

Intro to Theatre

Outlining Improvisation and Character Building

Standards Addressed:

- **9-12.RT.2** – Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text’s explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.
- **H.2.1: PROFICIENT** – Identify various dramatic forms, production practices, and theatrical traditions.
- **H.4.1: PROFICIENT** – Evaluate how well the text or production met its intended objectives.
- **H.6.1: PROFICIENT** – Construct imaginative scripts and collaborate with actors to refine scripts so that the story and meaning are conveyed to an audience.

Objectives:

- The students will be able to define improvisation and character building and recognize it in their own lives.
- The students will be able to outline and perform a short scene with a focus on character development and improvisation.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencil

Outline:

- **Journal Question and Discussion of Student Responses (~15 min.)**
 - **What is improvisation?**
 - Rolling with the punches
 - “Yes, and”
 - Making things up as you go
 - **Where do we see it outside of theatre?**
 - Everyday life – interacting with people
 - Problem-solving
 - Figuring out what to do when a situation doesn’t play out the way that you expected it to

- **How do you build a character?**
 - Deciding who they are, what they do, who they like, who they don't like, why they do the things that they do, etc.
 - You are creating a person, a complete and real person
- **Journal Question**
 - How could you apply improv to some part of your life? What character have you built for yourself to play in your everyday life?
 - Journal for **5 minutes** then begin intro to next activity
- **Physical Warm-up: Jump rope (~5 min.)**
 - Play music from "Jump In" or something similar with enough of a beat to provide some sense of rhythm to the activity.
 - Two people to turn the rope.
 - Each person has to run in, jump for 5 turns of the rope, and then run out.
 - As many as 3 students may take their turn at the same time.
 - If a student struggles with this, then have the whole class encourage them or offer to have someone go with them.
- **Elevator Shutdown (~25 min.)**
 - Get into 4 groups of at least 5 people (if they can do this quickly and quietly on their own, then they can pick their own groups)
 - You are going to be presenting an outlined version of an improv scene. Now, imagine you get on an elevator one day, and it just shuts down during your trip up/down. There are other people on the elevator with you (your group members).
 - **Now is the time to decide a few things (with your group discuss):**
 - What kind of building are you in? (hospital, hotel, skyscraper, etc.)
 - Who is your character, and why are they in that building that day?
 - How do you get the elevator to start working again? (you will only have
 - Why did it stop working in the first place? (does your character even know that?)
 - What is going to happen if you cannot get this elevator to work again?
 - You need 1 person to work the lights, and the rest of you will be in the elevator (when the lights flicker at beginning – shutdown; when they flicker at end – elevator working again).
 - Your scene should be **no longer than 5 minutes long**, but try to **shoot for closer to 3 minutes** so we have time for discussion between scenes.
 - You have **5 minutes** to discuss these questions and outline them on a piece of paper to turn in to me.
- **Presentations**
 - Explain that they should be able to communicate to the audience who and where they are without introducing it at the beginning.

- Take a volunteer group to go first. Each group has about 3-5 minutes to present their scene.
- Once a group has completed their scene, ask the class if they could guess 2 things:
 - *Who were each of the characters?*
 - *Where was this elevator?*
- Each group should go in that manner, with very brief discussions between presentations.
- **Conclusion (5 min.)**
 - What did that activity accomplish?
 - After doing that activity, how do you see improvisation in your own life?
 - How might improvisation be a useful skill to have in day-to-day life?

Assignment:

- Character Quirks: Try to find at least 2 quirks that your “everyday character” has, and bring them in for discussion next class.

Evaluation:

- Did I get through everything that I had planned? If not, what took too long? If yes, was there too much time leftover?
- Was fifteen minutes long enough to get in a decent discussion? Was it too long? Did it drag? If so, how do I get students more engaged in the topic?
- How did the class respond to the jump roping? Were they engaged or frustrated? Did it take longer than I had planned?
- Was 5 minutes long enough to plan the scenes? Could they have benefited from a longer prep. time?
- Did I explain the directions of the activity clearly enough?

Notes: