

The Renaissance

Theatre Activities for the Classroom





Improvisation Games Rules & Set-Up

1. Clear a space in the room and have students make a circle of chairs.
2. The **PLAYING AREA** is inside the circle of chairs. All games must take place in the playing area; you cannot go all over the room.
3. If students are sitting in their chair and watching they are the **AUDIENCE**.
4. If a participant needs their chair for the game they can take it into the **PLAYING AREA** with them.
5. Each game has a set of directions. Listen to all directions. When you say **ACTION** the game starts.
6. When you say **CUT**, the game is over, so students freeze in their place.
7. In improvisation there are no right or wrong answers. participants must **STICK TO THE RULES OF THE GAME AND USE THEIR IMAGINATION**.
8. In improvisation you must **NEVER SAY NO**. Once it is spoken, it is a fact for the story and it is the actors' job to build on that fact.
9. **SIDE COACHING**: During and improvisation game the director/teacher will sometimes find it necessary to remind the students of the game rules or set-up to keep them on focus.

Activities in a Room

A group improvisation game with no words (using only their bodies) to help students understand the “what?” (activity) and the “where?” (location) of a scene or setting. One student chooses a room in a house and begins an activity that takes place in that room. When other students recognize the activity and the room, they enter one at a time into the same room and do a different activity there.

1. Review improvisation rules and classroom set-up from page 1.
2. Have students stand in front of their chairs prepared to do the activity together.
3. Game rules to tell students:
 - I’m going to call out a room in the house.
 - When I say ACTION show me, without any words or sounds, use only your body, what you would do in that room in the house.
 - The first room is going to be the kitchen. Think, don’t move - what would you do in the kitchen? ACTION.
4. Allow students time to act out their activity. Tell them 2 things:
 - Go slowly.
 - Keep their eyes on what they are doing.
 - Remind them of these 2 things a few times. After you see everyone responding to these directions and fully participating, call CUT.
5. Have students go back to their chairs and sit.
6. Tell students:
 - Notice that I said to go slowly. You don’t have real objects in your hands, so you need to go slower to give the audience a chance to see what you are doing.
 - Also, keep your eyes on it. If you keep your eyes on the object that is not really there, and see it with your imagination, the audience will also see it.

7. Ask students: What were you doing in the kitchen?
 - Call on a few volunteers and ask them to give details.
For ex.: If someone was cooking ask, “What were you cooking?” “What did you use to mix it?” “What ingredients did you use?”
 - Explain to students that these details make their acting just like real life (realistic) and that’s the way we want our acting to be because the audience needs to believe what you are doing on stage.
8. Ask students: “Where did you get these details from?”
 - Answers sought: imagination, or based on real life or what they know.
 - Let students know these are the 2 main resources for acting and improvisation.

Part B

9. Play the game again with one volunteer:
 - Volunteer student stands on the center of the circle (can use a chair)
10. Instructions to student (and the entire class):
 - Choose a room in the house, but don’t tell anyone.
 - Choose an activity you would do in that room, but don’t tell anyone.
 - When I say ACTION, start your activity.
 - When the audience knows where you are and what you are doing, one person at a time goes into the same room as you, but they must do a different activity in that same room.
 - For example: What were you doing in the kitchen? (volunteer student will answer)
 - Ask the rest of the class:
 - a) If this student is doing this activity in the kitchen, which room do you go into? (answer: the kitchen)
 - b) Would you do that activity with him/her? (answer: no)
 - c) What would you do? (answer: something different)
 - d) And you must be different from everyone in the room, so you will go in only one at a time, so raise your hand and wait until you are called.

11. The volunteer students might need some help with an idea. Let them know they can choose any room in the house except the kitchen (because we did it already) and the bathroom (because we will be going in there with them). When he/she is ready, call ACTION.

12. Choose students to enter one at a time as they volunteer. Encourage as many activities as possible. Remind them to go slowly and focus their eyes.

