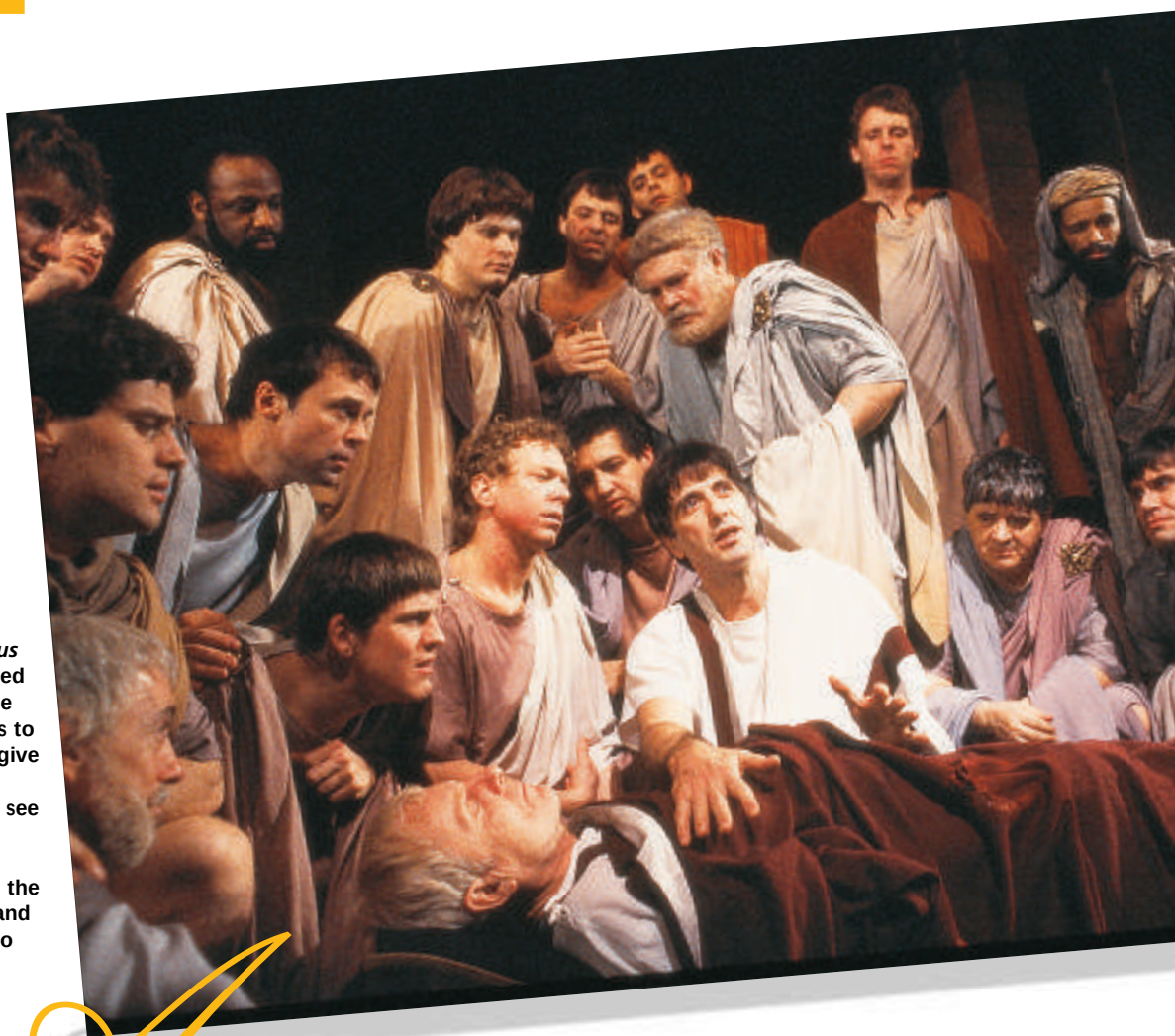
CHAPTER 4

Acting

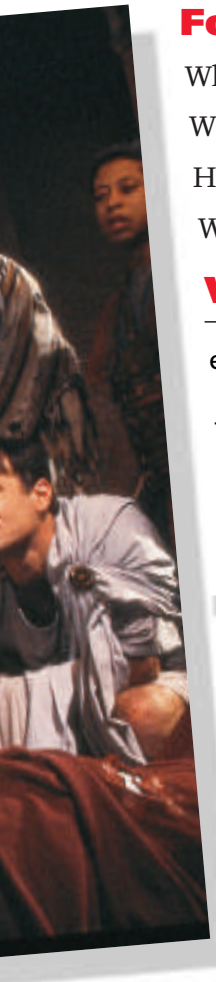


No role is too small. In this scene from *Julius Caesar,* the varied responses of the crowd members to Caesar's death give the scene more depth. One can see Mark Antony, played by Al Pacino, judging the crowd's mood and planning how to manipulate it.

Acting is a question of absorbing other people's personalities and adding some of our own experience.

—PAUL NEWMAN, ACTOR

SETTING THE SCENE



Focus Questions

What special terminology is used in acting?

What are the different types of roles?

How do you create a character?

What does it mean to act?

Vocabulary

emotional *or* subjective acting
technical *or* objective acting
leading roles
protagonist
antagonist
supporting roles
straight parts
character parts
characterization
primary source
secondary sources
body language
master gesture
inflection
subtext
substitution
improvisation
paraphrasing

So now you're ready to act! For most students of drama, this is the moment you have been waiting for. You probably share the dream of every actor to create a role so convincing that the audience totally accepts your character as real, forgetting that you are only an actor playing a part.

You must work hard to be an effective actor, but acting should never be so real that the audience loses the theatrical *illusion* of reality. Theater is *not* life, and acting is *not* life. Both are illusions that are larger than life. If both theater and acting are too real, the illusion is destroyed and replaced by what is normal. Onstage, the normal can be boring.

Restraint can sometimes be the best method for conveying strong emotion. Notice how John Malkovich in *True West* uses his arms, back, and facial expression to create a sense of restraint.

Shakespeare's Advice to Actors

Some classic lessons in dramatic art come from one of the world's most famous actor-dramatists, William Shakespeare. They were given as advice to actors in Act III, Scene 2, of *Hamlet*.

IN SHAKESPEARE'S WORDS

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it outherods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

IN MODERN WORDS

Speak the lines of the author as written, distinctly and fluently, with an understanding of their meaning.

Do not use elaborate and artificial gestures. Keep energy in reserve in order to build to an emotional climax smoothly and effectively.

Do not resort to farfetched action or noise simply to please unintelligent and unappreciative onlookers.

The Special Language of Acting

Very early in the rehearsal process, you will also begin hearing a number of theater expressions. To work comfortably and efficiently onstage, you must become familiar with these expressions. Those most often used in connection with acting are listed and defined in the following chart.

ad-lib	to improvise stage business or conversation
at rise	who and what are onstage when the curtain opens
back or *backstage*	the area behind the set or that part of the stage that is not visible to the audience, including dressing rooms, shops, and offices
bit part	an acting role with very few lines
blocking yourself	getting behind furniture or other actors so that you cannot be seen by the audience
building a scene	using dramatic devices, such as increased tempo, volume, and emphasis, to bring a scene to a climax
business	any specific action (other than changing location) performed on the stage, such as picking up a book or turning on a television set
C	the symbol used to identify the center of the stage
countercross	a movement in a direction opposite to a cross to balance the stage picture
cover	to obstruct the view of the audience; use of ad-lib to cover an unexpected, unwanted event during a performance
cross	the movement by an actor from one location onstage to another
cue	the last words, action, or technical effect that immediately precedes any line or business; a stage signal
curtain	the curtain or drapery that shuts off the stage from the audience; when written in all capital letters in a script, it indicates that the curtain is to be closed
cut	to stop action; to omit
cut in	to break into the speech of another character
down or *downstage*	the part of the stage toward the audience
dressing the stage	as a technical term, placing furnishings, pictures, and similar items to complete and balance a set; keeping the stage picture balanced during the action
enter	to move onto the stage
exit or *exeunt*	to leave the stage
feeding	giving lines and action in such a way that another actor can make a point or get a laugh

foil	an acting role that is used for personality comparison, usually with the main character
hand props	items (properties) such as tools, weapons, or luggage carried onstage by an individual player
hit	to emphasize a word or line with extra force
holding for laughs	waiting for the audience to quiet down after a funny line or scene
leading center	the body part or feature used by an actor to lead movements; often used to reflect a character's major personality trait
left and *right*	terms used to refer to the stage from an actor's point of view, not from that of the audience
master gesture	a distinctive action that serves as a clue to a character's personality
milk	to draw the maximum response from the audience from comic lines or action
off or *offstage*	off the visible stage
on or *onstage*	on the visible stage
overlap	to speak when someone else is speaking
pace	the movement or sweep of the play as it progresses
personal props	small props that are usually carried in an actor's costume, such as money, matches, a pipe, or a pen
places	the stage command for actors to take their positions at the opening of an act or scene
plot	to plan stage business, as to plot the action; to plan a speech by working out the phrasing, emphasis, and inflections
pointing lines	emphasizing an idea
principals	the main characters in a play or the named characters in a musical
properties or *props*	all the stage furnishings, including furniture and those items brought onstage by the actors
ring up	to raise the curtain
role scoring	the analysis of a character
script scoring or *scripting*	the marking of a script for one character, indicating interpretation, pauses, phrasing, stress, and so on
set	the scenery for an act or a scene
set props	properties placed onstage for the use of actors
sides	half-sheet pages of a script that contain the lines, cues, and business for one character
stealing a scene	attracting attention from the person to whom the audience's interest legitimately belongs
subtext	the unstated or "between the lines" meaning that an actor must draw from the script
tag line	the last speech in an act or a play, usually humorous or clever

taking the stage	giving an actor the freedom to move over the entire stage area, usually during a lengthy speech
tempo	the speed at which the action of a play moves along
timing	the execution of a line or a piece of business at a specific moment to achieve the most telling effect
top	to make a line stronger than the line or lines preceding it by speaking at a higher pitch, at a faster rate, or with greater volume and emphasis
up or *upstage*	the area toward the rear of the stage—away from the audience
upstaging	improperly taking attention from an actor who should be the focus of interest
walk-on	a small acting part that has no lines
warn cue	notification of an upcoming action or cue; usually indicated in the promptbook

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Choose a scene from Part 2, and analyze the setting and stage directions. With a partner or small group, act out the scene, focusing on the movements onstage. Decide when you should use the different techniques, such as the cross and countercross. Have the audience evaluate your stage movements and tell how the movements affect the meaning of your presentation. Also, the audience should note if anyone stole the scene or upstaged another actor.
2. In a small group, create a comic script that contains motivated characters, conflict, and a resolution. Include the different techniques used in comedy. Make sure you include a character with a humorous master gesture.
3. With a partner, choose one of the monologues from Part 2. Decide who will be the director and who will be the actor. The director will need to inform the actor, using the terminology given, of the different things he or she needs to do.

Approaches to Acting

CUE

Aim for a balanced approach to a role. If you lose yourself in the character you portray, an uneven and uncontrolled performance could result. If your approach to characterization is too technical, an artificial, shallow, and unconvincing portrayal could result.

There are two major approaches to acting. In the first, **emotional** or **subjective acting**, actors play their parts in such a way that they actually weep, suffer, or struggle emotionally in front of the audience. As nearly as they can, they *become* the parts they play and experience all that their characters experience. In the second, **technical** or **objective acting**, performance is based on acting technique. In this approach, an actor analyzes the play's structure and the personalities of the characters. The actor then uses the learned skills of acting, movement, speech, and interpretation to create the role. Emotional response is not allowed to interfere with the creation of the role. Instead, conscious technical control is responsible for the results. The actor does not actually live the part but acts it so well that the illusion of living the part is created. In the emotional approach, personal inner reactions form the actor's emotional response. In the technical approach, the process of study, analysis, and creative imagination forms the assumed personality.

There is much to be said for both approaches to acting. Today, however, most actors use a combination of the two. It is therefore best to identify yourself with your part so that you can interpret it naturally, simply, and spontaneously. At the same time, use your technical training to achieve a clear-cut, convincing, and consistent characterization.

"The Method" is the most discussed and influential acting theory today. It was formulated by Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski. He explained his theories on the art of acting and offered practical exercises in the techniques of vocal and bodily expression in his books *My Life in Art, An Actor Prepares, Building a Character,* and *Creating a Role*. His ideas greatly influenced the theater in the twentieth century.

Many people have misinterpreted Stanislavski's theories by placing too much emphasis on the actor's use of

THEATER HISTORY

Method actors tap their own emotions and channel them through their characters. Konstantin Stanislavski was the father of Method acting.

self-analysis and personal emotional experience in creating a role. As a result, many so-called "Method" actors become so involved with their inner resources that they fail to communicate to the audience. Their speech is often slovenly and their actions overdone. They make the mistake of believing that emotional identification with a character is more important than learning the lines as written or responding alertly to others onstage.

Stanislavski's so-called "magic *if*" should be most helpful to you in creating a character. Stanislavski advised that actors should use their full powers of concentration to ask what they would do *if* the events in the play were actually happening and they were intimately involved in these events. For example, ask yourself, "If I were Abigail in the courtroom scene in *The Crucible,* how would I feel as Proctor accused me of being a witch? How would I react? What would I do to stop him?" In answering questions such as these, actors analyze both their inner natures and their characters' inner natures. Only then can an actor use the technical resources of voice and body movement to accurately interpret the likely reactions of the character. This analysis can also lead to a deeper understanding of the play itself.

In approaching a role, it is helpful to consider the types of roles typically employed by a playwright. The main characters in a play are referred

FROM THE PROS

"Imagination, industry, and intelligence—'the three I's'—are all indispensable to the actor, but of these three the greatest is, without doubt, imagination."

—ELLEN TERRY, ACTOR

In an early rehearsal, these students work with few props in order to more fully concentrate on developing their characters.

to as the **leading roles.** They include the **protagonist**, who must solve the problem that arises in the play or be defeated in the conflict. There is often an **antagonist**, who opposes the goals of the protagonist. Other leading roles are the **juvenile,** the term for a young male lead between the ages of sixteen and thirty, and the **ingenue** (än′•jə•no͞o′), a young female lead. The leads are referred to as the **principals.** While many inexperienced actors are often disappointed if they are not cast in leading roles, **supporting roles** are often more challenging and demanding. The challenge of a role lies in the type of person to be portrayed, not in how long or short the part might be. One of the most important supporting roles is that of the **foil,** a character with whom another character, usually the protagonist, is compared. There can be more than one foil in a play.

Both leading and supporting roles can be either straight or character parts. The actors chosen for **straight parts** usually resemble in appearance and personality the characters the playwright had in mind. Actors chosen for roles that match their own voices, personalities, and appearances are said to be cast by type. **Character parts** will almost always include some distinguishing trait, idiosyncrasy, or personality type. This distinguishing feature might be either physical or psychological. These parts demand a high degree of acting ability. Such roles rarely resemble their actors in either appearance or personality.

An actor who is cast by type brings a sturdy realism to his or her role. George Rose's whiskers, physical appearance, and natural poise make him perfect for his role as the eccentric Major-General Stanley in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance.*

Some actors become identified with a certain personality—the girl next door, the business tycoon, the confused fool, or the faithful companion. Casting someone over and over again in the same kind of role is called **typecasting.** There is a difference between typecasting and casting by type. If a role calls for a man with a Santa-Claus-like build and the actor chosen happens to be a portly, white-bearded gentleman in his late sixties, the director

has probably cast by type. However, if a similarly built man with dark hair and beard has been cast in his last twenty roles as a "heavy," this actor has very likely been typecast as a villain.

An actor who has only a few lines is said to have a bit part. An actor who appears briefly onstage with no lines at all has a walk-on part. These minor roles demand as much careful attention to detail as supporting roles. The difference lies only in the number of lines and scenes involved.

Application ACTIVITY

Recall a serious movie or play you have seen recently. List the leading roles and identify the protagonist, antagonist, supporting roles, and other types of roles you recognize. Analyze the actors chosen for these roles and decide if they are straight parts or character parts.

Characterization

For you as an actor, the creative process of **characterization** should occur in two stages. First, you attempt to grasp the fundamental personality of a part. Then, you project that personality to the audience in such a way that your character becomes a living, convincing human being.

Characterization is the substance of acting. Therefore, it is your responsibility as an actor to increase your knowledge of the lives and emotions of real people in order to understand how they respond and behave. The constant study of human beings both in real life and in literature is one of your major responsibilities as an actor. It is an unending source of material and inspiration upon which to draw.

Successful projection of character depends on the skillful use of techniques. It also depends on insights into a character's behavior and the ability to express those insights in interpreting the character. The successful blending of technique and interpretation comes only with continued analysis of character and script and with the rehearsing and portrayal of varied roles.

Experience will teach you to use and to master some of the characteristics of acting. You will learn the use of **pause**—a lull, or stop, in dialogue or action—in order to sustain emotion while the voice and body are still. You will learn how to communicate originality, a freshness of acting style that colors and characterizes the work of every distinguished

dramatic artist. You will learn to apply **versatility**—the ability to change style or character with ease—which always surprises and delights. These are some of the means that experienced actors use as they interpret the characters they portray.

STUDYING THE PLAY

Before you can understand and interpret a role faithfully, you must study the play closely. Usually the entire script is read through at the first rehearsal. Some directors choose to read the entire play to the cast. Others prefer to have the actors read their assigned parts, although the director might also participate in the reading. This reading should bring out the author's purpose and theme. It should also identify the protagonist's main problems and the structure of the plot, especially how it builds to a climax and holds interest to the end. Pay close attention not only to your own lines but also to those lines about your character that are spoken by others. Note the shifting of moods throughout the play and how your character is affected by them.

Actors must develop their characters in relation to their setting so that props like antique telephones feel as natural as what they really own. These actors seem strikingly at home in this scene from the 1940s.

You will obviously want to know what kind of person you are in the play and why you behave as you do. You will also want to understand what your character wants and what stands in the way of getting it. Pay particular attention to what your character does; characters reveal themselves in what they do as well as in what they say. Note any changes that take place in your character during the play.

If the setting of a play is unfamiliar, study the place and the historical period. Learn all you can from books and pictures and, if possible, from people who have visited the place. Try to enter into the atmosphere of the location. If your character speaks a local dialect, try to talk to people from the locality or listen to recordings of speakers from the area. Notice their pro-

nunciation and their inflections. You might also want to read other plays by the same playwright or by other playwrights of the same era or geographical region. Look up historical references and check the meanings of unfamiliar words.

DEVELOPING A CHARACTER SKETCH

You will find it helpful to write a character sketch or brief biography of your character to supply information not provided in the script. Go through the play thoroughly and look for clues to the character you are to portray.

You can summarize your character sketch by listing the traits, behaviors, and motivations under several headings, such as the following:

CUE

When studying your character, ask the following questions:

- What does the author say about your character in the stage directions?
- What do your character's lines reveal?
- What do other characters say about your character?
- How do other characters respond to your character?

PLAY: *The Miracle Worker*
CHARACTER: Annie Sullivan

MENTAL TRAITS	EMOTIONAL TRAITS	BEHAVIOR	MOTIVATIONS	PHYSICAL TRAITS
Intelligent Not well educated	A strange mix of patience and impatience Strong-willed Outspoken	Willing to confront her employer Tried to separate "teaching" from "feeling"	Determined to get through to Helen Believed one "connection" was all it would take	Eyes sensitive to light Strong enough to carry Helen Hands very communicative

Ask and answer some basic questions about your character: What is my character's purpose? What is my character's function in the play? Am I playing a protagonist, an antagonist, or a foil? Is my character there for comic relief? What does my character want to do? What does my character want to be? What is my character's goal in the play as a whole and in each particular scene? State the answers to the last question in the form of a verb, such as *get even, deceive, trap, vindicate,* or *liberate*.

As you complete your character sketch and become better acquainted with your part, ask yourself more questions:

- How well adjusted to others is my character?
- Is my character shy or uninhibited?
- How intelligent is my character?
- In what ways has environment influenced my character?

Actors who performed in *Our Country's Good* had to understand how both upper and lower class British during Australia's colonization dressed, thought, and spoke. Such mastery requires intensive rehearsal so that the actors' appearance, behavior, and speech do not seem artificial.

- What are my character's particular problems?
- Is my character meeting or avoiding responsibilities? How and why?
- How does my character react to all of the other characters in the play?
- Does my character unknowingly avoid the main issues in situations?
- Is my character cynical, talkative, rowdy, tense, aggressive, charming, friendly, fearful, envious, courageous, or idealistic? Why?

The answers to questions such as these will allow you to understand more fully your character's personal and social background.

Application ACTIVITY

Watch a first-class actor at work on the stage, in a motion picture, or on television. Then do the following:

1. Write a character sketch similar to one an actor might have written when preparing for this role.
2. What elements of the performance indicate the actor has researched the place and period in which the play takes place?

SCORING A ROLE

Role scoring is a helpful process in character analysis. The process consists of answering a series of questions. If you take the time to answer these questions, you will unlock important information about your character.

ROLE SCORING QUESTIONS

1. How does the title of the play relate to your character?
2. What is your character's main sense of urgency? What strong impulse motivates your character to act?
3. If your character has a secret, what is it?
4. What rhythm might you associate with your character?
5. What sound might you associate with your character? (Sighing, wheezing, and grunting are sounds that might be associated with a character.)
6. What is your character's master gesture?
7. What is your character's leading center? (The head? The heart? The stomach?)
8. What color might you associate with your character? Why?
9. What object might you associate with your character? Why?
10. What animal might you associate with your character? Why?
11. What are your character's two primary senses?
12. Does your character "mask," or cover up, feelings and behaviors? If so, what does your character mask?
13. Does your character have a sense of humor? Is this sense of humor used in a positive or negative way?
14. In real life, would you be your character's friend? Why or why not?
15. What is your character's most positive trait?
16. What is your character's status in the world? Does your character have money and power?
17. What are your character's major wants and desires?
18. What is your character's major objective for each scene in which he or she appears?
19. How does your character go about achieving those major objectives?
20. What is your character's life objective?
21. How does your character go about achieving his or her life objective?
22. Has your character changed by the end of the play? If so, in what ways?

Here two actors in *Julius Caesar* hold a pause, building the scene's suspense and adding impact to the words that will follow.

SCORING A SCRIPT

You score a script by marking the pauses, pitch levels, emphasis, speed of delivery, phrasing, pronunciation, character revelation, movement, stage business, and any special function a given line or direction might have within the context of the play. Scoring a script is another useful tool in character analysis. The term comes from a musical score, which has similar markings to indicate tempo, rhythm, pauses, style, and interpretation. In its simplest form, a scored script may be marked to show only pronunciation, pauses, emphasized words and phrases, movement, and stage business.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for script scoring, nor is there any agreement about what symbols or marks should be used to score a script. Actors are free to use any personal marking system that will be of help to them.

Marullus

Wherefore rejoice? / What conquest brings he home? //
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?
You blocks, you stones, / you worse than senseless things! //
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? // Many a time and oft
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements, +
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome

Motivation: Self-interest and revenge. Marullus and Flavius were tribunes of the slain Pompey. They fear the loss of democracy in Rome.

Pointing to decorated statues
PP "Why are you celebrating?"
"What is Caesar's conquest – victories over Rome's enemies or over Pompey, Rome's friend?"
tributaries = captives

Irony: Common people will react in a similar manner after Caesar's death.

chimney tops (Shakespeare's London, not Rome)

from: *Julius Caesar*

Symbol Key

+	slight pause		speed up reading
/	1-second pause		slow down reading
//	2-second pause		rising inflection
	phrase		falling inflection
	simple stress	L	laugh line
	greater stress	C	character line
	greatest stress	P	plot line
	pitch level rising	T	theme line
	pitch level falling	PP	paraphrase

Exercises

Script Scoring

Work with a partner to do the following:

1. Prepare two copies of the script on page 111, but do not include the scoring symbols on one copy. One of you reads the script without the scoring; the other studies the scoring and then reads the script, using the notations.
2. Trade roles and read the script again.
3. Discuss which reading sounded more interesting and believable. Discuss how reading a scored script differs from reading an unmarked script.
4. Study the scored copy and discuss any variations that might be made and any other symbols that might be used to mark the pauses, pitch levels, and emphasis. Using your personalized set of symbols, use the unmarked copy of the script to create your own scoring.

Application ACTIVITY

Working with a partner, choose one of the monologues on pages 232 through 245. Study the background situation provided for the monologue. Individually score the script, using the symbols on page 111 or your own set of marks. Pay particular attention to pauses, emphasis, and speed of delivery. When both you and your partner have finished, present your monologues to each other. Discuss the differences in delivery and how those differences affected the meaning conveyed.

Building Up Your Part

There are two stages in building up your part. The first stage begins when the director gives the cast his or her own view of the play, its characters and their relationships, its theme, and its style. Then, as you study the play and the characters, you develop your own concept of the part.

It is often best not to see a motion picture or stage production of a play in which you are preparing to appear. If you do, you are likely to find yourself copying another actor's mannerisms rather than developing your own understanding of the role and the play. To build a characterization, choose a person you know who is similar to the character you are playing.

The faces of Kevin Kline as Hamlet and Dana Ivey as Gertrude reflect the depth to which they have internalized their roles in this production of *Hamlet*. A deep understanding of how a character thinks and feels allows an actor to respond believably to any situation in a play.

This individual becomes your **primary source**. Study and adopt this person's posture, movements, habits, and voice inflections. In many situations, you might choose more than one primary source and combine characteristics from all. The books that you read to help shed light on your character are your **secondary sources**. They are helpful, but good actors must always refer to life itself for appropriate models.

The second stage begins as you go to rehearsals with the entire cast under the director's guidance. It is during these rehearsals, as you react to others and incorporate the principles of acting, that your character develops into a living person. To avoid conflicts, differences in interpretations should be discussed with the director as soon as possible.

Once you have settled on the general interpretation of your part, you must then grow into it physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Your character's actions and speech are your means of making that character real to your audience. Voice, movements, and imagination are the tools you will use to make your character come alive on the stage.

SIXTEEN KEYS TO CHARACTERIZATION

Each of these keys should help you as you learn to develop the characters you play.

1. **Internalizing** When actors internalize a character, they develop a deep personal understanding of what the character is really like. The actor has already studied the play carefully, answered the questions *Who?* *What?* and *Why?* about the character, written a character sketch, and scored the role. Having done all these things, the actor knows how the character thinks and feels.

   Once the character has been internalized, an actor develops the ability to respond in character to any given situation. An actor's interpretation of a line and the reaction to the words or actions of other characters are all in a state of readiness. In the event of a dropped line or

Phyllis Frelich as Sarah Norman and John Rubinstein as James Leeds in *Children of a Lesser God* appear to be completely absorbed by their conversation. This level of concentration holds the audience's interest and makes the story come alive.

other unplanned mistake, an actor who is deeply in character will improvise a response in character.

2. **Externalizing** Externalization is the process by which the true personality of a character is made visible to an audience. This is done through careful interpretation, nonverbal expression, voice quality, pitch, rate, and physical action. For example, in *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, Captain Queeg's conviction that he is being persecuted is externalized through the ball bearings that he carries in his pocket. Whenever the captain becomes nervous and panicky, he removes the ball bearings from his pocket and begins fidgeting with them in his hand. As a result, the audience can see evidence of the inner man breaking down.

3. **Concentrating** Concentration is the ability to direct all your thoughts, energies, and skills into what you are doing at any single moment. It often helps to remember that every line comes from the middle of some larger thought. Lines are not isolated and independent from other thoughts and actions. As an actor, you must learn how to concentrate simultaneously on character, lines, and action. You must sustain that concentration through each performance and over the length of the production's run.

4. **Observing** The fourth key to characterization is observation. Observe people carefully, noting how they communicate fine shades of emotions. Notice in particular how they use their small facial muscles. Notice also their distinguishing physical characteristics and their unique voice and diction patterns. Do what most professional actors do: begin an actor's notebook and record your observations. Also, include pictures of real people that you might want to use as makeup models in the future. Record comments and suggestions made by directors and other actors. As you become more skilled in observation, you will begin to see the many subtle things people do that reveal their inner thoughts and feelings.

5. **Emotional Memory** Emotional memory is the recalling of specific emotions that you have experienced or observed. You have directly or indirectly experienced fear, joy, jealousy, timidity, anger, love, and many more emotions. However, emotions may need to be adjusted to fit your character, situation, time, and environment. As an actor, you draw on those emotional memories to give life to the characters that you play. Keep in mind, however, that people can experience more than one level of emotion at a time. A person, for example, is sometimes happy and sad at the same time. The expression of conflicting emotions is challenging. When a part calls for the expression of conflicting emotions, you must reach into your emotional memory bank to determine how to show the audience the tug-of-war between the two feelings.

6. **Projecting** Once inner feelings are externalized, they must then be projected to the audience. Projection is the sixth key to characterization. Strong volume is a part of projecting, but projection is more than loudness. Projection is "reaching out" to the last person in the last row of a distant balcony. You project your character through dialogue and focused action that seems larger than life. This projection of character "across the footlights" generates the empathy between actor and audience that is the heart of theater.

