

Teacher Package

The Arts Exemplar Task Grade 9 Dance Teacher Package

Title Spontaneous and Prepared Improvisation With Written Reflection

Time Requirement 4–6 periods of 70 minutes each

Description of the Task*

This exemplar task has three components:

1. *Spontaneous Improvisation*
 - Students will engage in teacher-directed dance improvisations that focus on space, shape, and theme.
 - Students will be evaluated on their improvisational skills and ability to apply safety principles to improvisational work.
2. *Reflective Writing*
 - Students will reflect on the improvisational process and will be evaluated individually on their written communication skills and critical thinking about the improvisational process.
3. *Prepared Improvisation (Presentation)*
 - In small groups of four, students will develop, structure, and rehearse their dance improvisation.
 - Students will be evaluated individually on the prepared improvisation that will be performed for the class.

Final Products

- Spontaneous Improvisation
- Reflective Writing Assignment
- Prepared Improvisation (Presentation)

* This task is adapted from Unit 3, Activity 2, “Experimenting and Manipulating”, in the course profile for Dance, Grade 9, Open (Public).

Assessment and Evaluation

See the rubric** for evaluating students individually on:

- their ability to use space, shape, and theme in structured improvisation;
- their ability to demonstrate safe movement practices throughout the improvisational process;
- their written communication skills and their critical thinking about the improvisational process;
- their prepared improvisations.

Expectations Addressed in the Exemplar Task

Students will:

1. demonstrate an understanding of safe practices in regard to self and others in the classroom and in performance settings;
2. explore movement through structured improvisation;
3. create dance sequences using explored elements;
4. reflect on their own work and that of others;
5. identify type(s) and/or styles of dance (e.g., improvisation), describing them orally and in written form.

Teacher Instructions

Prior Knowledge and Skills Required

- Students who have completed Unit 3, Activity 1, in the course profile will be well prepared to participate in this exemplar task.
- Teachers not working with the course profile must ensure that their students are comfortable with teacher-directed improvisation and are familiar with the basic elements of dance, especially shape and space.

Accommodations

Accommodations that are normally provided in the regular classroom for students with special needs should be provided in the administration of this performance task.

You may wish to review the relevant course profile for specific suggestions for accommodations appropriate for students in special education programs.

**The rubric is reproduced on pages 16–17 of this document.

Rubric

- Introduce the task-specific rubric to the students at least one day prior to the administration of the task. Review the rubric with the students and ensure that each student understands the criteria and the descriptions for achievement at each level.
- Allow ample class time for a thorough reading and discussion of the assessment criteria outlined on the rubric.
- Some students may perform below level 1. It will be important to note the characteristics of their work in relation to the criteria in the assessment rubric and to provide feedback to help them improve.

Materials and Resources Required

- the CD *Elements* by Soundtrack Performance Group (provided with task)
- CD player
- writing materials

Additional resources for teacher reference related to this task are listed in unit 3 of the Grade 9 course profile. Particularly recommended: *The Moment of Movement – Dance Improvisation* by Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin. ISBN: 0822954052.

Task Instructions

Component 1: Spontaneous Improvisation

Day 1

- Discuss briefly dance improvisation protocol with the students. Emphasize safe practice.
- Show the students the assessment rubric for the exemplar task and discuss it with them. Explain that this evaluation tool will be used for all three final products: spontaneous improvisation, reflective writing, and prepared improvisation (presentation). Highlight the expectations (1 and 2) relevant to the first component of the task – spontaneous improvisation.
- Guide the students to explore the classroom space independently but simultaneously. Here are some suggested directions. Note: You may adapt this script to accommodate your dance space:

“See empty space,
Move into it, around it, through it. . . .
Mould or sculpt your body,
Around the space, in the space. . . .
Hold your shapes briefly. . . .
Then move to the next space,
Find ways to inhabit the space in the room,
Inhabit the chair, the bench, the doorway, a wall. . . .”

3

- Reflect on and discuss with the students what was required of them to ensure their safety and the safety of others.
- Document and display these principles on chart paper.
- Instruct the students to pair off and label themselves A and B. Guide the students through the following improvisation:

Cycle

Partner A – Find a space anywhere within the classroom and create a still shape.

Partner B – Move, using a variety of levels and types of movement, towards your partner; observe the space created by A's shape and create a shape within or around your partner.

Partner A – Move, again varying the movement you use, away from your partner and create another shape somewhere else in the room.

Partner B – Move towards your partner and respond to the shape with a shape of your own.

- Repeat this cycle several times.
- Repeat the cycle again, this time with B leading and A responding.
- Reflect through class discussion about:
 - the safety precautions that were required;
 - the effect of the space on their shapes;
 - the various ways they moved from location to location;
 - the various ways they could expand how they moved between the spaces;
 - the various elements of shape they used (e.g., levels, direction, line – round, angular).
- Add additional safety precautions to the chart paper.
- Instruct the students to find a different partner and to label themselves A and B. Explain that they will engage in the same improvisation of shaping and responding, but with the addition of music. Inform the students that they are expected to respond to the music, the space around them, and each other as they work. You will not be giving vocal direction and will expect them to proceed through the improvisation at their own pace. However, you will signal them when it is time to switch leadership roles. Two contrasting pieces of music should be used; use selections from the CD *Elements* other than “Fire”, “Earth”, “Water”, and “Wind”, as these will be used later in the task.
- Between selections, discuss the impact of the music on their movement.

