Actor's Toolkit

Students engage in improv games preparing for auditions, then create audition materials including self-tapes, video demo reels, and audio demo reels.

Overview

Throughout this lesson, students will practice preparing for auditions by engaging in a series of improv games. Students will then put their acting and video editing skills to action by creating an audition tape including a self-tape, video demo reel and audio demo reel.

Duration

2-3 Hours

Materials

- "Self-Tape and Demo Reel Peer Assessment" Rubric

Activate: Improv Games

To begin this lesson, inform students that they are going to practice their improvision skills by playing a series of improv games. Improv is an important aspect of the acting world as it builds skills in active listening, the ability to tell a story and being a team player. Start with one game and play it until the group gets the hang of it. Then, move on to the next game.

Improv Catch:

RULES: All students move about the space in random patterns. The teacher starts by throwing an imaginary red ball to one of the students, making eye contact and saying, "red ball". That student catches the ball, then still moving about the space, throws the imaginary red ball to another student, making eye contact and saying, "red ball". This imaginary ball stays in play for the entire game.

The teacher then periodically throws new imaginary balls into play – the teacher may toss an imaginary yellow ball to another player, making eye contact and saying "yellow ball". If a student receives a yellow ball, that is the ball they pass to another student. If a student receives a red ball, then they pass that ball to another player. The teacher or a designated student is the only one allowed to add new imaginary balls into play. Every few seconds add other colours or get creative (eight ball, bowling ball, debutante ball, foul ball, high ball, Lucille Ball etc). It is the responsibility of the student throwing the ball to make sure it is caught so making eye contact with the receiver is extremely important to ensure that the ball is not lost.

After several minutes, ask them to stop and hold up their arm if they have a ball (or both arms if they have more than one ball). Call out the colours/kinds of balls you introduced to see if they kept track of them all. If more than one student indicates they have one of the colours/kinds of balls that is an error. If no one indicates they have one of the colours/kind of balls that is also an error.

Miming:

RULES: Students stand in a circle. One student turns to person on their left, makes eye contact, and offers a large action and short statement, loudly and with high energy: eg: puts hands on head and says, "My hair's on fire!". That statement & gesture gets passed around the whole circle, with everyone matching the original energy and tone as closely as possible. The student who started it says it in the way it is passed back to them again by the last person in the circle to their right. Then the following student offers a new gesture and short phrase, and so on. As the rhythm is established, the action should move faster and faster without compromising the original energy and tone offered.

Character Walks:

RULES: Have students line up at one corner of the room and move diagonally across the space, one at a time, adopting the characteristic prompts the teacher calls out to them. Depending on time, you can have each student try many different characters. There are endless ways to offer characteristics -- from realistic to abstract. Below are some examples.

- You are being followed by someone
- You're an angry librarian
- You're walking on high heels for the first time

- You're rushing to catch a plane with too much luggage
- Your whole left leg is made of wood
- You're in a bubble
- You're part giraffe
- You're late for the bus. It leaves without you.
- You're slowly turning into a lizard
- You have a tall invisible friend walking beside you
- You're playing soccer with someone.
- You are disguised as a robot
- You are being following by a tornado
- You're an avatar in a video game
- You are on a rickety pedestrian bridge. It's windy.

Games adapted from "Canadian Improv Games" at https://improv.ca/lesson-plans/

Acquire: "Actor's Kit" by Jimmy Blais

Have students read "Actor's Kit" by Jimmy Blais, found on pages 18-27 of the Create to Learn textbook. Alternatively, students can watch his lessons here: https://www.createtolearn.ca/tutorial/actors-kit

To debrief the reading, ask the class the following questions:

1. What tips does Jimmy give about preparing for an audition?
2. What is a self-tape? How can you make the most of your self-tape?
3. What is the purpose of a demo-reel? How can you create one?
4. What is a voice demo reel? How can you create one?

Apply: Making a Self-Tape, Demo-Reel and Voice Demo-Reel

Allow students time to follow the steps Jimmy outlines to create a self-tape, demo-reel and voice demo-reel. This may take several hours.

Students can use the video editing skills they learned in lesson three to edit their final cuts!

Assess: Peer Assessment

Once students finish editing their self-tapes and demo-reels, have them pair up and assess each other's work using the "Self-Tape and Demo Reel Peer Assessment" Rubric.

Encourage students to update their self-tapes and demo-reels based on the results of their peer assessment.

Self-Tape and Demo Reel Peer Assessment

Student: _____
Peer-Assessor Name: _____

CRITERIA | STRENGTHS | POSSIBLE AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Background:
Includes a plain background that is not distracting in any way.

Lighting:
No lighting is visible in the background, and the subject is clearly lit.

Eyeline:
Eyes are visible in the shot, and are near the center.

Range:
A range of scenes are included such as comedic scenes, dramatic scenes etc.

Overall Impression:
Student includes self-tape and voice demo-reels that are professional and show range and talent as an actor.

Take Student Learning Further

Have students research acting as a career path in the province or territory they live. Students can use the internet to search for acting jobs in their community to determine time commitment, hours, pay and job requirements.

Curriculum Connections

Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut

- Visual Composition
- Audio/Video
- Communications 10, 11 and 12

British Columbia and Yukon

- Drama 12
- Film and Television 11
- Film and Television 12

Ontario

- Drama, 10
- Media Arts, 10

Grade 9 and 10 Technology and Skilled Trades

Strand B: Technological Development, Impacts, and Careers

- B1.3 investigate and describe contributions to technological innovations made by Canadians, including women, and members of diverse groups and communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
- B3.1 explore a variety of roles, responsibilities, and opportunities related to current and emerging careers in technological fields, including a variety of broad-based technology areas, and the skilled trades
- B3.3 compare a variety of pathways leading to careers in technological fields and the skilled trades, including their structure and the educational and financial requirements for them