

SCRIPT ANALYSIS

by Francis Hodge. U of Texas. Prentice-Hall. 1982

Script analysis is the number one way to increase productivity during rehearsals. It all hinges on the director looking at all aspects of the play before stepping into the rehearsal space.

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental facts

1. Geographical location, including climate
2. Date: year, season, time of day
3. Economic environment
4. Political environment
5. Social environment
6. Religious environment

B. Previous Action -- underline all lines that refer to incidents that happened prior to the start of the play

C. Polar Attitudes -- the attitudes of the principal character as they are at the start of the play

II. Dialogue

A. Choice of words -- everyday or formal? long or short?

B. Choice of phrases and sentence structure

C. Choice of images -- does the character use images which evoke emotion? visuals?

D. Choice of peculiar characteristics -- dialect?

E. The sound of the dialogue -- does the character use "hard" sounding words or soft sounding?

F. Structure of lines and speeches -- how does it support the delivery of the subtext?

III. Dramatic Action

Break down the play into workable units of action. Sometimes you can find a break where an entrance or exit occurs, while at other times it is a change in subject. A one-act play typically has between 6-15 units, but not always.

A. Title the units -- number the units in the scene or play and give a nominative phrase as a title for each unit

B. Verbing -- express the action of each line (speech) by using the initial of each character followed by a present tense verb.

Example: N pleads

C. Summary of the Action -- summarizes the action of each unit by following the number of the unit with a compound sentence expressing the reciprocal action. Example: A (present tense verb) to B and B (present tense verb) to A.

IV. Characters

Treat each character under the following headings:

A. Desire -- what do they want most?

B. Will -- relative strength for obtaining the above

C. Moral Stance -- values, honesty, moral code

D. Decorum -- describe the physical appearance

E. Summary Adjectives -- summarize all of the categories above using only adjectives

F. Initial Character-mood-intensity at the scene opening expressed by:

1. Heartbeat: rate
2. Perspiration: heavy, light, etc.
3. Stomach condition
4. Muscle tension
5. Breathing: rate, depth

V. Ideas

A. Meaning of the title -- what is the core meaning, or what is the play saying? Often an idea is expressed through a feeling -- what lies subliminally beneath the feeling?

B. Philosophical statements in the play -- cite actual quotations found in the script. Pinpoint the line(s) that make direct reference to your

interpretation of it's meaning.

C. Implications of the action -- given circumstances and dramatic action, help unfold characters until the summit, or idea, is reached. Determine how the characters' actions propel the play to the climax and ending. Consider how these actions are played in relationship to what idea or conclusion you wish the audience to reach.

D. Consider each scene -- determine the purpose of each scene in the play. What idea is it trying to convey? How does it help the the overall idea?

VI. Tempo

Look back on each unit you have created within the play and designate a rate of speed to it, e.g.: slow, medium, fast...Graph (like a seismograph) the tempo of each unit. This way when you begin at rehearsal at unit 4, you will rehearse the scene at the correct tempo.

VII. Moods

After each unit, express the mood of the unit using an adjective.