13. Call CUT when there are no more volunteers.

14. Have students go back to their seats.

15. Ask: Where were you and what were you doing?

16. Call on a few for answers but save the person who started for last.

17. Before having the first students tell where they were, explain to the students:

- There is no wrong answer.
- The rules of the game were, "go to the same room you thought the first person was in."
- Whichever room you thought they were in was the right answer if you used your imagination.
- Stick to the rules and use your imagination.

18. Have the first student tell where they were and what they were doing.

After the students see a play or live theatrical experience. Ask students if the acting was realistic and contained detail? Have them site examples. Ask students to name the different activities that were going on during the performance. Were these activities indicative of the location? The time of day? The season of the year?

Character Circle

Small group improvisation game to help students understand the “who?” of a scene. One student stands in the center of a circle and each person around the circle gets a chance to talk to the person in the center. They must each first decide “who” they are going to be. The person in the center must listen to what each person says and how they say it and figure out “who” they are. When it is figured out, the center person responds as the other person in the relationship and has a conversation.

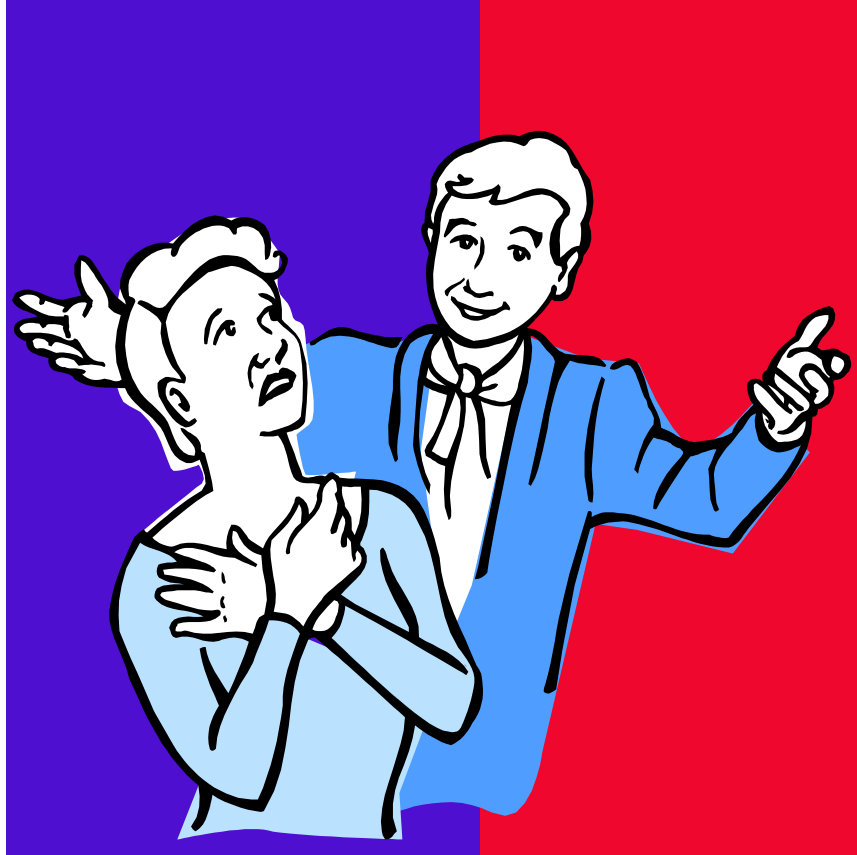
PROCEDURE

1. Review and set-up all improvisation rules from page 1.
2. Choose one good talker from the class and have them stand in the center of the playing area.
3. Choose 4 or 6 additional good talkers to form a circle around this person.
4. Rules for the students:
 - This game works with the “who are you?” in a scene – the character.
 - When an actor walks out on stage the audience does not know who they are until another actor walks out on stage and begins to talk to him/her.
 - The character becomes clear by the way the two of them relate to each other.
 - Each person in the small circle will get a chance to talk to the person in the center.
 - The person in the center then must figure out who they are, become the CHARACTER in the relationship, and engage in a conversation as that CHARACTER.
 - For example: If I talk to you like the mother/father, and say something like, “You’re grounded!” who do you become? (answer: the child) And what would you say in response? (answer: a response) If I talk to you like the boss and say

something like, “You’re late for work again today! What happened?” who do you become? (answer: the worker or employee) And what would you say in response? (answer: a response)

