

**Standards,
Benchmarks &
Indicators Covered in
This Unit**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

DRAMA/THEATRE

ELA STANDARD 3

Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies

- **Benchmark A**
Establish a purpose for reading and use a range of reading comprehension strategies to understand literary passages and text (in this instance, a play)

Indicator gr3:6
Create and use graphic organizers to demonstrate comprehension

ELA STANDARD 5

Reading Applications: Literary Text

- **Benchmark B**
Use supporting details to identify and describe main ideas, characters and setting.

Indicator gr3:2
Use concrete details from the text (play) to describe characters and setting.

ELA STANDARD 6

Writing Process

- **Benchmark C**
Use organizers to clarify ideas for writing assignments

Indicator gr3:4
Use organizational strategies to plan writing

ELA STANDARD 7

Writing Applications

- **Benchmark A**
Write narrative accounts that develop character, setting and plot.

Indicator gr3:1
Write stories that sequence events and include descriptive details and vivid language to develop characters, setting and plot.

(continued)

What a Character!

Using Observation & Graphic Organizers to Understand Characters in a Play

Overview

Students create and use a chart to document their observations about character traits in a theatre performance. Students compare and read charts to draw conclusions about the characters in the performance. Students use information in their chart to write a detailed description of one or more characters.

By the End of this Unit, Students Will Be Able to:

- Identify facts and concrete details from a play to describe a character
- Organize fact-based observations into chart form and use information from the chart as a resource for writing.

Student Work Product

- 1 completed character chart
- One or more 1-2 paragraph (5-10 sentences) character descriptions

Time

- Three or four 30-40 minute sessions (depending on the class)
- Attendance at a theater performance (varies by engagement)

Required Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Character chart (copied from attached or re-created by hand/computer)

Appropriate Engagements

- Theatre Performance (play, musical, opera), school-site or field trip

Teacher/Arts Provider Conversation

Teacher and arts provider have conversation/email exchange. Discuss lesson unit, including procedural lessons you will be doing; ask questions.

The arts provider should:

- Provide names of characters in the play that students will be seeing;
- Offer additional resources (as available) to assist in students' character observation.

Teacher Preparation

Familiarize yourself with Improvisation Rules & Set-Up, directly below:

PROCEDURAL LESSON

Improvisation: Rules & Set-Up

Overview: This activity will introduce the rules and set-up for improvisation games. Once understood, students can apply them to various activities yet to come.

Time: 10 minutes

DRAMA STANDARD 1

Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts

- **Benchmark A**
Recognize and demonstrate audience/viewer behavior appropriate for the context and style of the art form

Indicator gr3:1
Demonstrate audience behavior appropriate for forms and styles of drama/theatre: live theatre, film/video and broadcast media.

DRAMA STANDARD 3

Analyzing and Responding

- **Benchmark A**
Use dramatic/theatrical vocabulary and concepts in responding to dramatic/theatrical experiences

Indicator gr3:3
Identify and defend their own interpretations of a character.

- **Benchmark B**
Explain the impact of choices made by artists (e.g., playwrights, actors, directors, designers) in dramatic/theatrical works or experiences.

Indicator gr3:6
Critique an actor's portrayal of a character based on voice, gesture, facial expression and movement.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Character: a person in a play created by the playwright and represented by an actor.

Physicality: how the actor uses his/her body to create and represent the character (ex: Does the actor stand up right, or hunch over? Does the actor drag his/her feet while they walk? Does the actor slouch when he/she sits?).

Vocal Quality: how the actor uses his/her voice to create and represent the character (ex: high voice, deep voice, squeaky voice, loud voice, soft voice, etc.)

Costume: What the actor wears to represent and create the character.

Setting: the location of the play; can be a physical location (ex: a bedroom, a park, a living room, etc.) or can be a mood, feeling or adjective (ex: cluttered, dirty, neat, clean, bright)

Lighting: the quality and angle of light

Instructional Procedures:

1. Clear a space in the room and have students make a **circle** of chairs.
2. The **playing area** is inside the circle of chairs. All games must take place in the playing area; you cannot go all over the room.
3. If students are sitting in their chairs and watching, they are the **audience**.
4. If a participant needs his or her chair for the game, he/she can take it into the **playing area**
5. When you say **action**, the game **starts**. When you say **cut**, the game is **over**, students must **freeze** in their place.
6. In “improvisation,” there are no right or wrong answers. Participants must *stick to the rules* of the game and use their imaginations.
7. In “improvisation,” you must never say *no*. Once something is spoken, it is a fact for the story and it is the actor’s job to build on that fact.
8. **SIDE COACHING:** During an improvisation game, the director/teacher will sometimes find it necessary to remind the students of the game rules or set-up to keep them on focus.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Pre-Engagement Class Activities

Two 30-40 minute sessions

The second of these sessions should occur no more than 2 days before the performance.

