



Lesson Plan

Introduction to Class Clowns

The idea behind Class Clowns is to educate pupils through the use of comedy and develop the comedians of the future by providing the opportunity to develop skills while learning from professionals in the field. The competition originally began in Australia as a concept created by the Melbourne Comedy Festival this grew and now they take entrants from all over Australia each year involving 100's of Schools and 1000's of pupils. Heats are held within individual schools and the winners of those heats go through to a final in front of a live paying audience at the Melbourne Comedy Festival.

We are obviously starting off much smaller so we are happy for pupils to come forward and take part as long as they feel confident enough to – the aim of the lesson plan is to help build the confidence of individual and group performers.

Class Clowns Objectives

Class Clowns aims to develop Skills for Life and Work. This is done by challenging you to work with one another in the creative process to produce a well round piece of comedy or a sketch performance.

Reading and Writing – is key in Comedy – performers always prepare work well in advance of performances rehearsing and refining along the way. Developing these skills and techniques for the future will help you to understand the preparation and hard work that goes into being a performer.

Listening and talking is a huge part of comedy performance. Not only are performers required to react to one another but also audience members. Talking through your ideas with the group will help build confidence in public speaking as well as learning to listen to your peer's advice and to move forward and progress with your comedy.

Introductory ideas to think about...

- **What is Comedy?**
 - A joke?
 - A funny situation?
 - Laughter?

- **What makes a joke funny?**
 - Structure?
 - Timing?
 - Delivery?
 - Wording?
 - Punch Line?
 - Physicality?



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- **Who makes you laugh that is not famous?**
 - Family member?
 - Friends?
 - Teacher?
- **Why?** (Because they do – is not an answer!)
 - Sarcastic Wit?
 - Clumsy?
 - Childish?
- **Where do you find comedy?**
 - In everyday life?
 - On TV?
 - At comedy shows?
 - All around us?

Warm up activity:

It is important that you warm your vocal cords before going on stage – this helps with problems like nerves and becoming tongue tied as well as helping you to feel relaxed this also can be fun to do as part of a group!

Form a circle facing one another.

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, knees relaxed, arms hanging loosely. Take a deep, diaphragmatic breath and allow yourself to drop forward at the waist as you exhale. Roll back up and repeat, this time adding a sound as you inhale. Repeat several more times, getting louder each time.
- Play motorcycle. Vibrate your lips, making engine sounds, taking the pitch up and down. Pretending to ride the road is optional, but makes it more fun.
- Massage the sides of the jaw, releasing any tension you hold there. Cupping your hand in your chin, work your jaw up and down as fast as you can, making a sound. It'll come out something like "wawawawawaw," but the faster the better.
- Standing upright, breathing deeply, slowly and with control, start repeating "Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha." Listen to and hear if the sound is resonating in your chest. Feel the vibrations.
- Sustain your breath on a hum. Play with the pitch, up and down the scale, feeling the vibrations resonate through your body. As you get more adapt at feeling the resonance, try and move it deliberately, through your chest, your jaw, your nose, your sinus cavities, your forehead, the top of your head, then back down again.



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- Moving on, we go from just open sound to a shaped one, working different syllables to loosen the tongue and jaw. Start with each set slowly, repeating it until you feel confident, then increase your speed until it is almost a hum.
 - La
 - Le
 - Te
 - Ta-Ka
 - O-E
 - mamalo papalo
- Once you feel like you've loosened up, move on to the below activities!

Activity 1: Jokes

Split into groups of 4, preferably mixed groups (where possible). Often this will bring a more diverse opinion to the team of what is and isn't funny.

Using the worksheet below, allow each team 10 mins to discuss and list favourite comics and jokes. Ask each team to make a list of their favourite jokes (aim for 4). When the 10 mins are up each team should read them out, this will open up the discussion to what is and isn't funny.

Ask each group to nominate a joke. Discuss what it is that they find funny about the joke – was it the delivery? Was it the structure? Play on words?

Types of Comedy

1.)	5.)
2.)	6.)
3.)	7.)
4.)	8.)

Favourite Comedians

Name	What is it that you find funny about them?
1.)	
2.)	
3.)	
4.)	



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Favourite Jokes

Joke	Punch line
1.)	1.)
2.)	2.)
3.)	3.)
4.)	4.)

Activity 2: Types of Comedy

It is useful to discuss the different types of comedy you can encounter and this may help you to understand comedy you may be unfamiliar with.

Download the TYPES OF COMEDY guide from the gildedballoon.co.uk/classclowns website.

Divide each comedic genre amongst your groups. Each group should then research examples of comedians and/or sketch groups who perform their given genres of comedy.

Try performing some short comedy routines from some of the acts you have researched. This may help you to find the type of comedy you are most comfortable performing. Equally, it will help you determine what kind of comedy you are not comfortable performing, which is just as useful! It will take you a while to find your preferred comedy style but it's all about trial and error!

Remember, when you apply to Class Clowns, you will be given the opportunity to attend a comedy workshop where you will be able to develop material with comedians and industry professionals.

Activity 3: Writing a Joke

In your groups, create a situation from which to devise a Joke.

Your situation must address 3 simple questions:



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- 1.) What is new this week?
- 2.) How does this affect you?
- 3.) Why is this unusual?

Example:

What's new?

My new head teacher started work this week.

How does this affect you?

She has no idea that I owed our last Head Teacher an after-school detention!

Why is this unusual?

I haven't been home on time since last term! My mum nearly fainted when I arrived home just after 3:30pm!

Testing the joke

In small groups test the joke out on one another –if it doesn't work you can try paraphrasing or delivering in a different way, perhaps add some comedic gesturing. In many cases the delivery of the joke can be as (if not more) funny than the content of the joke itself.

Remember that not everyone laughs at the same thing and if you win over 5 out of 10 people you are on to a winner!