5. Find out who in the circle is ready with an idea.
6. Tell the others:
 - We will start with this person when I say ACTION.
 - When I say NEXT, we will go to the next person and continue all around the circle. If you get more than one turn as the game continues, you must stay the same person, you cannot become a different character.
 - People in the circle cannot repeat a character already chosen.
7. Say ACTION to start.
8. Once a character is established and a conversation is underway, say NEXT.
9. Remind students to follow the never say NO rule of improvisation.
10. After everyone has had at least one turn call CUT.
11. Ask the audience to tell who each person was and what the relationship was.

After the students see a play or live theatrical experience. Discuss the relationship of the characters. What did the students understand about each character from the way they related to one another (behavior/character traits)?



Activities in a Room + Who

A group improvisation game to help students understand the “what?” (activity) and the “where?” (location) and “who?” (character) of a scene or setting. This is a combination of “Activities in a Room” and “Character Circle”. One student chooses a room in a house and begins an activity that takes place in that room. When other students recognize the activity and the room, one student enters and begins a conversation with that person knowing “who” they are. The person who started the activity will engage in a conversation as the other person in the relationship, but they must not stop their activity, no matter what.

1. Review improvisation rules and classroom set-up from page 1. Explain to the students that this game is a combination of “Activities in a Room” and “Character Circle”, that were previously played.

2. Ask the class for one volunteer to start the game:
 - Volunteer student stands on the center of the circle (can use a chair)
3. Instructions to student (and the entire class):
 - Choose a room in the house, but don't tell anyone.
 - Choose an activity you would do in that room, but don't tell anyone.
 - When I say ACTION, start your activity.
 - When the audience knows where you are and what you are doing, one person at a time goes into the same room as you, but they must know "who" they are.
 - They will start a conversation with you the same way they did in the character circle game, and you must do as the center person in the character circle did, listen to figure out who are they, become the other person in the relationships, and have a conversation, but do not stop your activity no matter what.
4. When he/she is ready, call ACTION.
5. Choose students to enter one at a time as they volunteer. Ask them, when their hands go up, if they know who they are going to be and are they ready to have a conversation.
6. Allow a second or third person to enter.
7. Call CUT when your feel the scene has gone on as long as it should.
8. Have students go back to their seats.
9. Ask:
 - Where was the first person and what were they doing?
 - Who was the next person to enter and what was the relationship?
 - What were the other relationships in the scene?
 - What was the objective of each character? What did they want from one another?
 - Was there a conflict? What was it?
 - Was the conflict resolved?

10. Explain to the students that in improvisation “once it is a spoken word it is a fact.” For example: if I thought the first person to start the scene was in the living room watching TV and entered saying, “Get your feet off the couch!”, but they thought they were in the bedroom lying on the bed watching TV, the origin idea must change and the scene takes place in the living room. Another example: if the person watching TV responds by saying, “But Mom, I’m comfortable”, that character becomes the Mom even if their original idea was to be the older sister or grandmother.

11. Explain to the students how conflict is created from character objective. Sometimes characters want different things, and therefore conflict occurs. Sometimes characters want the same things, and cannot both have it, therefore conflict occurs. Conflict is what makes a scene or play interesting, and character objective is what moves the plot forward.

After the students see a play or live theatrical experience. Ask students about the characters’ objective. What was the main conflict in the play? Did the characters achieve their objectives? Was the conflict resolved?



