Radio Drama Unit – Live Performance with Foley

Days 1–4 of 4 (~50 min class periods) · Grades 7–8 · Advanced Theater (Continuation)

Lesson Goals

Central Focus

Students collaborate in two parallel small groups to rehearse, sound-design, and perform an original scripted radio drama for a live audience, building ensemble and vocal/technical theatre skills. Grounded in the Buck Institute's Gold Standard PBL elements (authentic public product, structured critique and revision, student voice and choice) and Viola Spolin's theatre-game tradition for ensemble-building.

State Standards

- 7.TH:Pr4.b – Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.
- 8.TH:Pr4.a – Explore different pacing to better communicate the story.
- 8.TH:Pr4.b – Use various character objectives and tactics to overcome an obstacle.
- 7.TH:Pr5.a / 8.TH:Pr5.a – Participate in acting exercises/techniques applied in rehearsal or performance.
- 7.TH:Pr5.b / 8.TH:Pr5.b – Choose/use technical theatre elements (sound design) applied to a design.
- 8.TH:Pr6 – Perform a rehearsed, scripted scene for an audience.
- 7.TH:Cr2.a – Examine and justify original ideas based on critical analysis.
- 7.TH:Cr2.b / 8.TH:Cr2.b – Demonstrate mutual respect and share leadership in preparing/devising drama/theatre work.
- 6.TH:Re7 – Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices.

Learning Objective

I will use vocal choices, sound design, and pacing to bring a scripted radio drama to life, rehearse collaboratively with my ensemble, and perform live for an audience.

Academic Language and Language Supports

Language function: Perform, Justify, Critique

Language demand: Speaking, Listening, Analyzing, Collaborating

Lesson vocabulary: Reviewed vocabulary vital for lesson: Foley, cue, objective, pacing, ensemble, critique, “Keep/Try” feedback. Radio-drama-specific language reviewed with

individual students as needed.

Syntax: Students use structured sentences for peer feedback and character work (e.g., “My character wants ___ because ___,” “I noticed ___,” “I wonder if ___,” “Try ___.”)

Discourse: Students will negotiate sound and vocal choices in small groups, participate in “Keep/Try” peer coaching circles, and coordinate live with Foley/Sound Artists during rehearsal and performance.

Materials

- “Static at Outpost Zorp” script (Group A)
- “The Case of the Vanishing Ventriloquist” script (Group B)
- Sci-fi Foley kit: cellophane, wood blocks, squeaky toy/plunger, kazoo or slide whistle, cookie sheet, bell/clicker
- Mystery Foley kit: cookie sheet, dried rice or paper, squeaky hinge, plastic beads/utensils, kazoo, wood block
- Two designated Foley/sound stations
- Timer for each group
- Peer feedback slips (Day 4)

Differentiation

English Language Learners

- The radio format is naturally supportive for ELL/RFEP students since meaning is carried entirely through vocal delivery rather than written blocking notes.
- Provide a bilingual (English/Spanish) reference card of key terms (cue, objective, Foley).
- Let students rehearse lines aloud with a partner before performing for the group.

Gifted/Advanced Students

- Invite advanced students into a peer-coaching role during the Day 3 “Keep/Try” circles.
- Have them design an additional layered sound cue (e.g., underscoring music) beyond what the script specifies, extending Pr5.b.

IEP/504

- Offer seating away from the Foley table for students sensitive to sudden sound effects (klaxons, glass shatter).
- Students with performance anxiety may opt into a Foley/Sound Artist role, which still meets the Pr5/Pr6 technical theatre standards without requiring solo vocal performance.
- Provide written cue sheets alongside verbal instruction.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Both scripts lean into broad, campy genre “types” (noir detective, mad scientist, alien) rather than culturally specific characters, giving every student equal ownership of the material.
- Encourage students to bring their own vocal influences (accents, rhythms, family storytelling styles) into character choices as a legitimate artistic decision.

Day 1: Table Read & Character Voice

10 min Warm-Up: Vocal-Only “Who, What, Where”

- Whole-class Spolin “Who, What, Where” vocal-only improv warm-up: pairs establish relationship, activity, and location using only voice.
- Debrief: What did you have to do with just your voice that you'd normally do with your body?

15 min Table Read

- Split into Group A and Group B. Each group does a full table read of its assigned script.
- Pause after to discuss the funniest and most tense moments in the script.

15 min Objective Cards & Casting

- Each actor completes a character objective card: what the character wants, and one vocal trait that shows it.
- Finalize casting (doubling allowed if a group is short on actors); identify 1–2 Foley/Sound Artists per group.

5–8 min Closure: Exit Ticket & Share-Out

- Objective cards collected as an exit-ticket check for a clear, sayable objective — not a check for “correctness.”
- Whole-class share-out: each group tells the other one fun moment from its table read.

> **Assessment 1.1 (Informal) · Standards: 7.TH:Pr4.b**

Day 2: Sound Design Workshop

5 min Warm-Up: Sound Circle

Whole-class “Sound Circle” warm-up: each student contributes one sound effect (body, voice, or object); group guesses the story moment it might represent.

25 min Cue Marking & Foley Rehearsal

- Split into groups: Foley Artists and cast mark every [SOUND] cue in the script together, testing 2–3 options per cue before choosing.
- Foley Artists rehearse cues alone first for timing, then integrate with actors.

- Group A: layer multiple [GOO SQUELCH] sounds for the “family arrives” moment. Group B: give extra rehearsal time to the sustained [CLOCK TICKING] underscore.

5–8 min Closure: Cue Check

- Teacher observation checklist per group: are Sound Artists identifying cues independently from the script, or needing prompting?
- Each group names the cue it's most worried about, to prioritize Day 3 focus.

> **Assessment 2.1 (Informal) · Standards: 7.TH:Pr5.b / 8.TH:Pr5.b**

Day 3: Full Rehearsal & Peer Coaching

5 min Warm-Up

Shared vocal warm-up: projection and diction drills.

25 min Runs & “Keep/Try” Coaching

- Each group: Full Run #1, timed, no stopping.
- “Keep/Try” peer coaching circle — teacher models one example first to keep feedback specific and kind. Feedback flows actor-to-actor and actor-to-Foley-table.
- Full Run #2, incorporating at least one “Try” note per role.

8–10 min Growth Check

- Compare Run #1 to Run #2 for timing/energy growth — used to set final performance goals, not graded.
- Observe specificity and kindness of peer feedback during the coaching circle.

> **Assessment 3.1 (Informal) · Standards: 8.TH:Pr4.a / 8.TH:Pr4.b, 7.TH:Cr2.a / 7.TH:Cr2.b**

10 min Logistics Huddle

Whole-class logistics huddle: confirm performance order, seating/mic setup, and who introduces each piece.

Day 4: Performance

5 min Warm-Up & Huddle

Full vocal/physical warm-up together, plus a shared huddle — one word from each group for how they want their run to feel.

18–20 min Live Performances

- Group A performs “Static at Outpost Zorp” for Group B (audience); Group B performs “The Case of the Vanishing Ventriloquist” for Group A (audience).
- Each audience group completes peer feedback slips for the performing group.

Assessment 4.1 (Formal) · Standards: 8.TH:Pr6

10 min Closure: Reflective Circle

- Joint reflective circle: What's one choice you're proud of today? What would one more rehearsal have let you fix? What did you notice in the other group's approach that you might try next time?
- Collect peer feedback slips alongside teacher observation as the basis for informal grading (participation, collaboration, vocal/technical choice).

Assessment 4.2 (Informal) · Standards: 6.TH:Re7