

# STOCK CHARACTERS\*

GAME SHOW HOST: Come on down! You're the next contestant on the Price is Right!

VALLEY GIRL: O-M-G. Gag me with a spoon.

OLD MAN: Stay off my grass, whippersnapper.

SURFER DUDE: Whoa, dude. MISTER Turtle is my father. Name's Crush.

NERD: My pokemon cards bring all the nerds to the yard.

WICKED WITCH: I'll get you my pretty and your little dog, too.  
(evil laugh)

GINGERBREAD MAN: It looks like we're up chocolate creek without a popsicle stick.

MOM: I'm Debbie Dooley. How ya doin'? I made snickerdoodles!

SICKO: I have a disease. But it's not contagious. (sneeze)

FOREIGNER: America! What a country! I love it!

- Stock Characters originated with the improvisational scenes of the Commedia Dell'Arte in Italy during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The scenes relied upon actors selecting and portraying a consistent character "type" throughout a performance.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Improvisation

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the key to improvisation.
  - a) Reminders
  - b) Confidence
  - c) Informal training
  - d) Spontaneity
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Improvisation is defined as...
  - a) Acting without words
  - b) Acting without preparation
  - c) Acting in musicals
  - d) Acting with puppets
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All of these are important to an improvisation EXCEPT...
  - a) Speaking loudly so all can hear
  - b) Staying in character at all times
  - c) Strong character development
  - d) Moving about the stage without motivation
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Actors who lead the scene must be careful not to...
  - a) Ask too many questions
  - b) Offer suggestions to the other actors
  - c) Listen to suggestions made
  - d) Run every moment of the scene
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. When developing a character quickly, an actor must answer the question...
  - a) Who is the character?
  - b) Who are my group members?
  - c) What game are we playing?
  - d) How much is this assignment worth?

Name three uses of practicing improvisation. How can it help you hone your skills?

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Why is establishing character quickly so important to performing an improv scene?

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# Improvisation Rubric: Acting I

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Improvisation	A Quality	B Quality	C Quality	Needs Improvement
<b>Imagination</b> 25	Performance is original in many ways; uses ideas, objects, performers in multiple unique ways	Performance has a few unique moments; some cliché and trite ideas are present	Performance has only one imaginative aspect, the rest is a rehash of an old story. Lacks freshness	We've seen this before! More of an imitation than an improvisation
<b>Structure (Applies in Story Improv)</b> 20	Very clear beginning, middle, and end, employs consistent style of performance, roles are well balanced	Beginning or the end are muddy—slow start or abrupt ending; actors are not all using the same style, most of improv revolves around only 2-3 of the performers	The scene has no ending, just stops. Relies on only 1-2 people, others have little to do. Styles do not really match, though there is a style	All middle, actors nor audience really know what is going on, Style?
<b>Stageworthiness</b> 30	Staging is open, interesting, uses the space well. Furniture or space objects are spaced well, consistently. All can be heard and understood clearly	Most of staging is open. Occasionally performers backs are to us, scene is too static at times, some space objects appear and are dropped without reason. Voices are mostly clear and understood, occasional diction problems	More than half of staging is closed and too static, Space objects and/or props appear and disappear at will—no consistency. Voices difficult to hear and understand—too quiet, little energy	No conscious choices made with audience in mind. No sense of performance. Playing to and for themselves only. A strain to see or hear what is going on!
<b>Energy Enjoyment</b> 25	Group is obviously having FUN! Energy level is high and contagious. Audience enjoys it as much as the performers	Most of group, duo, etc. is involved and enjoy performing	Not everyone is into the improv. Only 1-2 people seem at all enthused, others are too self-conscious or unfocused	Scene is void of energy, and seems a struggle. Lack of enthusiasm leads to boredom in audience
<b>Total Score</b>				

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

### IMPROVISATION TERMS

FOCUS	MASKING	EXPLORE
HEIGHTEN	BLOCKING	CANCELING
DRIVING	ENDOWING	PLATFORM
OFFER	ACCEPT	

<u>platform</u>	Who, What & Where of a scene
<u>offer</u>	Verbal or physical suggestion made by another actor
<u>accept</u>	Embrace an "offer" made by another performer
<u>explore</u>	To play out the consequences of an offer
<u>heighten</u>	To raise the stakes with regard to the situation
<u>canceling</u>	Rejecting information or ideas offered by another actor
<u>blocking</u>	Making the actions of another performer irrelevant
<u>endowing</u>	Refusing to let other actors make offers
<u>focus</u>	Assigning attributes to another actor's character
<u>masking</u>	To make sure the audience's attention is only in one place
	Standing out of the audience's sight or in front of other actors

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

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# ACTION

## Teaching Suggestion:

Success with improvisation depends in part on the class. With some groups, you may need to give students for preparing improvisations. For other groups, ensembles of three to four participants will work successfully.

