

# AARON F. BRATEMAN

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**Unit Title:** You're Always Making It Up

**Focus of the Unit:** How can we apply improvisation skills to enhance our performance of scripted scene work?

<b>Overarching Unit Objectives</b>	<b>Summative Assessment Strategies</b>
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to apply improvisation skills to enhance their performance of scripted scene work.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Analysis and Scripted Scene Performance <b>Criteria:</b> Provides textual evidence that supports analysis, Demonstrates use of improv skills (Strong Agreement, Activation, Grounding, Adherence to base reality), Commits to performance physically and vocally <b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Comments (Appendix G)
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to assess how improvisation affects their performance of a scripted scene.	<b>Performance Task:</b> Journal <b>Criteria:</b> Entry for each day, Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher Comments on Journal

## **A. Relevant Learning Standards:**

### Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

1. Creativity is a foundation of theatrical practice.  
HSIIc. Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character who is believable and authentic.

TH: Pr.4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

1. The essence of theater is storytelling.  
HSIIa. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable theatrical experiences.

TH: Pr.5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

1. Theater artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.  
HSIIa. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable performance.

## Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

### NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards—

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

## **B. Context for Learning:**

Audience: 10<sup>th</sup> grade theater class with 35 students in a specialized performing arts public high school in a large urban area. The class is a double period that is 96 minutes long. The school serves grades 9-12 and Special Education. Students audition to get into the program and take several classes a day in their desired concentration in addition to core curricular subjects. The school has 853 students. The student body is diverse--11% Asian, 13% Black, 33% Hispanic or Latinx, 36% White, and almost 6% American Indian. It should be noted, that this school contains a much higher percentage of white students than is represented in the city's school system at large. 1% of the students at the school are English Language Learners, and 19% are students with Special Needs. The student body is about 31% male and 69% female.

Known Learning Needs: Several students in the class have IEPs which include supports for redirection, focusing prompts, teacher check-ins, small group work, preferential seating, and visual support of information.

Modifications:

Learning Disability—Multi-step instructions will be broken down as needed.

Speech and Language Learning Disability—Written agenda, scaffolding, redirection, prompting, kinesthetic components to the lesson.

English-Language Learners—Pre-teach key words and phrases through examples; use physical demonstrations.

Previous Knowledge: Students have completed a year and a half of theatrical training. They are familiar with performance and acting technique and have recently completed a unit in scene study. Students have practice analyzing scripts and providing evidence to support their conclusions. In their freshman year, they completed a unit in improvisation, so they have a basic familiarity with improv technique.

**Lesson Title:** Yeah, I’m Listening... (Lesson 1 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we work as a team to perform together?

Unit Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to employ listening skills and an awareness of the group to work collaboratively with their peers.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Ad Exec <b>Criteria:</b> Celebrates suggestions, Shares the scene, Actively participates in scene <b>Documentation:</b> Brief Notes (Appendix A)
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to identify theatrical skills being used in improv games.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Group Discussion <b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix A)

**Related Standards:**

TH: Pr.5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

1. Theater artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.  
 HSIIa. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable performance.

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Students will be given refocusing prompts as needed, and the teacher will check in with students as needed. Suggestions in Ad Exec will be written on the board so that they can be referenced for ELLs.

**Spatial Organization:** The room will be cleared as possible for Blackout New York and One at a Time. For Zombie Tag, chairs will be arranged at random all across the room, with most students sitting in them. The room will again be cleared for Hide the Body, Pass the Face, and Modified Zip-Zap-Zop. A stage and audience area will again be created for Ad Exec.

**Materials Needed:** Chairs, Board

## **Procedures**

### **1. Introduction (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher introduces the unit to the students, explaining that they are going to take a look at how improv skills can be used to enhance scripted scene work together. The teacher asserts to students that all scripted scenes are actually improv scenes in disguise. The teacher leads a brief discussion fielding student responses to this assertion. The teacher explains that over the course of the unit students will examine the validity of this assertion. The teacher then introduces the next activity.

### **2. Blackout New York (10 Minutes)**

- a. Students walk around the room and follow teacher commands:
  - i. Flashlight: Students “click on” a mimed flashlight and walk around the room silently.
  - ii. Blackout: Students freeze in place. They must hear “Flashlight” to unfreeze.
  - iii. Brooklyn Bridge: Two students make a bridge by facing each other and putting their hands together above their heads. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - iv. Empire State: Students stop and put both hands straight up above their head like the top of a building. This must follow with:
    1. King Kong: Students pound their chests like a monkey and make a “George of the Jungle” noise. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - v. Statue of Liberty: Students stop and put one hand up which holds the “torch”, while the other hand holds the “tablets”. This must follow with:
    1. 4<sup>th</sup> of July: Students pulse their hands and make fireworks noises. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - vi. Subway: Students move together in a conga line in groups of three. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - vii. Broadway: Students get together in groups of four, form a kick line, and sing a little bit of “New York, New York”. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - viii. New Yorker: Students stop and yell, “Hey! I’m walking here!” They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
  - ix. Cockroach: Students lay on their backs on the floor and flail their arms and legs in the air. This must be followed with:
    1. Dead cockroach: Students flop over to the side and stop moving. This must be followed with:
      - a. Exterminator: Students stand up and mime spraying bug spray while making an aerosol noise. They must hear “Flashlight” to continue.
- b. The teacher will give commands as they choose, sometimes out of order to keep students on their toes. The teacher may eliminate students who do the wrong motion, or cannot find a partner, if they choose to make the game competitive.

