National Educational Standards

These activities were designed to correspond to the following National Educational Standards as defined by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations.

NA-T.K-4.1 SCRIPT WRITING BY PLANNING AND RECORDING IMPROVISATIONS BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND HERITAGE, IMAGINATION, LITERATURE, AND HISTORY
Achievement Standard:
- Students collaborate to select interrelated characters, environments, and situations for classroom dramatizations
- Students improvise dialogue to tell stories, and formalize improvisations by writing or recording the dialogue

NA-T.K-4.2 ACTING BY ASSUMING ROLES AND INTERACTING IN IMPROVISATIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students imagine and clearly describe characters, their relationships, and their environments
- Students use variations of locomotor and nonlocomotor movement and vocal pitch, tempo, and tone for different characters
- Students assume roles that exhibit concentration and contribute to the action of classroom dramatizations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history

NA-T.K-4.3 DESIGNING BY VISUALIZING AND ARRANGING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CLASSROOM DRAMATIZATIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students visualize environments and construct designs to communicate locale and mood using visual elements (such as space, color, line, shape, texture) and aural aspects using a variety of sound sources
- Students collaborate to establish playing spaces for classroom dramatizations and to select and safely organize available materials that suggest scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup

NA-T.K-4.4 DIRECTING BY PLANNING CLASSROOM DRAMATIZATIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students collaboratively plan and prepare improvisations and demonstrate various ways of staging classroom dramatizations

NA-T.K-4.5 RESEARCHING BY FINDING INFORMATION TO SUPPORT CLASSROOM DRAMATIZATIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students communicate information to peers about people, events, time, and place related to classroom dramatizations

NA-T.K-4.6 COMPARING AND CONNECTING ART FORMS BY DESCRIBING THEATRE, DRAMATIC MEDIA (SUCH AS FILM, TELEVISION, AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA), AND OTHER ART FORMS
Achievement Standard:
- Students describe visual, aural, oral, and kinetic elements in theatre, dramatic media, dance, music, and visual arts
- Students compare how ideas and emotions are expressed in theatre, dramatic media, dance, music, and visual arts
- Students select movement, music, or visual elements to enhance the mood of a classroom dramatization
NA-T.K-4.7 ANALYZING AND EXPLAINING PERSONAL PREFERENCES AND CONSTRUCTING MEANINGS FROM CLASSROOM DRAMATIZATIONS AND FROM THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION, AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA PRODUCTIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students identify and describe the visual, aural, oral, and kinetic elements of classroom dramatizations and dramatic performances
- Students explain how the wants and needs of characters are similar to and different from their own
- Students articulate emotional responses to and explain personal preferences about the whole as well as the parts of dramatic performances
- Students analyze classroom dramatizations and, using appropriate terminology, constructively suggest alternative ideas for dramatizing roles, arranging environments, and developing situations along with means of improving the collaborative processes of planning, playing, responding, and evaluating

NA-T.K-4.8 UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT BY RECOGNIZING THE ROLE OF THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION, AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN DAILY LIFE
Achievement Standard:
- Students identify and compare similar characters and situations in stories and dramas from and about various cultures, illustrate with classroom dramatizations, and discuss how theatre reflects life
- Students identify and compare the various settings and reasons for creating dramas and attending theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
Empathy: Being sensitive to and understanding the feelings and thoughts of others

Make ‘Em Laugh

Life Skill:
Communicating with others
Inventing sounds and actions
Developing empathy

Success Indicator:
Youth will learn empathy by determining actions that make other people laugh.

Time: 30 minutes – Depending on Group Size

Suggested Group Size:
Classroom or less

Supplies:
Club kit

What do you think is funny? Is it the same thing that other people think is funny? There is a word for that understanding: empathy. If we are aware of what makes other people laugh or cry or feel good about themselves, we are much better at understanding ourselves and at getting along with other people.

Great actors are successful because they have great empathy. They are very good at “putting themselves in other people’s shoes.” They can imagine what it would be like to be a queen or a pirate or school teacher.

Do the Activity:

Divide the group into two teams.

Have someone pick a topic. If there is an audience, let them choose the topic.