Projection is as much about drawing your audience to you as it is about extending yourself to your audience. This actor in *FOB,* a play written by David Henry Hwang, uses his hands and facial expression to reach everyone in the theater.

7. **Motivating** Motivation is the *why* of characterization. To be believable your character's behavior must be driven by an inner force. The inner force is intent. Intent is *what* the character wants to do. Motivation is *why* the character wants to do it. Motivations impelling a character to act are influenced by personal convictions, mind-set, self-interest, past experience, situation, environment, friends, and loved ones. Good acting always makes a character's motivation clear to an audience.

8. **Stretching a Character** Ordinary personalities onstage are very limited and rather boring. Stretching a character is the eighth key to characterization. Stretching a character is the process of making a role unique, individual, and interesting. The process should result in a character who is noticeably different from the other characters in a play. In stretching a character, an actor's aim is not to create an unbelievable exaggeration but to identify the character's primary personality trait and then to emphasize it. If the actor is portraying a villain, for example, he or she might develop and emphasize the cruelty that is the character's primary personality trait. Even if a character is stretched only slightly, the result can be a characterization that the audience will long remember. There is an old saying in theater: "A tenth of an inch makes a difference."

9. **The Consistent Inconsistency** The ninth key to characterization is called the consistent inconsistency. This key has to do with a special personality trait of a character that the actor chooses to emphasize. That trait is the character's *inconsistency,* the thing that makes him or her different from others. It might be a dialect, a limp, an arrogance, or a cackling laugh. Once it is chosen, it must not be dropped, even for a line or two. If the dialect slips away, if the limp shifts to the other leg, if the arrogance is mellowed, or if the cackle loses its fiendish quality, the characterization is bound to suffer. Actors, especially beginning actors, must strive to be consistent with their characters' inconsistencies.

10. **Playing the Conditions** The tenth key to characterization is playing the conditions. The conditions are the elements of time, place, weather, objects, and the state of the individual. These conditions affect the manner in which characters meet their objectives and deal with obstacles. Time can be the hour of the day, the day itself, the month, year, or season. The place can be indoors or outdoors, familiar or unfamiliar, threatening or comforting. The weather may be hot or cold, sunny or rainy, calm or blustery. Objects may be familiar or unfamiliar, in adequate supply or scarce, in working order or broken. The state of the individual may be extremely fatigued or well rested, wounded or healed, freezing or sweltering, healthy or ill. Actors must

keep all of these conditions in mind as they interpret their characters, for each of these conditions can influence the way a character responds.

11. **Playing the Objectives** The eleventh key to characterization is playing the objectives. This includes all of the ways and means that a character uses to reach a goal. The method used to attain a goal might be a physical act, such as a slap, a kick, or a kiss. It might be a mental act, such as a decision, a deliberate strategy, or an assumption. The method used might also be an object, such as a gun, a key, or a secret code. It might also be an action, such as writing a letter, making a phone call, or planting an explosive device. An actor must be completely familiar with a character's objectives and must be totally aware of all the means that the character uses to reach them. An actor must also know how the character will respond if the objectives are achieved or if they are not.

12. **Playing the Obstacles** The twelfth key to characterization is playing the obstacles or, in other words, facing each crisis or obstacle that stands in the way of an objective as the character would face it. An actor must note carefully how the personality of the character deals with these situations. For example, an actor must notice whether a character tackles an obstacle head on by considering it thoughtfully or whether the character ignores it, denies that it exists, transfers it to someone else, loses control, becomes rattled, or runs away from it. Each personality approaches a similar obstacle differently. You must know your character's response so that it can be forcefully communicated to an audience.

13. **Playing the Object** Not to be confused with "playing the objective," playing the object has to do with how an actor uses objects onstage to project character. These objects may be costume accessories, general props, furniture, tools, or weapons. We learn much from the way a character holds a phone, uses a knife and fork, or flutters a fan. Objects can be used to "set" or emphasize a line in the script. This can be accomplished through *preceding action, interrupted action,* or *concluding action.* An actor using preceding action might jab a log with a poker before delivering a line. With interrupted action, an actor having a cup of tea might lift the cup as if to take a sip, but just before the cup reaches the lips, hesitate, lower the cup, and deliver a line. The interruption of the flow of action causes the audience to focus on the line. A judge who bangs a gavel after saying, "Case dismissed," is using concluding action.

FROM THE PROS

"Continue searching harder, deeper, faster, stronger, and louder and knowing that one day, you'll be called upon to use all that you've amassed in the process."

—JODIE FOSTER, ACTOR AND DIRECTOR

When an actor seems in control of his or her character, using no more energy than each scene requires, the audience is more deeply moved when the climax finally comes.

14. **Energy** Energy is the fuel that drives acting, both individual performance and group performance. Energy enlivens a performance, makes forceful character portrayal possible, and creates greater empathy between the actor and the audience. Physical energy produces the freshness, sparkle, and spontaneity on which theater depends. The finest actors learn how to control energy and how to conserve it. Because most plays build steadily to a major climax, the key scenes of most characters occur well along in the play. Every performer must therefore control the use of energy and save some for important scenes.

15. **Focus** Focus directs the actor's attention, action, emotion, or line delivery to a definite target. There are many forms of focus. Internal focus on character includes focus on thought. Focus on scene concentrates on the central idea toward which a scene moves. Focus on stage position turns a scene in and concentrates audience attention on the key player in a scene. Visual focus that an actor creates with the eyes leads the audience to concentrate on the object of the actor's gaze. Vocal focus projects the voice to the members of the audience farthest

from the stage or bounces a line off another player and then out to the audience. Focus of feeling exists when an actor concentrates on a physical or emotional pain. This focus of feeling is called the point of pain. If the character has a physical pain in the chest, the actor focuses on the specific spot where the pain exists—the chest. If the character is suffering from a broken heart, the hurt is focused on the heart.

The playwright's writing, the director's staging, and the actor's delivery of lines can all create focus. The main responsibility for focusing attention, however, is the actor's. By stressing particular lines, gestures, mannerisms, facial expressions, or behaviors, the actor focuses audience attention on the key ideas of theme, plot, or characterization.

16. **Uniqueness** The final key to characterization is uniqueness. Every actor who plays a character should be unique in that role, not merely a close copy of someone else. Each actor and each director will have a different picture of the play and its characters. The director envisions each character as part of the total production. Within the director's image of a character, the actor must shape a personality that is special unto itself.

Elements of characterization, such as character stretching and focus, are often inseparable. The intense focus of Cleavon Little and Judd Hirsch in this scene from *I'm Not Rappaport* helps them stretch their characters.

The father in *Fences,* played by John Amos, shares a quiet moment with his son. Sometimes subtlety produces the best dramatic effect, especially when an actor has fully built up a character.

Application ACTIVITY

Choose a familiar character from a well-known play you have studied but have never seen performed. It might be a tragic figure from Shakespeare or another play you have read in a literature class. Decide on a primary source, a person you know who you feel is similar to the character in this play. Make a list of traits from your primary source that you could adapt to the character. You might list them under the following headings: posture, movements, habits, vocal inflections.

Physical Acting

According to the experts, the majority of our daily communication occurs through physical action. This nonverbal communication is often called **body language**. Physical acting relies on body language. It allows actors to communicate far more than the words of a script alone can convey. Beginning actors generally rely too heavily on the voice; most new actors need to work on and improve their physical acting.

GESTURE

To get some idea of how people use their bodies, it is helpful to imagine that each of us operates within a bubble. This bubble is an imaginary circle that people establish around themselves. Imagine that each character portrayed on the stage is surrounded by a personal bubble in which he or she "lives." The size of each bubble is determined by the personality of the character. Shy, withdrawn, and frail personalities have small bubbles. Swaggering, bold, and daring personalities have large bubbles. Since customary gestures are made within the bubble, less forceful characters do not really need much room for their uncertain movements. More forceful characters, on the other hand, often need bubbles that are large enough to contain the arms fully extended. Audiences are very much aware of the bubble space. They realize at once that when two personal bubbles overlap, there is likely to be either a confrontation or an embrace.

As you work on your physical acting, you will want to develop a **master gesture**, a distinctive action that serves as a clue to a character's personality. The master gesture might be a peculiar walk or laugh or some other recognizable form of behavior. Even the position of your feet while you are standing, walking, or sitting can be a master gesture.

Almost every character onstage begins movement or "leads" with a part of the body that is appropriate for the character's personality. A lead looks as if a string attached to a part of the body is pulling that part away from the other parts. The movement of the **leading center** can be either slight or exaggerated, depending on the character and the style of the play. The body part that a character leads with is determined by the character's major personality trait. For example, if you are playing an intelligent person, lead with the forehead. If you are playing a haughty character, lead with the chin, face slightly tilted upward. Brave characters might lead with the chest, and well-fed characters might lead with the stomach.

CUE

The size of the imaginary bubbles that surround us is cultural as well as individual. Americans tend to define their space like this:

- Six feet or more is "formal."
- Three to five feet is "friendly."
- Less than two feet is "intimate."

Without being aware of it, people guard their bubbles. (This is often apparent in crowded elevators and buses.)

COMMON ONSTAGE MOVEMENTS

Certain movements onstage are so common that all actors must master them. Among these are entering, exiting, crossing, sitting, and standing.

Because entrances introduce your character into a scene, you must prepare for them long before you come onstage. Plan exactly how you wish to appear. Pay particular attention to your posture. Remember that posture will be determined by your character's age, mood, and attitude toward the

Entrances can be tricky, particularly when they involve many actors. Each actor must have his or her own sense of purpose and at the same time be able to coordinate the entrance with others.

CUE

Be sure that hand props are where they are supposed to be so you will not be worrying about them onstage. As you wait for your entrance, do not stand in front of a backstage light, or you will cast your shadow onstage. Also, be sure that you do not block the exit for other actors.

other characters onstage. Be sure that every detail of your costume and makeup is exactly as it should be and that you have all necessary hand props.

You must always plan your entrance so that you have enough time to come onstage and speak exactly on cue. If the set has steps that you must climb or walk down when making your appearance, be sure to walk up or down them carefully. Think about where your character was and what your character was doing before your entrance. Know exactly why you are entering. If you have a line to say upon entering and if the action of the play permits it, pause in the doorway and deliver the line. Such a pause can be very effective. If several characters enter together and one of them is speaking, the character who is speaking should enter last so that he or she does not have to turn to talk to the others.

Exits are as important as entrances. Plan ahead for them. Always leave the stage in a definite state of mind and with a definite place to go. If you have an exit line or a reason to turn back, turn on the balls of your feet and deliver the line or glance pointedly, still holding the doorknob.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine the personal bubbles around the characters described below. Then act out a scene in which they board a crowded, standing-room-only bus.

- A boisterous salesperson who enjoys being around people on the way home from a very successful day selling appliances
- A shy librarian on the way to a lecture on bird watching who wants to read a book while riding the bus
- A high school football star known for his bone-crushing tackles and all-around rough play
- A wealthy business owner who usually rides a chauffeured limousine to her office and is not used to standing and having all types of people bump against her

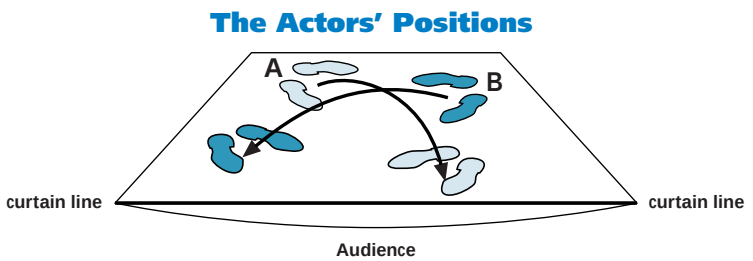
2. Decide on an appropriate "lead" for each of the following characters. Then act out that character as he or she begins to cross an intersection as the "Don't Walk" sign changes to "Walk."

- A highly respected literary scholar from a prestigious university
- The star dancer from a professional ballet troupe
- An overweight accountant
- The lead guitarist for a popular rock group

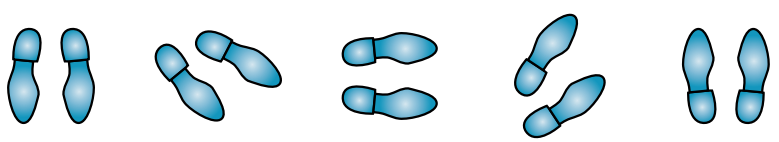
Frankenstein's monster leads with his bent arm, suggesting a defensive attitude. His facial expression and posture suggest that despite his size, he is mentally incapable of dealing with his predicament.

Onstage movement sends messages to the audience. You will recall that a movement from one stage position to another is called a **cross.** In general, actors usually move in gently curving patterns that resemble an S unless the movement is agitated or urgent. The curved pattern allows actors to open up or face the audience more easily. It also suggests that the stage space, which in reality is about one and a half times as large as the actual space being represented, is more similar to the actual space. It is always more forceful to move toward the audience or other characters than to move away. Standing is more forceful than sitting. Therefore, seated characters must expend more energy to build a scene.

The movement of two characters requires special consideration. Such scenes must be carefully rehearsed to be sure that one actor does not cover the other and also to be sure that both do not hold the same position for too long or use similar gestures. When one character moves, the stage picture loses its balance. Therefore, for each cross onstage, there is usually a movement in the opposite direction by another character. This is called a **countercross.** It does not have to cover a distance equal to the first movement. Crossing and countercrossing are important parts of rehearsing, and they must be carefully worked out so they look natural onstage. It is always best not to move on important lines, either your own or those of another character, because movement distracts the audience from the words spoken. Try to cross between speeches on a definite piece of business. Countercross easily and naturally when giving way to someone else.



COUNTERCROSS
When character A crosses from the UR position to DL, character B will move from UL to DR to balance the stage, to offset the movement of A, and to avoid being blocked by A's new position.



Rules of Stage Movement

DO . . .	DON'T . . .
Do open a door using the hand nearest the hinges, and close it with the other hand.	**Don't** block an exit while waiting to enter the stage or stand in front of a backstage light that might cast your shadow onstage.
Do enter the stage with your upstage foot first, so your body is turned downstage.	**Don't** move during important lines, a laugh line, or while the audience is laughing.
Do cross downstage of furniture or characters who are standing.	**Don't** cover your face with your hands or with a prop.
Do cross upstage of seated characters.	**Don't** cross your knees or feet or spread your feet apart with the knees together unless your character would do so.
Do make gestures with the upstage arm, and make turns toward the front.	**Don't** grab the arms of a chair to push yourself up unless your character would do so.
Do move forward on the upstage foot, and kneel on the downstage knee.	
Do sit with your feet and knees together unless you are playing a character who would sit otherwise, such as a child.	
Do stay in character when leaving the stage until you are out of sight of the audience.	

The movements associated with sitting and rising must be done naturally and effectively. Continually practice crossing to a chair or a sofa and sitting down in character until it feels comfortable and becomes natural. Avoid looking back for the chair or the sofa before you sit. Locate the edge of the chair or the sofa with the back of the calf of your leg. Then sit down, remaining in character as you do so. When rising, put one foot slightly in front of the other and push yourself up with the back foot, letting the chest lead. To make rising easier, sit on the front half of a chair or a sofa.

Exercises Entrances and Exits or Movement

Practice these stage movements with a partner.

1. Actor A enters from stage left and stands at center stage. Then Actor B enters from stage right and stands slightly upstage of Actor A. Actor A crosses to stage right. Then Actor B countercrosses. Both actors turn and look offstage right. While exiting stage left, the actors ad-lib a conversation.
2. Practice sitting and rising from different types of chairs and in different characters. As one of you practices, the other can critique the performance.

STAGE POSITIONS AND GROUPING

The positions and grouping of actors onstage are very important because they convey the spirit of a situation without any lines being spoken. There are four basic staging techniques:

1. An actor is said to **"cheat out"** when he or she pivots the torso and turns the face toward the audience. Two actors may "cheat out" when they "share a scene." You **"share a scene"** equally with another actor when you stand or sit parallel to each other. A shared scene should be played three-quarter front or in profile. A profile is rather weak, however, because it does not allow the audience to see your face. Also, a profile scene is a confrontation-type scene. It can be played for only a short time before the audience expects a strong emotional reaction, such as a fight or an embrace.

2. An actor is **"giving the scene"** when he or she crosses downstage and then turns slightly upstage toward the other actor. This shifts the audience's attention to the upstage actor.

3. Actors who are not the key characters in a scene are said to be **"turning the scene in"** when they shift the angle of their bodies upstage and look directly at the scene's key character. This focuses the attention of the audience on the center of the action.

4. An actor who turns away from the audience into a three-quarter back or full back position draws attention away from himself or herself. This is called **"taking yourself out of a scene."**

Peter O'Toole and Joyce Redman, playing Professor Higgins and his mother in *Pygmalion,* demonstrate cheating out. The way they lean toward each other, with his arm behind her, indicates a bond between the characters.

An actor can be emphasized simply by his or her position onstage. One technique that works well is to position the important character at the highest point of a triangle formed by actors, furniture, or other set pieces at the downstage "corners." Frames, such as doorways and archways, also set off an actor. Similarly, elevations such as platforms, steps, and landings give a character dominance over other actors onstage. Because people in Western societies are conditioned to move their eyes from left to right, down right is a stronger stage position in Western theater than down left.

A character who is upstage of another is usually dominant. Therefore, the term **upstaging** is used for scene-stealing when an actor intentionally moves upstage drawing attention away from the focus of the scene. Actors who keep the stage picture in mind allow the audience to see the performance clearly. They will not cover other actors, huddle in tight groups, stand in straight lines, or take an emphasized position at an inappropriate time.

Application ACTIVITIES

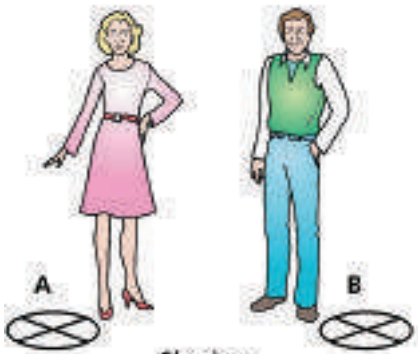
Work in groups to deliver the following lines, using the staging technique indicated.

1. Move downstage and cheat out saying, "I knew I should never have trusted him."
2. As Actor A gives the scene, Actor B upstage says, "I have come to an important decision."
3. Several actors turn the scene in as an upstage actor says, "Who among you will challenge my claim?"

STAGE BUSINESS

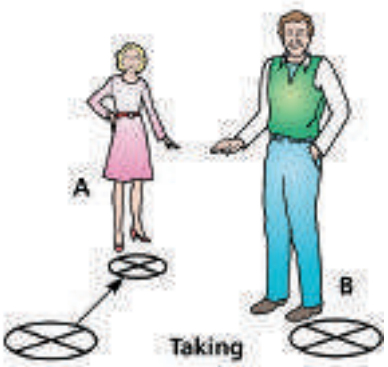
Stage business is an essential part of acting and involves the use of hand props, costume props, stage props, other actors, and even parts of the set (doors, windows, lighting fixtures, and so forth). How you handle a cup and saucer, a pair of glasses, or a handkerchief will, of course, vary from characterization to characterization. It takes training and a lot of practice to handle props well. This is especially true of such historical props as swords, fans, parasols, canes, and swagger sticks. If such items are not

Stage Positions



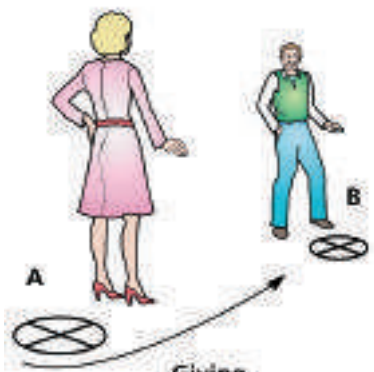
Sharing

A and B are on even line.
Both three-quarter front.



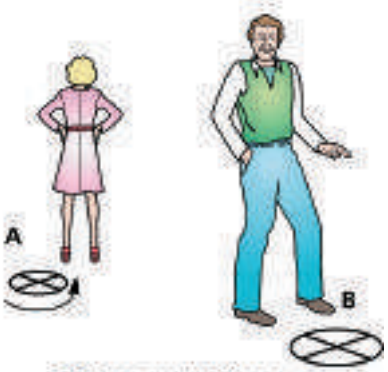
Taking

A moves into position upstage of B.



Giving

A turns three-quarter upstage to B.



Taking out of Scene

A turns full back.

Dominant Stage Positions

handled properly, their use will appear awkward and distracting and the audience will focus on the props instead of on the actor using them. Stage business, such as writing a letter, drinking from a cup, or stirring a fire, demands concentration and much practice before it looks natural. Good stage business aids a characterization and enhances an entire production. Too much stage business, however, especially that which is out of character and nonmotivated, is meaningless and even distracting.

Eating and drinking onstage present special problems. Real food is rarely used onstage, so an actor needs imagination to convince an audience that the food or drink is real. When you drink onstage, think about what the real drink is like. If you are supposed to be drinking a cup of cocoa, think about how hot it is. If it is really hot, you will sip it carefully. If it is lukewarm, you might gulp it down before it gets colder. Does it have a marshmallow on top? How full is the cup? When you eat onstage and dark bread has been substituted for steak, imagine what kind of steak it is, how it has been cooked, and whether it is tender and juicy or tough and dry.

CUE

When You Eat Onstage

- To avoid choking, do not eat or drink any more than is necessary and do not deliver lines with food in your mouth.
- Cups, utensils, and foods that have been in contact with your mouth must be disposed of properly.

Live props can be either impressive if handled well or unintentionally comic if handled poorly. Here, Carol Channing successfully works with pigeons in a scene from *Sugar Babies.*

SPECIAL STAGE TECHNIQUES

Two areas of stage technique deserve particular attention: combat and romance. The former includes delivering blows, pulling hair, and choking. The latter focuses primarily on the stage kiss.

Stage Combat Stage combat requires considerable training and practice. Only a few general principles will be given here. Most important, most stage combat is noncontact. If the combat is executed properly, the audience responds as if actual physical contact had taken place. Combat should never be treated as a game, and participants should always take care of their partners.

There are three stages to most combat:

1. The Preparation—usually an action opposite to the direction of the blow, such as the drawing back of the fist
2. The Blow—the execution of the blow, jab, or pull
3. The Reaction—a combination of sound, physical response, and freeze

Both actors should take in air before a blow is delivered so that both can respond vocally to the assault. Immediately following and timed to coincide with the landing of the blow is a second sound called a **knap,** a sliding, slapping sound or clap. The knap is usually made by the deliverer of the blow, who may hit his or her own chest with the free hand. It is not the sound of a closed fist hitting the palm. The knap should not be seen by the audience, except in commedia dell'arte, where seeing the knap is part of the comedy. There must be a slight pause after each hit of combat registers with the audience. The actor who receives the blow reacts immediately with both facial expression and body movement, freezes, and then lets air out with a pained sound.

Pulling the hair and choking are also used in stage combat. To create the illusion of pulling hair, an actor holds a closed fist against the back of the victim's head. The actor whose hair is being pulled distorts the face in anguish, twists the body in pain, and produces a sound of suffering. This is all that is necessary to convince the audience that the hair has been pulled. Choking, whether with two hands from the front or with the arm from the back, can be very dangerous if not done properly. It is best done by placing the hands or forearm on the collarbone instead of on the neck itself. The victim then reaches up and pulls the hands or forearm of the attacker toward him or her, thereby controlling the pressure. At the same time, the actor doing the choking pulls the hands or forearm away from the victim as the victim grimaces in pain.

Romantic Scenes Romantic scenes require careful rehearsal. They should be rehearsed privately with the director before they are attempted in rehearsals with the entire cast.

There are four key parts to a successful stage kiss: (1) proper foot position; (2) correct body position; (3) exact time count; and (4) a smooth break. The script or the director will tell you what kind of kiss is needed in the scene—a motherly peck or a romantic embrace. The first part is getting into the embrace. The woman usually faces the audience with her feet about six inches apart. The man then steps toward the woman on the foot closest to her, puts that foot between her feet and swings around so that they end up facing each other.

Body position is the second part of a stage kiss. For most romantic kisses little or no light should be seen between the couple. The woman should be facing the audience, and the man should be facing her, his back squarely toward the audience. The couple should decide ahead of time which way they will tilt their heads—to the right or to the left. The couple does not have to make any actual physical contact at all; many professional actors do not. Correct foot and body position give the illusion of a real kiss.

Kissing scenes are often altogether silent, with just two actors onstage. Try to imagine beforehand how this will be, so that when the moment actually comes you won't seem surprised.

The third and most important part of the kiss is the count. A sweet romantic kiss lasts one second; a reasonably romantic kiss lasts two seconds; and a very romantic kiss lasts from three to five seconds. Anything over five seconds will usually cause the wrong audience response.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the stage embrace is the parting or separation of the couple. First, it must be done with the same emotional value as the kiss established, usually a smooth slow release. Second, it is important for the couple to maintain physical contact with the hands until the "break"—the actual separation. To do this, the couple slowly pulls apart while sliding their hands down each other's arms. The break may occur at the forearms, or the couple may continue until they are holding hands. Then they may step away from each other, gently releasing their hands.

CUE

One of the most expressive parts of a stage kiss is the woman's hands embracing the man's back. Because the man has his back to the audience, this is what the audience sees.

for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf **is a choreopoem—a dramatic performance that blends poetry, dance, and stories. Actors communicate to the audience using a combination of vocal tone, word meanings, and movement.**

Vocal Acting

Your voice is one of the strongest instruments you have for creating a character. In addition to the principles of voice and diction that you studied in the previous chapter, certain principles of vocal behavior affect characterization.

PITCH AND INFLECTION

Most characters can be classified as either "pitch up" or "pitch down" personalities. Pitch-down characters are self-assured, dominating, authoritative, and overbearing, whereas pitch-up characters lack confidence and tend to be fearful, intimidated, seeking, or confused.

Closely related to the general rising and falling pitch patterns are the four **inflections**—rising, falling, sustained, and circumflex. **Rising inflection** is used to indicate questioning, surprise, or shock. **Falling inflection** usually signals the end of a statement. It is also used to express depression, finality, or firmness. **Sustained inflection**—staying on the same note—suggests calmness, decisiveness, or steadiness of purpose. **Circumflex inflec-**

tion is the intonation of two or more vowel sounds for what ordinarily is a single vowel sound. This inflection allows an actor to suggest a change in meaning of a word or to stress a particular meaning. This twisting of sound can alter the literal meaning of a word and even reverse the meaning entirely. One of the best known examples of the circumflex inflection is found in Marc Antony's funeral oration in *Julius Caesar*. Each time Antony says the word *honorable*, he inflects the vowel sounds more and more until the word suggests the meaning "dishonorable."

Exercises

Inflection

1. Say the following lines, using the inflection indicated in parentheses.

- It was you! (rising inflection)
- What's the use? (falling inflection)
- I have made up my mind. This is how we're going to do it. (sustained inflection)
- Surely, you're not going to go out in this weather. (rising inflection)
- I'm sorry, but I just can't allow you to copy my notes. (falling inflection)

2. Say the following lines. Inflect the underlined vowels with a circumflex.

- She is so grateful.
- It hurts a lot.
- It's so strange.
- Look at those flames!
- See, I told you she was surprised.

VOCAL RESPONSE

CUE

Never become so locked into how you deliver certain lines that you are unable to respond to the lines given by other actors.

When you rehearse alone, you may guess how lines will be delivered by other actors. But when you go into rehearsal, you may find that your planned delivery does not match up with that of the other actors. For example, if someone shouts at you, you instinctively want to shout back. As a scene builds, the volume levels usually become louder and louder. If the pace of a conversation quickens, you naturally tend to speak more rapidly. As an actor, you must respond to the emotion, pitch, and volume levels of the other actors onstage. However, you must always do so within the personality and mind-set of the character you are playing. Some personalities will respond to a given situation in a manner that is almost directly opposite to the way in which most people respond. While most characters will raise the volume of their voices in response to shouting, a particular character might whimper in response. You must not allow the flow of emotion from other characters to pull you out of your own characterization.

Getting Onstage

You have been given a part. Now it is time to put all you have learned to work in the day-to-day business of preparing for opening night. There are lines to be memorized, characters to be analyzed, and techniques to be refined.

MEMORIZING YOUR LINES

A chief responsibility that follows getting a part is memorizing your lines. Lines must be learned according to the director's schedule. Directors realize that an actor is severely limited as long as the script is still in hand. Therefore, the sooner the lines are memorized, the sooner the actor is free to concentrate on the action and to respond naturally to the other actors.

There are two approaches to memorizing. Whole-part memorization requires the actor to read through the whole play several times. The actor then reads a complete act several times, followed by several readings of those scenes in which the actor appears. The actor focuses on individual lines only after whole units of the play are firmly in mind. This method develops an internal feel for the entire play and for the other characters.

