

# Scenes vs Games

Scenic Improv

Grades 11-12 & up

**Educational Objective:** The students will demonstrate their ability to compare scenic improv and game improv by playing both.

**Materials Needed:** Clip of America's Funniest Home Videos.

**Hook:** Get two volunteers to do an improv scene. Give them a one word topic and have them act out a scene. Do not dissect the scene. Don't even talk about good and bad point.

**Step 1:** Now have two new volunteers do another scene and give them the same one word topic but no other instructions. Most likely the two scenes were completely different. Weather they were good, bad, boring, or exciting, the important thing is that they were different from one another. No need to discuss this or the scenes at this point – Just let them happen.

**Step 2:** Play \$20,000 PYRAMID – In this game, two actors (B & C) are sent out while Actor A is given three categories (Things that start with the letter “B”, or Items found in a kitchen, or Something a waitress might carry, or something comparable). Actors B & C will come in and will play the contestants. They will stand back to back Actor A will act out the category for Actor B using charades. At the same time, Actor B will be giving one word clues to Actor C based on the charades he is watching. Actor C must guess the category. A one-minute time limit is enforced for each category. Since there are two types of clues going on, they have to really work as a team. This is a fun game show type game. Play this game three times. Note how, even though the game is entertaining, it is still basically the same each time and if you were to play it the entire class period the students would eventually get bored. No need to discuss this yet.

**Step 3:** Chose a well-known fairytale and have several actors act it out without any preparation. Just assign characters. They must act it out to the end. Talk about the resulting fairytale. What is the difference between watching the improvised fairytale and the improvised \$20,000 Pyramid game?

**Step 4:** Ask everyone to think of a time when they had a big long belly laughed. Ask someone to describe the situation. Chance are it was just talking or being with family or friends and not while someone was telling a joke. Write on the board: THE TRUTH IS FUNNY. Have everyone repeat it. This is one of the biggest secrets to being funny and a great performer. Explain that *Honest discovery, observation, and reaction is better than contrived invention*. A great example of this is the old TV series “America's Funniest Home Videos.” What's funnier, the home videos of truth or the host's contrived jokes? Show a clip if possible. Ask if any one has ever seen or heard a joke that was untruthful. Discuss.

**Step 5:** Play a game of “Funeral.” Funeral is played by one person laying on a table and taking the role as corps. Another stands at the head of the coffin as a mourner. Others come up as viewing guests and try to break the characters of the corps and mourner by making them laugh. If they break them they take their place. The guests have one shot at breaking them (a line or an action). If they don't break the guest returns to his seat. Play about 5 viewers then stop and show how as soon as they went for the joke the improv was over. It can't go on after they've said the joke. It maybe a fun game but it is not good for scenic improv.

**Step 6:** Choose the same players who started the first fair tale at the beginning of class and have them

perform Happily Ever After. Use the same fairy tale they used at the beginning but now have them act out what happens after the tale ended, after they lived happily ever after. Remind them not to go for the one liners. Discuss.