It should allow participants to do some action which everyone is familiar with.
For example:
• The World’s Greatest Super Hero
• Feeding the Animals
• You’ll Never Guess What Happened to Me!

Each team will go back and forth, taking 10 – 15 seconds per turn. The leader can call “Switch!” to change participants.

They have to do something funny with one of the props in the box. Whatever they do, it has to have something to do with the subject.

The goal is to make everyone laugh.

[This activity can be repeated several times with the selection of different topics.]
Talking It Over

Share What You Did
What did you like about activity?
What was most difficult for you?
Which improvisations did you enjoy the most?
What was funny about them?

If you did the activity several different times, how did it become easier or harder to do?

Process What’s Important
How did people exaggerate (make bigger) their words or actions?
How did this help you understand what was going on?
How would it have been different if they had spoken softly and made very small movements?

Generalize to Your Life
How can you tell when someone is sad?
How can you tell if they are happy?

Apply What You Have Learned
How can we more aware of what people around us are feeling?
How can we better use our voices and body movements to communicate with other people?
Every day we improvise. When we have a conversation with our friends or when we undertake something we have never done before, we “make it up as we go along.”

In lots of movies, the hero or heroine is great at improvisation – they can talk their way out of difficult situations or they can improvise a bomb out of a tube of toothpaste and a rubber duck.

Theater improvisation is a great way for us to practice “thinking on our feet.” It helps us learn to solve problems whenever we don’t have much time to plan.

**Do the Activity:**

There are two ways to do this activity, depending on the age and skill level of the participants.

Some kids may feel very uncomfortable about doing a public presentation. Don’t pressure them, but encourage them to say at least a sentence or two.

**Beginners**

Distribute the props from the Club Kit to young people. If there are more students than props, several students may share the same prop.

Instruct the students on the activity: Make up a silly story about your prop. For example:
- How was your chicken famous in history?
- What super powers do the clown glasses have?
- Is your cup a secret spy device?

Ask the young people to come before the group when they are ready and tell a brief story about the prop – with as many details about “how, when, where, and what” as they wish to give.
Advanced

With older youth, make this a true improvisation. Have a leader conceal the props in the box. Have the leader randomly select props and ask young people to come and tell a story – the more outrageous the better.

Talking It Over

Share What You Did
What did you like about activity?
What was the most difficult part for you?
Which improvisations did you enjoy the most?

If you did the activity several different times, how did it become easier or harder to do?

Process What’s Important
How did story tellers make their stories believable?
How did the story tellers make their stories sad or funny or happy?
What real things, such as personal experiences or real animals, were these stories built around?

Generalize to Your Life
What are some times that you may have to improvise in real life?
How does skill at improvisation help you solve problems or create opportunities?

Apply What You Have Learned
When are some times when you might have to improvise in your job – if you were a teacher, a policeman, or in some other profession?
What are the things – the experiences or knowledge – we base our improvisation on in real life?
Pantomime: a performance using gestures and body movements without words

Puppet Story Sound Track

Life Skill:
Communicating with Others
Creative Movement
Improvisation
Effective Listening

Success Indicator:
Youth will practice creativity by producing and telling a story with minimal preparation.

Time: 20 minutes – Depending on Group Size

Suggested Group Size:
Classroom or less

Supplies:
Club kit CD
Club Kit Hand Puppets

Ham It Up – The Alabama 4-H Improv Club Kit

Have you ever listened to the music sound-track that goes along with a movie? Film directors carefully choose music that matches and supports the mood and the action that is taking place on the screen. If the actors are doing something fun and happy, the music is fun and happy. If something sad is taking place, the music is often slow and maybe a little gloomy.

In life, we have music that matches our mood, too. The music we hear at a football game is different from the music we hear at a wedding and certainly different from the kind of lullaby we might sing when we are trying to rock a baby to sleep.

Do the Activity:

Ask for a volunteer to use each hand puppet in the Club Kit. The instruction are that they will use the puppets to improvise a story based on the music they are about to hear. They will not use words for the story, only movement.

Randomly select a piece of music from the American Classics Sampler CD and let them use the puppets to pantomime a story that matches the mood of the music. You may end the music whenever you feel that the story has run its course.