The second method is called part-whole memorization. In this approach the actor studies the script line-by-line until it is memorized. This method has a number of disadvantages. First, since each line is learned by itself, the risk of forgetting exists with each line. Second, the play may seem very fragmented in the early rehearsals, since the differences between memorized lines and still-to-be-memorized lines are rather dramatic. Finally, actors who have memorized line by line tend to focus more on cues for their lines than on the meaning of the other characters' lines.

CUE

Unless the director says otherwise, lines should always be memorized exactly as written. Sometimes beginning actors complain that they don't like a line or that a line doesn't sound right. With few exceptions, the problem is with the actor. The line or lines that the actor is complaining about will sound right once the actor gets more into character.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

The author supplies the character's words in the text of the script. You, the actor, must supply the **subtext.** The subtext is the "meaning between the lines"—what is implied but not directly stated. The subtext is what your character thinks but does not say.

Actors should know what their characters are thinking when they are onstage and even what they are thinking offstage. Many actors write out a complete subtext. They then think as their character would think while other actors are delivering their lines.

A play, of course, is not a real-life situation. It is the illusion of real life. "Forgetting what you know" helps you maintain this illusion. After studying and rehearsing a play over and over, you get to know things your character really wouldn't know. For example, you know how things are going to turn out, you know the content of conversations that your character did not participate in, and you know what takes place when your character is not onstage. To create the illusion of reality in a convincing manner, you must "remember to forget" all of these things.

Another way of putting it is to say you are "playing the moment." Playing the moment means that you respond to each line, each action, and each character in the permanent present time that theater demands. The theater lives in the permanent "now," and you must not anticipate what is about to happen. An actor who plays the moment never turns to a phone before it actually rings and never opens a door before the knock. Beginning actors must remember not to shift emotions before the onstage action makes the emotional shift understandable. Maintain the "illusion of the first time" and the air of suspense that keeps the audience wondering what will happen next.

Although actors must play the moment, "working backwards" is a helpful technique. This means that although you will not give away a

An actor can say much while remaining silent. In this scene from *King Lear,* the facial expressions of the two men and Lear's outstretched arm reveal a powerful subtext.

character's future actions, you will find ways of making those actions believable when they do occur. You must know where a character is headed and then work backwards to prepare an audience. If a somewhat villainous character will undergo a change of heart and show mercy instead of pure vengeance, disclose the possibility of this change early by emphasizing certain lines, by actions, or by tone of voice. Such a character, for example, might show an obvious compassionate side to an acquaintance or loved one early in the play. Audiences enjoy surprises but will not accept dramatic character changes for which they are not prepared.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Working with a partner, choose one of the scenes in Part 2 and read it aloud before studying it. Then review the scene and write the subtext for your respective character. Present the scene again, paying particular attention to the increased meaning this performance contains.
2. Practice delivering each of these lines, using the subtext stated in parentheses:
   - "Thanks a lot!" (That was absolutely no help!)
   - "I'm so happy you were able to come tonight." (I thought you'd never get here.)
   - "There is no cause for alarm. Everything is under control." (I hope that keeps everyone calm until I figure out what to do.)
   - "Sure, now you want me to be your friend." (You weren't very friendly to me before I won the lottery.)
   - "Oh! What a lovely outfit. It must have cost you a great deal of money." (You certainly spend your money foolishly!)
   - "Oh! What a lovely outfit. It must have cost you a great deal of money." (I wish I could afford to spend such an amount on clothes.)
   - "Oh! What a lovely outfit. It must have cost you a great deal of money." (That is one of the ugliest outfits I have ever seen, regardless of how much you paid for it.)
   - "Oh! What a lovely outfit. It must have cost you a great deal of money." (You are such a show-off. You can't afford such things.)

Acting Techniques

No actor could possibly have experienced every emotion demanded by the roles he or she assumes. Most actors, however, have developed certain techniques for portraying such emotions. One such technique is called **substitution**. An actor might be faced with the challenge of playing the role of a parent who has to watch his or her own child die. The actor may never have been a parent and may never have experienced the death of any loved one. However, the actor might have experienced the death of a beloved pet. In playing the scene, the actor recalls the death of the pet and therefore uses a similar experience to help capture and project the emotional response called for in the scene.

Another useful technique is **improvisation,** the impromptu portrayal of a character without preparation or rehearsal. This technique is particularly useful when you are working on a period play or any play that has lines or actions far removed from your personal experience.

You can improvise once you know your character rather well, understand the general content of the lines and the reasons for the actions, and grasp the objectives and obstacles of a scene. If you are working alone, you can carry on a one-sided conversation that parallels the script. In a cast improvisation, you can play the whole scene. Under these circumstances, improvisation often allows you to understand more clearly how your character feels and what the other characters are feeling. It frequently enables you to see how the scene should be built when you return to the script.

Raul Julia portrays Othello, a character whose own jealousy destroys his happiness. For the performance to work, the audience must feel Othello's bewildered suspicion and all-consuming rage.

In *Cats* the actors crouch on their haunches and use their hands like paws. The right mixture of human and animal characteristics in roles such as these can be most effective.

Sometimes it is helpful to play certain roles as animal personalities. A particular mannerism associated with an animal's physical or vocal characteristics can sometimes be carried over to an actor's portrayal of a role. Various animals have physical actions and produce vocal sounds that can be worked into roles. This technique works especially well for children's theater. Some animal types that especially lend themselves to certain roles include the lion, bear, wolf, fox, rabbit, dog, cat, donkey, elephant, monkey, gorilla, turtle, alligator, snake, owl, vulture, chicken, duck, parrot, fly, and butterfly. Ben Jonson's *Volpone* is an example of a play written with animal personalities in mind. This same technique can be extended to other nonhuman types, such as androids, the Tin Woodsman and Scarecrow of Oz, robots, and other inanimate objects.

Scripts often include incomplete lines or one-sided telephone conversations. These must be practiced carefully, for to handle them correctly demands precise timing. There are two types of incomplete lines—**cut-off lines** and **fade-off lines**. Cut-off lines are lines that are interrupted by another speaker. In most scripts, cut-off lines are indicated by a dash (—). An actor who has a cut-off line should imagine what the rest of the line

would be if it weren't cut off and should finish the line mentally. The actor who creates the cut-off line by interrupting must decide on a cue word ahead of the cut-off in order to interrupt at the right time.

cue word cut-off imagined finish

MARY I don't care if — (she does leave.)
JANE What do you mean you don't care!

In a fade-off line, the speaker trails off rather than finishing the line. Sometimes the speaker expects an interruption that does not come. Sometimes the meaning is so obvious that it is pointless to express it. In most scripts, a fade-off line is indicated by a series of dots (. . . .).

MARY I knew it was wrong all along, but . . . .
JANE *(after an awkward pause)* It's all right, Mary. It's all over now.

Phone conversations are common onstage. To make them believable, you should include legitimate pauses during the other party's words. If your part includes a phone conversation, it is always best to write out the conversation that occurs on the other end of the line. You can then memorize it and repeat it silently in between your spoken lines.

MIKE Hello? [Hello, Mike?] Yeah, this is Mike. Who's this? [Mike, this is Bill—you know, Mary's fiancé?] Oh, yeah—Bill. What can I do for you? [Well, I just wanted you to know that it's off. It's all over between us—Mary and me—you understand?] What? Oh, yeah, sure. It's over. I understand.

To have natural-seeming telephone conversations onstage, listening is as important as talking. By portraying a good listener, you make not only your own character but also the character you are talking to real for the audience.

1. Explain one or more techniques you might use to prepare for one of these roles:

- An astronaut attempting to return to Earth discovering that the rockets are inoperable
- A foreign visitor who is unable to speak or write English arriving at Kennedy International Airport
- A convicted murderer being led to the electric chair
- A fourteenth-century physician treating a patient
- An unscrupulous poker player dealing crooked hands to three unsuspecting players

2. Write a script for the other voice in the following telephone conversation. Then practice reading just the original script. Compare several interpretations of these lines and assess the effect of the other voice on the interpretation.

Hello?
Yeah, this is the Smiths'.
No, she is away at the moment.
Really! I had no idea.
Of course, I'll give her a message.
You want her to report at eight o'clock Monday morning.
Sure thing! Thanks for calling. Bye.

Communicating Onstage

The lines spoken in a play combine with the action to communicate a playwright's meaning and style as well as to reveal the characters and their emotions. Lines must coordinate with actions in order to tell the complete story. Speech, however, must never be lost or blurred by movements or it will lose its impact and meaning.

KEY LINES

Significant lines must be heard by each person in the audience no matter where that person is seated. You should mark the significant lines plainly on your script as soon as you have studied every situation carefully. Recheck them after the first rehearsals, when movements will be determined. Avoid practicing inflections until action is set, for after they become automatic, it is difficult to change them.

A rapid picking up of cues must be established as early in rehearsals as possible. The cues should be memorized along with the lines. Many beginning actors wait for their cue before they show any facial or bodily reaction. Your face should respond *during* the other person's lines. You will then be ready to speak on cue. A good technique is to take a breath during the cue. Failure to pick up cues quickly causes many amateur performances

to drag in spite of painstaking rehearsals. The loss of only a fraction of a second before each speech slows the action dramatically.

The ad-lib is an emergency measure that should be used only to avoid a dead silence. If it is necessary to ad-lib, the lines must be spoken as though they were a part of the script without any change in volume or inflection. If one actor forgets lines or begins a speech ahead of the appropriate point in the action and skips important information, the other actors have to ad-lib the missing information while carrying on the conversation naturally.

Pointing lines means placing the emphasis on exactly the right word and timing the rate and pauses so that the audience gets the full emotional impact. A useful technique to use when you are uncertain how a line should be delivered is **paraphrasing**. Paraphrasing is simply figuring out the meaning of the line and stating it in your own words. Since the vocal patterns for similar thoughts are almost identical, the vocal pattern of your paraphrasing and that of the line will be very much alike. This exercise gives you a very good idea of how the line should be delivered.

Pointing lines is particularly essential in comedy; getting laughs in the right places makes or breaks a scene. Actors must work together to build up to the laugh line, so feeding cues properly is essential. Unless the preceding line or word leads to the point of the joke, the joke will fall flat. You can watch people in comic sketches on television leading into laughs. Notice how they combine pausing in the right place with facial expressions to help get laughs. They do this without stealing the

CUE

In crowd scenes or scenes that portray a large social gathering, entire background conversations are often improvised. These must never drown out the lines of the speaker who is carrying the scene. Frequently, reciting the alphabet quietly, with appropriate inflections, can be used in background groupings to suggest conversation.

Raul Julia dresses as a woman in *Where's Charlie?* For comic dialogue, timing and rate are everything. Unless they are nearly perfect, the punch lines become predictable and go flat.

scene from the actor who should have it. In a play on the stage, it is inexcusable for the actor feeding the line or the actor making the point to laugh, although this is often done on television.

Key lines frequently include a person's name. How a person's name is spoken shows how the speaker feels about another character at a given moment. A name can be uttered with love, hatred, envy, flirtatiousness, or in any of countless ways that express how the speaker feels about the person. One reason playwrights use names so frequently in dialogue is to clarify a speaker's feelings. The position of a name in a line determines whether the pitch will rise or fall. (That is why actors should not change the position of a name in a line.) Playwrights also have reasons for placing *oh's* or *well's* or similar "sound words" at the beginning of lines and sentences. These terms serve as vocal transitions that allow an actor to raise or lower the pitch level of the lines without interfering with the meaning of key words.

Exercises

Delivering Lines

1. Read these lines. Note how the pitch changes with the position of the name.

"Tom, I can't understand how you could have done such a thing."

"I can't understand how you could have done such a thing, Tom."

"I can't understand, Tom, how you could have done such a thing."

2. Study the following speech from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* Then paraphrase it and practice reading both your paraphrase and the original speech.

JULIET 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though, not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, [nor any other part]
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title: Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

3. Read these sentences. Note how the use of the sound word allows you to change the pitch level while keeping the meaning of the key words.

(In shock) Oh, how awful for you!
(In disgust) Well, I always said he'd turn out bad.
(In admiration) My, that's a gorgeous jacket!
(In polite agreement) Yes, I would like another cup of tea.
(In reserved dismay) Oh, dear, did I do something wrong?
(In mild denial) Well, no, I wouldn't say that.

PLAYING COMEDY

Much of the success of comedy depends on the comic mood that the cast establishes. The cast must always communicate enjoyment as they maintain the fast pace that comedy requires. Individual actors must keep in mind a few techniques for playing comedy successfully.

- Lift the end of a punch line and leave it hanging, or play it "flat," or deadpan, in order to say to the audience, "Laugh now."
- Clinch the punch line with a facial or bodily reaction. It is helpful to develop an air of innocence; comic characters are often naive.

Learn to feed a line to a fellow performer so that the other actor can catch it in midair and clinch the laugh on the following line. Remember that laugh lines are usually short and that their length is determined by sounds as much as by words. A line too long or too short will kill a laugh. This is one major reason actors are told over and over again to deliver comic lines exactly as they are written. Adding or omitting one word can lose the laugh that the line is designed to get.

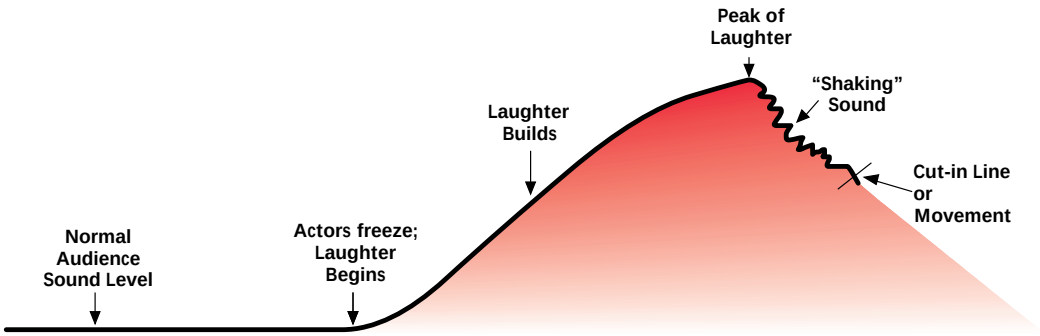
Topping becomes a particularly important factor in comedy. Actors top each other through increased volume, higher pitch, faster tempo, or greater emphasis. When a comic actor breaks a topping sequence, however, he or she may get a laugh through a sudden change of pitch, by saying the line in an almost expressionless manner, or with a look or gesture that seems inconsistent with the character or the situation. Remember, timing must be perfect or the laugh can easily be killed. Comedians even learn how to "milk" audiences for laughs by adding some exaggerated bits of business to their punch lines.

Beginning actors often fail to hold for laughs. Even after weeks of rehearsal during which many hours are spent picking up cues, beginning performers may rush from line to line without giving the audience an opportunity to react by laughing. An audience will naturally silence itself to hear lines. An actor must anticipate where the audience is likely to laugh and then be prepared to freeze until the laughter dies naturally. The actor must listen for the **laugh curve**. This begins with the laughter of those members of the audience who catch on more quickly. The laughter then swells more rapidly as others join in, for laughter is contagious, until a peak is reached. Just after the peak, the laughter will start to fade. At this instant the actor with the "cut-in" line must kill the laughter. Usually the first part of the cut-in line is not all that important to the play. Its main

CUE

Theater people often say, "No two audiences are alike!" This is probably most true of comedy audiences. One night a line might get a faint chuckle, and the next night the same line is greeted with a roar of laughter. Some audiences will laugh at almost nothing, while others seem never to stop laughing.

Laugh Curve



purpose is to silence the audience. It is important that an audience not be allowed to "laugh itself out." If it did, its members would then sit back relaxed, satisfied, and willing to wait a while before being entertained again. The pace of the comedy would then be seriously slowed.

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

Comedies as well as other forms of drama sometimes require the actors themselves to laugh. The best approach is to observe laughter closely, both in real life and on stage and television. Pay particular attention to unusual laughs. There are many kinds, including uproarious guffaws, artificial simperings, musical ripples, hysterical gurgles, and sinister snorts. The first step in learning to laugh is to pant like a dog. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you exhale and relax them as you inhale. On your first try, you might only make faces, because you will probably try to say "ha" when

Laughter is a good way to encourage audience empathy with your character. Characters who laugh often seem more likable and more well-rounded than those who do not.

To appear natural, an actor's level of grief must be appropriate for the situation. Death scenes, such as this one from *Amadeus,* require the greatest display of grief.

you are drawing in the breath instead of when you are expelling it in sharp, quick spurts. As you practice, literally "laugh until your sides ache."

In order to master the laugh, you must first relax and then let yourself go. Take the vowel combinations heard in laughter—"ha-ha-ha, ho-ho-ho, he-he-he, heh-heh-heh"—and say them in rapid succession with sharp contractions of the abdominal area. Do not stop or become self-conscious.

Crying onstage is much easier than laughing. The breathing technique for crying is much the same as that for laughing. Gasp for breath, flexing the abdominal muscles in short, sharp movements. Words are often spoken on the gasping breath, so you must be careful to keep the meaning clear by not obscuring the key words. In sobbing without words, try using different vowel sounds through the gasps. Intensify and prolong the sounds to avoid monotony. Occasional indrawn and audible breaths for the "catch in the throat" are effective. "Swallowing tears" is simulated by tightening the throat muscles and really swallowing. In uncontrolled or hysterical crying, the vowel sounds will be stronger. If words are needed, they will be greatly intensified. When you are crying, your entire body should react. Your shoulders will shake and heave. Facial expression is most important. An appropriate expression can be created by puckering the eyebrows, biting the lips, and twisting the features to obtain the necessary effect.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Practice laughing like the following people: a giggling child on the telephone; a rude actor in a comic television show; a very polite woman reacting to a joke she has heard many times; a villain who has at last captured the hero; a miser gloating over a box of money; an elementary school student seeing a friend trip over a brick.

2. Say the lines below, accompanying each with laughter as (a) a five-year-old child; (b) a teenager; (c) a middle-aged conservative person; (d) an elderly, wealthy person.

   "That's the silliest thing I've ever heard."
   "Look at that crazy monkey!"
   "But that's so embarrassing!"

3. Read the following passages from Shakespeare, accompanying the lines with appropriate laughter.

   a. FROM *As You Like It*
   JAQUES A fool, a fool!—I met a fool i' the forest,
   A motley fool; a miserable world!

   b. FROM *As You Like It*
   CELIA O wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful, wonderful, and yet again wonderful!

   c. FROM *The Merchant of Venice*
   GRATIANO Let me play the fool,
   With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come.

4. Practice sobbing like each of the following: a young child who has lost his or her only stuffed animal; a husband at the bed of his sick wife, who is asleep; a spoiled child having a tantrum; a hysterical driver after a serious automobile accident; an elderly person alone on a holiday.

5. Read the following passage. Cry through the words, but be careful to keep the meaning clear.

   FROM *Pearls* by Dan Totheroh
   (A young girl has just learned that her brother is a thief.)
   POLLY I can't believe it. I can't—I can't—He's only a little boy—just a kid.

Accents and Dialects

National and regional speech differences are evident in the pronunciation and selection of words and in the inflection of sentences. Train your ears to catch changes in quality, pitch, timing, stress, and rhythm and the occasional substitutions and omissions of sounds.

When you are beginning work with a role involving a dialect shift in English, nothing can take the place of listening to people who use the dialect until you catch the inflections, omissions, and patterns of sounds. You might find recordings helpful, however, because you can play them again and again. There are also a few good books that will help you with dialects, idioms, and colloquial speech. A dialect that is too precise, however, can be very distracting to an audience. Dialects used onstage are rarely authentic but are accepted stage versions of dialects.

When you speak in a dialect, it is important to make the words recognizable. Sometimes it helps to face the audience so they can watch your mouth form the words. These actors in *Fiddler on the Roof* must enunciate all the more carefully because their beards and mustaches interfere with lip-reading by audience members.

ENGLISH

British English is the basis for so-called stage diction. It can be heard in BBC dramas on television or on recordings made by such actors as Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, or Edith Evans.

The British use a higher tonal pitch and a much wider range than Americans. There are also a number of important differences in pronunciation. Here are five such differences. Refer to the chart on page 85 for help with pronunciations.

1. The *a* in words like *basket, aunt, banana,* and *laugh* is pronounced ä instead of ă as in American English.
2. The final vowel in words like *Tuesday, nobody,* and *certainly* is pronounced ĭ.
3. The vowel sound in the word *been* is ĭ; the vowel sound in *either* and *neither* is ī, while the vowel in the second syllable of *again* is pronounced ĕ.
4. The first syllable is stressed in many words, such as *secretary, library,* and *necessary* (sĕk•rŭ•trĭ; lī•brĭ; nĕ•sŭ•srĭ). Note that in such words as *secretary* and *necessary,* the last two syllables are run together in their pronunciation.
5. The *r* sound is dropped after a vowel or when it is the final sound. So *father* becomes fä′ thə; *never* becomes nĕ′ və; and *park* becomes päk. An *r* between vowels or a doubled *r* is trilled. You hear this in such words as *very, orange, marry,* and *courage.*

Cockney, a distinct version of British English, is difficult to master, yet it is one of the most common stage dialects. Note the unusual pronunciations used in Cockney. The Cockney dialect commonly drops initial and final consonants from words.

Word	Standard Pronunciation	Cockney Dialect
place	plās	plīs
ice	īs	ois
know	nō	nou
right	rīt	rŏ(t)
habit	hăb′ ĭt	ăbĭ(t)
home	hōm	ōm

The Irish dialect, on the other hand, is a lilting one, marked by much variety in pitch and inflection and a pace that is a little faster than American speech.

Note the vowel changes in these Irish pronunciations:

Word	Standard Pronunciation	Irish Dialect
fine	fīn	foin
when	hwĕn	hwĭn
one	wŭn	wo͝on
love	lŭv	lo͝ov
deal	dēl	dāl
you	yo͞o	yŭh

American English dialects vary in practically every state in the United States, but there are a few distinguishing characteristics that apply to whole areas. As a general rule, the farther a person is from an urban area, the slower and more nasal the speech. Southern and Western accents are known for their drawl—speaking slowly and inflecting the vowels (changing the tone or pitch of the voice). The various Southern accents have vowels that are rich and round. The long *i* often becomes ä in words like *I, my,* and *like,* and a final *er* nearly disappears. So "I like that view over yonder" might become "Äh läk that vēo͞o ovä yŏndə." Other commonly used American stage dialects are those from Brooklyn, New Jersey, and Boston.

EUROPEAN ACCENTS

European accents are too difficult to imitate without listening to people who use them habitually. A few suggestions may be helpful.

Italian is exceedingly musical and patterned with many inflections. The occasional *ŭh* sound added to consonant sounds is most pleasing, as in *soft-uh-ting* (soft thing) or *fruit-uh-stand,* and *I gottuh* as in T. A. Daly's delightful poem, "I gotta love for Angela, I love Carlotta, too." All of Daly's poems offer excellent phrasing and pronunciations; he uses *dä* for *the, ā* for *ē,* and adds *uh*'s between words.

The German accent is definitely gutteral; many of the sounds are made with the back of the tongue. *V* takes the place of *w, d* is used for *t,* and *p* is used for *b*.

Swedish is inclined to be high in pitch with recurring rising inflections and a flat tone that is not nasal. The o͝o is pronounced o͞o, so *good* rhymes with *food.* The voiced *th* becomes *d*, so *that* is pronounced *dăt.* A *w* becomes *v*, so *wet* is pronounced *vĕt,* and *j* becomes *y* as in *yŭst* for *just.*

All the European accents are based on the inflections, rhythms, and word order of the original language. These frequently differ very much

from those of the English language. Authors can give some help in writing passages, but listening to people and recordings is essential to an actor learning the accents.

The popularity of *Fiddler on the Roof* and Neil Simon's comedies have increased the popularity of Yiddish, which is a mixture of High German and Hebrew. It is the American stage Yiddish that actors should know. The pitch is much higher than American speech, often rising into a falsetto and seldom dropping to low pitch levels. Most sentences end with a rising pitch. The quality is quite nasal, and the pace is fairly slow.

In general, accents are difficult to master. However, there are often many roles for actors who can handle accents well. Stage accents are seldom authentic. Many authentic accents would be too difficult to understand. Some stage accents are more a theatrical convention than an imitation of the real thing.

Exercises

Dialect

Read the following lines in the dialect indicated.

1. My aunt will arrive at the library on Tuesday. (British English)
2. My love for you will never die. (Irish)
3. I figure we'll see your father tomorrow. (Southern United States)
4. I have a place close to home. (Cockney)

Rehearsing

Rehearsals are essential for full development of a play's unity, timing, and characterization. Rehearsals allow the director to shape the play, and the actors to develop their characters by interacting with one another.

PREPARING FOR A PRODUCTION

Actors should come to rehearsals prepared to rehearse by using the methods that the director prefers. Directors are different. Some directors will block one movement at a time. Other directors will have the actors write down the blocking for a page or scene and then have them walk through the scene. Still other directors will have actors move as they feel motivated to move and then correct awkward moves. Always bring a script to rehearsal so you can write the blocking, the stage business, and the director's comments on the script *in pencil*.

In early rehearsals, when the script is still being memorized, an actor can request a prompt for a forgotten line by saying "line" or "prompt" or by snapping a finger. The director may specify the method before the first rehearsal.

Actors should clearly mark all of their lines in the script. If rented scripts are used, the markings should be made only with a soft lead pencil. If the scripts have been purchased, underlining the character's name or highlighting the lines are the preferred methods. Underlining all of a character's lines makes a script too difficult to read. A different color can be used to mark movement or stage business or to note interpretation. Many directors prefer to number each speech on the page consecutively so that page and line numbers can easily be referred to in critiques and written notes.

Actors should always be prepared for frequent interruptions by the director during rehearsals. This is especially true of the early rehearsals. As rehearsals progress, lines should be so well memorized that a director can say, "Start with 'and furthermore.'" The actor should be able to pick up the line at just that point.

These actors are having an early rehearsal with only a few props. At this point the relationships and habits are formed that will later shape the production.

It is during rehearsals that the tempo of a play is set. The rapid pick-up of cues determines the play's tempo. If the tempo is slower than it should be, the delay is probably caused by slight pauses between speeches. During rehearsals actors must learn to come in on another actor's final word without a pause.

At rehearsals it makes sense to wear clothing that is generally related to your character's personality. Avoid styles that are entirely out of keeping with your character. Wear clothes that are like those your character might choose. They will help to put you in the right mood for a scene. Shoes are very important, for your movements are greatly affected by footwear. Men should wear suit jackets if their characters would wear them. This will allow them to get the feel of wearing a coat. Too often an actor who starts wearing a jacket at dress rehearsal will jam his hands into the coat pockets or grab awkwardly at the lapels. Women should wear appropriate rehearsal jewelry but should remove any bracelets, necklaces, or watches that are entirely out of character. A long necklace might tempt them to fidget. It is helpful to wear a skirt of the same length the costume will be or even a hoop if a hoop skirt will be worn.

If a cast works closely together at rehearsals, the members will experience the joy that real teamwork brings. As lines are tossed back and forth appropriately, the members will feel the different personalities reacting to one another and begin to understand that acting is a cooperative experience. Discovering how personality plays upon personality in a scene is what makes rehearsing worthwhile.

Stage techniques must become automatic and subconscious during rehearsals and performances. If you follow a daily practice schedule for as long as you are involved in dramatics, you will establish stage techniques and keep your body and voice at their best. The following chart outlines a series of exercises recommended for daily use. The instructions for these exercises are found in chapters 2 and 3.

DAILY PRACTICE

BODY EXERCISES	VOCAL EXERCISES
Deep breathing	Relaxing the entire body
Loosening up: stretching, bending, twisting	Yawning to relax throat
Pantomime exercises	Jaw exercises
Posture exercises	Lip exercises
Shaking hands vigorously	Babbling
Opening and closing fists	Humming
Moving fingers as in five-finger exercises	Breathing and counting
Rotating hands in circles from the wrists	Tongue twisters
Moving arms from elbow in circles	Chanting lines of poetry
Moving entire arms in circles	Reading stories aloud
Using body and arm gestures to show pleading, fear, and commanding	

As you study theater more deeply, audition for all kinds of parts, and spend a number of weeks at rehearsals, it is easy to focus exclusively on yourself and on what progress you are making. You must remember, however, that actors perform for an audience and gain empathy from an audience. Actors must always keep the interests, needs, and enjoyment of the audience uppermost in their minds.

The individuals who make up your audience are auditory, visual, and kinesthetic people. Some will respond more to what they hear. Others will respond more to what they see, and still others will respond more to the

kinds of physical action with which they identify. Therefore, in order to appeal as strongly as you can to all of the members of your audience, your acting must be a blending of sound, sight, and action.

Adapting to the Arena and Thrust Stages

Everything an actor says or does onstage must be done with an awareness of the physical dimensions of the stage itself. The position of an actor in relation to the audience profoundly affects his or her speech, movement, exits, entrances, and even the lighting. In order to achieve the best productions possible, actors involved in productions on arena and thrust stages need to rehearse diligently. Because of the special conditions imposed by these two types of stages, the acting and staging differ from those required by the more traditional proscenium stage. The experience gained through rehearsing becomes crucial.

