



Writing a Dialogue - A Jazz Conversation Using Collective Improvisation

While watching a video featuring Wynton Marsalis and his band, students learn about a jazz concept called "Collective Improvisation." They then apply the concept to creating an original dialogue between two characters.

Lesson Summary

Overview

While watching a video featuring Wynton Marsalis and his band, students learn about a jazz concept called "Collective Improvisation." They then apply the concept to creating an original dialogue between two characters.

Why is this an important concept?

When students can create original literary texts in which characters use dialogue to express themselves, they demonstrate a deep understanding of character development. In turn, they develop skills in listening and responding in conversations.

Grade Level:

3-5

Suggested Time

(2 or 3) 50-minute periods

Media Resources

- [Together](#) QuickTime Video
- [Musical Conversations](#) QuickTime Video
- [Collective Improvisation](#) QuickTime Video

Materials

- [Collective Improvisation Dialogue](#) handout
- [Writing a Listening Dialogue](#) handout
- [Dialogue rubric](#)

The Lesson

Part I: Learning Activity

1. Tell students they are about to watch a video segment in which Wynton Marsalis and his band perform examples of jazz music and show that jazz can be played in a way that creates a conversation between musicians.
2. Before playing the [Together](#) QuickTime Video, ask students to listen for two special words, "collective improvisation," and be able to explain what the words mean. You may want to write these words on the board. Play the video, pausing after about three minutes when Wynton says, "Make it up together." Ask students to offer explanations of this phrase.
3. Tell students they are now going to see an example of collective improvisation through a spoken conversation. Ask students to think about how the spoken conversation between the two musicians in the video is an example of collective improvisation. Resume playing until the end of the segment. Then ask students what they think are the two most important factors in a conversation between two people.
4. Next, tell students they are about to hear two musical conversations. While watching the [Musical Conversations](#) QuickTime Video, ask students to listen and describe the differences between the two musical conversations they hear. Play the second video then take responses.
5. Play the [Collective Improvisation](#) QuickTime Video. What makes the third and final musical conversation the best example of collective improvisation in the New Orleans style?
6. Next, share with students that a conversation between two people is called a dialogue. Distribute the [Collective Improvisation Dialogue](#) [handout](#) as a textual guide. As a class, ask students to read the dialogue and summarize the conversation the two men had by asking them to give examples of how they listened to each other.

Part II: Assessment

Students should work alone to create an original dialogue between two characters who listen to each other's responses. Distribute the [Writing a Listening Dialogue](#) [handout](#).

For students who need additional teacher guidance:

1. While working with small groups or individuals, ask students to have a verbal conversation with their peers or with you. Take turns listening, responding and listening again while highlighting each time listening or responding takes place.
2. Distribute the [Collective Improvisation Dialogue](#) and read the dialogue aloud. Encourage students to complete the [Writing a Listening Dialogue](#) [handout](#) in pairs or in a small teacher-guided group.

Portfolio: The Writing a Listening Dialogue handout can be placed in a student's portfolio to serve as an example of skill acquisition.

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