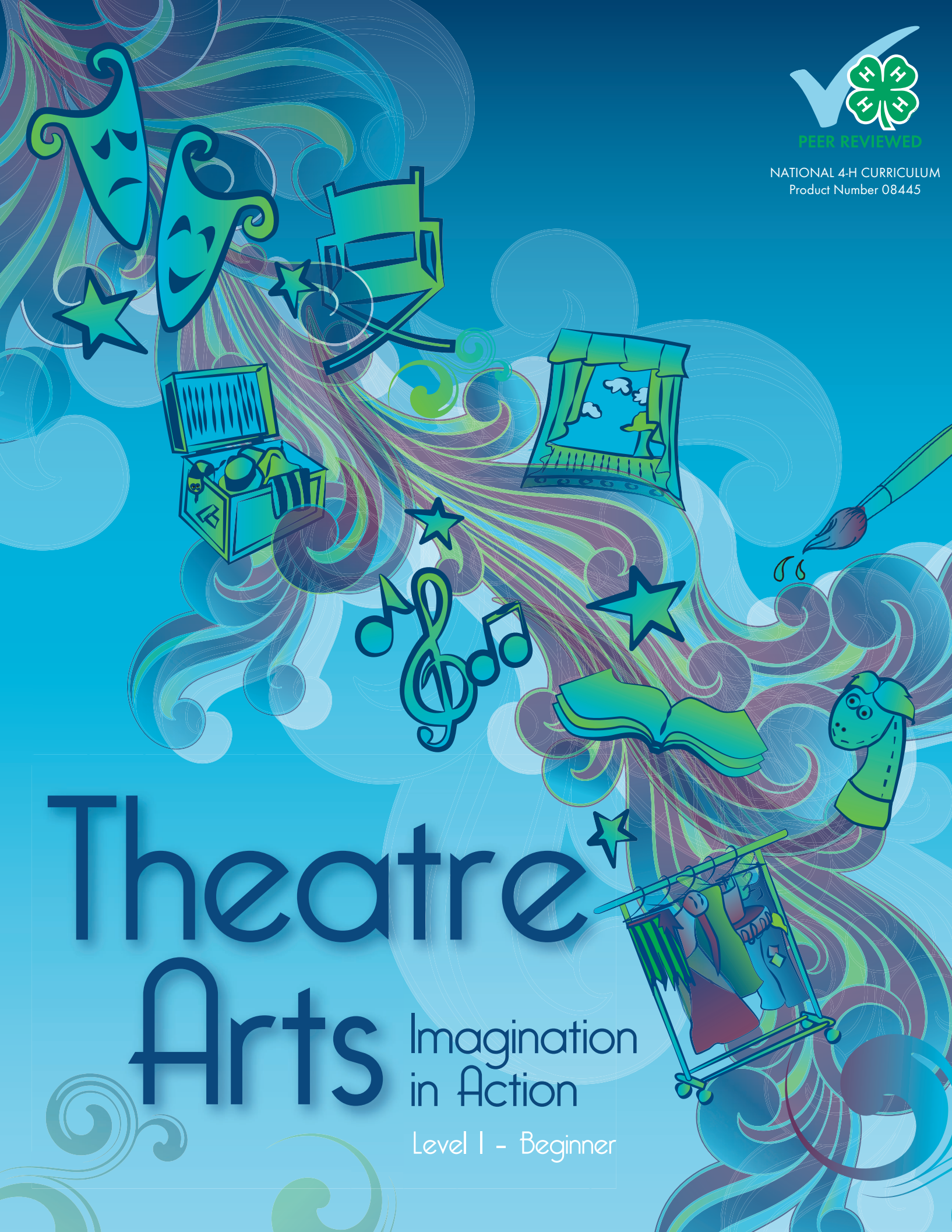




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# Theatre Arts

Imagination  
in Action

Level I - Beginner



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# THEATRE ARTS CURRICULUM

# Table of Contents



## LEVEL I – BEGINNER

### **Big Idea: Communication**

Non-verbal Improvisation – Pantomime with a Purpose .....	1
Verbal Improvisation – Communicating in Gibberish .....	5
Active Listening – Collaborative Storytelling .....	8