**Evaluation:** After each scene, ask the students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses of the scene. Have a dialogue, and discuss how it took place.

## Teaching Suggestion:

Success with improvisation depends on this class. Use the way for improvisation. Use these opportunities to build trust and confidence in your students.

Follow the guidelines for improvisation in the situations assigned by your teacher. Each scene can be played as a duet or as an ensemble with the entire acting company. Add additional characters to the scene if they are needed.

## 1. Sticky Situations

- a. You and a friend return home from a ball game to find your house locked.
- b. Early on a cold winter morning, the car won't start.
- c. Your mother discovers that she has misplaced the only set of car keys.
- d. You discover that one of your favorite shoes is missing.
- e. You and your friends find yourselves locked in the school building on Friday afternoon.
- f. You and two friends are caught outside the movies in a severe rainstorm.
- g. A newly engaged teacher loses her diamond ring on the school campus. You offer to help her look for the ring.
- h. By accident, your best friend dyes her hair red.
- i. A student you know forgets his lunch money on the first day of school. He asks to borrow money from you.
- j. You are a tough guy who lost your last quarter in the soft drink machine.
- k. Your best friend gives you a tacky gift in front of some peers you would like to impress.
- l. The principal catches you and two other outstanding students skipping class.
- m. You bring the wrong book to the class of the toughest teacher in school.
- n. Your father tells you that you must baby-sit your little sister on the night of the biggest football game of the season.
- o. One of your friends wants to play a trick on the substitute teacher, who happens to be your mom's best friend.
- p. Your friend is wearing a new shirt. While eating in the school cafeteria, you spill red fruit punch on it.

**2. School Situations.** Many situations that occur at school can be the basis for wonderful improvisations. Working with a partner, one of you will play the role of the student; the other will play another character in the scene.

- a. Your locker is stuck.
- b. Your best friend gets the part you wanted in the school play.
- c. You forgot to study for a test.
- d. You lost your lunch money.
- e. You're caught passing notes in class.
- f. You forgot to finish your homework.
- g. The new outfit you are wearing violates the school dress code.
- h. You are a new student who can't find the right classroom.
- i. You didn't make the football team.
- j. You are late to class.
- k. You lose your new jacket the first day you wear it to school.

**Real-Life Application:** Many of these suggestions were made by a juvenile probation officer based on situations young people have actually encountered. Point out to students that one of the most effective strategies for avoiding problem situations and resisting peer pressure is to anticipate the situations and to practice responses that help avoid the unwanted behaviors. Improvising with these situations is one way of identifying and practicing these responses.

**Student Activity:** After a discussion of how improvisation can be used to help solve problems in real life, have the students list ideas for improvisations in their theatre notebooks.

- l. You discover during class that your best friend has invited your boyfriend (or girlfriend) to the movies.
- m. You notice that your friend's socks don't match.
- n. You dislike math, but the school computer has misprinted your class schedule, and you end up in an advanced math class.
- o. You have to make a speech in class, and you are unprepared.
- p. You forget part of your costume on the day of the play, and you have to tell the director.

### 3. Serious Improvisations: What Do I Do Now?

- a. While on a school-sponsored trip, your friend decides to walk out of a restaurant without paying the check. You are confronted by the trip sponsor.
- b. Your friend, who has been caught smoking in school several times, asks you to hold her cigarettes so that she won't get caught again.
- c. A new friend hangs around with a group of teenagers who are known to get in trouble. Your friend invites you to join the group after school.
- d. Your friend's mother appears to have been drinking when she picks you and your friend up after a party. She insists on driving you home.
- e. While on a school trip, someone hides alcohol in your luggage. You get caught.
- f. Two seemingly nice guys you've just met offer to buy you and your friend pizza after the movies.
- g. A new car in the parking lot at school belongs to a teacher you dislike. Your friend suggests that you scratch the car with a key to get back at the teacher.
- h. You are alone at your house. Two of your friends stop by to visit. Your parents do not allow you to entertain guests unless they are home.
- i. You share a locker in the gym with a very popular athlete. You open the locker one morning and discover a small plastic bag with something in it that looks suspicious.
- j. Your friend wants you to slip out of your bedroom window after your parents are asleep.
- k. You and your friend notice an expensive camera lying on the back-seat of an unlocked car. Your friend would really like to have the camera.
- l. While spending the night at a friend's house, one of your friends produces a can of spray paint and a paper bag to get high.
- m. You and your date arrive at a party and discover that the host is serving alcohol. Everyone at the party is a minor.
- n. Your group suggests writing hate letters to a foreign exchange student, threatening what you will do if he doesn't go back home.
- o. When the boy next to you in class opens his backpack, you see what you think is a switchblade.
- p. A classmate offers you some prescription medicine for your headache.
- q. Several times your friend comes to school with unexplained bruises. You suspect abuse.
- r. An extremely thin friend who sits with you in the school cafeteria never eats lunch, yet constantly complains of how fat she is. You suspect that she has an eating disorder.
- s. Your cousin has been slipping out of the house in the middle of the night and driving the family car around town. He doesn't have a driver's license.

