

**UWM Lesson Plan Template**  
*(adapted from PSOA Art Education Area)*

<b>Name:</b>	John Christensen	<b>Email:</b>	Chris472@uwm.edu
<b>Lesson Title:</b>	Improv Olympics	<b># of Sessions</b>	6
<b>Level/Grade/Age:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Drama, Age 12-13		

**BIG IDEA**

*(Describe how the big idea is important to this age group in relation to student assets and the content area):*

In our Drama class, I use theatre games as a way to teach the bigger idea of “Community” and insist that students build stronger relationships among themselves as well as their teachers. Yes, gaining important public speaking skills, exploring creative outlets, and reading canonical dramatic texts are all part of the curriculum, but maintaining a consistent and positive community in a class that started off with bullying and negative attitudes has been the most important goal for me as a teacher. Delving into the art of performance and presentation has allowed for some students, who don’t shine in other content areas, to come out of their shell, giving them confidence and allowing them to create a resilience that helps them ward off the negative. The Improv Olympics required teamwork and allowed for students who excel at all areas of learning to step into the spotlight and make their team proud, allowing for a more productive community for the entire class.

**OBJECTIVES AND NATIONAL STANDARDS:**

*Form & Structure (i.e., how does the lesson allow students to analyze and demonstrate art making approaches using art elements and principles of design to convey meaning?)*

On the first day of the Improv Olympics, students are asked to come together in one of three groups to create a Country name and discuss what each country “stands for.” Once each group has discovered what’s important to them, they have to create a flag (using paper, pens, pencils, crayons, and colored pencils) that reflects their country’s names and represents their country symbolically. Once time is up, each Country shares their flag to the rest of the class and explains each of the symbols on their team’s flag, demonstrating their ability to create meaning from art.

*Production (i.e., how does the lesson allow students to analyze and use techniques and materials through methods of experimentation and investigation to develop art and/or design?)*

In the previous twelve weeks or so of our Drama class, students have been developing speaking skills by working specifically on projection, diction, articulation, facing, movement, and tone. Students used monologues, two-person dialogue scenes, group plays, and improv games to workshop these skills and experiment with the aforementioned elements of speaking. The Improv Olympics is a presentation that requires students to use all of these skills and present what they’ve developed throughout the semester in terms of the art of performance and the art of public speaking.

*Context (i.e., how does the lesson allow students to relate art to personal, social, cultural and/or historical perspectives?)*

During the second day of the Improv Olympics, students are given vague scenes to perform with a partner in a game called “Scenes from a Hat.” In those scenes, they are asked to present topical, social situations without any researched material. Students have been asked to take on the role of George Washington in a computer store or Kim Kardashian at a coffee shop, allowing students the opportunity to express their own personal knowledge and perspectives on people, events, and places.

Personal Perspective (i.e., *how does the lesson provide opportunities to students for personal choices with content, methods, or styles?*)

Improv is all about the actor and how the actor perceives a situation, no matter what game they are playing. One student may receive a scene and chose to perform it one way and another student, later on in the game, may receive the same scene and perform it in a completely different way. Students are given the freedom to express themselves in these games by presenting whatever language, content, or imaginative situation they wish (as long as it is school-appropriate). They have developed the speaking tools (diction, articulation, movement, etc.) to allow the audience to clearly interpret their personal performance.

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**ACADEMIC LANGUAGE TO BE INTRODUCED THROUGHOUT LESSON:**

Academic language to be used:	Improvise, performance, public speaking, analyze, determine, asses, interpret, reflect
Where academic language will be practiced ( <i>i.e. through writing and art making</i> ):	At the start of each individual lesson, students will be given directions for each activity. At the end of the Improv Olympics unit, students will be asked to write a one-page reflection on their experiences during the unit.

**LANGUAGE FUNCTION USED THROUGHOUT LESSON:**

Type of language function:	Expressive Language Function
Emphasis of language function ( <i>describe the main purpose of using this language function for your lesson</i> ):	It’s important for students to be able to express themselves and it’s even more important for students to know <i>how</i> to express themselves. By workshopping speaking and performance techniques that they’ve developed and acquired throughout the semester, students will gain confidence, allowing them to express themselves in a more articulate way.
Where language function will be practiced ( <i>i.e., through writing and art making</i> ):	Language function will be practiced every day during the Improv Olympics for each lesson through performance or through writing.

**UNIT or LESSON OVERVIEW:**

The Improv Olympics will take place over six days including five events and one closing ceremony. This unit is competition-based and is meant for students to work with each other to out-perform other groups. Students will utilize previously acquired and rehearsed public speaking and performance arts skills including articulation, diction, movement, projection, facing, movement, and tone. A winner for the entire unit is determined by the total number of points each group has acquired throughout the five-day lesson.