### **Big Idea: Character Development**

Creating Characters – Photos Come to Life .....	11
Synchronizing Movements – Mirror Mirror! .....	14

### **Big Idea: Play Development**

The Magic of Monologue .....	17
Theater Genres – Styles of Delivery .....	20

### **Big Idea: Play Production**

Technical Theatre – Set in a Box .....	23
Stage Geography – Directing Your Cast .....	26

### **Big Idea: Theater as Projected Play**

Masks – Everyday Masks .....	30
Puppetry – Everyday Puppets .....	33



# Non-verbal Improvisation– Pantomime with a Purpose!

## How Do I Best Communicate Through Pantomime?

**Skill Level**  
Beginner

**Learner Outcomes**  
Through pantomime, effectively express an idea and communicate a concept w/out the use of words.

**Educational Standard(s)**  
National Theatre Standards 5-8. Standard 2.

**Success Indicator**  
Creates and passes an identifiable imaginary form to another person using pantomiming.

**Life Skill(s)**

- Self-Expression
- Teamwork

**Tags**  
Pantomime, non-verbal expression, mime, acting without words

**Time Needed**  
30-45 minutes

**Materials List**  
N/A

### Introduction

In some cultures, masks were used to represent the different characters who acted out life situations with no words. Pantomime imitates or creates an illusion of real life by using imaginary objects or situations. For instance, a pantomime artist would try to imitate a real walk without making sounds.

You might think that “mime” is short for pantomime, but they are actually two very different acting forms. Both communicate meaning without words, using facial expressions, gestures, and body language. But, pantomime artists provide force to the air around them, implying weight, texture, line, rhythm, and force. Mime artists show theatrical movement in their actions.

See Appendix A for a Venn diagram Comparison of Mime and Pantomime.

### Experience/“What to Do”

#### Facilitator Note:

Use the wording below to get started, if you find it helpful. Encourage youth to ask questions throughout the process and to help each other find answers.

There are many ways to express ideas to people. Words are one of the most common forms of the communication of ideas among people. What if we didn't use words? How could we get our ideas across to others? Have you ever turned down the volume on a television show or movie only to find that you can still follow the story line by the movements and facial expressions of the actors? Communicating without words is not simple and requires skill. Some actors choose only to communicate with their bodies through pantomime or mime. In this exercise we are going to develop our non-verbal communication skills using an imaginary object.



#### Learn More

You can find additional information on this activity and more at:

[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)



Let us start by first relaxing and taking a few deep breathes while sitting in a circle. Relaxation is the key to any kind of improvisation.

- First, imagine you have a big blob that’s somewhat soft and slippery so that it’s hard to keep in your hands. Pass this around the circle once to practice passing, receiving and holding.
- Next, scoop up a big blob of air – feel the difference of weight and ability to hold it.
- Then, make an imaginary object out of it, paying attention to its size and weight and how you must handle it. Maybe it is a favorite toy or food you like or an object that you use at home or school.
- Now pantomime using the object. Use your five senses and imagination to create the object and be very clear in your actions. Be sure not to speak.

Exaggerated gestures help audience to “get” your emotional response. You might create a pizza where the cheese is hot and gooey and it tastes delicious, for example. After each pantomime, others guess the object.

In the next round, everyone will create an object from the same category, such as a favorite food, a special present I once received something fun to use outside or when I swim, etc. After each pantomime, the others can name the object. If you choose, you can tell each other why the objects you chose have meaning for you. Develop a list of actions to pantomime and practice with a partner, adding more detail and movement. If there is time, create another category and try again. HAVE FUN!

### Facilitator Notes:

In narrative pantomime, the actors pantomime the actions that match the story being told. If you have older or more practiced youth, encourage them to make up their own story for narrative pantomime, writing in pantomime cues. They can do this individually, in pairs, or in a small group. Another option is to tell a story about a problem being solved using pantomime. The story should have a beginning, middle and end.

