

Acting

What is Acting, and
how do you do it?

Acting as a Career

Look up 'actor' as a career, and the message can be discouraging. Yes, it's hard work, the hours are long and unsocial, regular employment is unlikely and, for many, income may be limited and the actor may need to have another job to make ends meet. But acting is a profession in which the personal rewards are huge. After all, how many careers are there where you can make a living doing something that you really want to do? And for many actors, the pay can be very healthy indeed. Of course not everyone is going to achieve a career as illustrious as Chuck Norris or Ewan McGregor. But for many others, they can make enough money working in theatre, film, television and radio to provide a decent living for the individual and a

Playwright Arthur Miller said “Acting is inevitable as soon as we walk out our front doors into society; I am acting now; certainly I am not speaking in the same tone as I would in my living room.”

Think about how true that is. Do you speak to your friends the way you think when you are alone? We all have a ‘persona’ we project for the world around us.

Greek philosopher, Aristotle, thought man was by nature a social animal, and that we are ruled more by the arts of performance, by acting in other words, than anybody wants to think about for very long.

So..What is Acting?

- If we get down to the basics, Acting is storytelling.**
- Storytelling is the oldest form of communication/education/healing in the history of mankind, dating back to the "storyteller" (the shaman) around the campfires of prehistoric or primitive villages. The stories painted or drawn on the walls of caves in petroglyphs, on animal skins and in the oral tradition, were man's first form of education, communication, entertainment and healing, far predating the written word.**

So.. I still want to know, What is Acting?

- The actor must first know the story. In fact knowing the story is the Actor's first responsibility.
 - He must know each event down to the tiniest detail in proper sequence (all stories have a sequence of events; one thing happened first, one thing happened second, etc.).
- He then must create his character.
 - Stories are told by and through the characters by visualization and by coloring the events with emotions.

- **What a character!** You've heard that before, no doubt in reference to something you've said or done that the adults in your life found amusing or slightly outrageous. The expression means something else when you're talking about acting. When you create a character onstage or in front of a camera, you bring all of the qualities that make someone unique into focus: how he or she looks, sounds, moves, and his or her motivations (what they want and

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Today, the actor must work out his own way to express his character., He must not think, but DO in order to **create** his character and stay in the moment of the play or film.

Acting is a byproduct of listening and responding to the other character's dialogue/action or your own character's.

"Listening is the single most important thing an actor can do during a performance." - (Meryl Streep)

"90% of acting is REACTING." - (Merrill Cheyne)

- After the actor learns the story, he starts to create his character starting with the information supplied by the playwright (the writer of the play).
 - What does the character say about himself?
 - What do the other characters say about the character?
- The actor will then decide upon his own ***given circumstances***, (visible physical characteristics he cannot change; height, weight, race, etc)

The actor will then create a Back Story of the character. Second only to knowing the story, the creation of a back story, or what is going on 'behind the story' is the most important responsibility of the actor.

When an actor does this work he creates a character that is anyone but himself, it is always a fantasy character from a creative imagination that is based on someone else.

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The Back Story

- The BACK STORY begins the creative process of the actor.
- The actor creates (in writing, third person essay form) a complete biography of the character from birth up to the time the story takes place.
- Primarily the actor should be interested in what the character is like or what makes him tick.
 - What are his goals, what are his desires, wants and needs in his life. What are his habits, manners, lifestyle and values? What interesting things have happened to him in his life that makes him unique? How does he respond and deal with conflict, crisis, fear and love and why? (Commonplace is not interesting) He must even create anticipation or dread of future events for the character; what is the character looking forward to (or dreading), what goals (specifically) has he set for himself in his life, what does he anticipate is going to happen to him?

"Always give the character a secret that only he knows." -

Katharine Hepburn

And I have added: Always give your character a secret he knows about the other character(s) that the other character(s) doesn't know he knows.

You can shape your character to anything your imagination can deliver.

"A man isn't an actor until he commands a technique which enables him to get an impression across into the heart of an audience without reference or relation to his own individuality. The better the actor, the more completely is he able to eliminate the personal equation." John Barrymore

On the flip side; the poorer the actor, the more he must rely on his own personality in his attempt to tell the story

So an Actor's job is to make a fictional character come alive. They do that by creating a detailed personal history of that character and then deciding how they react to the world around them. An Actor has everything to do with how a character comes across on stage or in a film.

One of the great things about creating a character is your chance to transform into somebody else. Remember, you don't necessarily have to like the way your character thinks or behaves. Can you really like someone who's greedy, makes nasty comments, and brags? You just have to be able to empathize, or be able to see the world through his eyes. Acting really involves being a student of observation of

So.. Your job is to choose your favorite actor. You are going to create a very detailed web that talks about why they are your favorite. What is it about them as an actor that makes you want to watch them in lots of films, television programs, or plays?

On the following slide is my web for Chuck Norris... use it as an example of what I am asking you to do. You will have to gather some background information to complete this assignment. You should start the web today, and bring the information you will need to complete the web the next class period.