When a play is acted in the round, the audience is very close to the performers. This scene from a stage adaptation of Voltaire's *Candide* shows audience interaction with arena staging.

Learning to act on an arena or stage "in the round" is now becoming a necessary part of dramatic training. The open stage, surrounded on four sides by seats, results in close contact between actors and spectators. Arena staging demands careful planning and rehearsing. The director cannot depend heavily on a set for effects, and the audience is so close that every detail of costumes, furniture, and lighting must be right. The acting area must be lighted by spotlights that do not hit any member of the audience in the eyes. Acts can be ended by blacking out the lights or by incorporating exits into the play's action. Either will take the place of the usual stage curtain. The furniture must not block the action from any side, and scenes must be arranged so that they can be seen from all angles.

The director must plan to keep the actors moving and speaking as they cross and countercross rather than have them seated for long periods of time. Keeping the actors in motion allows their faces and voices to carry the meaning of the play to everyone. The actors often face each other offset by at least two feet so that the audience can always see the face of one actor. If possible, the director must plan the action so that it can be seen from all sides at once.

The arena stage places more demands on the actors than the proscenium stage does. Each actor must be continually conscious of being surrounded by spectators who must see and hear everything. Actors must speak very clearly and project their words so that everyone in the audience can hear even when the actors turn away. Very accurate pointing of lines and accenting of key words must combine with a few clear-cut gestures that are effective from every angle. With the audience so close, artificiality or exaggeration becomes so apparent that all sense of reality is lost. Also, fidgeting and aimless gestures are far more irritating at close range.

Plays for an arena production must be carefully selected. Entrances and exits are sometimes difficult in arena staging because actors can be seen long before they reach the acting area and for some time after they exit from the stage. Entrances must permit effective approaches for actors before they speak, and exits must allow for convenient departures. Actions and lines must be suitable for the close attention of the audience. Sofas, benches, and low-backed chairs must be appropriate as a background for the actors since there is minimal scenery. A suitable play in the round can move spectators deeply when it is well done. A production that might be acceptable on the regular stage might be a failure in the round.

CUE

Because there are no upstage/downstage or right/left directions in arena staging, the acting areas must be identified in a different manner. Here are two popular systems:

Clock References
The twelve o'clock position is assigned. From there, all of the other directions are worked out according to the position of the numbers on a clock's face.

Quadrants The stage is divided into four quadrants. These quadrants are named according to compass locations, such as *NE, SE, SW, NW,* or by the numbers *1* through *4* or the letters *A* through *D.*

Thrust staging offers some of the advantages of both the proscenium stage and the arena. The thrust, sometimes called horseshoe staging, uses a low platform surrounded on three sides by the audience.

Since the thrust has a back wall, many plays requiring scenery that would be difficult, if not impossible, on an arena stage can be presented. Entrances can come from the back wall as well as from the three sides of the thrust. Much of the action needs to take place mid-stage; otherwise, the audience sitting on the sides will see only the backs of the actors. When there is a large cast, as in a musical, the chorus members must be placed in a curved *V*—the opposite of proscenium blocking.

The flexibility and intimacy of the thrust have made it a very popular type of staging. It works well in a large classroom, and if the audience does not exceed two hundred, a thrust arrangement can be set up on the stage, in a gym, or in a lunchroom.

This scene from *Where's Charlie?* shows successfully blocked thrust staging. At least one actor faces each side of the stage, thus drawing the audience into the action.

CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

Summary and Key Ideas

Summarize the chapter by answering the following questions.

1. What advice do directors often give to beginning actors?
2. Who was Konstantin Stanislavski? What is his "magic *if*"?
3. What information should be in a character sketch?
4. What are role scoring and script scoring? How does each help an actor?
5. Describe at least five keys to characterization.
6. What is a cross? Why is a cross usually followed by a countercross?
7. Name at least three *Do*s and three *Don't*s of stage movement.
8. What are three rules for eating onstage?
9. What are some techniques for playing comedy?

Discussing Ideas

1. Compare the emotional, subjective approach to acting to the technical, objective approach. How would an actor use each approach to prepare for the part of a mother whose child is missing?
2. Discuss the different types of roles and why each type of role is important in a play.
3. Choose a role you have played or would like to play. Explain how you would use any or all of the sixteen keys to characterization to build your role.
4. What demands do arena and thrust stages place on actors?

FOCUS ON Evaluating Theater

Learning to evaluate, or judge, live theater, film, and television will make your viewing more enjoyable and will help you develop as a cast member. Get in the habit of making precise, specific observations about the productions you view. Think about the play itself, the set design, the direction, and the acting.

Judging a Play With a partner, view a live theater, film, or television production. Then evaluate the play itself as well as the set design, direction, and acting. Were the play and its various elements effective? Why or why not? With your partner, discuss your response. Then summarize your evaluation in a short paper. Try to repeat this process any time you view a student or professional production.

Learning from the Critics Critics—those who review and analyze drama—open readers' minds to creative and lively interpretations. Find two pieces of criticism about a live theater, film, or television production that you've seen. Then give the class a short presentation comparing and contrasting the pieces of criticism.

ACTING

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

Observation While watching television, observe an actor very closely. Pay attention to the way he or she walks, talks, moves, smiles, laughs, sits down, stands up, and so forth. Imitate the person for the class and ask class members whom you are imitating.

Externalization Choose an action verb, such as *fight, confess, attack,* or *collide,* and create a scene around it. Think of a master leading gesture and a leading center that will provide clues to your character's personality and situation. For example, if you chose the action verb *defend*, you might fend off a slavering pit bull with an arm outstretched to protect the face and body. Act out the scene for your classmates and see if they can figure out what is happening.

Cooperative Learning Activities

Concentration The Mirror is a classic comedy routine. Working with a partner, improvise a character watching his or her moving image in a mirror. Move together as though you are one person. After receiving feedback from your classmates, try the scene again to improve both your concentration and synchronicity.

Stage Position and Movement With two or three classmates, develop a scene in which the characters have a conflict: a parent and children, a supervisor and employees, a coach and players or a similar relationship. Work out the conflict and its resolution onstage, making sure that every player is visible to the audience at all times. You will need to make some decisions about sharing the scene or giving the scene.

Across the CURRICULUM Activities

History Choose your favorite historical character and prepare to portray that person in a play. Using the questions on page 109, write a description of your characterization of the person. Include a character sketch (refer to pages 107–108.)

Foreign Language Imagine that you are a brash, self-confident, somewhat obnoxious tourist in a foreign country. You are intent on communicating with the residents regardless of your ignorance of the language. Ask a classmate to play the role of the resident of the country. Then act out a scene in which you attempt to communicate with the native resident by speaking English with a foreign accent mixed with an occasional foreign word.

Theater Etiquette

Successful performances are possible only if everyone—the actors, the director, the stage crew, and even the audience—shows proper respect for everyone involved. Achieving the best results is possible only in an environment of personal responsibility and mutual respect.

Often theater etiquette is nothing more than showing common courtesy. However, theater presents some unique situations, ones where the ground rules for interacting with others might not always be clear. The following guidelines to behavior will make it possible for everyone involved in a performance to enjoy the theater experience.

THE ACTORS

- Arrive at rehearsals and makeup calls on time.
- Learn lines, business, and blocking on schedule.
- Never peek through the curtains before (when the audience is present) or during a performance.
- Do not remove your makeup until after the curtain call. Never mingle with members of the audience or leave the theater while in costume or makeup.
- Do not change lines or stage business or tell others to do so unless the change has been approved by the director.
- Subordinate yourself to the performance by accepting your role and the costume, hairstyle, and makeup that go with it.
- Never knowingly upstage other performers. Be careful not to do it accidentally, either.
- Be attentive and receptive to the director's comments, and make an honest effort to make requested adjustments.
- Do not borrow another actor's makeup.
- Promptly report any damage to costumes or props before leaving the theater after each performance.

- Join the audience in applauding the musicians at the end of a musical's curtain call.
- Always show your appreciation to the director, the crews, and any other staff members associated with the production.
- Offer to assist the stage crew whenever possible.

EVERYONE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRODUCTION

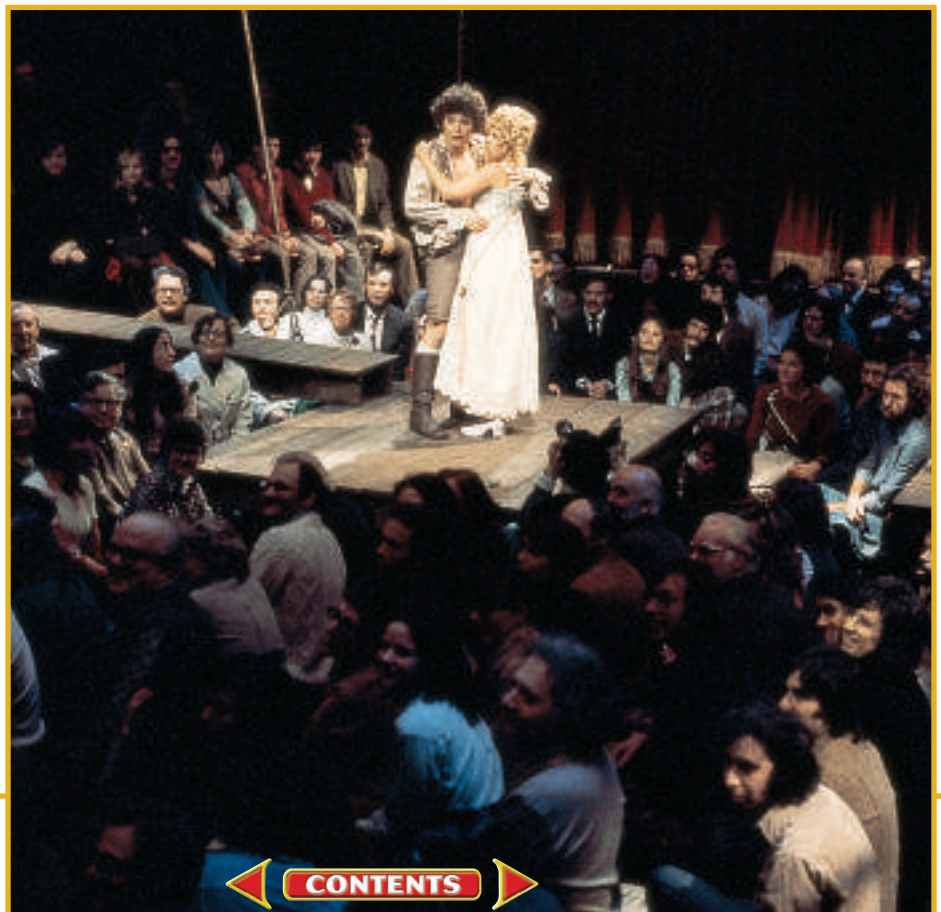
- Respect and encourage the contributions of each member of the cast and crew by complimenting good rehearsals, effective lighting, skillful costuming, and creative construction and design.
- Unless you are on the props crew, do not handle the props or sets.
- Know emergency procedures and the locations of firefighting equipment, the exits, and the fire alarms.
- Respect those who want to carry on theater traditions even though these traditions might seem like superstitions to you.
- After the show, make any presentations or recognitions for outstanding contributions at a time when everyone associated with the performance can be present.
- Post-performance cast parties should involve only those who worked on the show.

A successful production depends on cooperation among the cast, the crews, and the director.

THE AUDIENCE

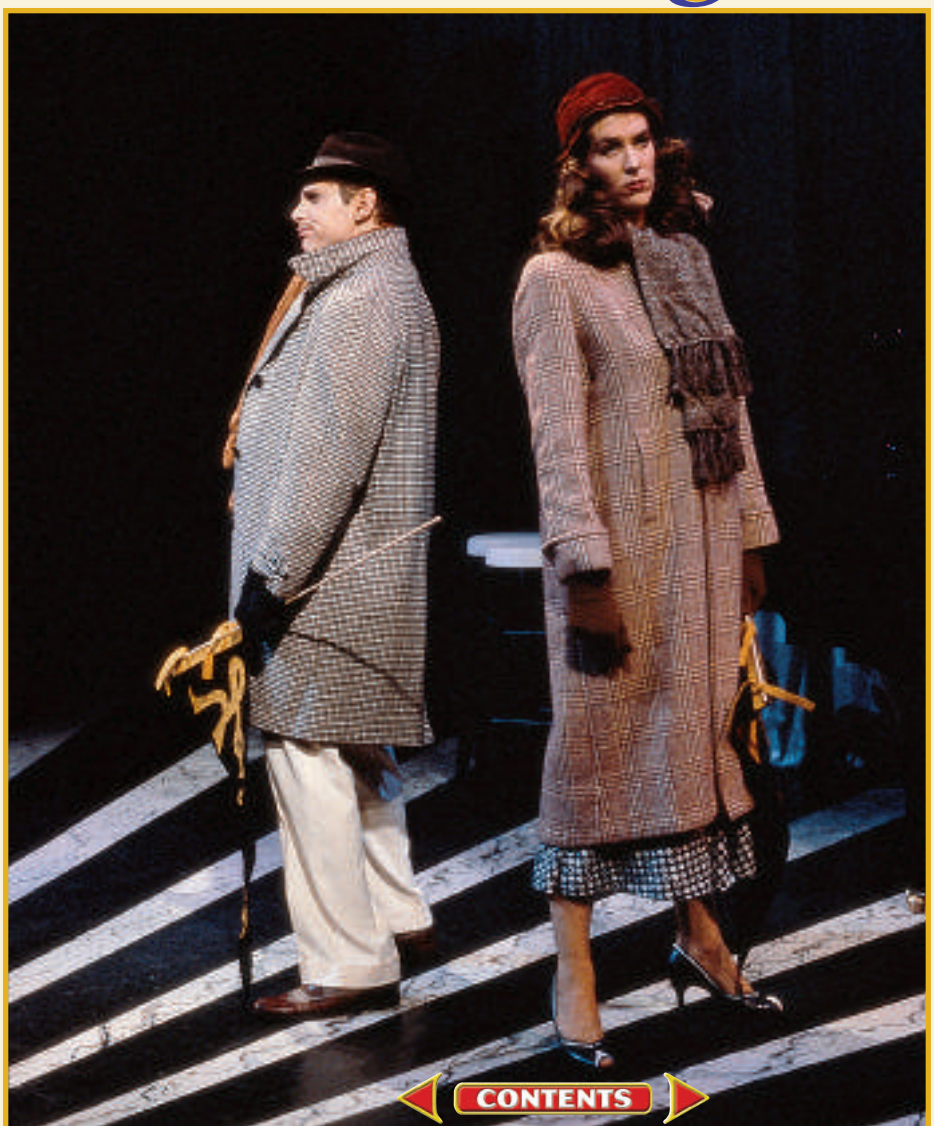
- Arrive early enough to be seated before the lights dim.
- At a musical, it is customary to applaud as the conductor approaches the podium.
- When the curtain goes up, if the set pleases you, compliment the designer and crew by applauding.
- Do not talk or make noises with food or drink items.
- Silence any phones, pagers, or watches before the performance begins.
- Leave the theater during a performance only out of necessity.
- Applaud an especially fine scene or individual performance only in cases of rare "show stoppers," and reserve standing ovations for truly outstanding performances.
- Presentations of flowers, gifts, or similar recognitions are usually made offstage; exceptions should have the approval of the director or the stage manager.
- Never be openly critical of a performance.

An appreciative, courteous audience contributes to the success of a production.



Part TWO

A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues



Gaining experience by reading scenes and monologues helps aspiring actors develop poise and acting skills.
(Play: *Oh, Coward*)

CONTENTS

SCENES *for One Man and One Woman*

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare (1594–5)

Characters: ROMEO—A Montague, he is an impulsive young aristocrat who has fallen in love with the daughter of the Capulets, a family despised by the Montagues.
JULIET—A Capulet, she is a romantic and somewhat headstrong aristocrat.

Situation: The action takes place in Verona, Italy. Young Romeo and Juliet have fallen in love at a masked ball, only to discover that they are members of two families that despise each other. In this scene, Romeo hides in the orchard below Juliet's bedroom window. Romeo expresses his love for Juliet, and then he overhears Juliet expressing her love for him.

[Capulet's orchard. ROMEO *advances from the wall.]*

ROMEO He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
(Juliet appears above at her window.)
But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
It is my lady, O, it is my love!
Oh, that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?
Her eye discourses. I will answer it.—
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET Ay me!

ROMEO She speaks!
O, speak again, bright angel! For thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO *(Aside)* Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's a Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. Oh, be some other name!

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde (1895)

Characters: LADY BRACKNELL—She is an elderly English woman who is neither deep nor subtle. Her ideas about what makes a suitable husband are extremely rigid.
JACK—Jack Worthing is superficial, flippant, flirtatious, dishonest, witty, charming, and entirely self-serving.

Situation: In this satirical farce, Wilde ridicules the social attitudes of nineteenth-century England. The action takes place in a fashionable apartment in London. Lady Bracknell interviews Jack for the position of son-in-law.

LADY BRACKNELL *(Sitting down)* You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. *(Looks in her pocket for a notebook and pencil)*

JACK Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL *(Pencil and notebook in hand)* I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK *(After some hesitation)* I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL *(Makes a note in her book)* In land, or in investments?

JACK In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one posi-

tion, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK 149.

LADY BRACKNELL *(Shaking her head)* The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could be easily altered.

JACK Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL *(Sternly)* Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY BRACKNELL Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL Found!

JACK The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK *(Gravely)* In a hand-bag.

LADY BRACKNELL A hand-bag?

JACK *(Very seriously)* Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag, in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY BRACKNELL The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!
(LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.)*

JACK Good morning!

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

by Brian Clark (1978)

Characters: MRS. BOYLE—A social worker, she tries to do her job in a caring but professional way.
KEN HARRISON—A car accident has left him paralyzed from the neck down. Depressed and bitter, he wants to be allowed to die.

Situation: The scene takes place in a private hospital room.

MRS. BOYLE Why don't you want any more treatment?

KEN I'd rather not go on living like this.

MRS. BOYLE Why not?

KEN Isn't it obvious?

MRS. BOYLE Not to me. I 've seen many patients like you.

KEN And they all want to live?

MRS. BOYLE Usually.

KEN Why?

MRS. BOYLE They find a new way of life.

KEN How?

MRS. BOYLE You'll be surprised how many things you will be able to do with training and a little patience.

KEN Such as?

MRS. BOYLE We can't be sure yet. But I should think that you will be able to operate reading machines and perhaps an adapted typewriter.

KEN Reading and writing. What about arithmetic?

MRS. BOYLE *(Smiling)* I dare say we could fit you up with a comptometer if you really wanted one.

KEN Mrs. Boyle, even educationalists have realized that the three r's do not make a full life.

MRS. BOYLE What did you do before the accident?

KEN I taught in an art school. I was a sculptor.

MRS. BOYLE I see.

KEN Difficult, isn't it? How about an electrically operated hammer and chisel? No, well. Or a cybernetic lump of clay?

MRS. BOYLE I wouldn't laugh if I were you. It's amazing what can be done. Our scientists are wonderful.

KEN They are. But it's not good enough, you see, Mrs. Boyle. I really have absolutely no desire at all to be the object of scientific virtuosity. I have thought things over very carefully. I do have plenty of time for thinking and I have decided that I do not want to go on living with so much effort for so little result.

MRS. BOYLE Yes, well, we shall have to see about that.

KEN What is there to see?

MRS. BOYLE We can't just stop treatment, just like that.

KEN Why not?

MRS. BOYLE It's the job of the hospital to save life, not to lose it.

KEN The hospital's done all it can, but it wasn't enough. It wasn't the hospital's fault; the original injury was too big.

MRS. BOYLE We have to make the best of the situation.

KEN No. "We" don't have to do anything. I have to do what is to be done and that is to cash in the chips.

MRS. BOYLE It's not unusual, you know, for people injured as you have been, to suffer with this depression for a considerable time before they begin to see that a life is possible.

KEN How long?

MRS. BOYLE It varies.

KEN Don't hedge.

MRS. BOYLE It could be a year or so.

KEN And it could last for the rest of my life.

MRS. BOYLE That would be most unlikely.

KEN I'm sorry, but I cannot settle for that.

MRS. BOYLE Try not to dwell on it. I'll see what I can do to get you started on some occupational therapy. Perhaps we could make a start on the reading machines.

KEN Do you have many books for those machines?

MRS. BOYLE Quite a few.

KEN Can I make a request for the first one?

MRS. BOYLE If you like.

KEN "How to be a sculptor with no hands."

MRS. BOYLE I'll be back tomorrow with the machine.

KEN It's marvelous, you know.

MRS. BOYLE What is?

KEN All you people have the same technique. When I say something really awkward you just pretend I haven't said anything at all. You're all the bloody same . . . Well, there's another outburst. That should be your cue to comment on the light-shade or the color of the walls.

MRS. BOYLE I'm sorry if I have upset you.

KEN Of course you have upset me. You and the doctors with your appalling so-called professionalism, which is nothing more than a series of verbal tricks to prevent you relating to your patients as human beings.

MRS. BOYLE You must understand; we have to remain relatively detached in order to help . . .

KEN That's all right with me. Detach yourself. Tear yourself off on the dotted line that divides the woman from the social worker, and post yourself off to another patient.

The Rainmaker

by N. Richard Nash (1954)

Characters: STARBUCK—Bill Starbuck is big, but lithe and agile. He is a mixture of loud braggart and gentle dreamer. He carries a short hickory stick, which is his weapon, his magic wand.

LIZZIE—Lizzie Curry is a strong yet incomplete woman. She is twenty-seven years old and has never loved or been loved. She yearns for romance but feels she must conceal her longings, given her situation, under the guise of being a good-natured tomboy.

Situation: The following exchange takes place on a summer day in a western state suffering from drought. Starbuck has arrived out of the blue claiming he could bring rain for a fee. He is presently boarding with the Curry family. Lizzie has brought bed linens out to the bunkhouse.

STARBUCK What are you scared of?

LIZZIE You! I don't trust you!

STARBUCK Why? What don't you trust about me?

LIZZIE Everything! The way you talk, the way you brag—why, even your name.

STARBUCK What's wrong with my name?

LIZZIE It sounds fake! It sounds like you made it up!

STARBUCK You're darn right! I did make it up.

LIZZIE There! Of course!

STARBUCK Why not? You know what name I was born with? Smith! Smith, for the love of Mike, *Smith!* Now what kind of handle is that for a fella like me? I needed a name that had the whole sky in it! And the power of a man! Star-buck! Now there's a name—and it's mine.

LIZZIE No, it's not. You were born Smith—and that's your name.

STARBUCK You're wrong, Lizzie. The name you choose for yourself is more your

own than the name you were born with. And if I was you I'd choose another name than Lizzie.

LIZZIE Thank you—I'm very pleased with it.

STARBUCK Oh, no you ain't. You ain't pleased with anything about yourself. And I'm sure you ain't pleased with "Lizzie."

LIZZIE I don't ask *you* to be pleased with it, Starbuck. I *am.*

STARBUCK Lizzie? Why, it don't *stand* for anything.

LIZZIE It stands for me! *Me!* I'm not the Queen of Sheba—I'm not Lady Godiva—I'm not Cinderella at the Ball.

STARBUCK Would you like to be?

LIZZIE Starbuck, you're ridiculous!

STARBUCK What's ridiculous about it? Dream you're somebody—*be* somebody! But Lizzie? That's nobody! So many millions of wonderful women with wonderful names! *(In an orgy of delight)* Leonora, Desdemona, Carolina, Paulina! Annabella, Florinda, Natasha, Diane! *(Then, with a pathetic little lift of his shoulders)* Lizzie.

The Diary of Anne Frank

dramatized by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (1954) from the book *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*

Characters: ANNE—Anne Frank is a fourteen-year-old. She is self-controlled, lively, polite, optimistic, curious, creative, and compassionate. PETER—Peter Van Daan is an awkward sixteen-year-old. He is angry and frustrated with the powerlessness and injustice of his situation.

Situation: This play, based on historical fact, was inspired by Anne's diary, which was published after her death. Anne was in fact eventually taken to a German concentration camp where she died at age fifteen. Only her father survived. This excerpt occurs at almost the end of the play. It is February 1944, World War II is in progress, and the Frank and the Van Daan families are hiding from the Nazis on the top floor of a warehouse in Amsterdam, Holland. The three rooms and a small attic are sparsely furnished, and all of the windows have blackout curtains. There is immense tension. Anne tries to comfort Peter.

ANNE *(Looking up through skylight)* Look, Peter, the sky. What a lovely day. Aren't the clouds beautiful? You know what I do when it seems as if I couldn't stand being cooped up for one more minute? I *think* myself out. I think myself on a walk in the park where I used to go with Pim. Where the daffodils and the crocus and the violets grow down the slopes. You know the most wonderful thing about *thinking* yourself out? You can have it any way you like. You can have roses and violets and chrysanthemums all blooming at the same time. . . . It's funny. . . . I used to take it all for granted . . . and now I've gone crazy about everything to do with nature. Haven't you?

PETER *(Barely lifting his face)* I've just gone crazy. I think if something doesn't happen soon . . . if we don't get out of here . . . I can't stand much more of it!

ANNE *(Softly)* I wish you had a religion, Peter.

PETER *(Bitterly)* No, thanks. Not me.

ANNE Oh. I don't mean you have to be Orthodox . . . or believe in heaven and hell and purgatory and things. . . . I just mean some religion . . . it doesn't matter what. Just to believe in something! When I think of all that's out there . . . the trees . . . and flowers . . . and seagulls . . . when I think of the dearness of you, Peter . . . and the goodness of the people we know . . . Mr. Kraler, Miep, Dirk, the vegetable man, all risking their lives for us every day. . . . When I think of these good things, I'm not afraid any more. . . . I find myself, and God, and I . . .

PETER *(Impatiently, as he gets to his feet)* That's fine! But when I begin to think, I get mad! Look at us, hiding out for two years. Not able to move! Caught here like . . . waiting for them to come and get us . . . and all for what?

ANNE We're not the only people that've had to suffer. There've always been people that've had to . . . sometimes one race . . . sometimes another . . . and yet . . .

PETER *(Sitting on upstage end of bed)* That doesn't make me feel any better!

ANNE I know it's terrible, trying to have any faith . . . when people are doing such horrible . . . *(Gently lifting his face)* but you know what I sometimes think? I think the world may be going through a phase, the way I was with Mother. It'll pass, maybe not for hundreds of years, but some day. . . . I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart.

Barefoot in the Park

by Neil Simon (1963)

Characters: CORIE—She is young and optimistic.
PAUL—He is a conservatively dressed, serious young lawyer.

Situation: Paul and Corie are newlyweds. The scene occurs in a large, unfurnished, one-room apartment on the top floor of an old brownstone in Manhattan. It is a cold February afternoon, and Paul has just climbed five flights of stairs to the apartment Corie rented for them.

CORIE The furniture will be here by five. They promised.

PAUL *(Dropping affidavits into case, looks at his watch)* Five? . . . It's five-thirty. *(Crosses to bedroom stairs)* What do we do, sleep in Bloomingdale's tonight?

CORIE They'll be here, Paul. They're probably stuck in traffic.

PAUL *(Crossing up to bedroom)* And what about tonight? I've got a case in court tomorrow. Maybe we should check into a hotel? *(Looks into bedroom)*

CORIE *(Rises and moves towards* PAUL*)* We just checked *out* of a hotel. I don't care if the furniture *doesn't* come. I'm sleeping in my apartment *tonight.*

PAUL Where? Where? *(Looks into bathroom, closes door, and starts to come back down the steps)* There's only room for one in the bathtub. *(He suddenly turns, goes back up steps and opens door to the bathroom.)* Where's the bathtub?

CORIE *(Hesitantly)* There is no bathtub.

PAUL No bathtub?

CORIE There's a shower . . .

PAUL How am I going to take a bath?

CORIE You won't take a bath. You'll take a shower.

PAUL I don't like showers. I like baths. Corie, how am I going to take a bath?

CORIE You'll lie down in the shower and hang your feet over the sink. . . . I'm sorry there's no bathtub, Paul.

PAUL *(Closes door, and crosses down into the room)* Hmmmm . . . Boy, of all the nights . . . *(He suddenly shivers.)* It's freezing in here. *(He rubs his hands.)* Isn't there any heat?

CORIE Of course there's heat. We have a radiator.

PAUL *(Gets up on steps and feels radiator)* The *radiator's* the coldest thing in the room.

CORIE It's probably the boiler. It's probably off in the whole building.

PAUL *(Putting on gloves)* No, it was warm coming up the stairs. *(Goes out door into hall)* See . . . It's nice and warm out here.

CORIE Maybe it's because the apartment is empty.

PAUL The *hall* is empty too but it's warm out here.

CORIE *(Moves to the stove)* It'll be all right once I get a fire going.

PAUL *(Goes to phone)* A fire? You'd have to keep the flame going night and day. . . . I'll call the landlord.

CORIE *(Putting log into stove)* He's not home.

PAUL Where is he?