### **3. One at a Time (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher transitions to the next game.
- b. All students stand spread out across the space.
- c. One student begins walking around the space.
- d. There may only be one student walking at a time, and the group must switch who is walking without talking.

### **4. Zombie Tag (10 Minutes)**

- a. Students sit in chairs spread out across the space, with one empty chair.
- b. One student is selected to be the “Zombie”. They must walk with their knees together at all times. They are encouraged to make zombie noises and physicalize their role.
- c. The “Zombie” begins at the opposite side of the space from the empty chair. It is the “Zombie’s” goal to sit in an empty chair. The rest of the group can shift chairs as needed to cover an empty chair that the “Zombie” is near. If the “Zombie” manages to sit in an empty chair, they win, and a new “Zombie” is selected.

### **5. Hide the Body (7 Minutes)**

- a. Students will work in a group to hide another student from being seen. They should use their whole bodies to accomplish this task.
- b. The groups being used to hide the other student should start out large, and become increasingly smaller with each round.

### **6. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher asks students about their experience playing the games that have happened so far. The teacher may further prompt students by asking what led to success in those games. In other words, what did students have to do in order to win or be good at the games?
- b. The teacher responds to students and notes evolving understandings.
- c. The teacher transitions to the next activity.

### **7. Pass the Face (7 Minutes)**

- a. All students stand in a circle.
- b. One student initiates a pose (including facial expression) and noise, and shows it to the person standing next to them.
- c. The next student copies exactly what they see and passes it along to the next person.
- d. Like the game, Telephone, the “face” is passed around the circle, with each student copying exactly what they have been given, not trying to recreate the initiation.

### **8. Modified Zip-Zap-Zop (10 Minutes)**

- a. Students play Zip-Zap-Zop, but will pass the game around by copying the way it was sent to them. Just like in the previous exercise, students copy the physicality and tone of the sender, but they now shift the words to be Zip, Zap, or Zop as needed. If the words go away completely, that is okay.

### **9. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher initiates another group discussion asking students about their experience with the last two games. Again, the teacher asks students about how the games were played successfully and what someone might do to be successful in the game.
- b. The teacher responds to students and notes evolving understandings.
- c. The teacher transitions to the next activity.

### **10. Ad Exec (25 Minutes)**

- a. A group of 6-7 students takes on roles at an advertising agency. One student will function as the “boss”.
- b. The teacher instructs that the “boss” will explain that a company has had a bad year and needs to sell a new product. Then the “boss” will get suggestions from the group for the following things, one item at a time:
  - i. Product
  - ii. Name of Product
  - iii. What’s the product do?
  - iv. Who is spokesperson for product?
  - v. Jingle or slogan for product
- c. Anyone in the group can provide a suggestion to the boss’s prompt. As soon as anyone gives a suggestion, everyone (boss included) has a giant celebration about the idea. As the celebration dwindles, the “boss” pulls everything back together and recaps the things the group has decided so far.
- d. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.

### **11. Group Discussion (7 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher wraps up class by initiating another group discussion asking students about their experience with the last game. Again, the teacher asks students about how the game was played successfully and what someone might do to be successful in the game.
- b. The teacher then asks students what they think the focus of the day’s activities was, and what they got out of the activities. The teacher highlights answers about working together and collaboration and agreement, or perhaps prompts students if necessary. The teacher then asks students how they were able to engage as a group and work together, and how those skills might be relevant to scripted scene work.

**Homework:** Students will complete a journal entry for the day addressing the following prompts: What do you think the focus of today’s activities was? What did you get out of the work today? Did you learn anything new? What spurred that learning? Cite a specific moment. Why might the focus of today’s activities be useful to creating an improv scene with a partner? How might that focus apply to a scripted scene?

