

Don't worry, you don't have to be funny: Five things I use from Improv in an academic library

**"THE FUNNIEST ROCK MOVIE
EVER MADE!"**

**"HILARIOUS... SENDS UP WHAT THE
BEATLES STARTED WITH 'A HARD DAYS NIGHT'"**

"DON'T MISS IT... ONE OF THE FUNNIEST MOVIES"



Spinal Tap

CHRISTOPHER GUEST MICHAEL MCKEAN HARRY SHEARDER BOB HEINICH

JANE CHADWICK TONY HENDON & BRUNO KYLES KAREN MADGWY

CHRISTOPHER GUEST & MICHAEL MCKEAN & BOB HEINICH & HARRY SHEARDER BOB HEINICH

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What is improv?

Teaching LIS students reference skills + building classroom community (Nelson, S. B., & Vardell, E., 2023)

Enfusing play into library instruction (Cohn, S. B., & Levitan, G., 2022)

Training healthcare providers in empathy, respect for multiple viewpoints and dealing with ambiguity (Mehta, A., Fu, B., Chou, E., Mitchell, S., & Fessell, D., 2021)

“Real” world use

Me & improv

No background in theater*

Gifted a level 1 course in 2019

Enrolled in my 7th course

Love that there's no homework!



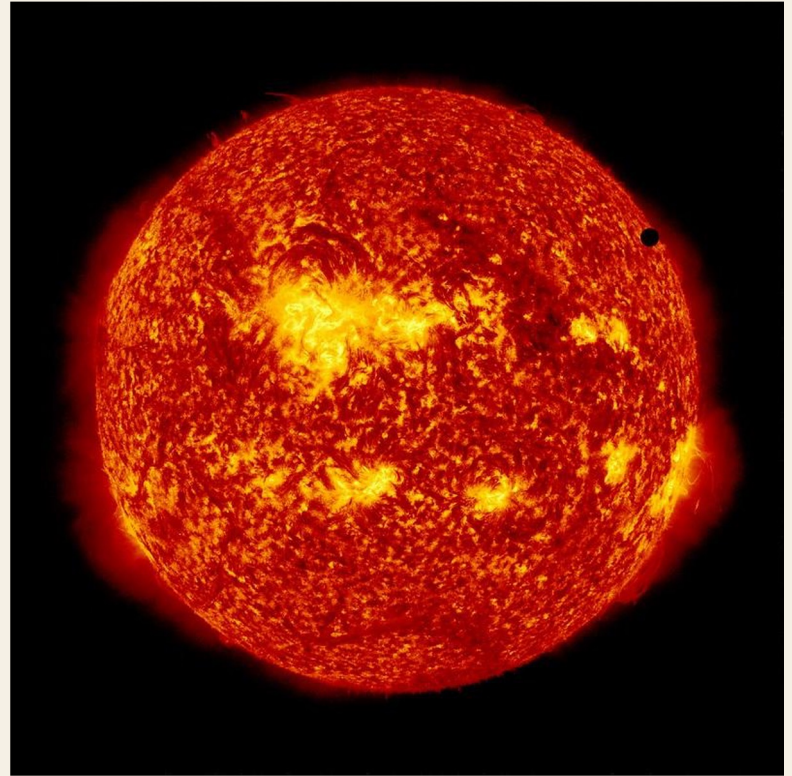
"Cow" by mindfrieze is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Five things I use from Improv in an academic library

Where might these be useful in instruction, reference or beyond?

1. Yes, and...

“Wow, mom it’s really cold on Venus”

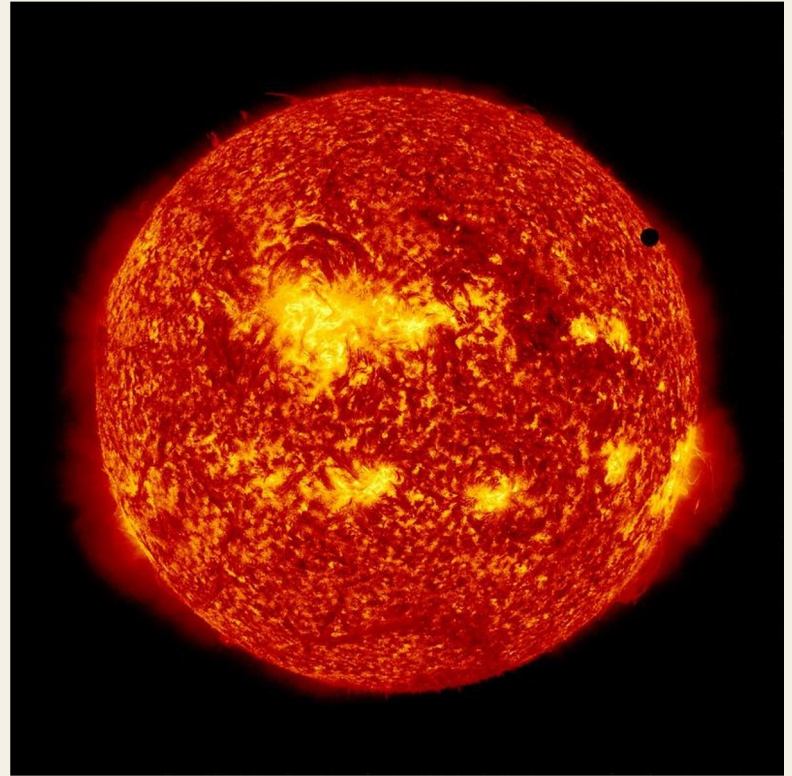


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2. Accept the base reality

“Wow, mom it’s really cold on Venus”