Mirrors

A movement game where student mirror one another's movements. Students are in groups of two. They face one another and silently move as if they are looking in a mirror. Their partner must move as if they are the reflection in the mirror. Once the premise of the game is set you can add vocabulary words for students to act out and mirror one another.

PROCEDURE:

1. Review the improvisation rules and set-up from page 1.
2. Choose 2 volunteers.

3. Have them stand in the center of the playing area and face one another.
4. Explain that one person will be acting as if they are looking in a mirror and the other person will be the reflection in the mirror.
5. Ask the students what that means. (answer: the person being the reflection must move exactly like the person looking in the mirror)
6. Give the two participants the rules.
 - Rule #1: Face your partner at all times.
 - Rule #2: Keep 2 feet on the floor at all times.
 - Rule #3: Move in slow motion. Explain to the students that this is the most important rule because the object of the game is for the partners to be perfectly together. Moving in slow motion will make this easier.
7. In order to give the students some ideas for movement, ask, “What kinds of activities would you do if you are looking in a mirror?” (answers: comb hair, fix clothes, brush teeth, etc.)
8. When student are ready call ACTION. (play slow music if your want)
9. Participants might need to be reminded that as a mirror they would move with the arm directly across from one another, which is actually the opposite.
10. Allow the two participants to move for a while, then call CUT.
11. Ask the audience:
 - Did they follow the rules? (go through each rule one at a time)
 - Were they together?
 - What did they have to use to be together? (answer: eyes)
Before the reflection could move, they first have to see the movement.
12. Split the class into partners. Have them face one another.

13. Review the 3 rules

- Rule #1: Face your partner at all times.
- Rule #2: Keep 2 feet on the floor at all times.
- Rule #3: Move in slow motion.
- Review the object of the game: to be perfectly together.
- Remind students the most important thing to use is their eyes.

14. Choose which partner will be the person and which will be the reflection. Let them know they will each have a chance to do both. Call ACTION. (play slow music if your want)

15. Call CUT. Have the partners switch roles. Call ACTION.

16. Switch roles a few times.

Part B

17. Have partners choose who will be the person and who will be the reflection. Tell them not to let you know.

18. Tell them that you want them to be so perfectly together that you cannot tell who the person is and who the reflection is.

19. Call ACTION. (play slow music if your want)

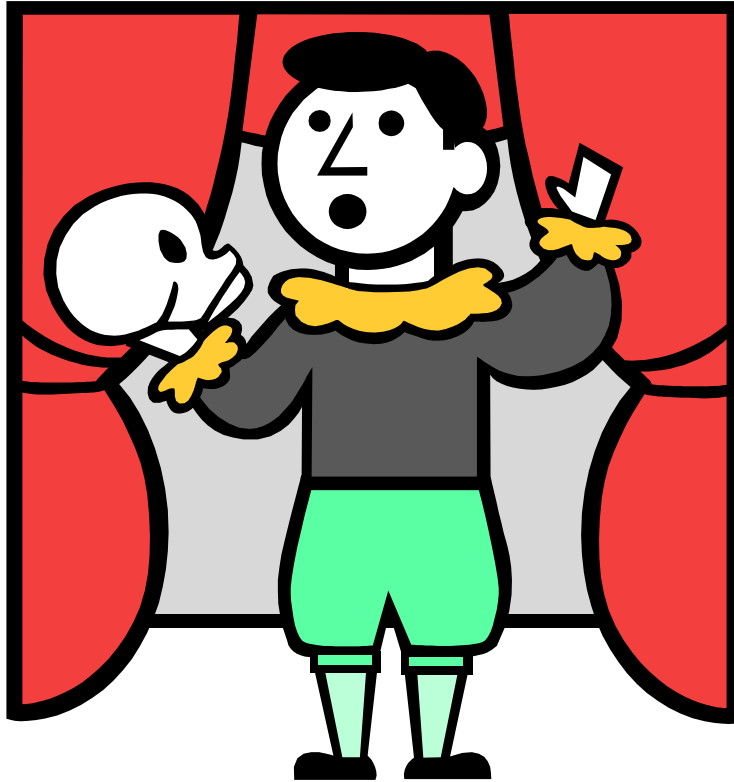
20. Walk around and watch as they play and see if you can see who the person is and who the reflection is in each group.