After each piece, allow the group to talk about the performance. For example:

- What kind of story was being told?
- How did the story match the music?
- Did the story match the music?
- What was the mood of the music and story?

Allow all the young people to participate as they wish. You may also choose to allow the youth to tell their stories by ones, twos, or larger casts. You may also call “Switch!” in the middle of a song, with youth passing off their puppets to others.
Talking It Over

Share What You Did
What did you like about activity?
What was the hardest part for you?
Which music and stories did you enjoy the most?

Process What’s Important
What works best when you match a story to music?
How did the story tellers make their stories sad or funny or happy?
What are the differences between pantomime and dance?
Would the stories have been told differently without the music?

Generalize to Your Life
When are some times that we hear music in real life?
Why is music important to us?
How does music sometimes match how we feel or what we are doing?

Apply What You Have Learned
How would it have been different if we had presented our pantomime without using the puppets?
When are some times in life that we have different roles? For example, how are we different with our parents, our teachers, and our friends?

Above and Beyond
Repeat the exercise, allowing the young people to do the pantomime exercise without using the puppets, but by interacting with one another as characters.
Ham It Up – The Alabama 4-H Improv Club Kit

If you’ve ever seen old silent movies you know it’s pretty easy to tell a story using only non-verbal communication.

For example, a group of kids is attacked by a scary monster – and a little dog came and frightened the monster away.

[Tell the young people]  
Show me the monster.

[Tell the young people]  
Show me the scared kids.

[Tell the young people]  
Show me the brave little dog.

Do the Activity:
Put the props on a central table where all the young people can see what props are available for this activity.
Divide them into several groups.

Instructions:
Your challenge is to tell a story using the props, but with no words and no sounds.

Give them a few minutes to develop a story and to quietly discuss how they will act out their scenario.

One by one, call the groups to present their stories. After each presentation, have the audience guess what was being presented.

The group may choose to discuss each story after it has been presented or after all scenes have been presented.
Talking It Over

Share What You Did
What did you like about activity?
What was the hardest part for you?

Reflect
What were some things people did to show their characters?
How well did the different characters interact? – Was everyone included?
How did you work as a group to come up with a story? Did one person take a leadership role?

Generalize to Your Life
When are some times that we use our physical actions to tell other people how we feel – for example, how do people look when they are mad or afraid or shy?
What makes it difficult to recognize people’s “body language”?

Apply What You Have Learned
What are other situations when you need to pay close attention to what a person does and says?

How do you make group decisions in real life?
Ham It Up – The Alabama 4-H Improv Club Kit

Imagination is based on seeing things that no one has ever seen before. An inventor sees a problem and then begins to understand how that problem can be solved through new approaches and new ideas. A writer uses his or her experiences to create new characters and new stories.

When we look at clouds, we know they are clouds, but we can often see dragons or angels or cats and dogs. This activity allows us to look at everyday objects and imagine them as something completely different.

Do the Activity
Instruct the young people in the activity:
- Stand in a circle around the objects from the Club Kit which have been placed on a table in the middle of the group.
- One at a time, step forward and take an object from the table and demonstrate its use as something other than what it is. For example, the cup might be a hat or a megaphone.

Turn on the CD player to the first two pieces of music. Have the young people -- one at a time -- select and demonstrate objects. You can let this activity run until their inspiration runs out of steam or through the first two pieces of music.

Talking It Over
Share What You Did
What did you like about activity?
What was the most difficult part for you?
Which objects were the easiest to work with and why? The most difficult?

Process What’s Important
What led you to create your ideas?

Generalize to Your Life
What are some times that you may have to look at things differently in order to solve problems?
How do inventors find ways of creating something new?

Apply What You Have Learned
Solving problems is based on the ideas of looking at things in different ways? How can we use this idea to create new opportunities?

This Is Not What It Is

Life Skill:
Communicating with Others
Improvisation

Success Indicator:
The young people will demonstrate the ability to use their imagination by using ordinary objects in new ways.

Time: 15 minutes – Depending on Group Size

Suggested Group Size:
12 or less

Supplies:
Club kit

http://www.alabama4h.com/improv/