**Lesson Title:** ACTIVATION COMPLETE (Lesson 2 of 5)

**Focus Question:** What does it mean to accept and activate someone else’s idea?

<b>Unit Objectives</b>	<b>Formative Assessment Strategies</b>
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to accept and activate each other’s ideas in an improvised performance.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Slideshow <b>Criteria:</b> Makes choices that build on known information, Works collaboratively with group, Shares scene with others <b>Documentation:</b> Brief Notes (Appendix B)
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate the effect of “Yes, anding” on an improvised performance.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Discussion and Journal <b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix B)

**Related Standards:**

TH: Pr.4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

1. The essence of theater is storytelling.  
HSIIa. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable theatrical experiences.

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down. Teacher will check-in with students during small group work. Tableaux titles will be written on board for ELLs, with vocabulary explained, as needed.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be as clear as possible, except during Alibis and Slideshow, during which a stage and audience area will be formed with chairs.

**Materials Needed:** Board, Deck of playing cards



## Procedures

### 1. Introduction (2 Minutes)

- a. The teacher welcomes the class and introduces the focus question for the day's activities. The teacher fields some preliminary answers to the question from students and asks them to see how the day's activities change or confirm their preliminary thoughts.

### 2. Pass the Clap (5 Minutes)

- a. Students stand in a circle.
- b. Students pass a clap around the circle by making eye contact with each other and clapping at the same time.
- c. Students may pass the clap to anyone in the circle this way. They may not talk to each other.

### 3. Thank You Statue (6 Minutes)

- a. Students stand in a circle.
- b. One student goes into the center of the circle and freezes in a dynamic pose.
- c. After a moment, another student goes into the circle and strikes a complementary pose.
- d. The initiating student says, "Thank you, statue," and takes a place back in the circle. The other student remains frozen.
- e. Another student now comes out to complement this pose, and the process repeats indefinitely.

### 4. Tableaux (20 Minutes)

- a. The teacher tells the students that as a group they will need to create a "snapshot" of the image that they give a title of. The teacher encourages them to work together and to *do* rather than discuss. This exercise should be performed silently.
- b. The teacher leads students through a series of tableaux. They count down out loud from either 20 or 10, depending on how quickly the group works. When the teacher reaches zero, they shout, "FREEZE!" Everyone should be frozen in a snapshot at this point.
- c. The teacher speeds this count up as they progress through the exercise.
- d. Occasionally, the teacher asks students to come out of their pose and take a look around if they think the image is particularly strong.
- e. If the teacher sees the group stalled, they encourage them to start with one person establishing something and having everyone else add on and accept that initiation.
- f. The teacher can come up with any titles they want, but it is interesting to begin with very concrete images and then to progress to more open images. Here are some possible tableau ideas:
  - i. The number five
  - ii. The letter "D"
  - iii. A circle
  - iv. A Day at the Beach
  - v. First Day of Camp
  - vi. Times Square

- vii. A Justin Bieber Concert (This one is fun, as it tends to be polarizing.)
  - viii. The Zoo
  - ix. Ice Cream
  - x. Despair
- g. Often, the actors will resort to working on their own and striking a pose, rather than working as a group to create a cohesive image. If the teacher sees this happening, they will encourage the actors to try to form one unified image of the scene, rather than a bunch of different representations of the scene.

**5. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher asks students about their experience doing the exercises that have happened so far. The teacher may further prompt students by asking what moments students found successful in those exercises. Why were those moments successful?
- b. The teacher responds to students and notes evolving understandings.
- c. The teacher transitions to the next activity by explaining that students will now use those skills in a more structured form.

**6. So I'll...Pass the Card (5 Minutes)**

- a. Students pair up, and the teacher gives each pair a playing card.
- b. Students do a scene, and the first student starts with a belief they actually have, for instance, "I hate cats."
- c. The other student responds with, "What you're saying is \_\_\_\_\_, so I'll \_\_\_\_\_". The student should repeat what was said to them, and then add what they will do next.
- d. Only the person holding the playing card may speak, and the student holding the playing card will pass it to the other student after they have finished speaking.

**7. Alibis (20 Minutes)**

- a. In pairs, students will be "interrogated" by the teacher in a situation that they would need to create an alibi for, ie. Missing curfew, or robbing a bank.
- b. Students must work together to create an airtight alibi. The teacher will try to poke any holes in the story, and take everything that the students say as "true".
- c. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.

**8. Group Discussion (3 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher again asks students about their experience doing the last exercise. The teacher may further prompt students by asking what moments students found successful in those exercises. Why were those moments successful?
- b. The teacher responds to students and notes evolving understandings.
- c. The teacher explains the next exercise and asks students for some suggestions of skills they have been looking at that students will need to keep in mind.

**9. Slideshow (25 Minutes)**

- a. A group of 7-8 students performs this game.
- b. Two of the students are giving a presentation of photographs of a recent trip they went on. They will give a brief recap of the trip and then describe what we will see in the first photograph.