Instructions

1. Explain **Improvisation Rules and Set Up** to students.
2. Do “**Character Circle**” **Procedural Lesson** (directly below) so students understand the notion of “character”

PROCEDURAL LESSON

Character Circle

Overview: This is a small-group improvisation exercise to help students understand the “who” or character of a scene, and also explores the idea of “relationships” between two characters. This not only fosters creativity, but encourages students to consider character motivation, detail, and the connectedness between two characters in a written or dramatic work.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: flashcards with examples of relationships written on them (e.g. father/child, policeman/speeder, boss/worker)

Instructional Procedures:

- a. Review improvisation rules and set up.
- b. Choose one student to stand in the center of the *playing area*.
- c. Choose 4-6 additional students to stand in a circle around him/her.

used on the stage (ex: color, light from the front, bright, dim, Did you see the lighting instruments?)

Sound: anything the audience hears during the performance (sound effect such as wind, crickets, thunder, etc., and music or recorded voices).

Stage Time: the amount of time an actor spends in stage (ex: a lot, a little, most of the show, only few scenes, never left the stage)

- d. Teacher repeats the following to students:
“This game works with the “who are you?” in a scene: the character. When an actor walks out on stage, the audience does not know who they are until another actor walks out on stage and begins to talk to him/her. We start to learn more about the characters by the way they relate to each other.”
- e. Rules of the activity:
- i. One group of students stands in the *playing area*. The rest of the class will serve as the *audience*.
 - ii. Teacher passes out cards (each with one relationship written on it) to the 4-6 students in the circle. Each student receives his own individual card and should not share it with anyone.
 - iii. The student in the *center* of the circle faces one of the individuals in the *outside circle*. The person on the *outside* will begin to talk with the person in the *center*. Based on that information, the person in the *center* must figure out who the person on the *outside* is pretending to be. For example: If a student on the outside has a card that reads “Mother/Child,” she might say to the person in the center, “Unless you clean your room, you’re grounded!”
 - iv. Once the student in the *center* has figured out who the person on the *outside* is, he engages in a conversation as that character.
 - v. The student in the *center* continues this process with all of the individuals in the outside circle.
- f. As the teacher facilitates the various groups, say “*Action*” to start. Once a character is established and a conversation is underway, say “*Next*” and move onto the next person/character. After everyone has had one turn, call “*Cut*.” Ask the audience to tell who each person was and what the relationship was.
- g. Discuss each character in the circle. What clues were given that helped decide who they were? Note how this is similar to reading & good writing: what clues in the text reveal traits and qualities about the character(s)?

This is the end of the Character Circle activity.

3. In the same or different session, do “**Activities in a Room**” Procedural Lesson (directly below) so students understand the notion of “setting”

PROCEDURAL LESSON

Activities in a Room

Overview: A group improvisation game with no words (using only their bodies) to help students understand the “what” (activity) and the “where” (location) of a scene or setting. One student chooses a room in a house and begins an activity that takes place in that room. When other students recognize the activity and the “type” of room, they may “enter” one at a time into the same room and perform a different activity there.

Time: 20 minutes

Instructional Procedures:

- a. Review **improvisation** rules and set-up and the elements of a scene.
- b. Have students stand in front of their chairs prepared to perform the activity together.
- c. Game rules to tell the students:
 - I'm going to call out the name of a room in the house.
 - When I say "action," show me (without any words or sounds—use only your body/actions) what you would do in that room of the house.
 - The first room is going to be the kitchen. *Think*—(don't move) what would you *do* in the kitchen? **ACTION**.
- d. Allow students time to act out their activity. Tell them two things:
 - Go slowly.
 - Keep your eyes on what *you're* doing.
- e. After you see everyone responding to these directions (fully participating) call **CUT**.
- f. Have students go back to their chairs and sit down.
- g. **Tell students:** "Notice that I said *go slowly*. You don't have real objects in your hands, so you need to go slower to give the audience a chance to see what you are doing. Also, keep your eyes on it. If you keep your eyes on the object that is *not really there*, and *see it with your imagination*, the audience will also see it."
- h. **Ask the students:** "What were you doing in the kitchen?" Call on a few students and ask them to give details—i.e. If someone was cooking ask, "What were you cooking? What did you use to mix it with? What ingredients did you use?" Explain to students that these details make their acting more like real life (*realistic*) and that's the way we want our acting to be because the audience needs to believe what you are doing on stage. This is just like when we use details in our writing to support our main idea, and give the reader a vivid picture of what we are trying to describe.
- i. **Start the game again** with *one volunteer* who will stand in the center of the circle.
- j. **Repeat** the instructions to the class:
 - Choose a room in the house, but don't tell anyone.
 - Then, choose an activity you would do in that room, but don't tell anyone.
 - When I say **ACTION**, start your activity.
 - When the audience knows where you are and what you are doing, one person at a time goes into the same room as you, but the must do a **different** activity in the same room.
 - Because you must be different from everyone, please raise your hand and wait to be called upon before entering the circle.
- k. Call **CUT** when there are no more volunteers left.
- l. Have students to return to their seats.
- m. Ask, "Where were you and what were you doing?" Call on a few students, but save the person who started for last.
- n. Before the last student says where they were, explain to the students that there are no wrong answers, because the rules of the game were to "go to the same room you **thought** the first person was in."

This is the end of the Activities in a Room activity.

4. In the same or different session, **have students create a character chart** (see sample on the last page of this unit). Either have students draw a chart in their notebooks or distribute copies of the sample.
5. Have students write the character names from the play they will be seeing in the far left column.

6. Review definitions of the categories on the chart (see “Helpful Definitions” on page 2 of this unit). Discuss examples of each. Explain to students that they will be observing details of each of the categories during the performance and filling in the chart with adjectives, adverbs or any words that describe their observations.

You may want to use this time to review the definition of adjectives and adverbs. Students may find it helpful if you list on the blackboard different kinds of descriptors students will be looking for at the performance. For example: vocal quality examples might be soft/loud, thoughtful/quick, deep/high, funny/serious, old/young, squeaky/resonant, etc. Costume examples might be bright, colorful, somber, dark, raggedy, fancy, playful, business-like, useful, etc.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

- Have students bring their notebooks and charts to the performance. Students may begin taking notes/filling out their charts during intermission or on the bus back to school. Students will fill in the chart with adjectives, adverbs, or any words that describe their observations.

FOLLOWING THE PERFORMANCE

Post-Engagement Class Activities

Two 30 minute sessions

These sessions should occur as soon possible after the performance.

Instructions

1. Have students complete their charts.
2. Lead students in a group analysis (discussion) of their charts. You may want to use a blank “master” chart on an overhead projector, where you can record students’ joint observations.
 - a) Do some characters have more stage time than others? Why?
 - b) Does the setting define one character more clearly than another?
 - c) Are some characters more physically defined than others? Why?
 - d) Is lighting and sound more difficult to observe? Why?
 - e) Do any of these observations surprise you? Why?
3. Discuss with students how these observations and conclusions reflect the interpretation of the actor, director and designers.
 - a) Seek the students’ opinions of these interpretations. Would they have portrayed the characters differently? How might they have demonstrated those differences?
 - b) How else could the play be interpreted?
 - c) Conduct Procedural Lessons “Activities in a Room” and/or “Character Circle” to illustrate these different interpretations.
 - d) What would the effect of a different interpretation have on the students’ reaction to the play?
4. Using the information on their completed Character Charts, have students write a descriptive essay regarding the characters in the play. When thinking about organizing their writing, invite students to:
 - Think about how much writing space they should devote to each character; for example, a main character might need 1 or more full paragraphs to be adequately described, while 2 lesser characters might be able to be fully described in a single paragraph.
 - Consider the similarities and differences between characters. Does it make sense to describe certain characters together and others separately?
 - Use their Character Charts as a checklist – to ensure that they have described each character as fully as possible.

VARIATION: Have students make up a new story that uses the characters in the play. Have students think about new plots, settings, and situations that still seem realistic for the characters to be in.

Assessing Your Students’ Work

- Use the attached Ohio Department of Education Grade 3 Writing Scoring Rubric to grade your students’ writing project.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

- Encourage students to think about the following questions when watching the performance: What does each character want? If you had to describe each character in one word, what would it be? Which characters interact with each other (are on stage at the same time)? Which ones don't? What do you think each character's thoughts and feelings are? You might have students bring notebooks to the performance and have them begin jotting down their observations during intermission or on the bus back to school.