CORIE In Florida! . . . There's a handy man that comes Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

PAUL You mean we freeze on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays?

CORIE He'll be here in the morning.

PAUL *(Moving R.)* And what'll we do tonight? I've got a case in court in the morning.

CORIE *(Moves to* PAUL *)* Will you stop saying it like you always have a case in court in the morning. This is your first one.

PAUL Well, what'll we do?

CORIE The furniture will be here. In the meantime I can light the stove and you can sit over the fire with your law books and a shawl like Abraham Lincoln. *(Crosses to the Franklin Stove and gets matches from the top of the stove)*

PAUL Is that supposed to be funny? *(Begins to investigate small windows)*

CORIE No. It was supposed to be nasty. It just came out funny. *(She strikes match and attempts to light the log in stove.* PAUL *tries the windows.)* What are you doing? *(Gives up attempting to light log)*

PAUL I'm checking to see if the windows are closed.

CORIE They're closed. I looked.

PAUL Then why is it windy in here?

CORIE *(Moves R. to* PAUL*)* I don't feel a draft.

PAUL *(Moves away from windows)* I didn't say draft. I said wind . . . There's a brisk, northeasterly wind blowing in this room.

CORIE You don't have to get sarcastic.

PAUL *(Moving up into the kitchen area)* I'm not getting sarcastic, I'm getting chapped lips. *(Looking up, he glimpses the hole in the skylight.)*

CORIE How could there be wind in a closed room?

PAUL How's this for an answer? There's a hole in the skylight. *(He points up.)*

CORIE *(She looks up, sees it and is obviously embarrassed by it.)* Gee, I didn't see that before. Did you?

PAUL *(Moves to ladder)* I didn't see the *apartment* before.

CORIE *(Defensively. Crosses to the railing and gets her coat)* All right, Paul, don't get upset. I'm sure it'll be fixed. We could plug it up with something for tonight.

PAUL *(Gets up on ladder)* How? How? That's twenty feet high. You'd have to fly over in a plane and *drop* something in.

CORIE *(Putting on coat)* It's only for one night. And it's not that cold.

PAUL In February? Do you know what it's like at three o'clock in the morning? In February? Ice-cold freezing.

CORIE It's not going to be freezing. I called the weather bureau. It's going to be cloudy with light s—*(She catches herself and looks up.)*

PAUL What? *(CORIE turns away.)* What? . . . A light what?

CORIE Snow!

PAUL *(Coming down ladder) Snow?!* . . . It's going to snow tonight? . . . In here?

CORIE They're wrong as often as they're right.

PAUL I'm going to be shoveling snow in my own living room.

CORIE It's a little hole.

PAUL With that wind it could blow six-foot drifts in the bathroom. Honestly, Corie, I don't see how you can be so calm about all this.

CORIE Well, what is it you want me to do?

PAUL Go to pieces, like me. It's only natural.

Harvey
by Mary Chase (1943)

Characters: VETA—Veta Simmons is overwrought. She wants Dr. Sanderson to commit her brother, Elwood, to a mental hospital so that she can entertain her friends without being embarrassed by him.
SANDERSON—A psychiatrist, he believes Veta is having a nervous breakdown.

Situation: The scene takes place in Dr. Sanderson's office.

VETA Doctor—everything I say to you is confidential? Isn't it?

SANDERSON That's understood.

VETA Because it's a slap in the face to everything we've stood for in this community the way Elwood is acting now.

SANDERSON I am not a gossip, Mrs. Simmons. I am a psychiatrist.

VETA Well—for one thing—he drinks.

SANDERSON To excess?

VETA To excess? Well—don't you call it excess when a man never lets a day go by without stepping into one of those cheap taverns, sitting around with riffraff and people you never heard of? Inviting them to the house—playing cards with them—giving them food and money. And here I am trying to get Myrtle Mae started with a nice group of young people. If that isn't excess I'm sure I don't know what excess is.

SANDERSON I didn't doubt your statement, Mrs. Simmons. I merely asked if your brother drinks.

VETA Well, yes, I say definitely Elwood drinks and I want him committed out here permanently, because I cannot stand another day of that Harvey. Myrtle and I have to set a place at the table for Harvey. We have to move over on the sofa and make room for Harvey. We have to answer the telephone when Elwood calls and asks to speak to Harvey. Then at the party this afternoon with Mrs. Chauvenet there—We didn't even know anything about Harvey until we came back here. Doctor, don't you think it would have been a little bit kinder of Mother to have written and told me about Harvey? Be honest, now—don't you?

SANDERSON I really couldn't answer that question, because I—

VETA I can. Yes—it certainly would have.

SANDERSON This person you call Harvey—who is he?

VETA He's a rabbit.

SANDERSON Perhaps—but just who is he? Some companion—someone your brother has picked up in these bars, of whom you disapprove?

VETA *(Patiently)* Doctor—I've been telling you. Harvey is a rabbit—a big white rabbit—six feet high—or is it six feet and a half? Heavens knows I ought to know. He's been around the house long enough.

SANDERSON *(Regarding her narrowly)* Now, Mrs. Simmons, let me understand this—you say—

VETA *(Impatient)* Doctor—do I have to keep repeating myself? My brother insists that his closest friend is this big white rabbit. This rabbit is named Harvey. Harvey lives at our house. Don't you understand? He and Elwood go every place together. Elwood buys railroad tickets, theater tickets, for both of them. As I told Myrtle Mae—if your uncle was so lonesome he had to bring something home—why couldn't he bring home something human? He has me, doesn't he? He has Myrtle Mae, doesn't he? *(She leans forward.)* Doctor—*(She rises to him. He inclines toward her.)* I'm going to tell you something I've never told anybody in the world before. *(Puts her hand on his shoulder)* Every once in a while I see that big white rabbit myself. Now isn't that terrible? I've never even told that to Myrtle Mae.

SANDERSON *(Now convinced. Starts to rise)* Mrs. Simmons—

VETA *(Straightening)*And what's more—he's every bit as big as Elwood says he is. Now don't ever tell that to anybody, Doctor. I'm ashamed of it. *(Crosses to C., to chair R. of desk)*

SANDERSON *(Crosses to* VETA*)* I can see that you have been under a great nervous strain recently.

VETA Well—I certainly have.

SANDERSON Grief over your mother's death depressed you considerably?

VETA *(Sits chair R. of desk)* Nobody knows how much.

SANDERSON Been losing sleep?

VETA How could anybody sleep with that going on?

SANDERSON *(Crosses to back of desk)* Short-tempered over trifles?

VETA You just try living with those two and see how your temper holds up.

SANDERSON *(Presses buzzer)* Loss of appetite?

VETA No one could eat at a table with my brother and a big white rabbit. Well, I'm finished with it. I'll sell the house—be appointed conservator of Elwood's estate, and Myrtle Mae and I will be able to entertain our friends in peace. It's too much, Doctor. I just can't stand it.

The Dining Room

by A. R. Gurney Jr. (1982)

Characters: ARTHUR—With his father dead and his mother now living in Florida, Arthur needs to divide his parents' belongings between himself and his sister.
SALLY—Arthur's sister, Sally has adult children but still reverts to childish behavior in her brother's presence. She wants the dining room furnishings partly because they remind her of her happy, secure childhood and partly because her brother wants them.

Situation: This play has just one set, a dining room. The playwright portrays dining rooms as symbolic of the changing lifestyle of the American upper middle class. In this play the dining room was once the center of family life but is now neglected and cluttered.

ARTHUR The dining room.

SALLY Yes. . . .

ARTHUR Notice how we gravitate right to this room.

SALLY I know it.

ARTHUR You sure mother doesn't want this stuff in Florida?

SALLY She hardly has room for what she's got. She wants us to take turns. Without fighting.

ARTHUR We'll just have to draw lots then.

SALLY Unless one of us wants something, and one of us doesn't.

ARTHUR We have to do it today.

SALLY Do you think that's enough time to divide up a whole house?

ARTHUR I have to get back, Sal. *(He looks in the sideboard.)* We'll draw lots and then go through the rooms taking turns. (*He brings out a silver spoon.*) Here. We'll use this salt spoon. (*He shifts it from hand to hand behind his back, then holds out two fists.*) Take your pick. You get the spoon, you get the dining room.

SALLY You mean you want to start here?

ARTHUR Got to start somewhere. *(*SALLY *looks at his fists.)*

SALLY *(Not choosing)* You mean you want the dining room?

ARTHUR Yeah.

SALLY What happened to the stuff you had?

ARTHUR Jane took it. It was part of the settlement.

SALLY If you win, where will you put it?

ARTHUR That's my problem, Sal.

SALLY I thought you had a tiny apartment.

ARTHUR I'll find a place.

SALLY I mean your children won't want it.

ARTHUR Probably not.

SALLY Then where on earth? . . .

ARTHUR Come on, Sal. Choose.*(He holds out his fists again. She starts to choose.)* You don't want it.

SALLY Of course I want it.

ARTHUR I mean you already have a perfectly good dining room.

SALLY Not as good as this.

ARTHUR You mean you want two dining rooms?

SALLY I'd give our old stuff to Debbie.

ARTHUR To Debbie?

SALLY She's our oldest child.

ARTHUR Does Debbie want a dining room?

SALLY She might.

ARTHUR In a condominium?

SALLY She might.

ARTHUR In Denver?

SALLY She just might, Arthur.

ARTHUR (*Shuffling the spoon behind his back again; then holding out his fists*) I don't want to fight. Which hand? *(*SALLY *starts to choose, then stops.)*

SALLY Are you planning to put it in storage?

ARTHUR I might.

SALLY I checked on that. That costs an arm and a leg.

ARTHUR So does shipping it to Denver. (*He holds out his fists.*)

SALLY (*Almost picking a hand, then stopping*) I know what will happen if you win.

ARTHUR What?

SALLY You'll end up selling it.

ARTHUR Selling it?

SALLY That's what will happen. It will kick around for a while, and you'll end up calling a furniture dealer.

ARTHUR I am absolutely amazed you'd say that.

SALLY I don't want to fight, Arthur.

ARTHUR Neither do I. Maybe we should defer the dining room. (*He starts for door, stage right.*)

SALLY (*Following him*) Maybe we should.

ARTHUR Selling the dining room? Is that what you told mother I'd do?

SALLY (*Following him out*) I told her I'd give you the piano if I can have the dining room. . . .

ARTHUR I'll be lucky if I keep this spoon.

SALLY I'll give you the piano and the coffee table if I can have the dining room.

The Breakfast Special

by Matthew Calhoun (1984)

Characters: WAITRESS—She is in her early twenties and has little interest in being a waitress.
CUSTOMER—He is a well-dressed young man in his late twenties.

Situation: The characters are in a dingy diner on the Lower East Side in New York City.

WAITRESS Menu, sir?

CUSTOMER No thanks. I know just what I want.

WAITRESS Uh huh?

CUSTOMER A robin egg omelette topped with coriander made French style—*red* caviar in that, and a licorice liqueur, please.

WAITRESS Huh?

CUSTOMER Yes, all that and some Wonder Bread toast with wild gooseberry preserves. Shave the crusts, please.

WAITRESS We don't have that . . . here.

CUSTOMER No Wonder Bread? You should try it. That cheap, synthetic texture provides a delightful contrast to some of the more docile of the wild preserves. Wild raspberry needs more of a . . .

WAITRESS We don't have those.

CUSTOMER You mentioned that. Make it wild blackberry then, and put it on Arnold brick oven white. Broil it, though, please. It makes a subtler taste, broiled.

WAITRESS We don't have that stuff. We have scrambled or fried, or we could poach it for you, and it comes with home fries and coffee. Or French toast, if you want.

CUSTOMER What?

WAITRESS This is a diner, not a French cookbook place. We don't have robin eggs. You can get a Denver omelette, if you want.

CUSTOMER This is a diner, as you said. I'd like to dine. I don't understand your attitude.

WAITRESS We don't have liqueurs. We got O.J. or grapefruit juice.

CUSTOMER This is New York City, lady. Can't I get breakfast?

WAITRESS Pancakes? Tomato juice? Cold cereal? We got that.

CUSTOMER Where am I, in primitive colonial New England where all they know how to fix is turkey and succotash?

WAITRESS It's summer. We don't have a Thanksgiving menu till November.

CUSTOMER Don't you have *anything* here?

WAITRESS *(Shrugging)* Yankee bean soup.

CUSTOMER OK, OK, bring me a menu. I'll eat that.

WAITRESS There are some nice more exotic restaurants in Midtown. You can get the D train right over . . .

CUSTOMER I don't want to take a subway to get a little breakfast. I'm not on a safari here. I don't want to have to hunt lion to get a bite to eat.

WAITRESS Lion?

CUSTOMER I suppose next you'll be telling me I can't get a little fresh squeezed tangerine juice here.

WAITRESS The restaurant two doors north'll give you fresh squeezed O.J. if you want.

CUSTOMER I'm sure they could give me bubble gum freshly garnered from under their tables, too, but I don't *want* that.

WAITRESS You are being entirely unreasonable. A small, unassuming, lower East Side diner and you come in here and expect Julia Child to cater to your every whim. You get eggs here. You get toast. You get home fries. You can have a donut if you want. Glazed or plain. That's what you get. If you don't like it, then go hire a cook and a butler and live in a mansion on a hill somewhere. OK?

CUSTOMER *(Momentarily stunned)* You're right. I expect too much out of life. I always have. I'm a bit neurotic that way. I just want things right, that's all. But I have no right to force my outlandish expectations on others. *(Stands, hugs her)* Thanks for the outburst. A fella has to be put in his place sometimes. *(Sits)* Bring me the breakfast special. Whatever it is. Thanks.

WAITRESS You can't have the special because it's 11:02. You can only get it before 11. You should have ordered it when you sat down.

CUSTOMER You're right. My fault. Two fried eggs, then. That'll be fine.

WAITRESS White, whole wheat or rye?

CUSTOMER You have whole wheat eggs?

WAITRESS *(Irritated)* Toast.

CUSTOMER Oh, I see. Anything's fine. Anything that's easiest.

WAITRESS White?

CUSTOMER Rye. *(Beat; worriedly)* If I'm not imposing.

WAITRESS Rye. Coffee?

CUSTOMER Sure.

WAITRESS OK, then. *(She starts to exit.)*

CUSTOMER Oh!

WAITRESS What?

CUSTOMER Could I maybe have a table here, to eat off of?

WAITRESS A table, sir?

CUSTOMER Well there's two chairs here, but no table. I hate to eat off my lap.

WAITRESS Couldn't you just pull up the other chair?

CUSTOMER Well . . . *(Short pause)*

WAITRESS Maybe we should just come to your house and serve you breakfast in bed, huh?

CUSTOMER *(Embarrassed)* OK. Sorry. *(He pulls up the chair.)* Chair will be fine.

WAITRESS You can pick up breakfast in the kitchen in about twenty minutes.

CUSTOMER Twenty minutes? For eggs?

WAITRESS Whadaya think, sir, we're gonna have a foreman whip the cook to work at superhuman speed to kill himself on your eggs? You've *got* a chair, sir. You think *we* get to sit down?

CUSTOMER But there's no customers here!

WAITRESS Cook's a freelance writer. He writes comedy skits as he works. Slows him down a little. What are you, anti-art?

CUSTOMER And what did you mean pick it up in the kitchen?

WAITRESS In twenty minutes. Kitchen's over there, right past the communal bathroom.

CUSTOMER Aren't you going to bring it to me?

WAITRESS What am I, your slave? Would you show a little initiative around here?

CUSTOMER *(Getting up)* I'm leaving.

WAITRESS It's about time. Robin egg omelette.

CUSTOMER Eat off chairs.

WAITRESS Wild gooseberry jam.

CUSTOMER Twenty minutes so the moron can write comedy skits.

(The following dialog is spoken simultaneously.)

WAITRESS *Red* caviar. Licorice liqueur. Shave the crusts. Cook it French style. Wants a table. Expects me to *wait* on him.

CUSTOMER Pick it up myself in the kitchen past the communal bathroom. Don't even have Wonder Bread toast. Wants me to take a subway for breakfast. Don't even have tangerine juice! *(Lights fade to end scene)*

The Sound of a Voice

by David Henry Hwang (1984)

Characters: WOMAN—In a remote corner of a forest lives a Japanese woman in a small hut. With no neighbors nearer than two days' journey, she is lonely. Many of the distant villagers think she is a witch and believe she turns her visitors into flowers that she keeps in a vase. MAN—Wearing a sword, the man seems to be a soldier but has no mission, no assignment.

Situation: Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang has modeled this short play on Japanese ghost stories. As in those traditional tales, his play lets the audience decide whether the characters are humans or spirits. In this scene, the man happens upon the woman's hut. He is puzzled by her solitary life, but stays on as her guest.

[Evening. Woman warms tea for man. Man rubs himself, trying to get warm.]

MAN You are very kind to take me in.

WOMAN This is a remote corner of the world. Guests are rare.

MAN The tea—you pour it well.

WOMAN No.

MAN The sound it makes—in the cup—very soothing.

WOMAN That is the tea's skill, not mine. *(She hands the cup to him.)* May I get you something else? Rice, perhaps?

MAN No.

WOMAN And some vegetables?

MAN No, thank you.

WOMAN Fish? *(Pause)* It is at least two days walk to the nearest village. I saw no horse. You must be very hungry. You would do a great honor to dine with me. Guests are rare.

MAN Thank you.

(Woman gets up, leaves. Man gets up, walks to the kitchen door, listens. The room is

sparsely furnished, except for one shelf on which stands a vase of brightly colored flowers. The flowers stand out in sharp contrast to the starkness of the room. He crosses to the vase of flowers. He touches them. Quickly, he takes one of the flowers, hides it in his clothes. The woman re-enters. She carries a tray with food.)

WOMAN Please. Eat. It will give me great pleasure.

MAN This—this is magnificent.

WOMAN Eat.

MAN Thank you. *(He motions for the woman to join him.)*

WOMAN No, thank you.

MAN This is wonderful. The best I've tasted.

WOMAN You are reckless in your flattery, sir. But anything you say, I will enjoy hearing. It's not even the words. It's the sound of a voice, the way it moves through the air.

MAN How long has it been since you last had a visitor?

(Pause)

WOMAN I don't know.

MAN Oh?

WOMAN I lose track. Perhaps five months ago, perhaps ten years, perhaps yesterday. I don't consider time when there is no voice in the air. It's pointless. Time begins with the entrance of a visitor, and ends with his exit.

MAN And in between? You don't keep track of the days? You can't help but notice—

WOMAN Of course I notice.

MAN Oh.

WOMAN I notice, but I don't keep track. *(Pause)* May I bring out more?

MAN More? No. No. This was wonderful.

WOMAN I have more.

MAN Really—the best I've had.

WOMAN You must be tired. Did you sleep in the forest last night?

MAN Yes.

WOMAN Or did you not sleep at all?

MAN I slept.

WOMAN Where?

MAN By a waterfall. The sound of the water put me to sleep. It rumbled like the sounds of a city. You see, I can't sleep in too much silence. It scares me. It makes me feel that I have no control over what is about to happen.

WOMAN I feel the same way.

MAN But you live here—alone?

WOMAN Yes.

MAN It's so quiet here. How can you sleep?

WOMAN Tonight, I'll sleep. I'll lie down in the next room, and hear your breathing through the wall, and fall asleep shamelessly. There will be no silence.

MAN You're very kind to let me stay here.

WOMAN This is yours. *(She unrolls a mat.)*

MAN Did you make it yourself?

WOMAN Yes. There is a place to wash outside.

MAN Thank you.

WOMAN Good night.

MAN Good night. *(He starts to leave.)*

WOMAN May I know your name?

MAN No. I mean, I would rather not say. If I gave you a name, it would only be made up. Why should I deceive you? You are too kind for that.

WOMAN Then what should I call you? Perhaps—"Man Who Fears Silence"?

MAN How about, "Man Who Fears Women"?

WOMAN That name is much too common.

MAN And you?

WOMAN Hanako.

MAN That's your name?

WOMAN It's what you may call me.

MAN Good night, Hanako. You are very kind.

WOMAN You are very smart. Good night.

Green Grow the Lilacs

by Lynn Riggs (1930)

Characters: LAUREY—An orphan who lives on her aunt's farm, Laurey dreams of pretty, elegant surroundings but knows firsthand the hardships of farm living.
CURLY—A rowdy cowhand who claims to be the best bronco buster and bulldogger in seventeen counties, Curly finds himself attracted to Laurey.

Situation: This play by Cherokee playwright Lynn Riggs is set in 1900 in Indian Territory, which will become part of the state of Oklahoma in just seven years. Rodgers and Hammerstein based their popular musical *Oklahoma!* (1943) on *Green Grow the Lilacs.* Curly and Laurey are on opposite sides of the cowhand-farmer feud that divides Indian Territory, but politics won't keep him from pursuing her. In the scene below, Curly has already rented a fancy surrey to take Laurey to a dance, but he hasn't yet asked her if she'll go with him.

[*The door slides back, and* LAUREY *comes out. She is a fair, spoiled, lovely young girl about eighteen in a long white dress with many ruffles. She sees* CURLY.]

LAUREY Oh! Thought you was somebody. (*To* AUNT ELLER) Is this all that's come a-callin' and it a'ready ten o'clock of a Satiddy mornin'?

CURLY *(Sullenly)* You knowed it was me 'fore you opened the door.

LAUREY No sich of a thing.

CURLY You did, too! You heared my voice and knowed it was me.

LAUREY I did not, I tell you! Heared a voice a-talkin' rumbly along with Aunt Eller. And heared someone a-singin' like a bull-frog in a pond—

CURLY I don't talk rumbly. And I don't sing like no bull-frog—

LAUREY Bull-frog in a pond, I told you. But how'd I know it was you, Mr. Curly McClain? You ain't so special. All men sounds alike to me.

CURLY *(Doggedly)* You knowed it was me, so you set in there a-thinkin' up sump'n mean to say. I'm a good mind not to tell you nuthin' about the play-party now. You c'n jist stay at home, for yer tongue. Don't you tell her whur it is, Aunt Eller. Me'n you'll go and leave her at home.

LAUREY If you *did* ast me, I wouldn't go with you. Besides, how'd you take me? You ain't bought a new buggy with red wheels onto it, have you?

CURLY No, I ain't.

LAUREY And a spankin' team with their bridles all jinglin'?

CURLY No.

LAUREY 'Spect me to ride on behind ole Dun, I guess. You better ast that ole Cummins girl you've tuck sich a shine to, over acrost the river.

CURLY If I was to ast you, they'd be a way to take you, Miss Laurey Smarty.

LAUREY Oh, they would?

CURLY A bran' new surrey with fringe on the top four inches long—and *yeller!* And two white horses a-rarin' and faunchin' to go! You'd shore ride like a queen settin' up in *that* carriage! Feel like you had a gold crown set on yer head, 'th diamonds in it big as goose eggs.

LAUREY Look out, you'll be astin' me in a minute!

CURLY I ain't astin' you, I'm *tellin'* you. And this yere rig has got four fine side-curtains, case of a rain. And isinglass winders to look out of! And a red and green lamp set on the dashboard, winkin' like a lightnin' bug!

LAUREY Whur'd you git sich a rig at? *(With explosive laughter)* Anh, I bet he's went and h'ard it over to Claremore, thinkin' I'd go with him!

CURLY 'S all you know about it—

LAUREY *(Jeering)* Went and h'ard it! Spent all his money h'arin' a rig, and now ain't got nobody to ride in it.

CURLY Have, too! Did *not* h'ar it. Made the whole thing up outa my head—

LAUREY What! Made it up?

CURLY Dashboard and all!

LAUREY *(Flying at him)* Oh! Git outa the house, you! Aunt Eller, make him git hisself outa here 'fore I take a stove arn to him! Tellin' me lies—!

CURLY *(Dodging her)* Makin' up a few—Look out, now! Makin' up a few purties ain't agin no law 'at I know of. Don't you wish they *was* sich a rig, though? Nen you could go to the party and do a hoe-down till mornin' 'f you was a mind to. Nen drive home 'th the sun a-peekin' at you over the ridge, purty and fine.

LAUREY I ain't wantin' to do no hoe-down till mornin'. And whut would I want to see the sun come up fer, a-peekin' purty and fine—alongside of you, anyhow?

SCENES *for Two Women*

Antigone

translated from the French play written by Jean Anouilh in 1943

Characters: ISMENE—(pronounced ĭz•mā´•nē) The older sister of Antigone, she is trying to keep Antigone from an action that would mean certain death.
ANTIGONE—(pronounced ăn•tĭg´•ə•nē) She is a passionate young woman who will not compromise her principles, even if she must die for them.

Situation: At the time this was written and first produced, France was under German occupation. Although this text could not be explicit since it had to be approved by German censors, a French audience would identify with Antigone; the French, too, were being promised happiness if they surrendered their consciences and sold their souls. Anouilh's play is based on the Sophocles tragedy of the same name. Antigone's two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, competed for power after the death of their father, Oedipus, the king of Thebes. The struggle resulted in the brothers killing each other. The current king of Thebes, Creon, has ruled that only Eteocles shall be given a burial, while Polynices will be left to rot where he lies. Antigone has decided to disobey Creon's law.

ISMENE Antigone, I've thought about it a lot.

ANTIGONE Have you?

ISMENE I thought about it all night long. Antigone, you're mad.

ANTIGONE Am I?

ISMENE We cannot do it.

ANTIGONE Why not?

ISMENE Creon will have us put to death.

ANTIGONE Of course he will. That's what he's here for. He will do what he has to do, and we will do what we have to do. He is bound to put us to death. We are bound to go out and bury our brother. That's the way it is. What do you think we can do to change it?

ISMENE *(Releases* ANTIGONE'S *hand; draws back a step)* I don't want to die.

ANTIGONE I'd prefer not to die, myself.

ISMENE Listen to me, Antigone. I thought about it all night. I'm older than you are. I always think things over and you don't. You are impulsive. You get a notion in your head and you jump up and do the thing straight off. And if it's silly, well, so much the worse for you. Whereas, I think things out.

ANTIGONE Sometimes it is better not to think too much.

ISMENE I don't agree with you! Oh, I know it's horrible. And I pity Polynices just as much as you do. But all the same, I sort of see what Uncle Creon means.

ANTIGONE I don't want to "sort of see" anything.

ISMENE Uncle Creon is the king. He has to set an example!

ANTIGONE But I am not the king; and I don't have to set people examples. Little Antigone gets a notion in her head—the nasty

brat, the wilful, wicked girl; and they put her in a corner all day, or they lock her up in the cellar. And she deserves it. She shouldn't have disobeyed!

ISMENE There you go, frowning, glowering, wanting your own stubborn way in everything. Listen to me. I'm right oftener than you are.

ANTIGONE I don't want to be right!

ISMENE At least you can try to understand.

ANTIGONE Understand! The first word I ever heard out of any of you was that word "understand." Why didn't I "understand" that I must not play with water—cold, black, beautiful flowing water—because I'd spill it on the palace tiles. Or with earth, because earth dirties a little girl's frock. Why didn't I "understand" that nice children don't eat out of every dish at once; or give everything in their pockets to beggars; or run in the wind so fast that they fall down; or ask for a drink when they're perspiring; or want to go swimming when it's either too early or too late, merely because they happen to feel like swimming. Understand! I don't want to understand. There'll be time enough to understand when I'm old. . . . If I ever *am* old. But not now.

The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams (1945)

Characters: LAURA—Laura has grown up to be a very shy young woman largely as a result of her embarrassment over a deformed foot. Her escape from her handicap is a collection of delicate glass animals that she tends lovingly. A loner, Laura is as fragile as her glass menagerie.

AMANDA—Amanda Wingfield raised her children, Tom and Laura, alone. She is a woman of great but confused vitality. Unintentionally cruel at times, Amanda means well.

Situation: The Wingfield apartment is at the back of a lower-middle-class tenement. This is a memory play, so the scene should be dimly lit, sentimental, and not realistic.

LAURA Hello, Mother, I was—

(She makes a nervous gesture toward the chart on the wall. AMANDA *leans against the shut door and stares at* LAURA *with a martyred look.)*

AMANDA Deception? Deception?

(She slowly removes her hat and gloves, continuing the sweet suffering stare. She lets the hat and gloves fall on the floor—a bit of acting.)

LAURA *(Shakily)* How was the D.A.R. meeting? *(*AMANDA *slowly opens her purse and removes a dainty white handkerchief which she shakes out delicately and delicately touches to her lips and nostrils.)* Didn't you go to the D.A.R. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA *(Faintly, almost inaudibly)*—No—No. *(Then more forcibly)* I did not have the strength—to go to the D.A.R. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the ground and hide myself in it forever!

(She crosses slowly to the wall and removes the diagram of the typewriter keyboard. She holds it in front of her for a second, staring at it sweetly and sorrowfully—then bites her lips and tears it in two pieces.)

LAURA *(Faintly)* Why did you do that, Mother? *(*AMANDA *repeats the same proce-*

dure with the chart of the Gregg Alphabet.) Why are you—

AMANDA Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken.

