Middle School Monologues – Improv to Improve!

Lesson 7 · 50 minutes · Grades 6–8 · Theater

Lesson Goals

Central Focus

Students will analyze their monologue character's objective, emotions, and given circumstances by participating in guided improvisations set before and after the monologue.

State Standards

- 6.TH:Cr1.b – Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.
- 7.TH:Cr3.b – Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work.
- 7.TH:Re7 – Compare recorded personal and peer reactions to artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

Learning Objective

I will be able to analyze my character's objective, describe my character's emotions and feelings using theater vocabulary, and justify performance choices following an improvisation session.

Academic Language and Language Supports

Language function: Perform, Analyze, Describe

Language demand: Writing, Speaking, Reading, Listening

Lesson vocabulary: Reviewed vocabulary vital for lesson: monologue, character, objective, obstacle, given circumstances, beat, emotion, audience, improvisation, "before" scene, "after" scene, tactics, stakes.

Syntax: Students use structured sentences to describe and justify their character choices (e.g., "My character wants ___ because ___," "Before the monologue, my character is ___ and feels ___," "After the monologue, my character might ___ because ___.").

Discourse: Students will participate in guided improvisations and peer discussions to clarify their understanding of character, objective, and situation, and will address follow-up questions with the instructor. Sentence stems for discussing their monologue and improv work include:

- “My character wants ___ because ___.”
- “Before this monologue, ___ happened, which makes the character feel ___.”
- “After this monologue, my character might ___ because ___.”

Differentiation

English Language Learners

- Allow ELL students to plan a few key lines or phrases for the improv in writing before performing.
- Intentionally pair ELL students with supportive peers who can help negotiate meaning, rehearse dialogue, and model English structures.

Gifted/Advanced Students

- Challenge them to explore two contrasting versions of the same “before” or “after” scene (e.g., hopeful vs. bitter) and decide which best fits the text.
- Invite them to help model a short improv for the class or to offer structured peer feedback using sentence stems.

IEP/504

- Use explicit, concrete directions for each improv: who they are, where they are, and what they should focus on (for example, “You want to tell your friend a secret but you’re nervous”).
- Student given option to participate in second round after observing first round.
- Clarify social expectations including gratitude, positive encouragement for peers, and respectful listening.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Continue to provide monologues that offer connection to cultural heritage of students, and allow for alteration to better match their experience.
- Accept occasional code-switching in early rehearsal as a bridge to full English performance, when appropriate.

Lesson Plan Details

5 min Step 1 – Hook & Objective

- Briefly review that students already did a first read and worksheet for their monologues, and that they’re playing a FICTIONALIZED version of themselves – a character.
- Explain: “Today we’re going to improvise around your monologues to explore who your character is, what they want, and how they act in different situations.”

5 min Step 2 – Review Key Character Information

- Ask students to take out their completed first-readthrough worksheets.
- Lead a quick review with prompts: “What does your character want?” “What happened before the monologue?” “How does your character feel at the start and at the end?”
- Chart a few sample answers on the board to model depth.

> **Assessment 1.1 (Informal) · Standards: 6.TH:Cr1.b – Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.**

5 min New Information: Step 3 – Introduce Improvisation Guidelines

- Define improvisation in student-friendly terms (“acting without a script using your character and situation”).
- Set simple rules: Say “yes, and…” to keep the scene going. Stay safe and respectful. Stay in character and in the world of the monologue.
- Clarify participation options (solo, with a partner, or in a small group) depending on comfort and needs.

5 min Mini-Lesson / Warm-Up: Step 4 – Warm-Up Improv in Character

- Lead a short whole-class exercise, “Character Walk”: call out different emotions/situations (“late for school,” “hiding a secret”) and have students walk as their monologue character would respond.
- Pause periodically and ask: “How would your character’s walk change if they got what they wanted?” “What if they just lost something important?”

7 min Main Lesson: Step 5 – Improvising “Before the Monologue”

- Have students pair or group by play/monologue type (or assign mixed groups).
- Give a prompt: “Improvise a short scene that happens right before your monologue. Show what leads up to the first line.”
- Offer specific starting lines or situations if needed (e.g., “You just got some news,” “You’re waiting for someone who is late”).
- Circulate, coaching students to: use their character’s objective; show emotions with voice and body; stay in the world of the script.

10 min Step 6 – Improvising “After the Monologue” or “What If”

- Offer a second improvisation option: “Now improvise what happens right after the monologue ends,” or “Improvise a ‘what if’ version where one big detail changes (different audience, different location, or different outcome).”
- Remind students to let their character’s wants, fears, and personality drive their choices.

5 min Closure: Step 7 – Quick Share & Observation

- Invite a few groups to present a short improv for the class.
- Ask the audience to look for: What does the character seem to want? How can you tell (voice, body, words)?

- After each share, ask 1–2 quick reflection questions to the performers.

5 min Step 8 – Reflection & Connection Back to Monologue

- Have students individually jot answers on a brief reflection sheet or in their theatre journals.
- Connect explicitly: “How can what you discovered today change how you perform your actual monologue next time?” “Would you change what you’ve written based on what you did today?”

> **Assessment 2.2 (Formal) · Standards: 7.TH:Cr3.b – Develop effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work. 7.TH:Re7 – Compare recorded personal and peer reactions to artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.**