### References:

- National 4-H Council. (2004). *Imaginary Blog Pantomime, Play the Role*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council. BU-08070
- Taylor, M. (2007). *British Pantomime Performance*. Chicago, IL, Intellect.
- Hall, E. & Wyles, R. (2009). *Oxford Scholarship Online*: January 2009. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199232536.001.0001
- Banham, M. (1995). *The Cambridge guide to theatre*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Booth, M. R. (1991) *Theatre in the Victorian age*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCaslin, N. (1999). *Creative drama in the classroom and beyond*. Allyn & Bacon.

### Did you know?

If we break the word pantomime down into parts, “panto” means all and “mime” means a story portrayed through actions with no verbal communication. The Originally, from Greece, a pantomime was a number of people imitating something with a singing narrator and music, usually the flute. Romans had a type of pantomime that included one actor who used action but no words. The word was eventually used to describe a type of non-verbal performance. Pantomime spread around the world.

Pantomime artists and mimes create imaginary objects; they must be able to make the size, scope and weight of the objects believable. They each observe the behaviors and actions of everyday people to help them create more believable characters or objects. In pantomime, the actors communicate real-life actions like flying a kite or hitting a baseball; in mime, the actor expresses themes or ideas (like freedom or courage) or feelings. In pantomime, actors create imaginary objects. In mime, the actors can transform objects or turn into those objects. Actors in both do physical relaxation exercises to free their bodies from restrictions.

### News & Careers

Find more information at:  
[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)



### **Share...**

Describe your feelings about pretending to create an object from a blob of air. Why was this activity easy or hard for you? What kind of clues helped you to determine the meaning or object of the pantomime?

### **Process...**

What did you do to make your object clear to everyone? How did you have to change your actions to get the results you wanted? How was the interpretation of your pantomime the same for the people watching? How was it different? How does your ability to be a good observer play into your success at pantomime?

### **Generalize...**

Describe times in your life when you felt it was better to show how you felt than to tell how you felt. How did you get the idea for the object you used? What similar skills did people use when they acted out the pantomime? What skills do you need to be good at pantomiming or communicating non-verbally?

### **Term Concept Discovery/Facilitator Notes...**

**Take time to encourage youth to notice contrasts between pantomime and mime practices.** If you noticed misconceptions, this is the time to reteach or provide clarity. Make sure that the youth have had a chance to think about and process the difference between mime and pantomime. You might want to pull some photos of famous mimes and pantomime artists or look for a YouTube video of pantomime in action to provide increased exposure to these arts. The photos or videos could stimulate peer feedback discussion. Show them each one and ask them to think of as many questions as they can about what they saw. This is a great springboard for inquiry – taking them through what they predict could happen next- what the actor or mime might do - what observations they noticed, etc. Youth need to be able to develop these concepts through their own exploration and define the terms using their own words out of their experience.

