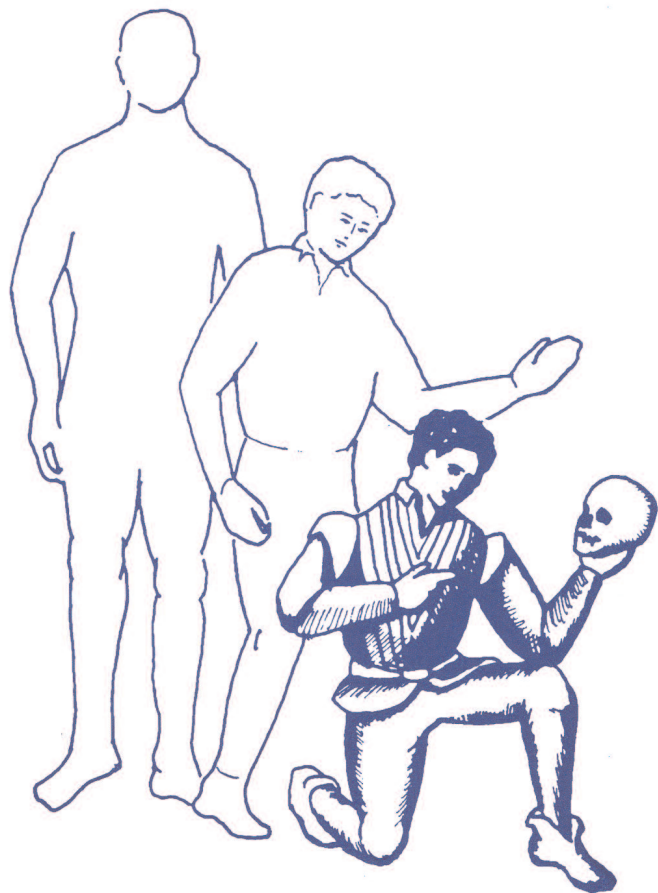


Theatre Video Series

“Building A Character”

Teacher's Guide

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“Building A Character”

Teacher's Guide

An approach to a truthful and realistic character development is the theme of this video. In “Building A Character,” a group of acting students are guided through the process of developing a character by addressing the following elements: preparing the “character analysis,” physical work, vocal work, emotional work, combining all the elements and rehearsal guidelines. “Building A Character” demonstrates the process of creating a character and explores options available to the actor. A quiz, selective bibliography and handout materials have been included in the teacher’s guide and we encourage you to make copies for your students. The following is the outline for “Building A Character.”

- I. INTRODUCTION (covering the contents of the video)
 - A. Script analysis
 - i. Understanding the text
 - ii. Four column analysis
 - iii. Character biography
 - B. Physical work
 - i. Developing the physical life of a character
 - C. Vocal work
 - i. Developing the vocal life of a character
 - D. Emotional work
 - i. Developing the emotional life of a character
 - E. Combining the elements
 - i. Combining physical, vocal and emotional work
 - F. Rehearsal guidelines
- II. SCRIPT ANALYSIS
 - A. Understanding the text
 - i. Read the play
 - B. Four column analysis
 - i. Environmental requirements
 - Scenery, costumes, special effects, etc...
 - ii. Possible objectives
 - What the character wants
 - iii. Possible physical action
 - Any movement required by the text
 - iv. Other notes
 - Any information, explanation, or descriptions relevant to the character
 - v. Four column analysis should be done for the entire script
 - C. Character Biography
 - i. Should be completed at the beginning of the rehearsal process and updated throughout
 - ii. Physical attributes of the character
 - Age, posture, dialect, eyesight, cleanliness, etc...
 - iii. Character’s personality
 - Self image/ego, jealousy, reliability, etc...
 - iv. Character’s thoughts about the relationships to other characters
 - v. Other character’s thoughts about him/her
 - vi. Environment
 - Parents status, residence, job, social class, etc...
 - Previous action off stage
 - vii. Primary and secondary objectives
 - viii. Primary and secondary objectives
- III. PHYSICAL WORK (physical life of character)
 - A. Warm-ups
 - B. Outward appearance
 - i. The center of gravity
 - ii. Rehearsal clothing