(She crosses slowly to the sofa and sinks down and stares at LAURA.*)*

LAURA Please don't stare at me, Mother.

*(*AMANDA *closes her eyes and lowers her head. Count ten.)*

AMANDA What are we going to do, what is going to become of us, what is the future?

(Count ten.)

LAURA Has something happened, Mother? *(*AMANDA *draws a long breath and takes out the handkerchief again. Dabbing process)* Mother, has—something happened?

AMANDA I'll be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered—*(Count five.)*—by life. . . .

LAURA Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened.

AMANDA As you know, I was supposed to be inducted into my office at the D.A.R. this afternoon. But I stopped off at Rubicam's Business College to speak to your teachers about your having a cold and ask them what progress they thought you were making down there.

LAURA Oh . . .

AMANDA I went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We don't have any such student enrolled at the school!

I assured her she did, that you have been going to classes since early in January.

"I wonder," she said, "if you could be talking about the terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?" "No," I said, "Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks!"

"Excuse me," she said. She took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, "No, there must have been some mistake! There must have been some mix-up in the records?"

And she said, "No—I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys! The first time we had a speed-test, she broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer"—while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those—Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet!

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water!

Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans—my hopes and ambitions for you—just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that. *(*LAURA *draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet. She crosses to the victrola and winds it up.)* What are you doing?

LAURA Oh! *(She releases the handle and returns to her seat.)*

AMANDA Laura, where have you been going when you've gone out pretending that you were going to business college?

LAURA I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA That's not true.

LAURA It is. I just went walking.

AMANDA Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA All sorts of places—mostly in the park.

AMANDA Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA It was the lesser of two evils, Mother. I couldn't go back up. I—threw up—on the floor!

AMANDA From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted me to think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA Inside where?

LAURA I went in the art museum and the birdhouses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the Jewel-box, that big glass house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? *(*LAURA *looks down.)* Why?

LAURA Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum!

AMANDA Hush!

LAURA I couldn't face it!

(Pause. A whisper of strings)

AMANDA *(Hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook)* So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him.

We won't have a business career—we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion! *(Laughs wearily)* What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife!—stuck away in some little mouse-trap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life!

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of! It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course—some girls *do marry.* *(*LAURA *twists her hands nervously.)* Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA Yes. I liked one once. *(Rises)* I came across his picture a while ago.

AMANDA *(With some interest)* He gave you his picture?

LAURA No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA *(Disappointed)* Oh—a high-school boy.

LAURA Yes. His name was Jim. *(*LAURA *lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.)* Here he is in *The Pirates of Penzance.*

AMANDA *(Absently)* The what?

LAURA The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating! See his grin?

AMANDA *(Absently)* He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA He used to call me—Blue Roses.

AMANDA Why did he call you such a name as that?

LAURA When I had that attack of pleurosis—he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I said pleurosis—he thought I said Blue Roses! So that's what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he'd holler, "Hello, Blue Roses!" I didn't care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere. . . . It says in the Personal Section—they're engaged. That's—six years ago! They must be married by now.

AMANDA Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. *(Gets up with a spark of revival)* Sister, that's what you'll do!

*(*LAURA *utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.)*

LAURA But, Mother—

AMANDA Yes? *(Crossing to photograph)*

LAURA *(In a tone of frightened apology)* I'm—crippled!

AMANDA Nonsense! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect—hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it—develop charm—and vivacity—and—*charm!* That's all you have to do! *(She turns again to the photograph.)* One thing your father had *plenty of*—was *charm!*

Wine in the Wilderness

by Alice Childress (1969)

Characters: CYNTHIA—She is a college-educated social worker in her early twenties who has befriended Tommy.
TOMMY—She is a factory worker with an eighth-grade education. She wears artistically mismatched clothes.

Situation: This comedy-drama is set in a one-room apartment in a Harlem tenement building. The room is in a state of artistic disorder, decorated with pictures and ornaments from a variety of cultures. Bill Jameson, an artist friend of Cynthia's, is looking for an African American woman to model for him. Tommy has just the look he needs. Cynthia wants to protect Tommy from getting emotionally involved with Bill, knowing that he is interested in Tommy as a model, not as a woman.

CYNTHIA *(A bit uncomfortable)* Oh, Honey, . . . Tommy, you don't want a poor artist.

TOMMY Tommy's not lookin' for a meal ticket. I been doin' for myself all my life. It takes two to make it in this high-price world. A black man see a hard way to go. The both of you gotta pull together. That way you accomplish.

CYNTHIA I'm a social worker . . . and I see so many broken homes. Some of these men! Tommy, don't be in a rush about the marriage thing.

TOMMY Keep it to yourself, . . . but I was thirty my last birthday and haven't even been married. I coulda been. Oh, yes, indeed, coulda been. But I don't want any and everybody. What I want with a no-good piece-a nothin'? I'll never forget what the Reverend Martin Luther King said . . . "I have a dream." I like him sayin' it 'cause truer words have never been spoke. *(Straightening the room)* I have a dream, too. Mine is to find a man who'll treat me just half-way decent . . . just to meet me half-way is all I ask, to smile, be kind to me. Somebody in my corner. Not to wake up by myself in the mornin' and face this world all alone.

CYNTHIA About Bill, it's best not to ever count on anything, anything at all, Tommy.

TOMMY *(This remark bothers her for a split second but she shakes it off.)* Of course, Cynthia, that's one of the foremost rules of life. Don't count on *nothin'!*

CYNTHIA Right, don't be too quick to put your trust in these men.

TOMMY You put your trust in one and got yourself a husband.

CYNTHIA Well, yes, but what I mean is . . . Oh, you know. A man is a man and Bill is also an artist and his work comes before all else and there are other factors . . .

TOMMY *(Sits facing* CYNTHIA*)* What's wrong with me?

CYNTHIA I don't know what you mean.

TOMMY Yes you do. You tryin' to tell me I'm aimin' too high by lookin' at Bill.

CYNTHIA Oh, no my dear.

TOMMY Out there in the street, in the bar, you and your husband were so sure that he'd *like* me and want to paint my picture.

CYNTHIA But he does want to paint you, he's very eager to . . .

TOMMY But why? Somethin' don't fit right.

CYNTHIA *(Feeling sorry for* TOMMY*)* If you don't want to do it, just leave and that'll be that.

TOMMY Walk out while he's buyin' me what I ask for, spendin' his money on me? That'd be too dirty. *(Looks at books. Takes one from shelf)* Books, books, books everywhere. "Afro-American History." I like that. What's wrong with me, Cynthia? Tell me, I won't get mad with you, I swear. If there's somethin' wrong that I can change, I'm ready to do it. Eighth grade, that's all I had of school. You a social worker, I know that mean college. I come from poor people. *(Examining the book in her hand)* Talkin' 'bout poverty this and poverty that and studyin' it. When you in it you don't be studyin' 'bout it. Cynthia, I remember my mother tyin' up her stockin's with strips-a rag 'cause she didn't have no garters. When I get home from school she'd say, . . . "Nothin' much here to eat." Nothin' much might be grits, or bread and coffee. I got sick-a all that, got me a job. Later for school.

CYNTHIA The Matriarchal Society.

TOMMY What's that?

CYNTHIA A Matriarchal Society is one in which the women rule . . . the women have the power . . . the women head the house.

TOMMY We didn't have nothin' to rule over, not a pot nor a window. And my papa picked hisself up and run off with some finger-poppin' woman and we never hear another word 'til ten, twelve years later when a undertaker call up and ask if Mama wants come claim his body. And don'cha know, mama went on over and claim it. A woman need a man to claim, even if it's a dead one. What's wrong with me? Be honest.

CYNTHIA You're a fine person . . .

TOMMY Go on, I can take it.

CYNTHIA You're too brash. You're too used to looking out for yourself. It makes us lose our femininity . . . It makes us hard . . . it makes us seem very hard. We do for ourselves too much.

TOMMY If I don't, who's gonna do for me?

CYNTHIA You have to let the black man have his manhood again. You have to give it back, Tommy.

TOMMY I didn't take it from him, how I'm gonna give it back?

Butterflies Are Free

by Leonard Gershe (1969)

Characters: MRS. BAKER—She is a well-dressed, attractive woman who is highly protective of her adult son, Don, who is blind. JILL—Jill is nineteen years old, a would-be actress with a delicate, little-girl quality and long hair. She is always hungry. Jill and Don are neighbors who have become very close.

Situation: The scene is set in 1969 in Don Baker's apartment. Don has not lived on his own for very long.

MRS. BAKER *(Mumbling to herself)* Mrs. Benson!!!

JILL *(Opening her door)* Yes?

MRS. BAKER *(Is startled for a moment, but recovers, quickly. In friendly tones)* Could you come in for a moment, Mrs. Benson?

JILL *(Uneasily)* Well, I have my audition. I should leave in about fifteen minutes. I don't know New York and I get lost all the time.

MRS. BAKER *(Ingratiatingly. Steps toward* JILL *a bit)* Don't you worry. I'll see that you get off in time. *(*JILL *enters, reluctantly, stands behind table)* I thought you and I might have a little talk. You know—just girls together. Please sit down. *(*JILL *remains standing, avoiding too close contact with* MRS. BAKER.*)* Would you like a cup of coffee? Tea?

JILL No, thank you . . . *(Crosses off platform to L. of sofa)* but if that apple is still there.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses to refrigerator, gets apple and lettuce on plate, crosses to sink)* I'm sure it is.

JILL *(Crosses between sofa and coffee table to ladder, sits on step)* Where's Don?

MRS. BAKER Shopping. *(Washes apple and polishes it with dish towel)* You must be so careful to wash fruits and vegetables, you know. They spray all those insecticides on everything now. I'm not at all sure the bugs aren't less harmful. *(Crosses to* JILL *with apple)* I like apples to be nice and shiny. *(Holds the apple out to* JILL, *who looks at it and then at* MRS. BAKER *oddly)*

JILL This reminds me of something. What is it?

MRS. BAKER I have no idea.

JILL You . . . handing me the apple . . . nice and shiny. . . . Oh, I know! Snow White. Remember when the witch brought her the poisoned apple? Oh, Mrs. Baker, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that the way it sounded. I know you're not a witch.

MRS. BAKER Of course not. And I know you're not Snow White.

JILL *(Takes the apple, rises, crosses below* MRS. BAKER, *through kitchen to D.L. post)* I may have to wait hours before I read. I'll probably starve to death before their eyes.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses to kitchen, takes lettuce, picks off a few pieces, washes them, puts them on plate)* You're going to get that part, you know.

JILL What makes you so sure?

MRS. BAKER Well, you're a very pretty girl and that's what they want in the theatre, isn't it?

JILL *(Crosses below to D.R. post, away from* MRS. BAKER*)* Today you have to have more than a pretty face. Anyway, I'm not really pretty. I think I'm interesting-looking and in certain lights I can look sort of . . . lovely . . . but I'm not pretty.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses with lettuce, sits C. sofa)* Nonsense! You're extremely pretty.

JILL *(Laugh)* No, I'm not.

MRS. BAKER Yes, you are.

JILL *(Turns, leans on post)* No, I'm not. I've got beady little eyes like a bird and a figure like a pogo stick. *(Waits for a reaction from* MRS. BAKER. *There isn't one.)* Well? Aren't you going to deny you said that?

MRS. BAKER *(Unperturbed)* How can I, dear? Obviously, you heard it.

JILL *(Crosses above director's chair)* There are plenty of true things you can put me down with. You don't have to put me down with lies.

MRS. BAKER You know what I like about you?

JILL Uh-huh. Nothing.

MRS. BAKER Oh yes. I like your honesty . . . your candor. You're really quite a worldly young woman, aren't you, Mrs. Benson?

JILL I suppose I am. *(Crosses above "picnic," away from* MRS. BAKER*)* I wish you wouldn't call me Mrs. Benson.

MRS. BAKER Isn't that your name . . . Mrs. Benson?

JILL But you don't say it as though you mean it.

MRS. BAKER I'm sorry. Why don't I call you Jill? That's more friendly . . . and I'll try to say it as though I mean it. Now, Jill. *(*JILL—*R. turn, back to audience)* . . .

MRS. BAKER I was interested in seeing what you and Donny might have in common. He likes you very much.

JILL *(Crosses U. end of coffee table)* And I like him very much. He may very well be the most beautiful person I've ever met. Just imagine going through life never seeing anything . . . not a painting . . . or a flower . . . or even a Christmas card. I'd want to die, but Don wants to live. I mean really live . . . *(Crosses onto platform to above table)* and he can even kid about it. He's fantastic.

MRS. BAKER Then you would want what's best for him, wouldn't you?

JILL *(Crosses U.S. end of coffee table)* Now, we're getting to it, aren't we? Like maybe I should tell him to go home with you. Is that it?

MRS. BAKER Donny was happy at home until Linda Fletcher filled him with ideas about a place of his own.

JILL *(Crosses through kitchen to above table)* Maybe you just want to believe that he can only be happy with you, Mrs. Baker. Well, there are none so blind as those who will not see. *(Crosses D.L. post)* There. I can quote Dylan Thomas AND Little Donny Dark.

MRS. BAKER *(Rises, takes lettuce to counter)* You constantly astonish me.

JILL Well . . . we women of the world do that.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses to "picnic," picks up pillows and cloth, folds cloth)* Funny how like Linda you are. Donny is certainly consistent with his girls.

JILL Why do you call him Donny?

MRS. BAKER It's his name. Don't I say it as though I mean it?

JILL He hates being called Donny.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses to sofa, pillows at each end, crosses to counter, puts cloth on it)* He's never mentioned it.

JILL Of course, he has. *(Crosses off platform to D. end of sofa)* You just didn't listen. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear. You could make up a lot of those, couldn't you? There are none so lame as those who will not walk. None so thin as those who will not eat . . .

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses off platform to U.C.)* Do you think it's a good idea for Donny to live down here alone?

JILL I think it's a good idea for *Don* to live wherever he wants to . . . and he's not alone. I'm here.

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses U. end of coffee table)* For how long? Have you got a lease on that apartment?

JILL No.

MRS. BAKER So, you can leave tomorrow if you felt like it.

JILL That's right.

MRS. BAKER You couldn't sustain a marriage for more than six days, could you?

JILL *(Upset. Crosses D.R.)* My marriage doesn't concern you.

MRS. BAKER It didn't concern you much, either, did it?

JILL Yes, it did!

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses above director's chair)* Have you thought about what marriage to a blind boy might be like? . . . You've seen

Donny at his best—in this room, which he's memorized . . . and he's memorized how many steps to the drugstore and to the delicatessen . . . but take him out of this room or off this street and he's lost . . . he panics. Donny needs someone who will stay with him—and not just for six days.

JILL You can stop worrying, Mrs. Baker. Nothing serious will develop between Don and me. I'm not built that way.

MRS. BAKER But Donny *is* built that way.

JILL Oh, please—we're just having kicks.

MRS. BAKER Kicks! That's how it started with Linda—just kicks . . . but Donny fell in love with her . . . and he'll fall in love with you. Then what happens?

JILL *(Crosses below to D. end of sofa)* I don't know!!

MRS. BAKER *(Crosses U. end of sofa)* Then don't let it go that far. Stop now before you hurt him.

JILL What about you? Aren't you hurting him?

MRS. BAKER I can't. I can only irritate him. You can hurt him. The longer you stay the harder it will be for him when you leave. Let him come with me and you go have your kicks with someone who won't feel them after you've gone!!

JILL I'm not so sure you can't hurt him. Maybe more than anybody. *(Crosses above table)* I think you deserve all the credit you can get for turning out a pretty marvelous guy—but bringing up a son—even a blind one—isn't a lifetime occupation. *(*MRS. BAKER *turns U., away from* JILL.*)* Now the more you help him, the more you hurt him. It was Linda Fletcher—not you— *(*MRS. BAKER *turns and looks at* JILL *slowly.)* who gave him the thing he needed most—confidence in himself. *(Crossing away L.)* You're always dwelling on the negative—always what he needs, never what he wants . . . always what he can't do, never what he can. *(Crosses D. end of sofa)* What about his music? Have you ever heard the song he wrote? I'll bet you didn't even know he could write songs! *(Crosses above table)* You're probably dead right about me. I'm not the ideal girl for Don, but I know one thing—neither are you!! And if I'm going to tell anyone to go home, it'll be you, Mrs. Baker. YOU go home!! *(Turns and exits into her apartment, closing door behind her.* MRS. BAKER *watches her go.)*

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare (1595–6)

Characters: JULIET—Juliet is a young aristocrat who is romantic, stubborn, and independent. She and Romeo have just been secretly married by Friar Laurence, and she is waiting to hear when Romeo will arrive.
NURSE—An elderly woman, the nurse is a cross between Juliet's nanny and a doting grandparent.

Situation: In this scene, the nurse arrives with the rope that Romeo was to use to climb to Juliet's room, but Romeo has just killed Juliet's cousin Tybalt and has been banished from the city. The nurse is upset, and Juliet has trouble understanding what has happened.

JULIET O, here comes my nurse,
And she brings news; and every tongue that speaks

But Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.
*(*NURSE *enters with cords.)*

JULIET Now, nurse what news? What has thou there? the cords
That Romeo bid thee fetch?

NURSE *(Throwing them down)* Ay, ay, the cords.

JULIET Ay me! what news? why dost thou wring thy hands?

NURSE Ay, well-a-day! he's dead, he's dead, he's dead.
We are undone, lady, we are undone!
Alack the day! he's gone, he's kill'd, he's dead!

JULIET Can heaven be so envious?

NURSE Romeo can,
Though heaven cannot: O Romeo, Romeo!
Who ever would have thought it? Romeo!

JULIET What devil art thou, that dost torment me thus?
This torture should be roar'd in dismal hell.
Hath Romeo slain himself? say thou but 'I,'
And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice:
I am not I, if there be such an I;
Or those eyes shut, that make thee answer 'I.'
If he be slain, say 'I'; or if not, no:
Brief sounds determine of my weal or woe.

NURSE I saw the wound, I saw it with mine eyes,—
God save the mark!—here on his manly breast:
A piteous corse, a bloody piteous corse;
Pale, pale as ashes, all bedaub'd in blood,
All in gore-blood: I swounded at the sight.

JULIET O, break, my heart! poor bankrupt, break at once!
To prison, eyes, ne'er look on liberty!
Vile earth, to earth resign; end motion here;
And thou and Romeo press one heavy bier!

NURSE O Tybalt! Tybalt, the best friend I had!
O courteous Tybalt! honest gentleman!
That ever I should live to see thee dead!

JULIET What storm is this that blows so contrary?
Is Romeo slaughter'd, and is Tybalt dead?
My dear-loved cousin, and my dearer lord?
Then, dreadful trumpet, sound the general doom!
For who is living, if those two are gone?

NURSE Tybalt is gone, and Romeo banished;
Romeo that kill'd him, he is banished.

JULIET O God! did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?

NURSE It did, it did; alas the day, it did!

JULIET O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,
A damned saint, an honourable villain!
O nature, what hadst thou to do in hell,
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?
Was ever book containing such vile matter
So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace!

NURSE There's no trust,
No faith, no honesty in men; all perjured,
All forsworn, all naught, all dissemblers.
Ah, where's my man? give me some aqua vitae:

These griefs, these woes, these sorrows make me old.
Shame come to Romeo!

JULIET Blister'd be thy tongue
For such a wish! he was not born to shame:
Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit;
For 'tis a throne where honour may be crown'd
Sole monarch of the universal earth.
O, what a beast was I to chide at him!

NURSE Will you speak well of him that kill'd your cousin?

JULIET Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it?
But, wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?
That villain cousin would have kill'd my husband:
Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring;
Your tributary drops belong to woe,
Which you, mistaking, offer up to joy.
My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain;
And Tybalt's dead, that would have slain my husband:
All this is comfort; wherefore weep I then?
Some word there was, worser than Tybalt's death,
That murder'd me: I would forget it fain;
But, O, it presses to my memory,
Like damned guilty deeds to sinners' minds:
'Tybalt is dead, and Romeo—banished;'
That 'banished,' that one word 'banished'
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts. Tybalt's death
Was woe enough, if it had ended there:
Or, if sour woe delights in fellowship
And needly will be rank'd with other griefs,
Why follow'd not, when she said 'Tybalt's dead,'
Thy father, or thy mother, nay, or both,
Which modern lamentation might have moved?
But with a rearward following Tybalt's death,
'Romeo is banished,' to speak that word,
If father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
All slain, all dead. 'Romeo is banished!'
There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,
In that word's death; not words can that woe sound.
Where is my father, and my mother, nurse?

NURSE Weeping and wailing over Tybalt's corse:
Will you go to them? I will bring you thither.

JULIET Wash they his wounds with tears: mine shall be spent
When theirs are dry, for Romeo's banishment.
Take up those cords: poor ropes, you are beguiled,
Both you and I; for Romeo is exiled:
He made you for a highway to my bed;
But I, a maid, die maiden-widowed.
Come, cords, come, nurse: I'll to my wedding-bed;
And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead!

NURSE Hie to your chamber: I'll find Romeo
To comfort you: I wot well where he is.
Hark ye, your Romeo will be here at night:
I'll to him; he is hid at Laurence' cell.

JULIET O, find him! give this ring to my true knight,
And bid him come to take his last farewell.

Brighton Beach Memoirs

by Neil Simon (1982)

Characters: KATE—Kate is about forty. She is a very generous woman who is also outspoken on occasion. She has few friends.
BLANCHE—She is a thirty-eight-year-old widow and Kate's sister. She and her two daughters live with Kate and her family.

Situation: The play is set in September 1937 in a house close to Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New York. It is an ethnically diverse, lower-middle-class area. Kate and Blanche have had an argument over household expenses, and Blanche has decided to move elsewhere with her girls. This scene takes place a couple of hours after their argument.

KATE Is she alright?

BLANCHE Yes.

KATE She's not angry anymore?

BLANCHE No, Kate. No one's angry anymore. I just explained everything to Nora. The girls will help you with all the housework while I'm gone. Laurie's strong enough to do her share. I've kept her being a baby long enough.

KATE They've never been any trouble to me, those girls. Never.

BLANCHE I'll try to take them on the weekends if I can . . . It's late. We could both use a good night's sleep. *(She starts out of the room.)*

KATE Blanche! . . . Don't go! *(*BLANCHE *stops.)* I feel badly enough for what I said. Don't make me feel any worse.

BLANCHE Everything you said to me tonight was true, Kate. I wish to God you said it years ago.

KATE What would I do without you? Who else do I have to talk to all day? What friends do I have in this neighborhood? Even the Murphys across the street are leaving.

BLANCHE You and I never had any troubles before tonight, Kate. . . . It's the girls I'm thinking of now. We have to be together. The three of us. It's what they want as much as I do.

KATE Alright. I'm not saying you shouldn't have it. But you're not going to find a job overnight. Apartments are expensive. While you're looking, why do you have to live with strangers in Manhattan Beach?

BLANCHE Louise isn't a stranger. She's a good friend.

KATE To me good friends are strangers. But sisters are sisters.

BLANCHE I'm afraid of becoming comfortable here. I don't get out now, when will I ever do it?

KATE The door is open. Go whenever you want. When you got the job, when you find the apartment, I'll help you move. I can look with you. I know how to bargain with these landlords.

BLANCHE *(Smiles)* You wouldn't mind doing that?

KATE They see a woman all alone, they take advantage of you . . . I'll find out what they're asking for the Murphy place. It couldn't be expensive, she never cleaned it.

BLANCHE How independent can I become if I live right across the street from you?

KATE Far enough away for you to close your own door, and close enough for me not to feel so lonely. *(*BLANCHE *looks at her with great warmth, crosses to* KATE *and embraces her. They hold on dearly.)*

BLANCHE If I lived on the moon, you would still be close to me, Kate.

KATE I'll tell Jack. He wouldn't go to sleep until I promised to come up with some good news.

BLANCHE I suddenly feel so hungry.

KATE Of course. You haven't had dinner. Come on. I'll fix you some scrambled eggs.

BLANCHE I'll make them. I'm an independent woman now.

KATE With your eyes, you'll never get the eggs in the pan.

I Love You, I Love You Not

by Wendy Kesselman (1988)

Characters: DAISY—Daisy is a typical adolescent who is on a roller coaster of emotions. She is insecure, and Nana is the one person with whom she feels she can freely express herself. NANA—(pronounced Nahnah) Daisy's grandmother, Nana is a survivor of the Holocaust. She understands the mood swings Daisy is going through, and she always provides a listening ear and unconditional love.

Situation: This play is set in the present in a country house, where Daisy is visiting Nana for the weekend. Daisy's parents will be picking her up shortly. It has been an emotional visit. In this scene, the conversation turns more reflective as Daisy enters a contemplative mood.

DAISY I feel so ugly, Nana.

NANA *(Sitting down beside her)* What are you talking about? You're a beautiful girl.

DAISY I know what I look like.

NANA Silly Daisy.

DAISY Don't call me that. I hate that name.

NANA It's a beautiful name. A beautiful flower. A flower that grows in the wild.

DAISY He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not. And all that's left is that horrible little thing in the middle. It's ugly—a daisy with all its petals gone.

NANA It's a survivor. That's what I always felt. A yellow sun. A yellow star. *(There is a long pause.)*

DAISY *(Quietly)* Nana, let me see. *(Very soft)* Let me see it, Nana. Show it to me. *(Slowly,* NANA *pulls back her sleeve, holds out her arm.)* Remember when I was little and I asked you?

NANA You were so tiny. Not even three. "What's that?" you said. *(Imitating* DAISY *at three)* "What's that, Nana?" *(She laughs softly.)* And month after month, year after year went by, and it was always, "Nana, what is that? Why do you wear that? Why do you have that on your arm?" *(She pauses.)* And then one day, I was putting some dishes up on the shelf, when I felt those huge eyes staring at me. And I heard, "Nana—"

DAISY *(Breaking in. Slowly)* "Are you sure you didn't do anything wrong to make them do that to you?" *(She leans closer and touches* NANA'S *arm. Quietly reading the number out loud.)* A. A is for Auschwitz.

Riders to the Sea

by John M. Synge (1904)

Characters: MAURYA—An old woman of the Irish peasant class whose family have always been fishers, Maurya lives in a cottage on an island off the west coast of Ireland.
NORA—Maurya's daughter, she is a teenager. To play her takes a focus on silent but eloquent sorrow and sympathy, for she has but one speech.

Situation: Maurya's son Michael has recently died at sea, as have all of the men in Maurya's life. Now Bartley, her only surviving son, has insisted on sailing to the mainland in bad weather to sell two horses. Pursuing Bartley to the shore, Maurya sees the image of Michael riding one of the horses. Upset, she returns to the house, fearing the worst for Bartley.

MAURYA *(In a low voice, but clearly)* . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door. . . . There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door. . . . *(. . . men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of sail over it, and lay it on the table.)* . . . They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser. *(Nora gives it to her.)*

MAURYA *(Drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him)* It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking. *(She kneels down again, crossing herself and saying prayers under her breath.)* . . .

NORA *(In a whisper . . .)* She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that? . . .

MAURYA *(Puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet)* They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn *(Bending her head)*; and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one left living in the world. . . . Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied. *(She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.)*

Haiku

by Katherine Snodgrass (1988)

Characters: NELL—In her fifties, Nell is a widow with two daughters, Billie (the older) and Louise (the younger). She is losing her eyesight. LOUISE—Louise, in her twenties, lives at home with her mother, because of a serious mental condition that makes her incapable of coping with reality. Her behavior is violent and destructive when not controlled by medicine. However, the medicine hinders her ability to think. She often communicates by haiku—a verse form that requires seventeen syllables.

Situation: The scene takes place in the living room. Nell has a noticeable bruise on her wrist, and Louise has a bandage on her forehead, both injuries apparently caused by one of Louise's violent rages. Louise is wearing a football helmet for her own protection. Nell is allowing Louise's medicine to wear off a little so that Louise will be able to communicate with Billie, who is coming to visit. As the numbing effects of the medicine diminish, Louise responds to Nell's reminiscence with haiku, which Nell records.

NELL You were born in early winter. John and I planned it that way. I couldn't imagine having a baby in the summertime. It gets so sticky in August, humid. A breech baby. You tried to back into the world. I remember, the doctor had to pull you out. It was night when they finally brought you to me.

LOUISE November evening.
Blackbirds scull across the moon.
My breath warms my hands.

(Nell writes haiku, then checks what she has written, holding the paper two inches from her eyes.)

NELL John said you were too beautiful to live. It was true. You and Bebe together, you were like china dolls. Delicate, perfect. And then . . . I sensed it that day when I saw you through the window. Billie was on the swingset, and you were there. Outside. She was in red, and you had on that blue jumpsuit, the corduroy one with the zipper. The ball lay beside you and that Mama doll that winked. You were so quiet. You'd stared before, of course, when something fascinated you, as all children do when they . . . as all children do. But this time, you were . . . different. I called for you to come inside. *Lulu, come inside and have some lunch!* But you didn't hear me. *Bebe, bring Lulu and come inside!* I went out then. I had to get down on my knees beside you. I touched your hair and then your face. I held up that Mama-doll, but you stared

through it in a way that . . . Funny, I don't remember being afraid. I remember the look on Bebe's face.

