

THEATER EXPLORATION – IMPROV

In Theater Exploration, we'll learn about the performance art known as Theater. Theater is created when performers share an event such as a story to an audience on a stage. There can be one performer-You! The event can be whatever the performer decides to create. The stage can be right where you are now! Let's go investigate the magic of theater! Our first lesson is on improvisation.

Instructional videos available at lanearts.org/online-learning

GET READY

Find a space where you can move around. You can follow along sitting or standing.

WHAT IS IMPROV?

Improv is the nick-name for Improvisation, which means acting right in the moment with no script. This helps us to stretch our imaginations and be prepared for the unexpected. When we improvise, we do need to follow some **boundaries**: everything we say must be appropriate, non-violent, kind, and honoring the personal boundaries of all participants.

YES, AND...

Our first improv game, "Yes, And...", can be played by one or several actors. If you're playing on your own, which is just fine, you can speak both parts, you can use something to act as a puppet (like your finger), or maybe you can grab an adult or sibling to play along.

Actor 1 will start by making a statement such as, "There's a cat wearing a backpack skating down the sidewalk." The other will follow up by first saying, "Yes, and..." agreeing with the first statement and adding new information. For example, "Yes, and I think I hear it whistling a song!" The players will go back and forth making "Yes, and..." declarations until they reach a natural conclusion.

Here are 4 statements that you can try right now:

1. That tree out there seems to have rainbow colored apples on in!
2. I feel like the ground beneath my feet just got hot and is moving!
3. It sure is windy out here on Mars.
4. I'm surprised to find this long pathway of dinosaur footprints!

Try them all and then try adding a few of your own!

I hope that knowing that the answer to all the ideas would be "yes, and..." felt fun and encouraging. Shooting down ideas can squash our creativity. When we improvise with 'yes, and...', we can find that there are infinite ideas!

MYSTERIOUS GIFT

In the next game, "Mysterious Gift," we'll use pantomime to play. Pantomiming is using our face and body to communicate an idea.

Actor 1 will give actor 2 an imaginary mysterious gift using pantomime and their voice. They will carry the gift in a way that shows how heavy or light, large or small, rigid or wiggly the gift is. Don't say what the gift is! We might need to look like we're using all our might to drag the gift along, or maybe we're carrying a tiny gift in a delicate way to show that it might be breakable. Actor 2, will accept the gift, also using motions to show that they see how to properly carry the gift. They'll unwrap the gift, and with great enthusiasm, will reveal what the gift is. For example, "Thank you so much for this giant-sized pencil eraser that's a big as a watermelon!" Or, "I've always wanted a tiny trampoline that a mouse could jump on!"

Now it's your turn.



I'll give you four gift prompts and you get to decide exactly what they are:

1. Here's a gigantic and very light gift.
2. Here's wiggly and tiny gift.
3. Here's a long and heavy gift.
4. One more heavy gift is in wrapped inside three boxes and if you shake it you can hear it rattle.

You can also think of a few gifts of your own to give someone.

PHONE CALL

In the game, "Phone Call," we'll imagine that we're getting a phone call and enjoy having a conversation with someone on the phone. First, try to think of 3 people that it might be fun to have a conversation with. The people could be real people that you know, or characters from a story or movie you're interested in, or, you can even make someone up. Maybe you're going to have a conversation with an eagle as it rides the waves of rising hot air over a field. Maybe the eagle couldn't hold a phone, but it could perhaps talk over a speaker phone.

Select 3 people to have a conversation with. Answer the phone and say hello to them by name. "Hello Tia Lupita!" or, "Hello Spiderman!" Ask them each 2 questions. Then, think of 2 questions they might ask you! You can play "Phone Call" on your own, or maybe you'd like to try it with a guardian or sibling. Have a great conversation!

DOCUMENT YOUR DISCOVERIES

After you've completed all these improv activities, you might want to document your discoveries. This was an investigation to experiment with improv and to see what kind of ideas you could create.