- iii. Hair style
 - C. Relaxing your body for control
 - D. Be aware of physical movement
 - i. Physical movement must work for the character
 - ii. The character's mannerisms
 - iii. Working the space
 - iv. How does the character...?
 - E. Explore the physical life of the character
 - i. Continue to try new and different things

- IV. VOCAL WORK (vocal life of a character)
 - A. Breathing
 - B. The pause
 - C. Projection
 - i. Not loudness
 - D. The operative word
 - i. Highlight operative words
 - E. Ask why?
 - F. Learning vs. memorizing lines
 - G. Creating a "world" on stage
 - H. Tempo/Rhythm
 - I. The optimum vocal range

- V. EMOTIONAL WORK (emotional life of a character)
 - A. Story exercise
 - B. Show emotions
 - i. Do not be afraid to show emotions
 - C. Using the pause
 - D. Asking why?
 - i. Continually ask why a character feels or behaves in a certain way
 - E. Emotional memory or emotional recall
 - i. Using emotional recall
 - ii. Working without a specific memory to recall
 - F. Subtext
 - G. Improvisation
 - i. Example

- VI. COMBINING THE ELEMENTS
 - A. Combine physical, vocal and emotional work to create a character
 - B. Example (completed scene)

- VII. REHEARSAL GUIDELINES (professional ethics)
 - A. Be punctual and ready to work
 - i. Always arrive early to rehearsals
 - ii. Always have rehearsal clothes, script, etc...
 - B. Leave personal problems outside of rehearsal
 - C. The actor's job never stops
 - D. Be courteous
 - i. "Line please"
 - E. Serve the playwright, audience and other artists

WARM-UP EXERCISES

There are many basic ways of moving which are not dependent on a particular technique. The major ones are stretching, swinging, bouncing, striking, shaking, and collapsing. The warm-ups suggested below not only tone the body, but help to establish good group rapport and facilitate proper working conditions for class, rehearsal and performance. Remember, it is vital to maintain a consistent, relaxed breathing rhythm...in through the nostrils, slowly out through the mouth.

STRETCHING

Stretch and extend your whole body in every direction, using your arms, legs, fingers and toes. Reach for the sky. Breathe. Move around the room—don't confine yourself to one small area. Stretch with one foot off the floor.

SWINGING

A swing is a loose, easy relaxed movement that starts with energy, continues with the momentum of the body, and ends with energy. Swing various parts of your body—head, shoulders, arms, wrists, legs, and upper body. If you are fully relaxed while you are swinging, the rhythm of your swing will be different from that of others. Pay attention to your own rhythm. Start small and low, swing full extension, and then reverse the order.

BOUNCING

Bounces can be jumps or gentle bobbing, up and down movements done by any part of the body. Bounces must be done without great exertion and without great range of movement. Special attention should be paid to the feet—one should land, from a jump using the first toe, then the ball of the foot, the heel, and finally bending of the knee. Try bouncing in place, then moving around the room. If the body does not “flop,” then you are not relaxed. Bounce with different people in class, adjusting to their rhythms.

STRIKING

Striking movements use any part of the body and are short, sharp, clearly defined actions that are the opposite of stretching, languid movements. A reason for their inclusion is to give that actor a chance to see that he must be personally relaxed in order to affect tension. Remember to keep the movements short, sharp and crisp.

SHAKING

Shaking movements resemble shivering because they are tiny, quick and constant. Try shaking in various positions, starting with isolated movements of the arms, legs or face. If the movements are not rapid, you know you are not vibrating or shaking. This exercise is extremely useful in helping to eliminate fatigue that accumulates in various parts of the body.

COLLAPSING

Collapsing or falling needs to be practiced slowly and from low levels until you are relaxed and know what you are doing. When you collapse, land on padded parts of the body, buttocks, the side of the upper arm. First, try to exercise from a kneeling position. Keep your neck fairly rigid to avoid jarring of the head.

COMMUNICATION OF FEELINGS THROUGH MOVEMENTS

Make up a movement sequence...keep it simple. Pick a partner and through the movement, convey a particular attitude of feeling to that person, non-verbally. Use your whole body.