“It’s great honey, we can go skiing on another planet like you always wanted to”

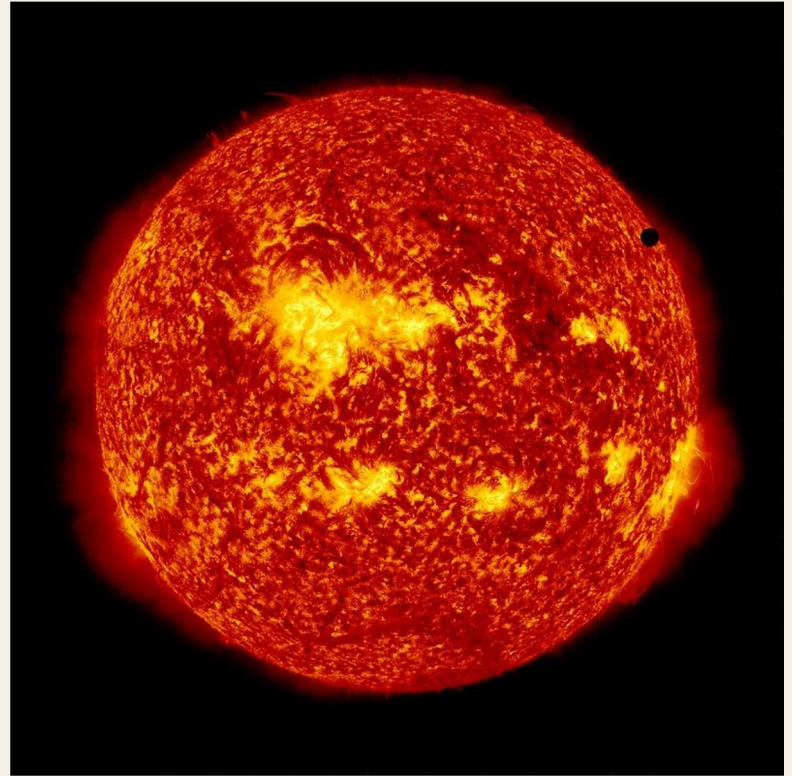


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3. Active listening

“Wow, mom it’s really cold on Venus”

“It’s great honey, we can go skiing on another planet like you always wanted to”

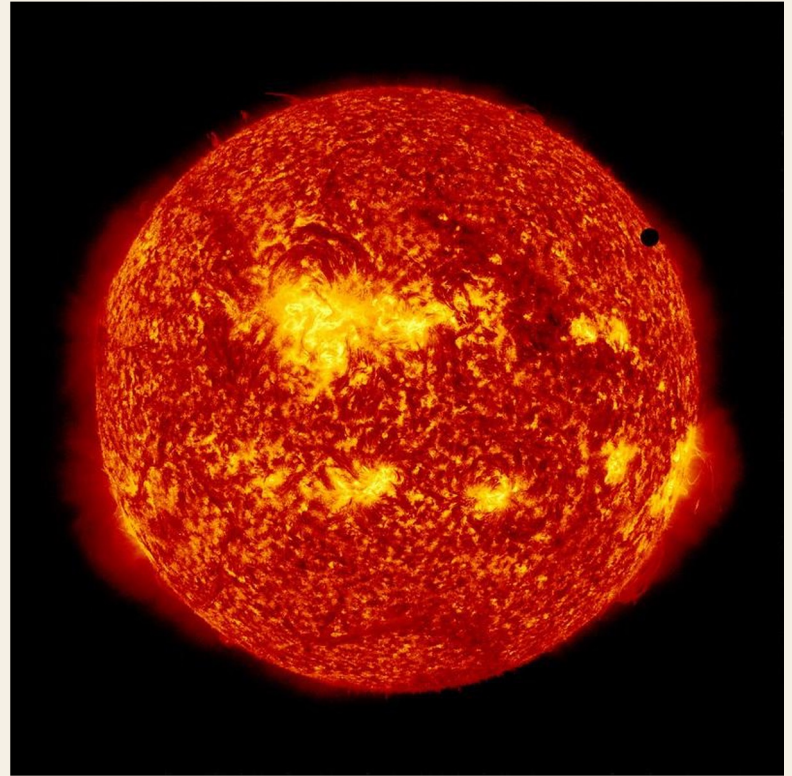


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4. There are no mistakes

“Wow, mom it’s really cold on Venus”

