



One-Liners

for Expression and Gestures (Grades 2–5)

One-liners are short ambiguous statements with different meanings based on the delivery of the line. Think of ways to deliver the words *I am going to the library* depending on the situation: as a question, meaning *I* alone, insistently, happily, angrily, resignedly, and so forth.

Model the activity for students. Concentrate on getting the message across with only voice inflection and hand gestures. Deliver one line three different ways and have students talk with partners to decide how to interpret the meaning.

Divide students into teams of three or four and give each team a one-liner with a list of possible meanings. Each individual chooses one situation and performs for the team. Team members offer feedback and suggestions. Students can also videotape one another and replay the videos so that team members can fine-tune their performances. Ask for volunteers to perform their lines for the class.

● *Sample One-Liners* ●

I didn't do it.

- Someone else did, and I know who.
- I know you think I did, but I am innocent.
- I am angry that you are accusing me.
- It's unfair that I am being punished.
- Asking a question.
- I really did, but I am afraid I'll be punished.
- I know it was assigned, but I didn't think it was important.
- You can't prove I did, and I'm going to get away with it.
- I did something wrong but not that.
- How could you think someone as adorable as I am would do that?
- I was afraid to try.

I like her.

- She is probably okay, but not someone I will be best friends with.
- She is someone I'd like to get to know better.
- I like her but not the other person who was with her.
- I think she's wonderful.
- Who said I don't?
- No matter what others think, I think she is nice.
- I don't know why you don't believe me.

He saw me.

- Asking a question
- Pleased surprise
- Horrified surprise
- Shout of delight
- Puzzlement
- Sigh of pleasure

You were wonderful.

- With grateful thanks
- Although the others were not
- In the past, but not now
- Excited praise
- You actually were pretty bad.
- Skeptical about what really happened
- Gushing praise

Special Cases

Some students feel more anxiety than the typical student. They may require particular attention and preparation, but should not be excluded from speaking activities.

- **Multilingualism:** Students whose home language is not English may worry about being misunderstood or ridiculed because of mispronunciations. These students may want additional practice and coaching, even though the activities have short sentences or use scripts. Pair multilingual students with native speakers for practice, emphasize the importance of slowing the pace, and, if necessary, simplify the language these students will use in Reader's Theater. Do not compare multilingual students' performances with students who are native speakers. Not only does it take six to seven years for anyone to develop fluency in a new language, but mastery of a different language may never "catch up" with native language expertise.
- **Stuttering:** Elementary-age children who stutter respond to speaking activities in varied ways. Consult with your school's speech specialist and the child's parents to determine how these activities should be handled. The child may be willing to practice but does not want to perform in front of the class. Oral reading and speaking in unison with a peer are possible options as well. Learn about stuttering at the Stuttering Foundation of America's Teacher Page (www.stutteringhelp.org/teachers).
- **Physical or cognitive disabilities:** Students with physical or cognitive disabilities who are mainstreamed into classrooms often want to be included in activities. Consult with the special education team to design appropriate accommodations.
- **Shyness:** Students who are shy or withdrawn may resist participation. Practice can build students' confidence. Assurance that they will perform in a supportive group or even in unison with a group may also help.