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (*provide for each lesson session*): **DAY ONE: FLAG DAY**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (the first five slides) that give a brief overview of the upcoming events, explain how scoring is done, explains the roles of the Judges and the Moderator, and explains the rule for Flag Day.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation, paper, crayons, pencils, colored pencils, pens.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: Greet the class and show the PowerPoint presentation (the first five slides) and answering any questions. From there, the teacher will ask for the three group leaders to come to the front of the class and pick their teams. After that, the three groups will go off into separate parts of the classroom, create a country name, determine their country's principles, come up with a war cry, and create a flag that uses symbols. The teacher will walk around the room, making sure that every student is participating in group work. Once time is up, the teacher will allow for students to present their flags, listen to their war cry, and ask the three student Judges to score each of the three flags.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will work together and collaborate to creatively present a unique, original flag.</li><li>• Students will use practiced speaking skills to present information about their Country.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will work in their chosen teams, assigning roles to each other as needed. Although there has been an assigned group leader, all athletes on a team are required to participate in the assignment. Each member of the group must be part of their flag presentation.</p> <p>Closure: Judges will explain the criterion that they used to evaluate each country's flag and determine a winner of the event, allowing the winning team to have an advantage in the next day's event.</p>

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (*provide for each lesson session*): **DAY TWO: SCENES FROM A HAT**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (slide 6) that explains the rules for the next Improv Olympics game, Scenes from a Hat.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation, 52 cut-up pieces of paper, pencils, one “hat” or shoebox.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: The teacher will hand each student two pieces of paper and ask each student to write down two different scenes for the game Scenes from a Hat. Students are also asked to write their Country’s team name at the bottom of both slips. The teacher gives students examples of two-person scenes to write, such as “Two friends arguing over what movie to go see,” or “a student heckling a teacher about what the teacher is wearing.” Once all of the scenes have been written, the teacher collects the scenes and puts them in a box. From there, each team selects two different “champions” to represent them for each round. Every student is asked to participate at least one and the three student judges take notes during each round. Each set of champions selects a scene and performs the scene for the class.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will collaborate and present an improv scene with a partner.</li><li>• Students will use practiced speaking skills to present their scene.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will perform in their chosen teams and the group leader will assign two champions to go up for each round. All athletes are required to perform in at least one two-person scene.</p> <p>Closure: The student Judges will explain the criterion that they used to evaluate each country’s improv performance and determine a winner of the event, allowing the winning team to have an advantage in the next day’s event, Vocab and Trivia. The winners get to see half of the trivia and vocab questions that they will be quizzed on.</p>

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (*provide for each lesson session*): **DAY THREE: VOCAB AND TRIVIA**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (slide 7) that explains the rules for the next Improv Olympics game, Vocab and Trivia.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation, 100 index cards with vocab definitions and trivia questions written on them.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: The teacher will ask students to line up in three lines, depending on which team they're on. They will be facing the three student Judges. The teacher will explain that when a judge asks a questions, the first person from each line will have the opportunity to answer the question and the first person to answer it correctly will get their team a point. Then, all three athletes must go to the back of their line.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will utilize prior knowledge to determine answers to vocabulary and trivia questions that they've been studying through the semester.</li><li>• Students will use practiced speaking skills to articulate their answer.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will stand in one of three lines and compete with each other to determine the answer to each of the Judges' questions. Students will root for their team and show team spirit as their teammates go up and compete for points.</p> <p>Closure: The student Judges will announce which team accumulated the most points in the Vocab and Trivia activity and then add the points to the teams' total scores. The student Judges will then give extra credit points to teams who showed good sportsmanship and team spirit.</p>

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (*provide for each lesson session*): **DAY FOUR: BLIND FREEZE**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (slide 8) that explains the rules for the next Improv Olympics game, Blind Freeze.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation, 52 previously-used scenes from Scenes from a Hat, eight green bracelets, eight blue bracelets, and seven red bracelets.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: The teacher will ask students to put on the bracelets (each of the three teams has a different color). Next, the teacher will ask students to line up in two lines with mixed teams in each line. The teacher will explain that the first two people in each line will go up and perform a scene and will be asked to freeze in the middle of it. Once the scene is frozen, the next two people in line will go up, tag out the previous players, assume the previous players' positions, and then come up with a completely different scene that starts in the same positions that the previous players ended in. Judges will give out "spirit points" to performers who do an excellent job in this challenge. The team with the most spirit points wins the event.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will use practiced speaking skills to convey unique, improvised scenes articulately.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will stand in two different lines and wait their turn to perform. Once they are the first person in their line, they will go up, tag the previous player out, resume their exact same position, and come up with an entirely new scene to perform. If students get stuck, they can ask for the teacher to pick a scene from the Scenes from a Hat game and the students will perform that scene instead of a made-up one.</p> <p>Closure: The student Judges will announce which team accumulated the most points in the Blind Freeze game and will then give extra credit points to performers who excelled. The total points will be added to the team's final scores.</p>