- t. One of your friends has the teacher's answers to your math textbook. He offers you the answers.
- u. You and a friend are hanging out at the mall, and your friend decides to shoplift a CD from one of the shops. He asks you to watch for the manager.
- v. Your friend has just been dumped by his girlfriend. He doesn't think life is worth living.
- w. When you walk down the hall at school, a certain group of students leer at you, shouting "catcalls." You are uncomfortable.
- x. Your friend has no rules at his house, and your parents won't allow you to spend the night. Your friend is having a big party, and you want to attend.
- y. A group of your friends is going to meet at a local park to gang up on a group from another school. Your best friend wants you to be there.
- z. When you are absent from school, your best friend "shares your secret" with the teacher.

**Student Activity:** Provide each student with a newspaper for each class period. Have the students write a list of ten words or phrases suitable as openers for improvisations. Discuss these ideas for using them in improvisation activities.

**4. Opening Lines.** A common problem in improvisation is thinking of an opening line. Your teacher will assign partners for this activity. One of you will begin with the opening line; the other will continue the dialogue.

- a. "I can't believe you said that."
- b. "Where did you get that?"
- c. "I have a date with John Saturday night!"
- d. "That's mine!"
- e. "How could you doubt me?"
- f. "Stay here! I'm going to call the wrecker."
- g. "What is that supposed to mean?"
- h. "Wait for me!"
- i. "How can you be so insensitive?"
- j. "I told you to pick that up!"
- k. "So, does that mean we have to do this assignment?"
- l. "I need to talk to you."
- m. "Did you really believe him?"
- n. "Tell me one more time."
- o. "Lower your voice."
- p. "What do you mean, I have to leave?"

**5. Creating Endings.** Thinking of appropriate endings for improvisations takes lots of experience. Try working with a partner to create a situation that could end with one of these final statements.

- a. "You're grounded!"
- b. "Aw, Mom!"
- c. "I love you, too."
- d. "For the life of me, I cannot imagine."
- e. "Good night!"
- f. "Stay here! I'm going to call the wrecker."
- g. "Don't be like that!"
- h. "You're not getting a puppy, and that's final."
- i. "I'll meet you at McDonald's."
- j. "Thank you so much. You're a lifesaver."
- k. "What about your mom?"
- l. "Very nice!"
- m. "Look what you did!"
- n. "Well, if you need anything, just ask."
- o. "I'm really sorry."

# BEASTIE RAP IMPROV

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Beastie Rap Improv is a rhyming competition between two teams. Each team sends up one rapper. He or she is given a one-syllable name to rhyme. They must use the sequence shown in the example below. Players keep rapping until one of them can't think of a rhyme.

**EXAMPLE: Bob**

**RAPPER 1 - I KNEW A GUY AND HIS NAME WAS...**

**RAPPER 1 TEAM - BOB!**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 2 - HE ALWAYS LIKED TO EAT CORN ON THE...**

**RAPPER 2 TEAM - COB!**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 1 - HE WAS OUT OF WORK, HE COULDN'T GET A...**

**RAPPER 1 TEAM - JOB!**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 2 - BOB WAS A HITMAN HE KILLED FOR THE...**

**RAPPER 2 TEAM - MOB!**

Now, you create a rap using JACK as your one-syllable name.

**RAPPER 1 - I KNEW A GUY AND HIS NAME WAS...**

**RAPPER 1 TEAM - JACK!**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 2 - \_\_\_\_\_**

**RAPPER 2 TEAM - \_\_\_\_\_**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 1 - \_\_\_\_\_**

**RAPPER 1 TEAM - \_\_\_\_\_**

**ALL - NA-NA-NA, NA-NA-NA-NA-NA!**

**RAPPER 2 - \_\_\_\_\_**

**RAPPER 2 TEAM - \_\_\_\_\_**