

ANALYZING A CHARACTER
The Theatre Lesson Plan Exchange

Educational Objective: The students will demonstrate their ability to create a character by using their created traits in a simple task.

Materials Needed: Situations and Characters slips (attached), container, Character Worksheet (attached), video clip of "The Princess Bride"

Hook: Show the beginning of "The Princess Bride" (the opening scene with Peter Faulk). Discuss the Character Traits of Grandpa. Why is he believable? Why doesn't he wait outside?

Step 1: Put the students into groups of five. Let each group draw one slip from the container. The slip will have written on it the situation and the characters involved.

Step 2: Explain that they will be performing an improv. As a group, they must decide the basic step by step action of the scene, including how it will begin, what will happen, the climax, and how it will end. Plan so that the scene will take 6-8 minutes. Be sure that everyone in the group can remember the action sequence. Keep it simple. The emphasis should not be on the story but on your own individual characters. Also decide who will introduce their scene when it comes time to perform (the next day).

Step 3: Give them 15-20 minutes to work out the scene. They must decide who is playing which characters. They must decide on a when, where, why and what. When they are finished tell them that they are finished working together as a group. They will not work together again until they perform the scene. Now is the time to work on their own character.

Step 4: Ask them to get their minds thinking about their characters. Ask the following questions to provoke their thoughts: What can you discover about your character's occupation, education, interests and hobbies? Is your character intelligent, clever, dull, slow, average? What are your character's values? What are your character's attitudes toward others? Is your character confident, outgoing, happy, poised?

Step 5: Give each student a Character worksheet and 15 minutes to fill it out and turn it in.

Step 6: Each student will come up front of the class and knock on a door (use a black board or a wall if necessary). They will keep their characters as they have created them but they will receive from the teacher a reason for knocking. Give them a reason to knock (ex. looking for someone, unable to reach the door knob, trying to hide, delivering a package, etc.)

Step 7: Discuss how knocking on the door seemed more real when they concentrated on the characteristics they had decided on. Ask how filling out the sheet helped. Remind them that they will perform the 6-8 minute improv next time.

Situation: A spring rummage sale in an empty building downtown.

Characters: Antique dealers - has hopes of finding something valuable
Old Woman - wants tussles for drapes
Costume chairman - for a university play
Poor parent - who needs clothing for three boys
Sales person

Situation: Waiting at an airport for take-off which will be delayed until the plane can be repaired.

Characters: Ticket Agent
Business executive - who has an important appointment
Model - flying to the Caribbean on her job.
Orphan - being sent to a foster family.
College boy - going back to school

Situation: Young man picking up date for the first time.

Characters: Young man
his date
her mother
her father
her aunt - who is visiting

Situation: A family reunion after a wedding reception. All are happy until an old argument is renewed.

Characters: Grandfather - retired railroad engineer
His brother - owner of an orange grove

His oldest daughter - mother of the bride
A nephew - a minister
A distant cousin - a librarian

Situation: A detective is questioning a group of people in connection with a recent murder in a boarding house.

Characters: Chinese cook
College professor of mathematics
Middle aged landlord or lady
Crippled person - who is a seamstress
Detective

Situation: A group of citizens are meeting with the city manager to discuss a proposed dog-leash law for the town.

Characters: City manager
Young Attorney
President of the local kennel club
Citizen who is tired of dogs in her yard
Spouse of a local veterinarian

Situation: A group of people are in the Lobby of a large hotel but they can't find any hotel employee to check them in.

Characters: Traveling Salesperson - has been driving all night.
A Business owner going to a convention.
A wealthy vacationer
A dance instructor - Driving across country to new job
A retired Army Colonel - Traveling to a reunion.

Character Worksheet

Actor's Name _____

Character's Name _____

I. Internal aspects:

A. Background:

Family _____

Education _____

Occupation _____

Hobbies _____

B. Mental:

Intellect _____

C. Spiritual:

Values _____

Beliefs _____

Ethics _____

D. Emotional:

Temper _____

Likes/dislikes _____

Strong Emotions _____

Weak Emotions _____

II. External aspects:

A. Posture _____

B. Movements and gestures _____

C. Mannerisms _____

D. Voice _____

E. Dress _____