LOUISE Chainmetal swings clanging
In the empty school yard.
Silent summer rain.

(Nell writes haiku. She goes through same process as before.)

NELL Do you know, I used to cry when school ended? It's true! I used to cry on the last day of school every year. My mother thought I was crazy. I'd come dragging my book bag over the fields, my face all wet. And my momma! . . . Nellie, she'd say . . .

LOUISE Nellie, she'd say . . . *(Nell looks sharply at Louise.)* You're the strangest girl I ever did see!

NELL Yes, that's what she said. Are you tired?

LOUISE No, no. Tell me again about John.

NELL You look tired.

LOUISE Please. You haven't talked about John in a long time.

NELL John. All right then. John was tall and thin like Icabod Crane, only not so scared.

LOUISE John wasn't scared of anything.

NELL He wasn't scared of anything, not John. He had a big, strong jaw and a tuft of yellow hair that stood up on his head, as yellow . . .

LOUISE . . . as Mr. Turner's daffodils.

NELL At least. And he would take you on his knee. Do you remember the song he used to sing? *(Nell clears her throat and sings.)* *"Here come a Lulu! Here come a Lulu to the Indian dance." (Louise joins in.) "All of them Indians, all of them Indians dance around Lulu's tent." (Like a drum) "Here come a Lulu! Here come a Lulu! Here come a Lulu!" (They laugh, remembering.)*

LOUISE Icy branches bend,
Breaking over stones.
I hear my dead father laugh.

On Golden Pond

by Ernest Thompson (1979)

Characters: ETHEL—Ethel Thayer, Chelsea's mother, is an intelligent, sixty-nine-year-old, middle-class American.
CHELSEA—Chelsea is forty-two, athletic-looking, and tanned. She is a nervous type with a dark sense of humor. She has had an unhappy childhood and is divorced.

Situation: It is early morning in August at the Thayers' summer lakeside home in Maine. Chelsea's friend Bill has a thirteen-year-old son, Billy, who has been staying with Chelsea's parents while she and Bill traveled to Europe. Chelsea has come to take Billy home.

ETHEL How'd you get here?

CHELSEA I rented a car. A Volare. It's made by Plymouth. I got it from Avis. *(She walks to* ETHEL. *They embrace.)* They *do* try hard.

ETHEL You're not supposed to come till the fifteenth.

CHELSEA Today's the fifteenth.

ETHEL No!

CHELSEA 'Fraid so.

ETHEL Well. No wonder you're here.

CHELSEA Still have the kid or did you drown him?

ETHEL Still have him.

CHELSEA Are he and Norman asleep?

ETHEL You must be joking. They're out on the lake already, antagonizing the fish. Still have Bill or did you drown him?

CHELSEA Still got him. But he's not with me. He went back to the coast. He had a mouth that needed looking into.

ETHEL Oh. You must have left Boston at the crack of dawn.

CHELSEA I left Boston in the middle of the night. I felt like driving. I didn't feel like getting lost, but it worked out that way.

ETHEL If you'd come more often, you wouldn't get lost.

CHELSEA You're right. If I promise to come more often will you give me a cup of coffee?

ETHEL All right. I could do that. Yes. You must have had a lovely time in Europe. You look wonderful.

(She exits to the kitchen.)

CHELSEA I do? I did. I had a lovely time. *(Peers out at the lake)*

ETHEL *(Offstage)* I always thought Norman and I should travel, but we never got to it somehow. I'm not sure Norman would like Europe.

CHELSEA He wouldn't like Italy.

ETHEL *(Offstage)* No?

CHELSEA Too many Italians.

ETHEL *(Enters)* I've got the perker going. See the boys?

CHELSEA Yes. What are they doing out there? It's starting to rain.

ETHEL Ah, well. I told Norman not to go. The loons have been calling for it. I'm afraid Norman doesn't give them much credence.

CHELSEA They're going to get drenched.

ETHEL I think between the two of them they have sense enough to come in out of the rain. At least I hope they do.*(A moment passes as they look out at the lake.)* Isn't it beautiful?

CHELSEA *(She nods and looks at* ETHEL.*)* Look at you. You've had that robe for as long as I can remember.

ETHEL *(She tries to arrange it.)* It looks like it, doesn't it?

CHELSEA It looks great.

(She stares at ETHEL. *She steps to her and hugs her emphatically.)*

ETHEL You're in a huggy mood today. What's the matter?

CHELSEA You seem different.

ETHEL You mean old.

CHELSEA I don't know.

ETHEL Well, that's what happens if you live long enough. You end up being old. It's one of the disadvantages of a long life. I still prefer it to the alternative.

CHELSEA How does it really make you feel?

ETHEL Not much different. A little more aware of the sunrises, I guess. And the sunsets.

CHELSEA It makes *me* mad.

ETHEL Ah, well, it doesn't exactly make me want to jump up and down. *(*CHELSEA *hugs* ETHEL *again.)* Oh, dear. They're not digging the grave yet. Come sit down. You must be exhausted.

*(*ETHEL *sits.* CHELSEA *wanders.)*

CHELSEA Have Billy and Norman gotten along all right?

ETHEL Billy is the happiest thing that's happened to Norman since Roosevelt. I should have rented him a thirteen-year-old boy years ago.

CHELSEA You could have traded me in. *(*ETHEL *laughs.)* Billy reminds me of myself out there, way back when. Except I think he makes a better son than I did.

ETHEL Well, you made a very nice daughter.

CHELSEA Does Billy put the worm on the hook by himself?

ETHEL I'm really not sure.

CHELSEA I hope so. You lose points if you throw up, I remember that. I always apologized to those nice worms before I impaled them. Well, they'll get even with me someday, won't they?

ETHEL You're beginning to sound an awful lot like your father.

CHELSEA Uh oh. *(Changing direction)* Thank you for taking care of Billy.

ETHEL Thank *you.* I'm glad it gives us another chance to see you. Plus, it's been a tremendous education. Norman's vocabulary will never be the same but that's all right.

SCENES *for Two Men*

You Can't Take It with You

by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman (1936)

Characters: HENDERSON—Mr. Henderson is employed by the Internal Revenue Service to collect past-due taxes.
GRANDPA—This is a man at peace with himself. Physically, he is a wiry little man of about seventy-five years with a youthful face.

Situation: The action takes place in the Vanderhof home on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It is a house filled with family where anything goes. Grandpa Vanderhof has never filed an income tax return, and Henderson calls on Grandpa to collect the past-due taxes.

HENDERSON *(Pulling a sheaf of papers from his pocket)* Now, Mr. Vanderhof, *(A quick look toward hall)* we've written you several letters about this, but have not had any reply.

GRANDPA Oh, that's what those letters were.

[ESSIE *(Sitting on couch R.)* I told you they were from the government.]

HENDERSON According to our records, Mr. Vanderhof, you have never paid an income tax.

GRANDPA That's right.

HENDERSON Why not?

GRANDPA I don't believe in it.

HENDERSON Well—you own property, don't you?

GRANDPA Yes, sir.

HENDERSON And you receive a yearly income from it?

GRANDPA I do.

HENDERSON Of—*(He consults his records.)*—between three and four thousand dollars.

GRANDPA About that.

HENDERSON You've been receiving it for years.

GRANDPA I have. 1901, if you want the exact date.

HENDERSON Well, the Government is only concerned from 1914 on. That's when the income tax started. *(Pause)*

GRANDPA Well?

HENDERSON Well—it seems, Mr. Vanderhof, that you owe the Government twenty-four years' back income tax. Now, Mr. Vanderhof, you know there's quite a penalty for not filing an income tax return.

GRANDPA Look, Mr. Henderson, let me ask you something.

HENDERSON Well?

GRANDPA Suppose I pay you this money—mind you, I don't say I'm going to pay it—but just for the sake of argument—what's the Government going to do with it?

HENDERSON How do you mean?

GRANDPA Well, what do I get for my money? If I go to Macy's and buy something,

there it *is*—I see it. What's the Government give me?

HENDERSON Why, the Government gives you everything. It protects you.

GRANDPA What from?

HENDERSON Well—invasion. Foreigners that might come over here and take everything you've got.

GRANDPA Oh, I don't think they're going to do that.

HENDERSON If you didn't pay an income tax, they would. How do you think the Government keeps up the Army and Navy? All those battleships . . .

GRANDPA Last time we used battleships was in the Spanish-American War, and what did we get out of it? Cuba—and we gave that back. I wouldn't mind paying if it were something sensible.

HENDERSON Sensible? Well, what about Congress, and the Supreme Court, and the President? We've got to pay *them*, don't we?

GRANDPA Not with my money—no, sir.

HENDERSON *(Furious. Rises, picks up papers)* Now wait a minute! I'm not here to argue with you. *(Crossing L.)* All I know is that you haven't paid an income tax and you've got to pay it!

GRANDPA They've got to show me.

HENDERSON *(Yelling)* We *don't* have to show you! I just told you! All those buildings down in Washington, and Interstate Commerce, and the Constitution!

GRANDPA The Constitution was paid for a long time ago. And Interstate Commerce—what *is* Interstate Commerce, anyhow?

HENDERSON *(Business of a look at* GRANDPA. *With murderous calm, crosses and places his hands on table)* There are forty-eight states—see? And if there weren't Interstate Commerce, nothing could go from one state to another. See?

GRANDPA Why not? They got fences?

HENDERSON *(To* GRANDPA*)* No, they haven't got fences. They've got *laws! (Crossing up to arch L.)* My . . . , I never came across anything like *this* before!

GRANDPA Well, I might pay about seventy-five dollars, but that's all it's worth.

HENDERSON You'll pay every cent of it, like everybody else! And let me tell you something else! You'll go to jail if you don't pay, do you hear that? That's the law, and if you think you're bigger than the law, you've got another think coming. You're no better than anybody else, and the sooner you get that through your head, the better . . . you'll hear from the United States Government, that's all I can say. . . *(The music has stopped. He is backing out of the room.)*

GRANDPA *(Quietly)* Look out for those snakes.

*(*HENDERSON, *jumping, off L.)*

No Time for Sergeants

by Ira Levin and Mac Hyman (1955)

Characters: WILL STOCKDALE—He is a private in the United States Army who has no idea that his observations are funny and perceptive. He is naive, forthright, and sensible. PSYCHIATRIST—He is a somewhat cartoonish

army psychiatrist who is too easily frustrated and too quick to diagnose.

Situation: The action takes place on a U.S. Army base in 1955. Will's unusual behavior has disrupted Army routine, so his sergeant has sent him to the base psychiatrist with the hope that grounds can be found for transferring Will elsewhere.

[PSYCHIATRIST, *a major, signs and stamps a paper before him, then takes form from* WILL, *seated next to desk.* PSYCHIATRIST *looks at form, looks at* WILL. *A moment of silence]*

WILL I never have no dreams at all.

PSYCHIATRIST *(A pause. He looks carefully at* WILL, *looks at form.)* Where you from, Stockdale?

WILL Georgia.

PSYCHIATRIST That's . . . not much of a state, is it?

WILL Well . . . I don't live all over the state. I just live in this one little place in it.

PSYCHIATRIST That's where "Tobacco Road" is, Georgia.

WILL Not around my section. *(Pause)* Maybe you're from a different part than me?

PSYCHIATRIST I've never been there. What's more I don't think I would ever *want* to go there. What's your reaction to that?

WILL Well, I don't know.

PSYCHIATRIST I think I would sooner live in the rottenest pigsty in Alabama or Tennessee than in the fanciest mansion in all of Georgia. What about that?

WILL Well, sir, I think where you want to live is your business.

PSYCHIATRIST *(Pause, staring)* You don't mind if someone says something bad about Georgia?

WILL I ain't heared nobody say nothin' bad about Georgia.

PSYCHIATRIST What do you think I've been saying?

WILL Well, to tell you the truth, I ain't been able to get too much sense out of it. Don't you know?

PSYCHIATRIST Watch your step, young man. *(Pause)* We psychiatrists call this attitude of yours "resistance."

WILL You do?

PSYCHIATRIST You sense that this interview is a threat to your security. You feel yourself in danger.

WILL Well, kind of I do. If'n I don't get classified Sergeant King won't give me the wrist watch. *(*PSYCHIATRIST *stares at* WILL *uncomprehendingly.)* He *won't!* He said I only gets it if I'm classified inside a week.

PSYCHIATRIST *(Turns forlornly to papers on desk. A bit subdued)* You get along all right with your mother?

WILL No, sir, I can't hardly say that I do—

PSYCHIATRIST *(Cutting in)* She's very strict? Always hovering over you?

WILL No, sir, just the opposite—

PSYCHIATRIST She's never there.

WILL That's right.

PSYCHIATRIST You resent this neglect, don't you?

WILL No, I don't resent nothin'.

PSYCHIATRIST *(Leaning forward paternally)* There's nothing to be ashamed of, son. It's a common situation. Does she ever beat you?

WILL No!

PSYCHIATRIST *(Silkily)* So defensive. It's not easy to talk about your mother, is it.

WILL No, sir. She died when I was borned.

PSYCHIATRIST *(A long, sick pause)* You . . . could have told me that sooner . . .

WILL *(Looks hang-dog.* PSYCHIATRIST *returns to papers.* WILL *glances up at him.)* Do you hate *your* mama? *(*PSYCHIATRIST'S *head snaps up, glaring.)* I figgered as how you said it was so common . . .

PSYCHIATRIST I do not hate my mother.

WILL I should hope not! *(Pause)* What, does she beat you or somethin'?

PSYCHIATRIST *(Glares again, drums his fingers briefly on table. Steeling himself, more to self than* WILL*)* This is a transference. You're taking all your stored up antagonisms and loosing them in my direction. Transference. It happens every day . . . .

WILL *(Excited)* It does? To the Infantry?

PSYCHIATRIST *(Aghast)* The Infantry?

WILL You give Ben a transfer, I wish you'd give me one too. I'd sure love to go along with him.

PSYCHIATRIST Stop! *(The pause is a long one this time. Finally* PSYCHIATRIST *points at papers.)* There are a few more topics we have to cover. We will not talk about transfers, we will not talk about my mother. We will only talk about what *I* want to talk about, do you understand?

WILL Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST Now then—your father. *(Quickly)* Living?

WILL Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST Do you get along with him okay?

WILL Yes, sir.

PSYCHIATRIST Does he ever beat you?

WILL You bet!

PSYCHIATRIST Hard?

WILL And how! Boy, there ain't nobody can beat like my Pa can!

PSYCHIATRIST *(Beaming)* So *this* is where the antagonism comes from! *(Pause)* You hate your father, don't you?

WILL No . . . I got an uncle I hate! Every time he comes out to the house he's always wantin' to rassle with the mule, and the mule gets all wore out, and *he* gets all wore out . . . Well, I don't really *hate* him; I just ain't exactly partial to him.

PSYCHIATRIST *(Pause)* Did I ask you about your uncle?

WILL I thought you wanted to talk about hatin' people.

PSYCHIATRIST *(Glares, drums his fingers, retreats to form. Barely audible)* Now—girls. How do you like girls?

WILL What girls is that, sir?

PSYCHIATRIST Just girls. Just any girls.

WILL Well, I don't like just any girls.

There's one old girl back home that ain't got hair no longer than a hounddog's and she's always—

PSYCHIATRIST No! Look, when I say girls I don't mean any one specific girl. I mean girls in general; women, sex! Didn't that father of yours ever sit down and have a talk with you?

WILL Sure he did.

PSYCHIATRIST Well?

WILL Well what?

PSYCHIATRIST What did he say?

WILL *(With a snicker)* Well, there was this one about these two travelin' salesmen that their car breaks down in the middle of this terrible storm—

PSYCHIATRIST Stop!

WILL —so they stop at this farmhouse where the farmer has fourteen daughters who was—

PSYCHIATRIST *Stop!*

WILL You heared it already?

PSYCHIATRIST *(Writing furiously on form)* No, I did not hear it already . . .

WILL Well, what did you stop me for? It's a real knee-slapper. You see, the fourteen daughters is all studyin' to be trombone players and—

PSYCHIATRIST *(Shoving form at* WILL*)* Here. Go. Good-by. You're through. You're normal. Good-by. Go. Go.

WILL *(Takes the form and stands, a bit confused by it all)* Sir, if girls is what you want to talk about, you ought to come down to the barracks some night. The younger fellows there is always tellin' spicy stories and all like that.

Dial M for Murder

by Frederick Knott (1952)

Characters: MAX—Max is a friend of Tony's wife, Margot. He is a writer of mysteries and has a vivid imagination.
TONY—Tony is a former professional tennis player who married Margot for her money.

Situation: Tony wanted to inherit his wife's money, so he persuaded an old college friend, Swann, to murder her. Instead, Margot killed Swann in self-defense. She was convicted of Swann's murder and sentenced to death. Max has a plan to free Margot, but it requires Tony's help.

MAX Tony, I take it you'd do anything—to save her life?

TONY *(Surprised)* Of course.

MAX Even if it meant going to prison for several years?

TONY *(After a pause)* I'd do absolutely anything.

MAX I think you can—I'm certain. *(Slowly)* If you tell the police *exactly* the right story.

TONY The right story?

MAX Listen, Tony. I've been working this out for weeks. Just in case it came to this. It may be her only chance.

TONY Let's have it.

MAX You'll have to tell the police that you hired Swann to murder her. *(Long pause.* TONY *can only stare at* MAX.*)*

TONY *(Rises)* What are you talking about?

MAX It's all right, Tony—I've been writing this stuff for years. I know what I'm doing. Margot was convicted because no one would believe her story. Prosecution made out that she was telling one lie after another—and the jury believed him. But what did this case amount to? Only three things. My letter—her stocking, and the idea that, because no key was found on Swann, she must have let him in herself. *(Pause)* Now Swann is dead. You can tell any story you like about him. You can say that you did know him. That you'd met him, and worked out the whole thing together. Now the blackmail. Swann was only suspected of blackmail for two reasons. Because my letter was found in his pocket and because you saw him the day Margot's bag was stolen.

TONY Well?

MAX You can now tell the police that you never saw him at Victoria. That the whole thing was an invention of yours to try and connect him with the letter.

TONY But the letter was found in his pocket.

MAX Because you put it there.

TONY *(Pause)* You mean I should pretend that I stole her handbag?

MAX Sure. You could have.

TONY But why?

MAX Because you wanted to find out who was writing to her. When you read my letter you were so mad you decided to teach her a lesson.

TONY But I can't say that I wrote those blackmail notes.

MAX Why not? No one can prove that you didn't. *(*TONY *thinks it over.)*

TONY All right. I stole her bag and blackmailed her. What else?

MAX You kept my letter and planted it on Swann after he'd been killed.

TONY Wait a minute—when could I have done that?

MAX After you got back from the party and before the police arrived. At the same time you took one of Margot's stockings from the mending basket and substituted it for whatever Swann had used. *(*TONY *thinks it over.)*

TONY Max, I know you're trying to help but—can you imagine anyone believing this?

MAX You've got to make them believe it.

TONY But I wouldn't know what to say. You'd have to come with me.

MAX No. I couldn't do that. They know the sort of stuff I write. If they suspected we'd talked this out they wouldn't even listen. They mustn't know I've been here.

TONY Max! It's ridiculous. Why should I want anyone to murder Margot?

MAX Oh, one of the stock motives. Had Margot made a will? *(Pause)*

TONY I—yes, I believe she had.

MAX Are you the main beneficiary?

TONY I suppose so.

MAX Well, there you are.

TONY But thousands of husbands and wives leave money to each other, without murdering each other. The police wouldn't believe a word of it! They'd take it for exactly what it is. A husband desperately trying to save his wife.

MAX Well, it's worth a try. They can't hang you for planning a murder that never came off. Face it. The most you'd get would be a few years in prison.

TONY Thanks very much.

MAX . . . And you'd have saved her life. That doesn't seem too big a price.

The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde (1895)

Characters: ALGERNON—A fashionable member of the British upper class, Algernon occupies himself dining with friends, attending plays and operas, and avoiding his tailor and hatter, whose bills he never pays.
JACK—Known to Algernon as Ernest, Jack is unable to keep his private affairs to himself in the face of Algernon's probing curiosity.

Situation: This play, Oscar Wilde's masterpiece, is partly high comedy and partly farce. To satirize the shallow attitudes of the British aristocracy during the reign of Queen Victoria, Wilde created characters who take themselves seriously even though the audience sees how trivial their interests are. In this scene Algernon begins to unravel Jack's secret: he has been maintaining two identities.

ALGERNON My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin; and before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily.

JACK Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily! I don't know anyone by the name of Cecily.

ALGERNON *(To butler)* Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

JACK Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGERNON Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

JACK There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

ALGERNON *(Taking case from butler)* I think it rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. However, it makes no matter, for now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK Of course it is mine. You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON Yes, but this is not your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON Your aunt!

JACK Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? "From *little* Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK My dear fellow, what on earth is there in *that*? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. *You* seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case.

ALGERNON Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B.4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen or to anyone else.

JACK Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives in Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing.

JACK —Well, old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me, in his will, guardian to his granddaughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle, from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country, under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON I suspected that, my dear fellow.—Now go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK My dear Algy, when one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's

duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives at the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. There, my dear Algy, is the whole truth, pure and simple.

ALGERNON The truth is rarely pure and never simple.

Brighton Beach Memoirs

by Neil Simon (1982)

Characters: EUGENE—Almost fifteen years old, he is innocent, generous, and sentimental. STAN—Stan, Eugene's older brother, is eighteen years old. He has been working to help support the family, and he is much more mature and hardened than Eugene.

Situation: The play is set in September 1937 in a house close to Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New York. It is an ethnically diverse, lower-middle-class area. Stan has decided to leave home because he is ashamed of losing his week's pay—$17.00—in a poker game.

EUGENE Aunt Blanche is leaving.

STAN *(Sits up)* For where?

EUGENE *(Sits on his own bed)* To stay with some woman in Manhattan Beach. She and Mom just had a big fight. She's going to send for Laurie and Nora when she gets a job.

STAN What did they fight about?

EUGENE I couldn't hear it all. I think Mom sorta blames Aunt Blanche for Pop having to work so hard.

STAN *(Hits his pillow with his fist)* Oh, God! . . . Did Mom say anything about me? About how I lost my salary?

EUGENE You told her? Why did you tell her? I came up with twelve terrific lies for you. *(*STANLEY *opens up his drawer, puts on a sweater.)*

STAN How much money do you have?

EUGENE Me? I don't have any money.

STAN *(Puts another sweater over the first one)* The hell you don't. You've got money in your cigar box. How much do you have?

EUGENE I got a dollar twelve. It's my life's savings.

STAN Let me have it. I'll pay it back, don't worry. *(He puts a jacket over sweaters, then gets a fedora from closet and puts it on.* EUGENE *takes cigar box from under his bed, opens it.)*

EUGENE What are you putting on all those things for?

STAN In case I have to sleep out tonight. I'm leaving, Gene. I don't know where I'm going yet, but I'll write to you when I get there.

EUGENE You're leaving home?

STAN When I'm gone, you tell Aunt Blanche what happened to my salary. Then she'll know why Mom was so angry. Tell her please not to leave because it was all my fault, not Mom's. Will you do that? *(He takes coins out of cigar box.)*

EUGENE I have eight cents worth of stamps, if you want that too.

STAN Thanks. *(Picks up a small medal)* What's this?

EUGENE The medal you won for the hundred yard dash two years ago.

STAN From the Police Athletic League. I didn't know you still had this.

EUGENE You gave it to me. You can have it back if you want it.

STAN It's not worth anything.

EUGENE It is to me.

STAN Sure. You can keep it.

EUGENE Thanks . . . Where will you go?

STAN I don't know. I've been thinking about joining . . . the army. Pop says we'll be at war in a couple of years anyway. I could be a sergeant or something by the time it starts.

EUGENE If it lasts long enough, I could join too. Maybe we can get in the same outfit.

STAN You don't go in the army unless they come and get you. You go to college. You hear me? Promise me you'll go to college.

EUGENE I'll probably have to stay home and work, if you leave. We'll need the money.

STAN I'll send home my paycheck every month. A sergeant in the army makes real good dough . . . Well, I better get going.

EUGENE *(On the verge of tears)* What do you have to leave for?

STAN Don't start crying. They'll hear you.

EUGENE They'll get over it. They won't stay mad at you forever. I was mad at you and *I* got over it.

STAN Because of me, the whole family is breaking up. Do you want Nora to end up like one of those cheap boardwalk girls?

EUGENE I don't care. I'm not in love with Nora anymore.

STAN Well, you *should* care. She's your cousin. Don't turn out to be like me.

EUGENE I don't see what's so bad about you.

STAN *(Looks at him). . .* Take care of yourself, Eug. *(They embrace. He opens the door, looks around, then back to* EUGENE.*)* If you ever write a story about me, call me Hank. I always liked the name Hank. *(He goes, closing the door behind him.)*

Fences

by August Wilson (1985)

Characters: CORY—Cory Maxson is an aspiring football player hoping to win a college scholarship. A typical teenager, he is ambitious and optimistic, but not always sensible or reliable. TROY—Born to a sharecropper who was an angry failure of a man, Troy Maxson tries hard to be a responsible family man and a good father to Cory. He is large, has big hands, and is fifty-three years old.

Situation: Written by an African American playwright, this play is set in 1957 and concerns the Maxsons, who live in an ancient two-story brick house set off a small alley in a big-city neighborhood. Cory is helping his dad make a fence for their yard but gets sidetracked, a habit of his, as he tries to convince Troy that they should buy a television set.

*[*CORY *takes the saw and begins cutting the boards.* TROY *continues working. There is a long pause.]*

CORY Hey, Pop . . . why don't you buy a TV?

TROY What I want with a TV? What I want one of them for?

CORY Everybody got one. Earl, Ba Bra . . . Jesse!

TROY I ain't asked you who had one. I say what I want with one?

CORY So you can watch it. They got lots of things on TV. Baseball games and everything. We could watch the World Series.

TROY Yeah . . . and how much this TV cost?

CORY I don't know. They got them on sale for around two hundred dollars.

TROY Two hundred dollars, huh?

CORY That ain't that much, Pop.

TROY Naw, it's just two hundred dollars. See that roof you got over your head at night? Let me tell you something about that roof. It's been over ten years since that roof was last tarred. See now . . . the snow come this winter and sit up there on that roof like it is . . . and it's gonna seep inside. It's just gonna be a little bit . . . ain't gonna hardly notice it. Then the next thing you know, it's gonna be leaking all over the house. Then the wood rot from all that water and you gonna need a whole new roof. Now, how much you think it cost to get that roof tarred?

CORY I don't know.

TROY Two hundred and sixty-four dollars. . . cash money. While you thinking about a TV, I got to be thinking about the roof . . . and whatever else go wrong around here. Now if you had two hundred dollars, what would you do . . . fix the roof or buy a TV?

CORY I'd buy a TV. Then when the roof started to leak . . . when it needed fixing . . . I'd fix it.

TROY Where you gonna get the money from? You done spent it for a TV. You gonna sit up and watch the water run all over your brand new TV.

CORY Aw, Pop. You got money. I know you do.

TROY Where I got it at, huh?

CORY You got it in the bank.

TROY You wanna see my bankbook? You wanna see that seventy-three dollars and twenty-two cents I got sitting up in there.

CORY You ain't got to pay for it all at one time. You can put a down payment on it and carry it on home with you.

TROY Not me. I ain't gonna owe nobody nothing if I can help it. Miss a payment and they come and snatch it right out your house. Then what you got? Now, soon as I get two hundred dollars clear, then I'll buy a TV. Right now, as soon as I get two hundred and sixty-four dollars, I'm gonna have this roof tarred.

CORY Aw . . . Pop!

TROY You go on and get you two hundred dollars and buy one if ya want it. I got better things to do with my money.

CORY I can't get no two hundred dollars. I ain't never seen two hundred dollars.

TROY I'll tell you what . . . you get you a hundred dollars and I'll put the other hundred with it.

CORY Alright, I'm gonna show you.

TROY You gonna show me how you can cut them boards right now.

How I Got That Story

by Amlin Gray (1979)

Characters: GUERRILLA—He is an information officer in a guerrilla uprising fighting for political power. Cold and direct, he has known nothing but war his entire life.
REPORTER—In his late twenties, he is a former journalist who has been taken hostage by the guerrilla insurgents. Afraid for his life, he tries to persuade the guerrilla that he poses no threat.

Situation: This play is set in a fictional southeast Asian country called Am-Bo Land, where the United States is supporting the government in a war against guerrilla insurgents.

[A small, bare hut. The REPORTER *is sleeping on the floor. His head is covered by a black hood and his hands are tied behind his back. A* GUERRILLA *Information Officer comes in carrying a bowl of rice.]*

GUERRILLA Stand up, please.

REPORTER *(Coming awake)* What?

GUERRILLA Please stand up.

REPORTER It's hard with hands behind the back.

GUERRILLA I will untie them.

REPORTER That's all right. I'll make it. *(With some clumsiness, he gets to his feet.)* There I am.