“It’s great honey, we can go skiing on another planet like you always wanted to”

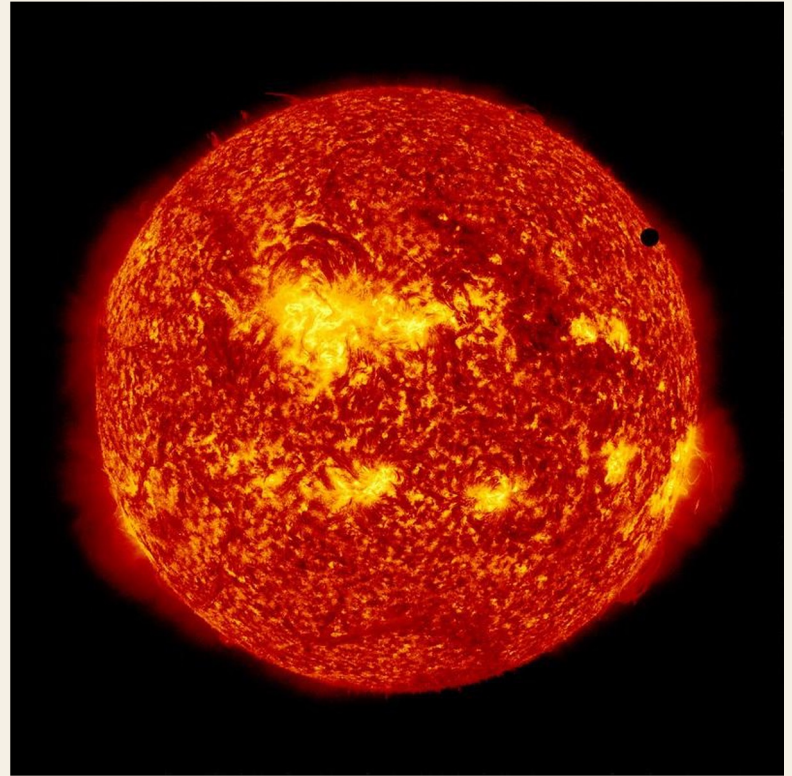


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5. Be present

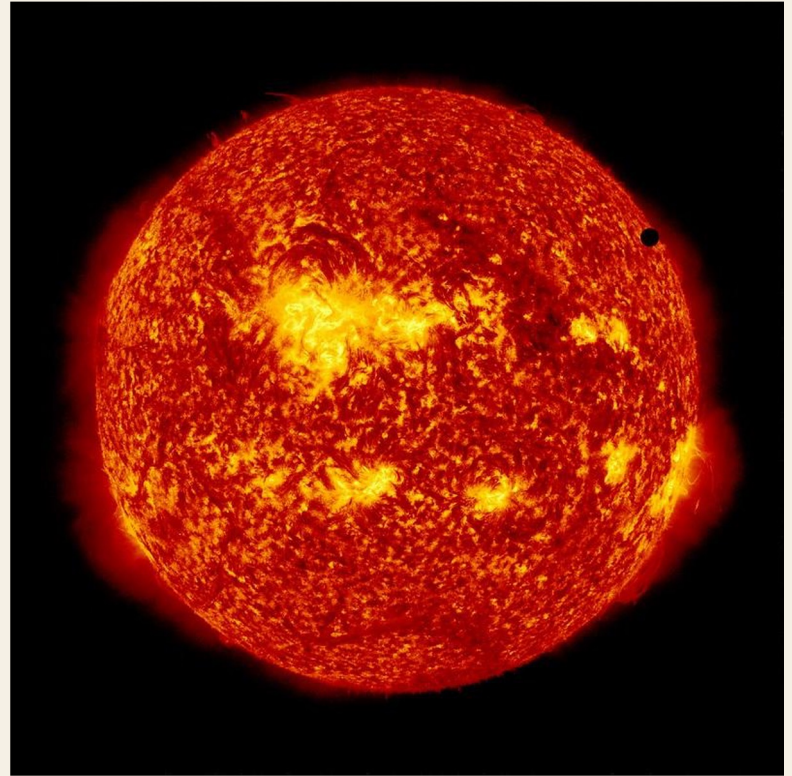
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Let's look at the [shared doc](#)
and see what other ideas there
are



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Questions

Further reading

Cohn, S. B., & Levitan, G. (2022). It's all improv to me: Infusing play into library instruction. *Journal of Play in Adulthood*, 4(2), 126-137.

Edwards, J. (2020). Lessons from improv theater: Applying improvisational concepts and techniques to LIS.

Mehta, A., Fu, B., Chou, E., Mitchell, S., & Fessell, D. (2021). Improv: Transforming physicians and medicine. *Medical Science Educator*, 31, 263-266.

Mockingbird Improv Theater: <https://www.mockingbirdimprov.org/>

Nelson, S. B., & Vardell, E. (2023). Performing Librarianship. *Inglorious Pedagogy: Difficult, Unpopular, and Uncommon Topics in Library and Information Science Education*, 9.