- c. The remaining students will create the photograph, making a tableau of the image. The students giving the presentation will describe in detail what everyone is posed as.
- d. The students making the image then create a second, random tableau, and the students giving the presentation must justify and explain why the image looks this way and what part of the trip it represents.
- e. Finally, one more image is described by the presenters, and the other students make this image. Again, the presenters describe what they see in detail.
- f. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.

#### **10. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher wraps up class by initiating another group discussion asking students about their experience watching or participating in the last exercise. Again, the teacher asks students about moments that were successful and why they were successful.
- b. The teacher then asks students what they think the focus of the day's activities was, and what they got out of the activities. The teacher highlights answers about building on each other's' ideas, or perhaps prompts students if necessary. The teacher explains that the skills students worked on today are called "acceptance" and "activation". The teacher then asks students how they were able to use those skills throughout the day, and how those skills might be relevant to scripted scene work.

**Homework:** Students will complete a journal entry for the day addressing the following prompts: What do you think the focus of today's activities was? What did you get out of the work today? How did it build on yesterday's work? What did you need to do to successfully work with your groups today? Why might that be important to improv? What about scripted work? Did you learn anything new? What spurred that learning? Cite a specific moment. Anything else you want to share?

**Lesson Title:** Honestly, I'm Glad You're Here (Lesson 3 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we bring ourselves to improvised performance?

Unit Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to perform a grounded improv scene.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Practice Scenes <b>Criteria:</b> Integrates acceptance, activation, and grounding <b>Documentation:</b> Brief Notes (Appendix C) and Discussion
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to analyze a grounded improvisational performance.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Discussion and Journal <b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix C)

**Related Standards:**

TH: Cr.1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.  
 2. Creativity is a foundation of theatrical practice.  
 HSIIc. Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character who is believable and authentic.

TH: Pr.4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.  
 2. The essence of theater is storytelling.  
 HSIIa. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable theatrical experiences.

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Students will have the ability to pause a scene if they do not like the direction it is going in, or if begins to trigger something for them. Vocabulary and cultural references will be introduced ahead of time for ELLs. Teacher will check in with students during small group work and provide refocusing as needed.

**Spatial Organization:** Space should be set up into a stage and audience area until the Practice Scenes, when the space should be cleared enough for each group of students to have some space to rehearse.

**Materials Needed:** Chairs, Board

## **Procedures**

### **1. Introduction (3 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher welcomes students and presents the focus question of the day. The teacher clarifies what “bringing ourselves to an improv scene” means, perhaps through direct explanation, or perhaps through further questions to students. The teacher asks students to keep this question in mind as they work today, and to see what answers they might discover as they work.

### **2. One Order of Truth (15 Minutes)**

- a. Two students will sit in chairs facing each other and have a conversation as if they are two close friends hanging out at a Starbucks (or another similar place). In the scene there is no need to reference anything about the friendship, and the characters should not talk about being at a Starbucks.
- b. The students play themselves in the scene and are given a suggestion as a jumping off point for conversation.
- c. The students have a real conversation using the suggestion as they please. Everything they say must be actually true.
- d. Other students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.

### **3. Group Discussion (4 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher leads a discussion about the performances. They ask students about their experience performing in and watching the scenes. The teacher asks students to point out moments that they felt were very “real” and what made those moments “real”. The teacher asks the class to come up with a few criteria for creating a “real” performance and encourages students to keep those criteria in mind as they move into the next activity.

### **4. Honest at All Costs (15 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher asks students to draw upon their previous improv experience and provide a few “rules” that an actor might keep in mind to perform a successful improv scene.
- b. The teacher explains that two students will play a scene. In the scene, they will ignore any other rules of improv in favor of being honest at all costs.
- c. Students should react to everything that comes up in the scene the way they actually would in real life. The teacher will question moments that read as not “real”, according to the criteria the students have come up with earlier, and encourage students to reconsider choices, if necessary.
- d. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.

### **5. Group Discussion (4 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher facilitates a brief reflection with students on how well students were able to meet the criteria of being “real” in this exercise, and any new ideas/criteria they have about creating a “real” performance after doing this exercise.

### **6. Scenarios (20 Minutes)**

- a. Groups of various size will perform scenarios given by the teacher. The students will play scenarios as realistically as possible, as if we are a fly on the wall watching them happen. Some possible scenarios include:
  - i. Morning announcements
  - ii. Local television news
  - iii. Shock Jock morning radio show
  - iv. NPR style interview show
- b. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.
- c. After students perform each scenario, the teacher will briefly facilitate group reflection on the performance, highlighting moments that students believe met the criteria for “real” performance that they laid out earlier and moments that fell short of meeting the criteria. The teacher fields suggestions about what students might do differently next time if moments fell short of meeting the criteria.

### **7. Heat/Weight (20 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains the concept of heat (the intensity of a relationship) and weight (the heaviness of the moment before). They use a couple pairs of students to demonstrate the concept.
- b. Students pair up and practice assessing heat/weight at the beginning of a scene.