You can use a paper and pen or pencil to document your most surprising or memorable ideas from "Yes, And..." your favorite gift from "Mysterious Gift," and the people or characters you got to speak with during "Phone Call." You might want to write about them or draw pictures of your findings and label those drawings.

I hope you had a great time investigating improv!

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THEATER EXPLORATION – ACTION

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THIS IS NOT A...

Our first game is called "This Is Not A..." First, find a pen or a pencil. Hold it up, examine it. Notice the shape, texture and contours of it. Now, think of what else that pen might be transformed into and say for example, "This is not a pen! This is a telescope that allows me to see into the future!"

What are two other amazing objects that pen might be transformed into? Try this game with a piece of paper and then with your hand. After that, you can use any object and transform it into something completely different!

YES, LET'S...

"Yes, Let's..." is similar to "Yes, And..." except in this game, we'll be using pantomime to show the action we're doing. See if you can find an adult or sibling to help play this one. You can also play it on your own.

The game starts with an action. You'd begin by pantomiming an activity and invite the other actor to do it too. For example, begin stirring something in a big imaginary bowl and say, "Let's make a giant batch of our favorite cookies!" Actor 2, or you, would reply, "Yes! Let's!" and begin to pantomime the action of making a giant batch of cookies. The other player or players always need to accept the ideas and answer with, "Yes, Let's!"

Now try these ideas.

1. Let's play drums outside in the park!
2. Let's build a rocket!
3. Let's draw with this giant, magic crayon!
4. Let's try on these magic gloves!

SHOW AND TELL

Find another familiar object, such as a cup. Hold the cup and notice the shape your hand needs to take to hold the cup. See what happens when you tip the cup over a bit or if you pretend to drink out of it. Notice how you need to hold onto the cup.

Put the cup down and now try to pretend to hold it. This is called pantomime. Pantomime is a theater skill in which we only use our bodies, faces, and expressions to show an action or idea without words. Try to see if you can place your hand in the same way so that it looks like you're still really holding the cup. Then, make up objects to hold and show and tell about them! Describe what it is, what it can do, and what it might be used for. You could start by showing a magic turtle.

DOCUMENT YOUR DISCOVERIES

Like in the last lesson, write down or draw about what you discovered through these games!

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THEATER EXPLORATION – EMOTION

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MOVING IN SLOW MOTION

First though, let's experiment with moving in slow motion. Pretend to pick up a ball that you can hold in one hand. Now, throw that ball as far as you can. Throw another ball in a different direction.

This time, when you throw the ball, do it in **slow motion**. Move slowly, noticing how you need to change position and imagine that the air is thick like peanut butter and you have to push through it to move. What helps you move in slow motion?

Now, let's pretend that balloons are falling on you from the ceiling. Swat THEM AWAY. Smack all the balloons in different directions. Try that again, but in slow motion. Imagine there are strings holding your arms back and you have to push against them, keep trying to swat the balloons away in all directions.

SLOW MOTION EMOTION

In this game, "Slow Motion Emotion," You'll start by making what we call a neutral face. That means a face that doesn't show any emotion. As you count from one to five in your head, move slowly and gradually from the neutral face, putting an emotion into body and your face.

After you've practiced with a few different emotions, see if an adult or sibling can guess the emotion you've chosen reflect on what gave away that emotion. Here is a LIST OF EMOTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM: *Friendly, Angry, Sad, Embarrassed, Frustrated, Annoyed, Shy, Nervous, Loving, Confident, Proud, Curious, Excited, Energetic, Surprised, Grateful, Hopeful, Happy.*

SAY IT YOUR WAY

We can investigate the ways we can show emotion by using our voice. There are so many ways we can shift and regulate our voices to show our emotions. Let's try saying, "Hello." If you walk up to a friend that you're excited to see, how might you say hello to them? Would you speak clearly and with energy in your voice? What if you were feeling very sleepy and it was too early to wake up, but someone accidentally dropped some pots and pans on the ground? How would your voice sound? If you were walking by a deer family that was feeding on the grass and you were a little bit afraid and excited at the same time and a friend walked by and you wanted to get their attention and not frighten the deer?