BALANCE

Arrange your body in a comfortable, yet “awkward” position, i.e., on one leg with arms leaning to the left. Find the center of balance and maintain that pose for several minutes. Concentrate on that center of balance and breathe properly.

HEAD ROTATIONS

Simple exercise, commonly used. *Slowly* rotate your head from one side to the other in a complete circle—reverse the procedure. Let the jaw drop naturally when the head rotates toward the back. It is vital that this exercise be done slowly. Allow yourself to make verbal noises whenever possible and natural.

WALKING ON FEET

In your bare feet or with socks on, slowly walk around the room standing on your toes, heels, sides of feet, inner feet, toe-heel, inside-outside, etc. Make sure the entire body is relaxed while doing this exercise.

Title: _____

Unit: _____

ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE PHYSICAL ACTION	OTHER NOTES

Character Biography

(If additional space is needed use a separate sheet of paper)

Play Title:

Character Name:

PHYSICAL

Age:
Center of Gravity:
Posture:
Cleanliness:
Dialect:
Hearing:
Eyesight:
I.Q.:
Tempo/Gestures/Speech:

PERSONALITY

Secret:
Religion:
Prejudices:
Curiosity:
Imagination:
Ambition:
Education:
Ability to Reason:
Alertness/Daydreamer:
Self-Image/Ego:
Giving:
Reliability:
Jealousy/Fear/Pride/Inferiority:
Thoughts About Other Characters:

Other Characters' Thoughts About Him/Her:

ENVIRONMENT

Parents/Status:
Siblings/Status:
Other Relatives/Status:
Husband/Wife/Status:
Residence/Status:
Job/Salary/Social Class:
Previous Action/Off-Stage Action:
Childhood:

Primary Objective:
Secondary Objectives:

Obstacles (primary and secondary):

Passion(s):

Rehearsal Guidelines

1. Be punctual and ready to work at least 10 minutes prior to scheduled starting time. Warm-ups, rehearsal clothing, prop-check, etc. must all be completed before starting time. The Stage Manager must be notified of emergencies before rehearsal. If company members miss calls or are consistently late, they will be replaced.
2. Leave your personal problems outside the door. They distract from valuable rehearsal time.
3. Only be concerned with *your* role and *your* responsibilities (unless it's your job to be concerned about other roles and others' responsibilities). Do not tell other company members what to do.
4. An actor's work does not stop at rehearsal. Rehearsals clarify what the actor needs to work on at home.
5. Rehearsal time (whether on stage or not) must be used to study the script, learn lines, do character investigations, etc. Do not socialize; respect each other's valuable time. Get to know each other through your work. Do not expect others to do your work for you.
6. All company members must record the notes given to them by the director and staff. These notes should be studied prior to the next rehearsal or work session. Do not waste time by making the director and/or staff repeat the notes.
7. When asking for a line say, "Line, please." Do not break character, shout, swear, etc. Actors must not prompt other actors or give them notes.
8. Respect your stage manager. Do not make the stage manager responsible for being at your service.
9. All company members have the responsibility to serve the playwright, audience, and their fellow artists.

Building A Character Quiz

1. What is the first step to character analysis?

2. Name three of the four columns in a four column analysis.

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____

3. When should the character biography be completed?

4. An actor should always wear rehearsal clothing.

True False

5. Projecting means to be loud.

True False

6. What is an operative word?

7. An actor should continually ask _____ of the character he/she is portraying.

8. An actor should never leave pauses in a monologue.

True False

9. What are the three types of work that an actor must do on a character?

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____

10. Name two rehearsal guidelines.

1. _____
2. _____

Building A Character Quiz Key

1. Read the play
2. Environmental requirements
Possible Objectives
Possible Physical Action
Other Notes
3. At the beginning of the rehearsal process
4. True
5. False
6. A word or words in each line of a script that should be emphasized in order to give the lone dynamics and meaning.
7. Why?
8. False
9. Physical Work
Vocal Work
Emotional Work
- *10. Be punctual
Be ready to work
Wear rehearsal clothes
Leave personal problems at home
Be courteous
Bring your script, paper and a pencil

**Almost any common sense answer regarding a proper attitude or performance at a rehearsal will work as an answer for question #10*

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