4

Day 2

- Begin the class by informing the students that the focus of the lesson will be to continue their improvisational exploration through an examination of theme.
- Remind the students to use the safety principles they have identified and displayed.
- Begin the improvisation by having the students form groups of three. Repeat the cycle part of the improvisation, adding a Partner C. This step should be repeated three times to give each student an opportunity to lead the improvisation. Keep each repetition fairly short, approximately one minute in length.
- Reflect through class discussion on the nature of their shapes:
 - Were their shapes concrete or abstract?
 - Did their shapes and locomotion communicate a feeling or thought?
 - What suitable themes could be explored through this improvisation?
- Record and post the list of suitable themes generated from the class discussion.
- Each person in the group selects one of the suggested themes for exploration and shares it with the group.
- Students repeat the cycle part of the improvisation, creating shapes and movement that reflect the leaders' themes. Repeat this step three times to allow for the exploration of all three themes. Again, keep each cycle through the improvisation short, approximately one minute.
- Reflect through class discussion on the impact of theme on the shapes and movements.
- Instruct the students to record their thoughts on paper for use in the upcoming writing assignment.

Component 2: Written Reflection

Day 3

- Begin the class by informing the students that the focus of the lesson will be to explore spontaneous improvisations based on the theme of "The Elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water". Also inform the students that they will be reflecting on their work and communicating that thinking through a piece of writing that will be evaluated.
- Begin the improvisation by having the class form groups of four. Explain that the same improvisational structure the students have been using will be adapted to include the theme of The Elements. Each student within a group will lead one of the four elements. The order of

leadership will be Earth, Water, Fire, and Air. All students will be working with the same element as the leader within the improvisation.

Note: This is the same order as the appropriate selection on the CD *Elements* provided for this task: Earth-#1, Water-#2, Fire-#8, Wind-#11.

- Students repeat the cycle part of the improvisation, creating shapes and movement that reflect their leaders' elements. Repeat four times to allow all students to explore all four elements.
- Have students reflect through class discussion on the impact of the theme on their shapes/movements.
- Have the groups sit together. Hand out the writing assignment and review it.
- Review the nature and format of reflective writing and the assessment rubric identifying the relevant expectations for this task (4 and 5).
- Instruct students to discuss their improvisation work for approximately five minutes, using the writing assignment as the framework for their discussion. The students should then separate and individually begin the writing that is to be submitted on the following day.

Reflective Writing Assignment

Length: Approximately 2 pages double-spaced and single-sided. I include the assignment's instruction sheet as page 1 and staple the three pages together.

Write a reflection about your spontaneous improvisational work on shape, space, and theme. I include:

- a description of intriguing movements
- a description of the effect of the space on the shapes you created
- suggestions for creating more interesting shapes
- a description of the various ways you moved from location to location
- suggestions you have for increasing the ways you moved between the spaces
- a description of the impact of the music on your movement
- a description of the impact of the four elements on your shapes and movement
- a reference to the importance of improvisational safety principles

To conclude, select a moment from your work that would be suitable for choreographing into a piece. Explain why you selected this moment.

Component 3: Prepared Improvisation (Presentation)

Day 4

- Collect the writing assignments.
- Begin the class by informing the students that the focus of the next 1–2 lessons will be to structure, develop, and rehearse prepared improvisations based on the assigned elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Students will work in groups of four on one of these elements. They will be presenting these prepared improvisations for evaluation.
- Inform students that they will be evaluated on their use of space, shape, and theme in the prepared improvisations. Review the assessment rubric identifying the relevant expectation (3) for the presentation of the prepared improvisations to the class.
- Define and briefly discuss effective rehearsal practices, work attitudes, and the challenges of developing and refining improvisational work for presentation.
- Students begin planning, rehearsing, and refining their dance studies according to the following instructions:

Student Instructions for Prepared Improvisation

Now that you have explored shape, space, and theme, you are ready to begin component 3 of the exemplar task. You will structure, develop, rehearse, and present a prepared improvisation of 1–2 minutes in length based on an assigned/chosen element (earth, air, fire, or water). All prepared improvisations must have a beginning, middle, and end and communicate your impressions of the element.

Part 1 (1–2 periods)

1. Form groups of four as directed by the teacher.
2. Brainstorm with your group your impressions of your assigned/chosen element and share intriguing moments from your improvisational work that you feel would be suitable for choreographing into a piece.
3. Structure and develop your prepared improvisation, ensuring that it contains all requirements and that all members of the group are participating equally in both the creation and the performance of the piece.
4. Rehearse your improvisation. Be sure to take into consideration the rubric for evaluation of the prepared improvisation.
5. Incorporate suggestions made by the teacher and your peers.

Part 2 (1 period)

Share your prepared improvisation with the class as directed by the teacher.

Days 5–6

- Organize the order of presentation and the way the audience will be arranged for the presentation.
- Ensure that all technical needs are organized (e.g., the playing of the music).
- Review expectation 3 on the assessment rubric.
- Provide rehearsal time for the students for a final run-through before the videotaping begins.
- Students share their prepared improvisations.