### **8. Practice Scenes (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that students will now pull together lessons from the unit so far. The teacher asks students about what concepts they have looked at on previous in the unit, prompting students with ideas about acceptance and activation if needed, and asking students to explain how those ideas might be executed successfully. The teacher then asks students to synthesize the day’s activities and fields student responses. The teacher explains to students that performing a scene in a “real” way could also be called performing a “grounded” scene.
- b. Students find a new partner and practice some scenes in which they try combining the agreement, activation, and grounding skills from the lessons in this unit.

### **9. Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher facilitates a discussion about the students’ practice:
  - i. How did it go? Were there challenges you faced in bringing everything together? What were they? What might you do differently next time? Did you have a handle on anything? What was it? Why were you able to execute on that? How can you use that information to help with things you missed? Why do we even care about all this? How can we apply these skills to scripted scene work?

**Homework:** Students will complete a journal entry for the day addressing the following prompts: What do you think the focus of today's activities was? What did you get out of the work today? How did it build on yesterday's work? What was your experience being honest in your scene or watching others be honest? Did that affect the way you connected to the scene? Why might that be important to improv? What about scripted work? Describe the concept of heat/weight. How do we utilize this in improv? How might we apply it in a scripted scene? Did you learn anything new? What spurred that learning? Cite a specific moment. Anything else you want to share?

The teacher provides feedback on the first three journal entries, noting student experiences and insights.

**Lesson Title:** Rules Help Us Play (Lesson 4 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How does structure provide freedom to an improvised performance?

Unit Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to dramatize a base reality in an improv scene.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Scenes <b>Criteria:</b> Demonstrates acceptance, activation, grounding, incorporates strong base reality <b>Documentation:</b> Brief Notes (Appendix D) and Discussion
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to identify the different elements of a base reality in an improv scene.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Discussion and Journal <b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix D)

**Related Standards:**

TH: Pr.5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

2. Theater artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.  
HSIIa. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable performance.

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Students may choose to write 7 Things in 7 Things instead of listing them out loud. Prompt cards will be available for objectives for Secret Mission, character names and traits for Gossip, and locations/objects for From Dawn ‘Til Dusk. Refocusing will be provided to students as needed.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared as much as possible, except for Gossip and From Dawn ‘Til Dusk, when chairs will be used to create an audience and stage area.



**Materials Needed:** Board, chairs, prompt cards

## Procedures

### 1. 7 Things (10 Minutes)

- a. Students sit or stand in a circle. The teacher explains the concept of “base reality”, highlighting that students will focus on the who, what, where, and why of a scene, and how the day’s activities that will support those concepts. They also explain how “base reality” provides a structure for the more interpersonal work that the last days have focused on. The teacher explains that the first activity will focus on “What”.
- b. Student A chooses a student Player B, and asks them to name 7 activities in a specific category. For instance, Student A might say, “Student B, name 7 things you would do at the mall!”
- c. Student B must then name 7 things they would do at the mall. All the other students provide a drum roll while the list is being created.
- d. After each thing named, the rest of the players count which number activity they have named. So, if Student B said, “Go to Forever 21, pick out a cute outfit, remember my mom said I can’t buy anything else!” everyone else would then shout, “One!”
- e. Students should do their best to draw on their personal experience when naming activities. We are interested in what *they* would do in a situation, not necessarily what *someone* would do. If a situation is unfamiliar to the student, encourage them to draw on cultural knowledge of how someone might behave in that situation to create a list.
- f. Once Student B has completed their list, they choose a Student C, and give them a category.
- g. When the activity is completed, the teacher asks students why they think knowing what characters are doing in a scene might be helpful to performing it, and how this activity can be applied to improv scene work.

### 2. Secret Mission (20 Minutes)

- a. The teacher explains that the next activity will focus on “Why”.
- b. Two students will perform a scene in which each student has a secret goal that they are trying to get the other student to do. Whoever gets the other student to perform the secret goal first will be the winner of the scene.
- c. When the activity is completed, the teacher asks students why they think knowing why characters are doing what they’re doing in a scene might be helpful to performing it, and how this activity can be applied to improv scene work.

### 3. Gossip (20 Minutes)

- a. The teacher explains that the next activity will focus on “Who”.
- b. The teacher explains that students will perform a three-person scene, in which one student starts offstage.
- c. In the scene, two of the students sit onstage, acting as if they are hanging out in the cafeteria waiting for the rest of their friends. The two students are instructed to “gossip” about another person at school who they do not like. The teacher stresses

to the students that they should not be talking about a real person who exists, and leads a brief discussion on how this behavior would be considered bullying in real life.

