often associated with the word no.
- The students will then get into groups of two and will attempt a scene but by only saying “no” to whatever the other scene partner has to offer. No accepting allowed.

### **Activity 2 – Purposely Whimp a scene**

- Explain and define whimpering to students.
- Whimpering - Accepting an offer but failing to act on it. In other words is often considered saying “I don’t know”. Being very wishy-washy.
- The students will then get into groups of two and will attempt a scene but by only saying “I don’t know” and whimpering the scene. No accepting allowed.

### **Activity 3- Only Accept in a scene**

- Explain and define accepting to the students.
- Accepting- embracing the offers made by other performers in order to advance the scene. Accepting is usually associated by saying, “Yes”.
- The students will then get into groups of two and will attempt a scene but by saying “yes” and accepting all the ideas of their partners. No blocking or whimpering allowed. This includes if the scene partner says something ridiculous like “Your pants are on fire” the scene partner must accept this.

### **Activity 4 – Accept and Advance in a scene without Blocking**

- Explain and define advancing to the students
- Advancing- The process of moving the scene forwards. Taking your scene partners ideas and using them.
- The students will then get into bigger groups of 4 or 5 and they will accept and advance in a scene, if they block or whimper they have to do 5 jumping jacks. Their teammates must call them out if they have blocked or whimpered.

### **Assessment:**

I will assess the students by observing that they are:

- Understanding the terms blocking and whimpering.
- Able to accept the ideas of their classmates without blocking.
- Able to advance the scene while using the ideas of the classmates.
- Are willing to cooperate as a team.

### **Key Questions:**

- What elements are important to improvisation?
- Why is it important to understand blocking and whimpering before we understand advancing and accepting?
- Are you finding anything difficult?

### **Conclusion: (5 min)**

- Give the students a moment to sit down and settle in a circle again to cool down.
- Ask and discuss “Why is it important to understand blocking and whimpering before we understand advancing and accepting?”
- Go over what words are associated with each term. Blocking = No, Whimpering = I don’t know, Accepting = Yes.

### **Sponge Activity**

- Ask: What are some improvisation games they have played and enjoyed previously

- **Notes**

- *Try to encourage the students while observing them play the games*

- *Review instructions more than once if needed*

- *Put list of game order on the board*

- *Show examples with students as the games are taught. Use a student as an example*

### **Reflection on lesson:**



## Improvisation Lesson #2

**Grade: 8**

**Subject: Drama**

**Topic/ Unit: Improvisation Lesson #2**

**Duration: 40 Minutes**

**GLO :**

- To acquire knowledge of self and others through participation in and reflection on dramatic experience.

**SLO:**

- Recognize the techniques of offering, accepting, advancing and blocking.
- Use the body and body language to enhance characterization.
- Select and use language appropriate to a given character and situation.
- Enter and exit in character.
- Sustain a character throughout an exercise or scene.

**Students will:**

- Demonstrate how to play Party Quirks.

**Materials:**

- A wide open space.

**Introduction: (5 mins)**

- Go over what we did the lesson previously. Accepting is yes. Blocking is no. Whimpering is I don't know.

**Body: (30 mins)**

**Activity 1 – Walking**

- The students will walk around the room at a variety of speeds while most importantly keeping the safety of themselves and their fellow classmates into consideration.
- I will then get them to walk in a variety of ways. Example, normal walking environment walking, character walking etc). This will allow them to explore different character movements

**Activity 2 – Talk Walk**

- Have the students walk around the class. When you yell out “Talk” they will have to go up to one another classmate or have a classmate come up to them and say only one related sentence to each other.
- For example Matt walks up to Ben and says, “Your pants are purple”. Ben will respond with “Yes and they are comfortable”. They will then walk away from each other and keep walking until I can TALK again

### **Activity 3- Bus Stop**

- The students will first do this in small groups of 2. They will pretend to be at a bus stop. There will be one student up first who will establish a character then 10 seconds later a second student will enter and sit with them at the bus stop and establish their own character. They will continue to improvise conversation in character for a couple minutes.
- Do the same activity but with the whole class. I will be choosing who is next up each time someone leaves the bus stop.