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (provide for each lesson session): **DAY FIVE: MYSTERY DAY**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (slide 9 and 10) that explains the rules for the next Improv Olympics game, Crazy Playwright.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation, 24 copies of the “Crazy Playwright” activity sheet, and pens/pencils.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: The teacher will ask for students to divide into their teams and then hand out a “Crazy Playwright” activity sheet to each student. The teacher will ask students to write down the name of a person on the first line and then fold the sheet and pass it to someone else on their team. Then, the teacher will ask for each student to write the name of another person on the activity sheet, fold it back, and pass it to another teammate. Next, the teacher will ask for each student to write the name of a place, fold it back, and pass it to another teammate. This process is repeated with one piece of dialogue (a questions or a statement the first character will say to the next), another piece of dialogue, and a happy ending. The teacher will then ask for all of the students to read their stories to each other (all of the stories should be a surprise). Once the stories have been read, the teacher will ask teams to select one story to perform as an improv scene for the Judges. The teacher will give them five minutes to practice their scene before they perform.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will use practiced speaking skills to convey a unique, improvised scene articulately.</li><li>• Students will participate in a writing activity collaboratively.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will sit in a circle with the rest of their team. Students will write down a narrative element in each box and pass the piece of paper to another teammate until all of the boxes have been filled. Once the worksheet is completed, each teammate will read their story in the following format (which has previously been practiced three weeks before this lesson): “(Character 1) met (Character 2) at (place). (Character 1) said (Dialogue 1) to (Character 2). (Character 2) said (Dialogue 2) to (Character 1). And then (Ending).” Students will select which story was their favorite and then have two teammates perform the scene for the judges.</p> <p>Closure: The student Judges will give their opinions on the positives and negatives of each performance and explain the criteria that they were looking for. The Judges will NOT say which team won and will NOT say how many points each team got.</p>

**UNIT or LESSON DETAIL** (provide for each lesson session): **DAY SIX: CLOSING CEREMONIES**

Motivation/introduction:	PowerPoint Presentation of the Improv Olympics (slide 11) which explains the agenda for the Closing Ceremonies.
Art Making:	<p>Supplies: PowerPoint presentation (slide 11 and 12), prizes for the winning team (bags of candy, certificates, whatever), paper and pencils.</p> <p>Teacher instruction: The teacher will announce the points given to each team during the previous Mystery Day challenge. The teacher will then add up all of the points and announce the winner for the Improv Olympics. The teacher will then give out prizes to the winning team. Next, the teacher will ask students to pull out a sheet of paper and ask them to write a reflection, answering the questions to the prompt on the last slide of the power point presentation.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will reflect on their experience during the Improv Olympics and will write about the skills they used for the activities.</li></ul> <p>Students at work: Students will write about their experiences and answer the prompts on the PowerPoint. Students will reflect on what they liked or didn't like about the Improv Olympics and how they could've gone better for them. Students will also evaluate their team and how they worked together throughout the process.</p> <p>Closure: The teacher will collect all of the students' reflections and ask them to have a discussion about some of the things that they wrote in their reflections.</p>



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<b>ADAPTATIONS:</b>	<p>Materials: provide all pens, pencils, and pieces of paper needed for all of the activities.</p> <p>Instruction: Repeat and reiterate instructions to activities throughout the course of the activity, reminding students of rules as needed.</p>
<b>RELEVANT THEORIES:</b>	<p>In <i>Teaching Adolescent Writers</i>, Kelly Gallagher recommends that students have to use deeper-level types of thinking, including reflection on a process. He says, "If we want our students to develop into deeper thinkers, we must move them beyond the kind of writing that is used to simply check surface-level comprehension and have them extend their thinking in writing activities that encourage inquiry and exploration," (Gallagher 117).</p>
<b>ASSESSMENTS:</b>	<p>Initial (formal/informal): Informal, making sure that each student is participating in each event.</p> <p>Progressive/Formative (formal/informal): Informal, watching students perform in each event and giving students feedback as needed (be louder, face the other way, use appropriate language, etc.). Students are also evaluated on their listening skills.</p> <p>Final/Summative (formal/informal): Formal, a one-page written reflection on their experiences with the Improv Olympics.</p>

Appendix A, “Crazy Playwright” Activity, Day Five of the Unit.

## Crazy Playwright!

You are a playwright, but you’ve got writer’s block, so you need some help from your friends. Write in one narrative element in each of the following spaces and then hand your sheet off to a friend! But, don’t go out of order and remember to fold this sheet so that the next person doesn’t see what you wrote. Fold on the dashed lines. At the end, unfold your paper and read your story in the following format: “(Character 1) met (Character 2) at (place). (Character 1) said (Dialogue 1) to (Character 2). (Character 2) said (Dialogue 2) to (Character 1). And then (Ending).”

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(Character 1) The name of anyone anywhere that your teammates should know. It could be the name of an actor, a teacher, a student, a historical figure, a song-writer, anyone!

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(Character 2)

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(Place)

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(Dialogue 1) Anything that someone could possibly say, get as specific as you want! It could be a question, a compliment, a command, or general gibberish!

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(Dialogue 2)

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(Ending) This just tells us what happens to the characters at the end of the story. Did they go off into the sunset happily holding hands? Did they go home and make a pizza? Did they have an epic fight and kill each other? You decide!