- d. The students are instructed that during the course of their gossip, they must give a name to the other character, ie. “Stinky Sam” or “Pig-Carrying Paul”, and identify three qualities or behaviors of the other character, ie. They wear a Dr. Seuss hat, they are always covered in birds, they terribly sing everything they say. The teacher fields some possible suggestions from the students for “gifts” they might use in a scene, and demonstrates how a student might introduce those ideas into a scene, ie. “Ughh I can’t stand how stinky Sam is! Like whenever he comes in the room I feel like I want to pass out!” Students are reminded to embrace the ideas that their scene partner contributes, and expand upon them, ie. “Yeah! He’s so smelly! He smells like baby diapers!” The teacher then demonstrates how a student might activate some of those ideas in a scene, reminding the students of how they activated those ideas in the character baseball exercise. The teacher introduces the concept of *showing* vs. *telling* and demonstrates how a student might *show* they are using a gift rather than just telling about it. For instance, if the gift is having an accent the teacher would talk in that accent rather than just saying they have one.
- e. The teacher then reviews some “rules” of good improv scene work that students had suggested in the previous lesson by asking for student reminders of those principles.
- f. The teacher then picks students to perform the scene. Once the first two students have identified the qualities of the third student, the third student will enter into the scene playing the character that was created. They should embody all the “gifts” that have been given to them by their scene partners. The teacher explains how students might do this by *showing* rather than *telling*. The teacher gives a few examples of this concept to clarify.
- g. The teacher lets the scene play out, giving the students opportunities to play with the “gifts” and react to them, before calling “Scene!”
- h. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.
- i. When the activity is completed, the teacher asks students why they think knowing who the characters are in a scene might be helpful to performing it, and how this activity can be applied to improv scene work.

#### **4. Dawn ‘Til Dusk (25 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that the next activity will look at “Where”.
- b. Two to three students perform a scene in which they will try to kill some vampires who are played by other three to four students.
- c. The students who will be playing vampires “scene paint” a suggested location. For example, if the location is an alley, one player might step forward and say “Over here is the old, rat infested dumpster, overflowing with smelly trash bags that haven’t been picked up yet.” Students should do their best to show the size and location of objects with their hands, possibly tracing an outline.

- d. The “vampire students” add several objects to the location, and then the scene begins with only the main characters who must inhabit the location as presented with characters that make sense in that environment.
- e. The teacher then will give a signal to allow the vampires to enter the scene. It is the job of the vampires to try to “bite” the main characters and the job of the main characters to try to “kill” the vampires using all the objects that were scene painted. The teacher should encourage students to use epic movie lines when “killing” the vampires. For instance, “I’ll teach you what it means to pay at the pump!”
- f. The scene is over when all the vampires are dead or the main characters somehow lost.
- g. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.
- h. When the activity is completed, the teacher asks students why they think knowing where the characters are in a scene might be helpful to performing it, and how this activity can be applied to improv scene work.

#### **5. Scenes (15 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher asks students to review the components of “base reality” they have explored today. The teacher asks students to explain the concepts, why they might be important to improv scene work, and what students can do to activate these concepts in their work. The teacher then asks students for suggestions about how they can tie the day’s work together with the previous work from the unit.
- b. Students practice applying base reality, acceptance, activation, and grounding considerations to scene work in pairs.

#### **6. Discussion (6 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher facilitates a discussion about the students’ practice:
  - i. How did it go? Were there challenges you faced in bringing everything together? What were they? What might you do differently next time? Did you have a handle on anything? What was it? Why were you able to execute on that? How can you use that information to help with things you missed? What application might this work have with scripted material? How would you apply these skills to a scripted scene? What specific actions would you take?

**Homework:** Students will complete a journal entry for the day addressing the following prompts: What do you think the focus of today’s activities was? What did you get out of the work today? How did it build on yesterday’s work? Define the concept of “base reality”. Why do you think that concept helps us play improv scenes? What connections can you draw between base reality and your knowledge of working on scripted material? How does base reality affect a scene? Did you learn anything else new? What spurred that learning? Cite a specific moment. Anything else you want to share?

**Lesson Title:** Live Theater (Lesson 5 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How can improv skills be used in the performance of a scripted piece?

<b>Unit Objectives</b>	<b>Formative Assessment Strategies</b>
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to apply improvisation skills to enhance their performance of scripted scene work.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Analysis and Scripted Scene Performance <b>Criteria:</b> Provides textual evidence that supports analysis, Demonstrates use of improv skills (Strong Agreement, Activation, Grounding, Adherence to base reality), Commits to performance physically and vocally <b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Comments (Appendix G)
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to assess how improvisation affects their performance of a scripted scene.	<b>Performance Task:</b> Journal <b>Criteria:</b> Entry for each day, Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides specific evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher Comments on Journal

**Related Standards:**

TH: Cr.1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

1. Creativity is a foundation of theatrical practice.

HSIIc. Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character who is believable and authentic.