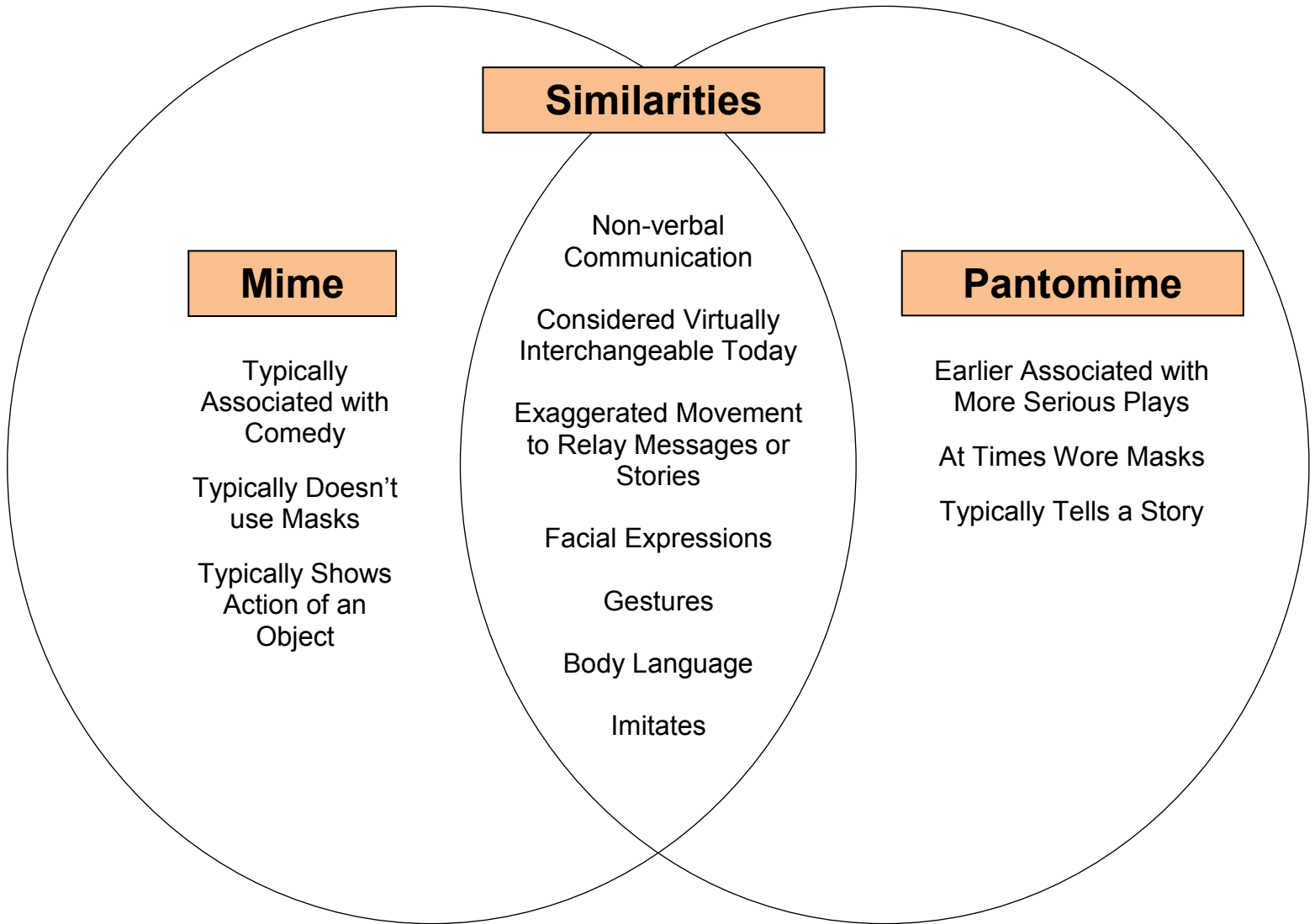
**Web note:** Be aware that web addresses can change unexpectedly, so check them out before use.



Appendix A: Venn Diagram

# Pantomime with a Purpose

Understanding the differences between Pantomime and Mime





## Verbal Improvisation – Communicating in Gibberish!

### How Is Non-verbal Communication An Important Part of Relaying Messages in Everyday Life?

**Skill Level**  
Beginner

**Learner Outcomes**  
Communicate a message through tone, inflection and body language using “gibberish”.

**Educational Standard(s)**  
National Theatre Standards 5-8: Standard 2.  
National Language Arts Standards: Standard 8.

**Success Indicator**  
Using inflection, tone of voice and body language through gibberish effectively communicates a message to a partner.

**Life Skill(s)**

- Communication
- Developing Character
- Self-esteem

**Tags**  
Gibberish, Improvisation, Inflection, Tone, Non-verbal communication

**Time Needed**  
30 minutes

**Materials List**  
None

### Introduction

The word gibberish is a noun that means communicating using words or sounds that have no meaning.

When we send specific messages using gibberish, we find that we typically make the gibberish words rhyme with the real words of the message being relayed, start moving our bodies to express meaning (like in charades) or try to get across meaning through the tone of voice.

Gibberish can be used in practice exercises to assist actors to focus on the effects of voice (intonation, inflection, pace, loudness or softness, etc) when getting across meaning in an unknown language. It is also a great strategy to prepare actors for stage interaction and ensemble work or when they are developing a character’s personality or reflecting emotion. Often it isn’t what someone is saying, but “how” they are saying it that conveys personality and meaning.