21. Call CUT.

22. Go through each group and tell them what you saw.

Choose vocabulary words and have students act them out and mirror the movements.

Have students act out sections of a story and mirror the activities or feelings from the words.



Exits & Entrances

This game allows students to understand the “why?” of the scene or story. This is the objective, or want, of the character. And helps us understand the character better. One student starts in the center. Other students must choose the location of the scene (preferably a place where there are a lot of exits and entrances). One student starts by standing in the center of the playing area. The student who enters must give the first student a reason (“why?”) to exit. Another student enters and does the same.

PROCEDURE:

1. Review the rules and set-up for improvisation games from page 1.
2. Define the word EXIT.
3. Define the word ENTRANCE.

4. Explain to the students that this game is called EXITS & ENTERANCES because it is about coming and going, you are not allowed to stay long.
5. Have the students choose a location that has a lot of entrances and exits. For example: a mall, school, an airport.
6. Ask for one volunteer.
7. Have the volunteer stand in the center of the playing area.
8. One student will enter into the location and give the first student a reason why he/she must exit the location.
9. Once the reason is given that student must exit, leaving the new student in the location.
10. The next student will enter and give the new student a reason to exit.
11. Once the reason is given that student must exit, leaving the new student in the location.
12. Repeat until everyone has had a turn.
13. Tips:
 - Students are not allowed to give reasons like: the building is on fire, or there is a bomb in the building because if something like this happens everyone must exit the scene and the game will be over.
 - Encourage students to think of specific reasons, such as: "Your mother just called and it's time for dinner." or "Your dog just ran off the leash. Hurry and catch it."
 - No repeaters allowed! If someone has already given a reason, you cannot repeat it.

After the students see a play or live theatrical experience. Discuss the "objective" of each character (their goals, wants, needs or desires). "Why" was the character there?



Dialogue Writing

A writing activity, in groups of two, where students will understand how to write dialogue.

1. Explain to students that writing for a play is different from narrative writing because in a play the entire story is told through dialogue.

Dialogue: a conversation between two or more character.

Monologue: one character speaking.

2. Have students split up into groups of two. They should have a pen or pencil each, and one paper they can share.

3. Choose with the class a location for a scene and two characters. Make sure the relationship of these two characters is clear. Write them on the board.

4. Have each student in each group decide which of the two characters they will be portraying.

5. Instruct one of the students to write their character's name on the page in the center of the first line. They should then write the first line of dialogue of this character starting at the left margin.

6. Instruct the second student to read that line of dialogue, skip a line and write their character's name in the center. Starting at the left margin the second student will write a line in response to the first character's line.

7. Students will pass the paper back and forth and continue with the scene. The important thing to tell students is that good dialogue writing responds to the previous line spoken (or written).

8. Script Format:

- Character names appear in the center of the line.
- Dialogue lines start at the left margin.
- Skip one line between a character's line and the character name on the next line.
- Stage directions appear in parenthesis.
- If stage direction appears in the line of dialogue, it pertains only to the character who is speaking.
- If stage direction appears in a line by itself, it pertains to different characters, and is indented from the left margin, and in parenthesis.

9. When the scene is completed, have students come to the front to act each scene out. Remember, they are not to read any stage direction. All stage directions must be acted out.

10. Ask:

- What was good about the scene?
- Did the dialogue lines respond one line to the other?
- What were the characters' objectives?
- Was there a conflict? What was it?
- Was the dialogue natural sounding? Did it sound like people really talking?

After the students see a play or live theatrical experience. Ask students about the dialogue. Did the dialogue respond one line to the next? Was the dialogue natural sounding? Could you tell the objectives of the characters through the dialogue? Was the conflict clearly expressed through the dialogue?