

STUDYING A TEXT: or Rehearsing a Script

Using Mike Alfred's : 'Different Every Night'

1. **Titling** - Section off the script into large pieces of action and give titles to these sections it might be that you are giving titles to Acts.

Get class / ensemble to decide on suitable titles based on the action → Make Titles strong and simple.

Decide on - Where that action generally takes place

- When
- What happens

Title Units - these might be scenes or simple pieces of text in which one event, pertinent to all or many of the characters takes place

→ again use strong but simple titles

This helps break down the script / text in an entirely different way and helps ownership of the text. It is a whole class or ensemble activity.

See example of student work titling Hating Alison Ashley.

2. **Actions** - Actors to prepare in complete sentences, so context is given, exactly what they are doing.
E.G. MASQUERADE Hare: I walk on to the stage quickly, chatting to myself, under my breath and carrying the amulet. I then ask Moon what I should do with it?

Need to really pay attention to stage directions to do this.

List all the actions a character has in one section of the play.

Now enact only the actions, not the dialogue, just to get a sense of what this character does. Speak these out loud

→ Can enact these actions with other characters .. eg. Masquerade; Moon - I tell the hare to take amulet to the sun.

Then you can move from "What I do" to "How I do it" including some physical (external) actions = pushing / pulling / laughing/ pointing and some psychological (internal) actions threatening / denying / encouraging / praising.

3. **Given Circumstances - The Facts**

What - events that occur

- Facts
- Conditions influence the situation taking place?
Eg. Environmental - season / time / location.

4. Establishing "The World" of the Play. Why? Because this sets the context for Designers and Actors.

The visual and physical aspects of the World the Characters live in ...

There may be more than one world to discuss, decide and elaborate on? This can be done in groups and brought back to the whole class.

- What is in this world?
- What does world look like? → list elements / find some pictures

- What does world sound like? → list sounds/ if you have someone on sound you could ask them to find sounds for worlds and also a song piece of music for each character.
- How does world feel? → list
- What rules are there in this world? → list what /who is allowed or not allowed
- How does this world change / alter? → list
- Are there any patterns / symbols / colours featured in this world? → list
- How is language used in this world?
- Do all the characters inhabit the same verbal world?
- Do they use accents or dialect?
- Not what characters are saying but in what form/s they are saying it?
- Then once shared establishment occurs, let the world evolve during rehearsals but always reference back to these first shared worlds and keep note of how the world begins to alter..

5. The Sub textual World –

Identify a play's topics / subject matter or specific areas of concern.

Is its emphasis on the psychology of the character, on their passions or on their social behaviours?

- Do the characters think or are they impulsive?
- Are they driven by appearances and social decorum?
- Are they linked by occupation or a belief system?
- Does the play deal with labour or act on politics or religion or money or fashion or illness or why we are alive?
- Does it deal with class and social structures?
- Does it inhabit a dream world or is it a slice of life?
- Are the incidents dramatic, violent or fanatical?
- Is it a world of extremes?
- Is it a play structured on elaborate and physical action or on mood or on intellectual debate?
- What doesn't the play deal with? What does it ignore or not address?

6. Relationship to Audience

In what way should this particular play relate to its audience?

- Do they become eavesdroppers?
- Do we acknowledge their presence? In what ways?
- Does each character have a private relationship with the audience? Eg. confidential asides / soliloquies.
- Is it the actor rather than the character who communicates with the audience?
- With what role are we endowing the audience confidant, sympathiser, judge, evaluator, someone to be challenged?

CHARACTER

1. Actor & Role : Find the character in yourself rather than impose yourself on the character
Therefore ... a) everything that you share with the character
b) All the elements of the character that are alien to you / different from you.

2. Pulse of The Character : The rate at which a person ticks – energy. Finds the rhythm of the character – march / waltz / salsa / heavy rock / steady / erratic. What shifts do they make?

3. Telling The Character's Story →
 - a) From earliest information the play provides and then
 - b) What you do within a scene and
 - c) Between an exit and your next entry
Talking the character → Actor talks about his / her character trying as much as possible to act out and physically fulfil what he / she describes

4. What are Characters?
 - Super Objective / Through time etc
 - Colour ?
 - Music?
 - Facts ?

5. **Verbal Exercise** - The point of most thoughts is made at the end of a sentence, often on the last word. Sustain thoughts with fluency → juggling balls kept aloft until the entire thought sentence has been completed only then to be caught and brought to rest.

Other Techniques

1. Hot Spot/seat
2. Who am I - Celebrity Head a character from the text
3. Police or Lawyer (In character class member) interviews a character
4. The character is put up on trial in front of class who acts as jury, other class members can be lawyers
5. Question and Answer Forum a group of characters are questioned.
6. Round Table Discussion on an issue: each character at the table has to give opinion in character
7. Conscience Alley - Class form a gang way and whisper conscience voices of what could be going through a characters head so an inner turmoil of voices occurs

8. Alter ego Another person becomes the extension of a character expressing their thought and feeling so subtext of the character is created. Can be used with hot seating to give an added dimension.
9. Conflicting Advice One character has one person on one side of them and another on the other side the character asks a question that concerns them and the persons on either side give contrary advice.
10. Make a documentary film about the character and their life and current set of circumstances.
11. Flashback Enact a flashback scene for the character with a group eg could be an invented childhood scene.
12. Circle gossip A class circle gossip about a set character. The character is on the outside of the circle listening in.
13. Headlines Make up a front page headline about the character then set up a tableaux picture to go with your headline.
14. Iceberg List all the things underneath the character that are not seen heard or understood ie all the subtext.
15. Letters. Last letter/email ever written by character before their death.
16. Letter from someone supporting them or objecting to them.
17. Props grab; a few seconds to run into costume props room and grab one thing to represent your character