### **Activity 4 – Party Quirks.**

- One student hosts the party, which the other three guests (students) will arrive at. That one student who is the host will leave the room for a minute till the students who are guests are assigned odd personalities, celebrities or characters. Whenever they are able, the host must identify what each guest is portraying. The guests enter one-at-a-time at the prompting of a doorbell sounded by the host. When their quirk is guessed correctly they return to their seat.
- Before doing this as a whole class have the students do it in groups of 2 by just taking turns portraying a character, personality or celebrity till the other partner guesses so they can switch.

### **Assessment:**

I will assess the students by observing that they are:

- able to create a character or emotions spontaneously
- able to accept the ideas of their classmates without blocking.
- are willing to cooperate as a team.
- able to enter and exit

### **Key Questions:**

- How do you feel about thinking on the spot ?
- Why is it important to accept the ideas of your classmates within a skit?
- Are you finding anything difficult?

### **Conclusion: (5 min)**

- Give the students a moment to sit down and settle in a circle again to cool down
- Have the students stretch with one partner
- Have the students share what they thought about the games, what was their favorite part or what would they want to do again with the class

### **Sponge Activity**

- Journal writing – Why do you think we are learning improvisation in class? Plus they can add whatever they want about the class.

**Notes**

- *Try to encourage the students while observing them play the games*
- *Review instructions more than once if needed*
- *Put list of game order on the board*
- *Show examples with students as the games are taught*

**Reflection on lesson:**

## Assessments:

### Quiz for lesson 3:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

/5c

### Improvisation Techniques Quiz

In this quiz you will be asked to recognize the techniques of offering, accepting, advancing and blocking. You will have 40 minutes to complete the quiz. Turn your paper over and put your hand up once you are done the quiz so I can collect it.

*The following multiple-choice questions will be worth one mark each. Circle the answers.*

1. What word is associated with **Blocking**? /1
2. What word is associated with **Accepting**? /1
3. What phrase is associated with **Whimping**? /1
4. Which of the following would be considered a “**don’t**” in improvisation? /1
  - A) Speaking loudly
  - B) Taking your cues from your scene partner
  - C) Turning down what your scene partner says
  - D) Reacting spontaneously to what is being said or done

5.

“Want to sit down for tea?”
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Which of the responses below is an example of **whimping** when answering the question above within a scene? /1

- A) “I would love to, what kind of tea?”
- B) “I already have cookies in my purse, how perfect!”
- C) “No thanks. I hate tea because it takes really funny”
- D) “I might be meeting my friend for dinner, so I am not sure. “

**Improvisation Evaluation Questions:**

1. Able to create a character or emotions spontaneously
2. Able to accept the ideas of their classmates without blocking.
3. Are willing to cooperate as a team.
4. Able to enter and exit
5. Did the students establish a coherent scene?
6. Did the students establish clear characters?
7. Was the plot coherent and consistent?
8. Did the scene have a beginning, middle and end?

## **Improvisation Checklist for Final Scenes**

**Names**

SKILLS

Warm up

Spontaneous Story

**Elements of story:**

Beginning

Middle

End

Accept Scene

Advance Scene

Entrances/ Exits

Sustaining a Scene

Characterization

## **Appendices:**

### **Games for lessons:**

Conducted Story: Players form a line on the stage. A title for a story, and a story genre is obtained from the audience. The MC starts the game by pointing to a player, who needs to start telling the story. At any point in time the MC can switch to another player, who needs to continue the story flawlessly, even if the switch happened in the middle of a sentence or even in the middle of a word.

Players that hesitate, or whose sentences are not grammatically correct or don't make sense, are boo-ed out of the game, by the audience yelling `Die`. The last player left ends the story

First line, Last line: Get a line (any line) from the audience. Players play a scene that concludes with the given line

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