FOLLOWING THE PERFORMANCE

Post-Engagement Class Activities

Two 30-40 minute sessions

These sessions should occur as soon as possible after the performance.

Instructions

1. Adapt the Character Circle Procedural Lesson and allow student to explore conversations between different characters from the live performance.
 - a) Write all the character names on the board. Ask the students, "What did each of the characters in the play want?" Next to each character name write the answer. This is the character's objective.
 - b) Set the students up for the Character Circle Procedural Lesson. Assign the main character to the student in the center of the circle. Assign the minor characters to the students forming the circle. Instruct each student that when it is their turn they will have a conversation with the main character and prevent or help the main character get what they want (achieve their objective).
 - c) Place one of the minor characters in the center of the circle. Repeat the activity above.
 - d) Repeat for all characters, or as many as time allows.
2. Explain to the students that as each of the characters from the Character Circle conversations tried to get what they wanted (achieve their objective), they developed hi/her individual story. This is how the story is explored from a different point of view.
3. Have students choose a minor character and rewrite the story from the point of view of this character. Select the form you would like students' writing to take, e.g. a dialogue between one or more characters that relays a particular scene/incident or a descriptive narrative of one or more paragraphs that relates a particular scene/incident or the full story. Encourage students to use the dialogue from the previous Character Circle game as inspiration for their re-writes.
4. Have students share and edit their writing.

Assessing Your Students' Work

- Adapt the attached Ohio Department of Education Grade 3 Writing Scoring Rubric by adding the following additional questions:
 - Does the student use details from the play that support his/her new version of the story?
 - Does the student's work reflect the ideas generated in the Character Circle game?

Grade 3 Writing Scoring Rubric

Score Point	Content Standards: Process 2 – 3, 11 Applications 2, 4	Organization Standards: Processes 2, 5, 6, 7	Conventions Standards: Conventions 1 – 6, 8 – 12, 14 – 17
4 Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a main idea or prompt completely supports a main idea with details from text focuses on a main idea with no extraneous information displays evidence of an author's voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a clear message with a developed introduction, body and closure contains well-constructed paragraph(s) contains fluent and easy-to-follow complete sentences varies sentence structure and vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays legible handwriting displays correct use of nouns, verbs and adjectives displays correct agreement between subject and verb, noun and pronoun displays correct spelling of grade-level words and reasonable attempts at beyond-grade-level words displays correct capitalization and punctuation
3 Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a mostly complete main idea or prompt supports a main idea with some details from text focuses on the main idea with little extraneous information displays some evidence of an author's voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conveys a clear message with a simple introduction, body and closure contains properly constructed paragraphs contains complete sentences that are somewhat fluent varies sentence structure and vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays legible handwriting in most cases displays mostly correct use of nouns, verbs and adjectives displays mostly correct agreement between subject and verb, noun and pronoun displays mostly correct spelling of grade-level words displays mostly correct capitalization and punctuation
2 Partial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops an incomplete main idea or prompt supports a main idea with a few details from text focuses on the main idea, but with some extraneous information does not display an author's voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a somewhat confusing message with a simple introduction, body and closure; one or more may be missing contains one or more paragraphs contains mostly complete sentences that are difficult to follow and do not flow well varies sentence structure and vocabulary with some repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays legible handwriting some of the time displays partially correct use of nouns, verbs and adjectives displays partially correct agreement between subject and verb, noun and pronoun displays partially correct spelling of grade-level words displays partially correct use of capitalization and punctuation displays patterns of errors that sometimes impede meaning
1 Minimal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not develop a main idea or prompt includes few details, which do not support a main idea focuses on topic, but extraneous information impedes comprehension does not display an author's voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conveys a confused message without an introduction, a body or a closure contains little or no paragraph structure contains disjointed sentences with little relation between them uses repetitive sentence structure and vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays mostly illegible handwriting displays minimally correct use of nouns, verbs and adjectives displays minimal use of correct agreement between subject and verb, noun and pronoun displays minimal use of correct spelling displays minimal use of correct capitalization and punctuation contains patterns of errors that seriously interfere with meaning
0	Student attempts to respond, but response is off-topic, illegible, or insufficient or otherwise fails to meet requirements for a score of 1.		

ART ^{is} EDUCATION

Character	Physicality	Vocal Quality	Costume	Setting	Lighting	Sound	Stage Time