TH: Pr.4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

1. The essence of theater is storytelling.

HSIIa. Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable theatrical experiences.

TH: Pr.5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

1. Theater artists develop personal processes and skills for a performance or design.

HSIIa. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable performance.

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards—

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Students with learning needs will be provided with scripts ahead of time, as will ELLs. Refocusing and check ins will be provided as needed in small group work.

**Spatial Organization:** The space should be cleared as much as possible for student rehearsals. Chairs should be used to create a stage and audience area for the performances. Chairs should be rearranged into a circle for the discussion.

**Materials Needed:** Board, chairs, scripts (Appendix E), analysis sheets (Appendix F), tick lists (Appendix G)

## **Procedures**

### **1. Introduction (2 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher welcomes students and explains that today they are going to apply the improv skills they have been working on to a scripted scene. The teacher recaps via student suggestions what skills they have been looking at.

### **2. Analysis (19 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that students will complete a brief script analysis and that they should think about the ideas of “base reality” as they complete the worksheet.
- b. Students will work in pairs to analyze the script of a short scene (Appendix E). They will fill out Analysis Sheets (Appendix F) together.

### **3. Rehearse (30 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher then explains that students will rehearse their scene with their partner. They ask students for suggestions of ways they might apply their improv skills to their rehearsals and performances. What specific actions might students take to do this successfully?
- b. Students will rehearse their scene with their partner, using the analysis they have created. They will use this rehearsal to incorporate the improv skills they have looked at earlier in the unit.

### **4. Scripted Scene Performance (35 Minutes)**

- a. Students perform the scenes they rehearsed. Students should be performing the scenes as written and applying the improv skills from the unit as acting skills. The teacher assesses the performances with the Tick List (Appendix G).
- b. Students will take notes on what they observe and experience to help complete their journal assignment.
- c. After each performance, the teacher fields feedback from students about their experience performing in or watching the scene. The teacher asks students to highlight moments they saw the improv skills being applied, or moments where they thought application of those skills might have enhanced the performance. The teacher asks students to be specific about which skill they think would enhance the performance.

### **5. Discussion (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher facilitates a discussion about the unit:

- i. How were you able to balance the work you've been doing when you had a script today? What successes did you have? What challenges? What did you notice from watching other people work? What skills were easily transferable? Which were more difficult to apply? When the skills were applied what did that do to the scene work? Conversely, what effect did a lack of application have on the work? How can you apply these skills in your future work? Why or why not would you want to do that?

**Homework:** Students will complete a journal entry for the day addressing the following prompts: Describe your experience applying improv skills to a scripted scene today. Did you have any successes? What were they? Provide specific examples. What about challenges? If you used improv skills in your future scripted scene work, how might you apply them to that work? What was your experience like working on the unit as a whole? Did you learn anything? If so, what? Did this work change how you might approach scripted scene work? If so, what changes did it evoke? Why do you think we embarked on this unit? Anything else you want to share?

The teacher provides feedback on the journal as a whole, noting student experiences and insights.

**APPENDIX A  
BRIEF NOTES (LESSON 1)**

<p><b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to employ listening skills and an awareness of the group to work collaboratively with their peers.</p>	
<p><b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to identify theatrical skills being used in improv games.</p>	
<p><b>Other Thoughts</b></p>	

**APPENDIX B  
BRIEF NOTES (LESSON 2)**

<p><b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to accept and activate each other's ideas in improvised performance.</p>	
<p><b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate the effect of "Yes, anding" on an improvised performance.</p>	
<p><b>Other Thoughts</b></p>	

**APPENDIX C  
BRIEF NOTES (LESSON 3)**

<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to perform a grounded improv scene.	
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to analyze a grounded improvisational performance.	
<b>Other Thoughts</b>	

**APPENDIX D  
BRIEF NOTES (LESSON 4)**

<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to dramatize a base reality in an improv scene.	
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to identify the different elements of a base reality in an improv scene.	
<b>Other Thoughts</b>	



APPENDIX E (LESSON 5)  
SAMPLE SCENE

## Augusta and Noble

Carlos Murillo

### Dramatic

RICARDO: 13

GABI: 13

*Afternoon. A grassy lot with a view of the Chicago skyline. RICARDO appears with his backpack. GABI has been kicking a soccer ball around with her brother, Jesus, but he's left. In this, the final scene of the play, GABI tells RICARDO the true story of her origins and her parents' harrowing immigration to America.*

RICARDO: Hey.

GABI: Hey . . .

RICARDO: So . . . this is the place?

GABI: Yeah. Do you like it?

RICARDO: When you said "park," I thought you meant like a *park* . . .

GABI: It *is* a park.

RICARDO: Well, it's really an empty lot.