### Opening Questions

Have you ever tried to talk using “Pig Latin” or nonsense words? How difficult was it to understand? What helped you understand what someone was trying to say?

### Experience/“What to Do”

As the “teller” in this activity, you are going to portray a person from an unknown country by sharing information about the person using gibberish. You should have in mind who the person is, where the person is from, and three things the person likes to do for fun. In addition, think about gender and personality. Tell a very short story about you, as this person, using gibberish. Include some of the key points suggested above to tell your story. You don’t have to know the whole story, but you need to have an idea of what it’s about, keeping a few key points in mind.



**Learn More**

You can find additional information on this activity and more at:

[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)





A second person will be a translator who stands beside you, listening carefully to your tone of voice and inflection and acting as though s/he understands exactly what is being said and how to translate your story for the audience.

As a teller, remember that this is a gibberish exercise, and that you cannot use English or other known languages, but rather use nonsense words and sounds. Use varied voice tone and pitch and pace to help “convey meaning”.

As a translator, act as though you are really paying attention to what is being said and react with body movement and facial express as you translate each part of the story (shaking your head to indicate yes or showing surprise). Make “your understanding” of the story look believable to the audience.

#### Facilitator Notes:

Youth can work in pairs to practice and view as presenter and audience; one pair can present while the other pair serves as the audience. Then they can switch roles. If there are an odd number of people or an uneven number of pairs, make adjustments to the size of the groups or serve as a participant. .

Once everybody has had a chance to try roles, presenter and audience, process what happened using some of the questions offered below as prompts. Encourage youth to pose questions of their own. As questions emerge organically, encourage youth to explore their curiosities and needs.

In acting situations there are many ways to convey a message. Talk about the differences in how we use voice inflection and intonation when we talk to peers vs. when we talk with younger children or the elderly. With older children or mixed ages, have them practice delivering gibberish to translators who are interpreting for audiences representing different age groups. Ask what they noticed about their sharing or how different audiences responded.

#### References:

*Gibberish activity for vocal expression.* Retrieved from: <http://sdea.org.sg/2011/gibberish-activity-for-vocal-expression/.html>.

*Improv activities.* Retrieved from <http://improvencyclopedia.org/games/index.html/.html>

### Did you know?

There are many different ways to speak gibberish. Communicating in gibberish can involve regular words with letters added in at syllable intervals, either before or after the word.

Pig Latin, for instance, is one such language that most of us know. You take the first letter of a word, put it at the end of the word and add a “long a” vowel sound. In this case the word happy would be appyha.

Not all gibberish needs to have such a structured form. Some forms of gibberish use accents and tone of voice to get points across and others are used with no intention of being understood. One theory on how gibberish is thought to have originated was in Gibraltar, a very diverse culture where people spoke many languages. The merging of these languages became known as gibberish only understood by locals.

### News & Careers

Find more information at:  
[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)



### ***Share...***

Was it more difficult to speak in gibberish or to translate the gibberish? As a teller, what did you do to keep the gibberish focused for the translator? As a translator, what responses did you offer the audience to keep your translation looking and sounding believable?

### ***Process...***

What did you learn about communication from relaying your key points in gibberish to the translator? When does new information sound like gibberish? Why was this a fun way to learn to communicate verbally?

### ***Generalize...***

Describe ways in which new ideas are communicated to you. What other clues do you look for when something you're being told isn't understandable? What has this activity taught you about communication?

### ***Term Concept Discovery/Facilitator Notes...***

Now that the youth have completed this activity, think about what you learned as a facilitator. How can you use what you learned to better communicate information to youth? How can you help youth to better understand the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication everyday life? Now is the time to make certain they understand important terms and to reinforce concepts related to communication that are not comprehended.

### ***Apply...***

Describe how you will use what you learned from the communication strategies practiced in this activity in your next conversation. How will you be more sensitive to varying age groups or to people who don't speak your language?



# Active Listening – Collaborative Storytelling

## How Does Active Listening Contribute to Communication and Collaboration?

**Skill Level**  
Beginner

**Learner Outcomes**  
Continue a group story by adding narrative to content heard from prior speaker

**Educational Standard(s)**  
National Theatre Standards 5-8: Standard 2.  
National Language Arts Standards: Standard 8.