Try to say, "Hello" in five ways that all sound a bit different from each other. What emotions might go along with the different hello's you just thought of?

Try saying, "What's going on over there?"

Experiment with changing how loud or softly you speak, how high or low your voice is and how much energy you use to make your words. Where is the person or people you're speaking to? Are they close or far away?

How does the way you say "what's going on over there?" show what emotions you might be feeling? Write down or draw pictures about what you discovered about showing emotion.



ENTRANCES & EXITS

In this game, we'll play with entering and exiting the stage! When we are performing, we enter the stage area from what is called "offstage." That's the area around the stage that the audience doesn't see. You can use pantomime or your voice and face to help give the idea of where you are when you enter the stage.

For example, if the scene on the stage is a magical cave under the sea, think about how you might need to move to show that to the audience. If you are acting as a judge on the Supreme Court of the United States and entering the courthouse to take your seat, how are you moving that shows who you are, where you are, and what you might be thinking? If you're at pool on the first warm day in summer, how can you show that when you enter the state area? Try all of these ideas out.

Actors also need to exit a stage in a dramatic way because actors are telling the story whenever they are on the stage. Here are some ideas you can try out:

1. You're riding a horse through a fierce rainstorm.
2. You're saying goodbye to a huge crowd at a fancy dance party.
3. You're escaping through a secret tunnel.

DOCUMENT YOUR DISCOVERIES

Using your paper and pen or pencil, you can draw or write about some of the ideas you've investigated about different ways you've investigated to show emotions to document what you've discovered. The games and ideas we covered were, moving in slow motion, Slow Motion Emotion, Say it Your Way, and Entrances & Exits.

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THEATER EXPLORATION – PERFORM

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TONGUE TWISTERS

Tongue twisters are fun to try to say clearly and also strengthen and stretch the muscles involved in speech so we can have clear pronunciation. It can be helpful to imagine where the tongue is in the mouth as you try to say the tongue twisters quickly. Thinking of each word as it is spoken is also helpful. Enjoy saying these quickly, clearly, and without stopping three times each. It's a fun challenge!

1. *You know you need unique New York.*
2. *Black background, Brown background, Brown Background, Black background*
3. *I thought a thought, but the thought I thought wasn't the thought I thought I thought. If the thought I thought I thought had been the thought I thought, I wouldn't have thought so much.*
4. *Yellow butter, purple jelly, red jam, black bread, spread it thick, say it quick!
Yellow butter, purple jelly, red jam, black bread, spread it thicker, say it quicker!
Yellow butter, purple jelly, red jam, black bread. Don't eat until you are spreading it like a spread!*

I AM LIKE

The "I am like..." poem form can be used to create a simple performance. Think of 5 descriptive words (adjectives) that you can use to talk about yourself or an imaginary character. For example: *strong, energetic, alive, stormy, curious, wiggly, silly, hopeful, bold.*

Next, think of 5 words or phrases of things (nouns) that match the descriptive words (adjectives) you've chosen. For example: *an oak tree, a dog running along the beach, hatching chick, floating feather.*

Put the adjectives together with the nouns or phrase to form descriptive sentences. I am ____like a/an _____. For example: I am strong like the trunk of an oak tree. Create three of these sentences for your "I am like..." poem.

PERFORM!

The poem you just wrote will be your performance. Decide where you'd like to give your performance and that will be your stage. It can really be wherever you think of because you are the actor and artist! What kind of entrance and exit will you use? You can be as dramatic as you'd like using your imagination.

Try to be accepting of your creative ideas and stretch your imagination as you remember the lessons we explored in the improv games "Yes, Lets!" and "Yes, And..."

After you perform, make sure to come back for a final bow. Bowing is a way of giving thanks to our audience for supporting us in our performance and to acknowledge your own hard work.

DOCUMENT YOUR DISCOVERIES

You can document your final performance by creating a drawing or written description of your stage and the ideas you shared in your poem. Think of ideas you might want to explore in future performances

The show must go on! Have fun and enjoy learning!

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