**GABI:** It's got grass. It's got this view . . . You could sit down . . .

*[He sits.]*

**RICARDO:** Definitely a nice view. I've never been to this neighborhood before.

**GABI:** I come here when I want to just sit and think.

**RICARDO:** What do you think about?

**GABI:** How beautiful the city is. What it was like for my mother and father seeing all the buildings for the first time.

**RICARDO:** There aren't buildings where they come from?

**GABI:** Not like these. I like this place 'cause it feels like you can reach out and touch them.

**RICARDO:** They seem like a million miles away to me.

**GABI:** Ever feel like you've got your feet in two different worlds? And you feel like you're getting split down the middle?

**RICARDO:** All the time. . . . My mom? She gets mad at me if I act too "Polish." My dad, he gets mad if I act too "Puerto Rican."

**GABI:** What does that mean?

**RICARDO:** I have no idea . . . I'm just trying to figure out who I'm supposed to be, which gets them both mad 'cause then I'm being too American. *[Pause.]* I'm glad you called . . . I thought you were still mad.

**GABI:** I'm not mad. It was hard, but it helped me ask questions that . . .

**RICARDO:** That . . . ?

**GABI:** I was too scared to ask before?

**RICARDO:** What kind of questions?

*[She looks at him seriously.]*

**GABI:** Can I trust you?

*[RICARDO thinks for a moment—no one has ever asked him that with as much seriousness as GABI is asking him now.]*

**RICARDO:** Yeah . . .

*[GABI looks back at the skyline. She takes a deep breath, like she's about to jump off the high dive for the first time.]*

**GABI:** I was born here. But my parents? They were born in Mexico . . .

**RICARDO:** Okay . . .

**GABI:** They've been here a long time, but . . . They're not really . . . supposed . . . to be here.

**RICARDO:** You mean . . .

**GABI:** They're here illegally.

**RICARDO:** Whoa.

**GABI:** They walked all the way across the desert to come.

**RICARDO:** That's terrifying.

**GABI:** They wanted a better life. For me. For Jesus. My father, he had to go back. To see his father before he died. Now he's coming home. He has to cross the desert again.

**RICARDO:** That's really scary, Gabi.

**GABI:** If he gets caught? They could send him back . . . My mother too . . .

**RICARDO:** What would happen to you?

**GABI:** I don't know. Guess I would have to go back with them.

**RICARDO:** But you belong here . . .

[*GABI looks at him.*]

**GABI:** I do?

**RICARDO:** You do.

[*Pause. GABI looks at him.*]

**GABI:** I don't know what's going to happen, Ricardo. But . . . One thing I want to do . . . ?

Finish Ms. Chan's project. Find out the incredible history we have inside of us. I want to do it right this time.

**RICARDO:** You mean as like . . . partners?

**GABI:** Yes, Ricardo.

**RICARDO:** Cool . . . I'd . . . like that. So . . . when do we like . . . start?

**GABI:** Well, it's Saturday. We can go to my house. Interview my mom. She doesn't have work tonight. She's making dinner. You can try some real Mexican food.

**RICARDO:** I've eaten Mexican before . . .

**GABI:** No, I mean like *real* Mexican, the way my mom makes it . . .

**RICARDO:** Maybe tomorrow you can come to my mom's? Only place in the city where you can eat some authentic Polish-Puerto Rican . . .

[*They laugh.*]

**GABI:** Um . . . Ricardo . . . ? Just so you know, like . . . I'm inviting you to my house as like . . . you know . . . a friend?

**RICARDO:** Oh, yeah, sure—I'm not sure I'm really into girls, so . . . ooops.

**GABI:** I see . . .

**RICARDO:** Does that . . . ?

**GABI:** Doesn't bother me.

**RICARDO:** Cool . . . um. Shall we go?

**GABI:** Meet me up at the corner of Augusta and Noble—I'll be there in a second.

**APPENDIX F (LESSON 5)  
ANALYSIS WORKSHEET**

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**PLAY:**

**PLAYWRIGHT:**

- 1. Who is your character in the scene? What are they like? What characteristics can you activate in your performance? Provide evidence for your conclusion.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. What is your character doing in the scene? Provide evidence for your conclusion.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. What is the characters' relationship like? Provide evidence for your conclusion.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What is the environment like where the scene takes place? Provide evidence for your conclusion.**

**APPENDIX G (LESSON 5)**  
**TICK LIST**

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

Learning Objective	Criteria	Yes	No
Students will be able to apply improvisation skills to enhance their performance of scripted scene work.	<b>Scene contains:</b>		
	Strong Agreement		
	Activation		
	Grounding		
	Clear Base Reality		
	Commits to performance vocally		
	Commits to performance physically		
	<b>Analysis Contains:</b>		
	Textual evidence that supports analysis		
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>/21</b>	

**COMMENTS:**

✓+ = 3   ✓ = 2   ✓- = 1