**Success Indicator**  
Continues a group story by adding narrative to content heard from prior speaker.

**Life Skill(s)**

- Communication
- Empathy
- Cooperation
- Creative Thinking

**Tags**  
Active Listening,  
Storytelling

**Time Needed**  
45 minutes

**Materials List**  
None

### Introduction

One of the most important skills in acting and daily life is the art of listening. To listen is to be attentive to the meaning of the speaker's words, not just the sounds one is hearing. Fine actors do not only pick up the prior speakers' line cues, but the underlying meaning being expressed. Similarly, in daily life, good listeners demonstrate to speakers that they have truly understood the meaning of what they have said, and are not merely waiting to speak.



### Opening Questions

Think of a time when you shared a story with someone only to learn, upon their retelling, that they had not heard what you said at all. How did that make you feel? Everyone likes to know that they have been understood. We can become better listeners to each other by developing our listening skills. So let's begin by creating a group, or collaborative story!

### Learn More

You can find additional information on this activity and more at:  
[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)



## Experience/ “What to Do”

### Facilitator Notes:

You can read this aloud to the youth with whom you are working or adapt, rephrase, or paraphrase to suit your needs.

Let’s form a circle. Together we are going to collaborate, which means to work together, and our goal is to create a group story. We will do this by building off of each other’s ideas. Let’s start with a volunteer. You begin with a word or line; when you decide to stop, nod at someone in the circle. This person will then continue the story from where you left off. Since one might receive the story in mid-sentence, it is important to listen so that you can continue the flow of the story without interruption. We will continue going around the circle until everyone has contributed in some way. It isn’t important that the story have a plot or be serious. What is important is that each of you listened and built on the words of the person who spoke before you. Now that we’ve built our collaborative story, let’s name it! We can even act it out or make it a puppet show!

### Facilitator Notes:

This activity can serve both as a session warm up, and as the core activity in improvisational acting. The story created can become the basis of narrative pantomime or dramatized scenes.

The leader can employ variations on the group formation. With new groups, going around the circle can often be a good starting point. Since some participants are more verbal than others in this activity, each participant can choose to contribute as little or as much as he or she wishes. This may be a word or it may be a paragraph. Spontaneity is encouraged, so participants need not contribute in clockwise or counterclockwise order.

### References:

*Skills for Active Listening*. Retrieved January 9, 2013 from:  
[http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/primary/Opening\\_the\\_Door/workshop2.html](http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/primary/Opening_the_Door/workshop2.html)  
*Skills for Active Listening*. Retrieved January 9, 2013 from:  
<http://www.taftcollege.edu/lrc/class/assignments/actlisten.html>

## Did you know?

In “Active Listening” the listener employs 5 specific techniques to actively engage in the speaker’s sharing. These include:

1. Demonstrate listening through inviting posture and facial expression, eye contact, supportive nod and comments
2. Invite further elaboration through such phrases as “Tell me more”.
3. Ask for clarification on any items you are unsure of
4. Paraphrase, or repeat back what you have heard
5. Acknowledge what has been said without advice or judgment

### News & Careers

Active listening is cited as the number one skill for such careers as therapists, social workers, judges, lawyers and reporters. “Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate and not interrupting at inappropriate times” is a critically important skill for success in these careers.

Find more information at:  
[www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/theatre2)



### ***Share...***

In general, what positive listening techniques did you observe in the group?

### ***Reflect...***

How does this collaborative storytelling compare to each of you individually telling a story? What process do you prefer? Why?

### ***Generalize...***

Were there any elements of active listening that could be added to this collaborative storytelling process?

### ***Term Concept Discovery/Facilitator Notes...***

At this point in the learning cycle, youth need to have been able to develop concepts through their own exploration and define the terms using their own words, out of personal experience. You will now notice many things about the learner and learning experience, e.g. degree of understanding, conception/misconceptions of content knowledge, and understanding/misunderstanding of vocabulary. Concepts or specific content that need to be re-emphasized, re-taught or reframed should emerge at this stage.

### ***Apply...***

How will these active listening techniques enhance your relationships, your work?