GUERRILLA I offered to untie your hands.

REPORTER I'd just as soon you didn't. When you know that you can trust me, then untie my hands. I'd let you take the hood off.

GUERRILLA *(Takes the hood off)* Tell me why you think that we should trust you.

REPORTER I'm no threat to you. I've never done you any harm.

GUERRILLA No harm?

REPORTER I guess I've wasted your munitions. Part of one of your grenades wound up imbedded in my derriere—my backside.

GUERRILLA I speak French as well as English. You forget—the French were here before you.

REPORTER Yes.

GUERRILLA You told us that you came here as a newsman.

REPORTER Right.

GUERRILLA You worked within the system of our enemies and subject to their interests.

REPORTER Partly subject.

GUERRILLA Yet you say that you have never done us any harm.

REPORTER All I found out as a reporter was I'd never find out anything.

GUERRILLA Do we pardon an enemy sniper if his marksmanship is poor?

REPORTER Yes, if he's quit the army.

GUERRILLA Ah, yes. You are not a newsman now.

REPORTER That's right.

GUERRILLA What are you?

REPORTER What am I? *(The* GUERRILLA *is silent.)* I'm what you see.

GUERRILLA What do you do?

REPORTER I live.

GUERRILLA You live?

REPORTER That's all.

GUERRILLA You live in Am-Bo Land.

REPORTER I'm here right now.

GUERRILLA Why?

REPORTER Why? You've got me prisoner.

GUERRILLA If you were not a prisoner, you would not be here?

REPORTER No.

GUERRILLA Where would you be?

REPORTER By this time, I'd be back in East Dubuque.

GUERRILLA You were not leaving when we captured you.

REPORTER I was, though. I was leaving soon.

GUERRILLA Soon?

REPORTER Yes.

GUERRILLA When?

REPORTER I don't know exactly. Sometime.

GUERRILLA Sometime.

REPORTER Yes.

GUERRILLA You have no right to be here even for a minute. Not to draw one breath.

REPORTER You have no right to tell me that. I'm here. It's where I am.

GUERRILLA We are a spectacle to you. A land in turmoil.

REPORTER I don't have to lie to you. Yes, that attracts me.

GUERRILLA Yes. You love to see us kill each other.

REPORTER No. I don't.

GUERRILLA You said you didn't have to lie.

REPORTER I'm not. It does—excite me that the stakes are life and death here. It makes everything—intense.

GUERRILLA The stakes cannot be life and death unless some people die.

REPORTER That's true. But I don't make them die. They're dying anyway.

GUERRILLA You just watch.

REPORTER That's right.

GUERRILLA Your standpoint is aesthetic.

REPORTER Yes, all right, yes.

GUERRILLA You enjoy our situation here.

REPORTER I'm filled with pain by things I see.

GUERRILLA And yet you stay.

REPORTER I'm here.

GUERRILLA You are addicted.

REPORTER Say I am, then! I'm addicted! Yes! I've said it! I'm addicted!

GUERRILLA Your position in my country is morbid and decadent. It is corrupt, reactionary, and bourgeois. You have no right to live here.

REPORTER This is where I live. You can't pass judgment.

GUERRILLA I have not passed judgment. You are useless here. A man must give something in return for the food he eats and the living space he occupies. This is not a moral obligation but a practical necessity in a society where no one is to be exploited.

REPORTER Am-Bo Land isn't such a society, is it?

GUERRILLA Not yet.

REPORTER Well, I'm here right now. If you don't like that then I guess you'll have to kill me.

GUERRILLA We would kill you as we pick the insects from the skin of a valuable animal.

REPORTER Go ahead, then. If you're going to kill me, kill me.

GUERRILLA We are not going to kill you.

REPORTER Why not?

GUERRILLA For a reason.

REPORTER What's the reason?

GUERRILLA We have told the leadership of TransPanGlobal Wire Service when and where to leave one hundred thousand dollars for your ransom.

REPORTER Ransom? TransPanGlobal?

GUERRILLA Yes.

REPORTER But that's no good. I told you, I don't work there anymore.

GUERRILLA Your former employers have not made the separation public. We have made our offer public. You will not be abandoned in the public view. It would not be good business.

REPORTER *(Truly frightened for the first time in the scene)* Wait. You have to think this out. A hundred thousand dollars is too much. It's much too much. You might get ten.

GUERRILLA We have demanded one hundred.

REPORTER They won't pay that. Take ten thousand. That's a lot to you.

GUERRILLA It is. But we have made our offer.

REPORTER Change it. You're just throwing away money. Tell them ten. They'll never pay a hundred thousand.

GUERRILLA We never change a bargaining position we have once set down. This is worth much more than ten thousand dollars or a hundred thousand dollars.

REPORTER Please—

GUERRILLA Sit down.

REPORTER *(Obeys, then, quietly)* Please don't kill me.

GUERRILLA Do not beg your life from me. The circumstances grant your life. Your employers will pay. You will live.

REPORTER You sound so sure.

GUERRILLA If we were not sure we would not waste this food on you. *(He pushes the bowl of rice towards the* REPORTER.*)*

REPORTER How soon will I know?

GUERRILLA Soon. Ten days.

REPORTER That's not soon.

GUERRILLA This war has lasted all my life. Ten days is soon. *(Untying the* REPORTER'S *hands)* You will be fed on what our soldiers eat. You will think that we are starving you, but these are the rations on which we march toward our inevitable victory. Eat your rice. In three minutes I will tie you again.

Man with Bags

by Eugène Ionesco (1977)

Characters: VOICE—This is an offstage mystery voice.
FIRST MAN—He is an innocent traveler who is trying to obtain a guide to lead him out of the country.
YOUNG MAN—He is an armed and demanding aggressor.
SPHINX—He is an absurd creature who demands answers to riddle-type questions.
[*N.B.* Voice, Young Man, and Sphinx may all be played by one actor.] (*N.B.* stands for *nota bene,* which in Latin means "note well.")

Situation: The First Man is traveling through the country of his birth, which has a dreamlike quality. Things happen for no reason. He is harassed by people who take their questions very seriously. It is as though he were trapped in a silly version of the game *Jeopardy!* in which losers die. In this scene, he is questioned first by a young man, apparently a guard, and next by a sphinx.

[Male VOICE *calls to* FIRST MAN *from Offstage Right]*

VOICE Who's out there?

FIRST MAN *(Turns from audience, moves Upstage Right)* Me! *(*YOUNG MAN *enters, Stage Right. He holds M-1 rifle trained on* FIRST MAN*)*

YOUNG MAN Hold it there!

FIRST MAN *(Drops suitcases, raises arms overhead)* Hey, c'mon. Nothin' in those but the usual junk . . .

YOUNG MAN Password?

FIRST MAN The password? What password?

YOUNG MAN If you don't know the password, you're a goner . . .

FIRST MAN *(False amusement)* Oh, well, of course . . the password! Wow! What's the matter with my brain, huh? I just keep forgetting everything! Les'see now . . . You're gonna' hav'ta' give me a clue . . . OK? Is the password a phrase or actually just a word? I can't quite remember.

YOUNG MAN Phrase.

FIRST MAN *(Screams)* A fool and his money are soon parted!

YOUNG MAN As quickly as water to a duck's back. *(Drops rifle down to his side; smiles)* Very good. *(Pauses)* What's up?

FIRST MAN You mean I got it?! The password?

YOUNG MAN What're'ya' looking for here?

FIRST MAN Here? Oh! Here! A guide. I'd like a guide.

YOUNG MAN Girl guide or boy guide? Or a whole troop of both?

FIRST MAN Cancel the order and send up a prune Danish!

YOUNG MAN Excuse me?

FIRST MAN Look, I'd like to hire a guide.

YOUNG MAN What are you looking for?

FIRST MAN Out. That's what I'm looking for: out. That's what I want: out. I'd like a guide, OK? I'll pay.

YOUNG MAN You're gonna have a lot of trouble finding a guide around these parts . . . especially for what you want one for . . . Ya' know what I mean? Out is not easy. Not here. *(Pauses)* Anyway, you haven't finished your quiz.

FIRST MAN My what?

YOUNG MAN Quiz. There's a pop quiz given at this point. Have you met the Sphinx yet?

FIRST MAN If this is s'pose'ta' be funny, it isn't, ya' know! I mean, I'm not exactly tickled by you, your gun, any of it . . . *(*YOUNG MAN *exits, Stage Right)* Where'ya' goin'? Hey, wait up! *(From the same point, a* SPHINX *enters.)*
[N.B. Possible that SPHINX *is* YOUNG MAN *wearing wings and insect-head mask]*

SPHINX Answer my question and answer it quickly. A true genius keeps what for last?

FIRST MAN That's a question?

SPHINX Answer!

FIRST MAN I don't feel like it. This is ridiculous!

SPHINX It's your life.

FIRST MAN My life? I see. What was the question again?

SPHINX A true genius keeps what for last?

FIRST MAN The last word . . . for last: the word.

SPHINX Upper regions of space?

FIRST MAN . . . Ummm . . . Ether.

SPHINX Musical ending?

FIRST MAN Coda.

SPHINX Tabula-what?

FIRST MAN Rasa?

SPHINX Land of Saint Patrick . . . four letters.

FIRST MAN Eire.

SPHINX Brainchild.

FIRST MAN Thank you.

SPHINX No, that's a question!

FIRST MAN Whether I am?

SPHINX Don't answer a question with a question!

FIRST MAN Gim'me an answer then. I'll give you a question.

SPHINX Who's the Sphinx here anyway?

FIRST MAN You are. You are.

SPHINX Brainchild. Four letters . . .

FIRST MAN I've got an idea . . .

SPHINX Idea?

FIRST MAN Right.

SPHINX Right!

FIRST MAN Huh?

SPHINX Disturb. Four letters.

FIRST MAN What is it with you and these four-letter words? So far, this play has been clean enough for children!

SPHINX Hurry! Disturb!

FIRST MAN Roil. Roil.

SPHINX That's eight letters!

FIRST MAN OK. OK. Roil.

SPHINX Now that's twelve letters!

FIRST MAN Roil.

SPHINX Good.

FIRST MAN This is ridiculous. And that's sixteen letters!

SPHINX OK, here it is: the penultimate question. A true genius keeps what for last.

FIRST MAN I told you that already! The last word. OK, I'm in, right? I passed.

SPHINX Out of the question. Failed! That's precisely the point, ducky. A true genius keeps the last word for last. You didn't. You blew it right off the bat!

Othello

by William Shakespeare

Characters: OTHELLO—An African Moor, he is a general on whom the city-state of Venice depends. He is respected, courageous, and happily married. He trusts too easily in his adviser Iago.
IAGO—Iago is an ensign, an honorable but not prestigious rank. He resents Cassio's recent promotion to lieutenant, a post Iago himself had desired. A brilliant but evil tactician, he is a supreme egotist dedicated to revenge.

Situation: This pivotal scene takes place in the garden of Othello's castle headquarters in Cyprus. Desdemona, Othello's Caucasian wife, is speaking with Cassio as Othello and Iago enter the garden. Cassio leaves suddenly, and Iago seizes on this apparently suspicious behavior to trap the unsuspecting Othello. After Desdemona leaves, Iago fills Othello's head with the false idea that Desdemona has betrayed him with Cassio.

OTHELLO Excellent wretch[1]! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

IAGO My noble lord,—

OTHELLO What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
Know of your love?

OTHELLO He did, from first to last. Why dost thou ask?

IAGO But for a satisfaction of my thought.
No further harm.

OTHELLO Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO O yes; and went between us very oft.

IAGO Indeed?

OTHELLO Indeed? ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO Honest? ay, honest.

IAGO My lord, for aught I know.

OTHELLO What dost thou think?

IAGO Think, my lord?

OTHELLO Think, my lord?
By heaven, he echoes me,
As if there were some monster in his thought
Too hideous to be shown.—Thou didst mean something.
I heard thee say but now, thou lik'st not that,
When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel[2]
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst, 'Indeed?'
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit[3]. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.

IAGO My lord, you know I love you.

OTHELLO I think thou dost;
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou give 'em breath,
Therefore these stops[4] of thine fright me the more;
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom[5], but in a man that's just
They are close delations[6], working from the heart
That passion cannot rule.

IAGO For Michael Cassio,
I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.

OTHELLO I think so too.

IAGO Men should be what they seem;
Or those that be not, would they might seem none!

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem.

IAGO Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man.

OTHELLO Nay, yet there's more in this.
I pray thee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.

IAGO Good my lord, pardon me;

Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that all slaves are free to.
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false;
As where's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? who has a breast so pure
But[7] some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets[8] and law-days, and in session sit
With meditations lawful?

OTHELLO Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but think'st him wrong'd, and mak'st his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

IAGO I do beseech you,
Though[9] I perchance am vicious in my guess
(As, I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not)—I entreat you then,
From one that so imperfectly conjects,[10]
You'ld take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble

Out of my scattering[11] and unsure observance.
It were not for your quiet nor your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO Zounds! (What dost thou mean?)

IAGO Good name in man, and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of our souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash. 'Tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

OTHELLO By heaven, I'll know thy thought.

IAGO You cannot, if my heart were in your hand;
Nor shall not, whilst 'tis in my custody.

OTHELLO Ha!

IAGO O beware, my lord, of jealousy!
It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on.[12]

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1 *wretch:* expression of utmost fondness
2 *of my counsel:* in my confidence
3 *conceit:* idea
4 *stops:* pauses, reticences
5 *tricks of custom:* habitual tricks
6 *close delations:* covert, involuntary accusations
7 *But:* but therein
8 *leets:* synonymous with 'law-days' *(keep leet:* hold court*)*
9 *Though:* supposing, granting that
10 *conjects:* imagines
11 *scattering:* random
12 *mock...feeds on:* tantalizes its victim

SCENES *for Mixed Groups*

The Diary of Anne Frank

dramatized by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (1954) from the book *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*

Characters: ANNE FRANK—Anne is a fourteen-year-old. She is lively, polite, optimistic, and compassionate.
MR. FRANK—He is a gentle, cultured, middle-aged man with a trace of a German accent.
MARGOT FRANK—She is an eighteen-year-old who is quiet and shy.
MR. VAN DAAN—He is a tall, dignified man in his late forties.
MRS. VAN DAAN—She is a woman in her early forties.
MRS. FRANK—She is genteel and reserved. She has a slight German accent.
PETER VAN DAAN—He is a shy and awkward sixteen-year-old.

Situation: This play is based on historical fact and was inspired by Anne's diary, which was published after her death. It is the first night of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. World War II is in progress, and the Frank and the Van Daan families are hiding from the Nazis on the top floor of a warehouse in Amsterdam, Holland. Mr. Frank is at the head of the table and has lit the shammes, or servant candle. All are dressed in their best; the men wear hats, and Peter wears his cap.

ANNE *(Singing)* "Oh, Hanukkah! Oh, Hanukkah! The sweet celebration."

MR. FRANK *(Rising)* I think we should first blow out the candle; then we'll have something for tomorrow night.

MARGOT But, Father, you're supposed to let it burn itself out.

MR. FRANK I'm sure that God understands shortages. *(Before blowing it out)* "Praised be Thou, oh Lord our God, who hath sustained us and permitted us to celebrate this joyous festival."

(He is about to blow out the candle when suddenly there is a crash of something falling below. They all freeze in horror, motionless. For a few seconds there is complete silence. MR. FRANK *slips off his shoes. The others noiselessly follow his example.* MR. FRANK *turns out a light near him. He motions to* PETER *to turn off the center lamp.* PETER *tries to reach it, realizes he cannot and gets up on a chair. Just as he is touching the lamp he loses his balance. The chair goes out from under him. He falls. The iron lamp shade crashes to the floor. There is a sound of feet below, running down the stairs.)*

MR. VAN DAAN *(Under his breath)* God Almighty! *(The only light left comes from the Hanukkah candle. . . .* MR. FRANK *creeps over to the stairwell and stands listening. The dog is heard barking excitedly.)* Do you hear anything?

MR. FRANK *(In a whisper)* No. I think they've gone.

MRS. VAN DAAN It's the Green Police. They've found us.

MR. FRANK If they had, they wouldn't have left. They'd be up here by now.

MRS. VAN DAAN I know it's the Green Police. They've gone to get help. That's all. They'll be back!

MR. VAN DAAN Or it may have been the Gestapo, looking for papers.

MR. FRANK *(Interrupting)* Or a thief, looking for money.

MRS. VAN DAAN We've got to do something—Quick! Quick! Before they come back.

MR. VAN DAAN There isn't anything to do. Just wait. *(*MR. FRANK *holds up his hand for them to be quiet. He is listening intently. There is complete silence as they all strain to hear any sound from below. Suddenly* ANNE *begins to sway. With a low cry she falls to the floor in a faint.* MRS. FRANK *goes to her quickly, sitting beside her on the floor and taking her in her arms.)*

MRS. FRANK Get some water, please! Get some water! *(*MARGOT *starts for the sink.)*

MR. VAN DAAN *(Grabbing* MARGOT*)* No! No! No one's going to run water!

MR. FRANK If they've found us, they've found us. Get the water. *(*MARGOT *starts again for the sink.* MR. FRANK, *getting a flashlight)* I'm going down. *(*MARGOT *rushes to him, clinging to him.* ANNE *struggles to consciousness.)*

MARGOT No, Father, no! There may be someone there waiting. It may be a trap!

MR. FRANK This is Saturday. There is no way for us to know what has happened until Miep or Mr. Kraler comes on Monday morning. We cannot live with this uncertainty.

MARGOT Don't go, Father!

MRS. FRANK Hush, darling, hush. *(*MR. FRANK *slips quietly out, down the steps and out through the door below.)* Margot! Stay close to me. *(*MARGOT *goes to her mother.)*

MR. VAN DAAN Shush! Shush! *(*MRS. FRANK *whispers to* MARGOT *to get the water.* MARGOT *goes for it.)*

MRS. VAN DAAN Putti, where's our money? Get our money. I hear you can buy the Green Police off, so much a head. Go upstairs quick! Get the money!

MR. VAN DAAN Keep still!

MRS. VAN DAAN *(Kneeling before him, pleading)* Do you want to be dragged off to a concentration camp? Are you going to stand there and wait for them to come up and get you? Do something, I tell you!

MR. VAN DAAN *(Pushing her aside)* Will you keep still? *(He goes over to the stairwell to listen.* PETER *goes to his mother, helping her up onto the sofa. There is a second of silence, then* ANNE *can stand it no longer.)*

ANNE Someone go after Father! Make Father come back!

PETER *(Starting for the door)* I'll go.

MR. VAN DAAN Haven't you done enough? *(He pushes* PETER *roughly away. In his anger against his father* PETER *grabs a chair as if to hit him with it, then puts it down, burying his face in his hands.* MRS. FRANK *begins to pray softly.)*

ANNE Please, please, Mr. Van Daan. Get Father.

MR. VAN DAAN Quiet! Quiet! *(ANNE is shocked into silence.* MRS. FRANK *pulls her closer, holding her protectively in her arms.)*

MRS. FRANK *(Softly, praying)* "I lift up mine eyes unto the mountains, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber . . ." *(She stops as she hears someone coming. They all watch the door tensely.* MR. FRANK *comes quietly in.* ANNE *rushes to him, holding him tight.)*

MR. FRANK It was a thief. The noise must have scared him away.

MRS. VAN DAAN Thank God.

A Raisin in the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry (1959)

Characters: BENEATHA—She is about twenty years old, slim, intense, and educated. She is going to school to become a doctor at a time when women weren't encouraged or expected to pursue such a profession.
WALTER—Walter Lee Younger is a lean man in his mid-thirties. He is struggling to retain his self-esteem in the face of family and financial obstacles.
RUTH—She is Walter's wife, about thirty years old, a gentle, maternal woman who looks disappointed. She wants a happier household.

Situation: Written by an African American playwright, this play is set in Chicago's South Side, sometime after World War II. A cramped apartment is home to an African American family: Walter, his mother Lena, his sister Beneatha, his wife Ruth, and their son Travis.

WALTER *(Senselessly)* How is school coming?

BENEATHA *(In the same spirit)* Lovely. Lovely. And you know, Biology is the greatest. *(Looking up at him)* I dissected something that looked just like you yesterday.

WALTER I just wondered if you've made up your mind and everything.

BENEATHA *(Gaining in sharpness and impatience prematurely)* And what did I answer yesterday morning—and the day before that—?

RUTH *(Crossing back to ironing board R., like someone disinterested and old)* Don't be so nasty, Bennie.

BENEATHA *(Still to her brother)* And the day before that and the day before that!

WALTER *(Defensively)* I'm interested in you. Something wrong with that? Ain't many girls who decide—

WALTER and BENEATHA *(In unison)* —"to be a doctor." *(Silence)*

WALTER Have we figured out yet just exactly how much medical school is going to cost?

BENEATHA *(Rises, exits to bathroom. Knocks on the door)* Come on out of there, please! *(Re-enters)*

RUTH Walter Lee, why don't you leave that girl alone and get out of here to work?

WALTER *(Looking at his sister intently)* You know the check is coming tomorrow.

BENEATHA *(Turning on him with a sharpness all her own. She crosses D.R. and sprawls on sofa.)* That money belongs to Mama, Walter, and it's for her to decide how she wants to use it. I don't care if she wants to buy a house or a rocket ship or just nail it up somewhere and look at it—it's hers. Not ours—hers.

WALTER *(Bitterly)* Now ain't that fine! You just got your mother's interests at heart, ain't you, girl? You such a nice girl—but if Mama got that money she can always take a few thousand and help you through school too—can't she?

BENEATHA I have never asked anyone around here to do anything for me!

WALTER No! But the line between asking and just accepting when the time comes is big and wide—ain't it!

BENEATHA *(With fury)* What do you want from me, Brother—that I quit school or just drop dead, which!

WALTER *(Rises, crosses down back of sofa)* I don't want nothing but for you to stop acting holy around here—me and Ruth done made some sacrifices for you—why can't you do something for the family?

RUTH Walter, don't be dragging me in it.

WALTER You are in it—Don't you get up and go work in somebody's kitchen for the last three years to help put clothes on her back—?

*(*BENEATHA *rises, crosses, sits armchair D.R.)*

RUTH Oh, Walter—that's not fair—

WALTER It ain't that nobody expects you to get on your knees and say thank you, Brother; thank you, Ruth; thank you, Mama—and thank you, Travis, for wearing the same pair of shoes for two semesters—

BENEATHA *(In front of sofa, falls on her knees)* WELL—I DO—ALL RIGHT? THANK EVERYBODY—AND FORGIVE ME FOR EVER WANTING TO BE ANYTHING AT ALL—FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME! *(She rises, crosses D.R. to armchair.)*

RUTH Please stop it! Your Mama'll hear you.

WALTER *(Crosses U.C. to kitchen table. Ties shoes at chair R. of table)*—Who . . . told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing around with sick people—then go be a nurse like other women—or just get married and be quiet—

BENEATHA *(Crossing toward L. end of sofa)* Well—you finally got it said—It took you three years but you finally got it said. Walter, give up; leave me alone—it's Mama's money.

WALTER HE WAS MY FATHER, TOO!

BENEATHA So what? He was mine, too—and Travis' grandfather—BUT the insurance money belongs to Mama. Picking on me is not going to make her give it to you to invest in any liquor stores—*(Sits armchair D.R. Under her breath)* And I for one say, God bless Mama for that!

(On BENEATHA'S *line* RUTH *crosses U.L. to closet.)*

WALTER *(To* RUTH*)* See—did you hear?—Did you hear!

RUTH *(Crosses D.C. to* WALTER *with* WALTER's *jacket from the closet)* Honey, please go to work.

WALTER *(Back of sofa, crosses U.C. to door)* Nobody in this house is ever going to understand me.

BENEATHA Because you're a nut.

WALTER *(Stops, turns D.C.)* Who's a nut?

BENEATHA You—You are a nut. Thee is mad, boy.

WALTER *(Looking at his wife and sister from the door, very sadly)* The world's most backward race of people, and that's a fact. *(Exits C.)*

BENEATHA *(Turning slowly in her chair)* And then there are all those prophets who would lead us out of the wilderness—*(Rises, crosses U.C. to chair R. of kitchen table. Sits.* WALTER *slams out of the house.)* Into the swamps!

RUTH Bennie, why you always gotta be pickin' on your brother? Can't you be a little sweeter sometimes?

(Door opens. WALTER *walks in.)*

WALTER *(To* RUTH*)* I need some money for carfare.

RUTH *(Looks at him, then warms, teasing, but tenderly)* Fifty cents? *(She crosses D.L. front of table, gets her purse from handbag.)* Here, take a taxi.

Letters to a Student Revolutionary

by Elizabeth Wong (1989)

Characters: KAREN—A modern young Chinese woman, Karen is not content with the choices she is offered by life in China. As a young girl, she had witnessed her mother being captured and executed.
BROTHER—Karen's brother, a devoted Communist soldier, believes that the individual is not important. He proved his loyalty to the state many years ago when he reported his mother for stealing food to feed her children and then witnessed her execution.
LU YAN—As married students, Lu Yan and Karen are active in the student movement for democracy.

Situation: In this play, Chinese American playwright Elizabeth Wong explores the choices that are open to women today in two very different cultures. Karen and Lu Yan optimistically take part in the student demonstrations for freedom in Tiananmen Square. Karen has been corresponding with Bibi, a Chinese American woman, who writes to her about democracy and freedom.

[Lights up on BROTHER, LU YAN, *and* KAREN *who are lying on a plateau on a mountainside.]*

KAREN Look at that sky. I see a dragon coiling ready to spring. I see a water buffalo. There's a big fat lumbering pig. That's you.

BROTHER I feel restless. It's funny to feel so restless.

LU YAN Ask Bibi to send us a copy of this Bill of Rights.

BROTHER What is this "pursuit of hap-

piness"? Even if I were to have it, I would not know how to go about this "pursuit of happiness."

LU YAN I think to be on Lotus Mountain is what is meant by "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

KAREN *(To* BROTHER*)* It means even *you* would count for something, you good for nothing.

BROTHER Oh? Who is lazy and who is not? I have written a novel.

LU YAN So why do you hide it?

BROTHER Because I am a bad novelist.

KAREN Well then, your book will be very popular.

LU YAN I think I will be a teacher in a great university. I have already applied for a transfer.

BROTHER Impossible.

LU YAN Maybe.

KAREN If only I could leave my job. I hate accounting.

LU YAN You do?

BROTHER I didn't know that.

KAREN Bibi sends me many fashion magazines. Only Bibi knows how I wish to be a designer of great fashion for very great ladies.

BROTHER Burlap sacks for old bags.

KAREN Lace, all lace and chiffon.

LU YAN You would look beautiful.

KAREN Not for me. For the people. I would be a dress designer and go to. . . .

LU YAN Paris?

BROTHER London?

KAREN America.

LU YAN People would clap and say, "Ahhh, of course, a Karen original."

BROTHER People will say, "How ugly. I will not wear this in a million years."

KAREN I would have a name. Then once I am famous as a clothes designer, I will quit and I would do something else. Maybe be a forest ranger.

BROTHER Or a fireman.

LU YAN Or an astronaut.

BROTHER Or a member of the central committee.

LU YAN Hah! You must be very old to be a member of the central committee.

KAREN Yes, a fossil. *(Beat)* Is it possible to be a somebody?

BROTHER Yes, I am a grain of sand!

KAREN A piece of lint.

LU YAN Those old men on the central committee. What do they know about us? Perhaps we should all take up our books and stone the committee with our new ideas.

BROTHER Lu Yan thinks he can change the world. But I'm telling you if we are patient, all things will come. *(Beat)* Things that die allow new things to grow and flourish.

KAREN Oh, my brother is a philosopher.

LU YAN No, he is right. They will die off and leave us with a nation of students. No politicians. Just you and me and Karen.

KAREN Three wolves on the mountainside, sitting in the sun.

LU YAN Change is sure to come.

KAREN This is changing me.

(KAREN *indicates a small pile of books.)*

LU YAN *(Looks at the titles)* Hemingway. Martin Luther King.

KAREN Bibi sent them to me. And this.

(KAREN *turns on a tape recorder. The music is Karen Carpenter's "We've Only Just Begun." They listen.)*

The Dramatic Circle

by Adrienne Kennedy (1992)

Characters: SUZANNE ALEXANDER—Waiting in London for her husband to return from a dangerous mission in Africa, Suzanne Alexander is plagued with breathlessness, sleepwalking, and hysteria.
ALICE ALEXANDER—Helpless to comfort her sister-in-law, Alice Alexander can only accompany her to the American Embassy every day to inquire about her missing brother and to try to keep up her own optimism.
DR. FREUDENBERGER—A compassionate and perceptive physician, Dr. Freudenberger has a premonition that Professor Alexander might be enduring hardships and that his wife Suzanne might also be victimized. To prepare Suzanne for the darkness he knows she must face, the doctor introduces Suzanne and Alice to the classic novel *Dracula.* The group reads an excerpt from Dr. Stewart's diary in which he goes through bad times, and a woman, Lucy, is the victim of an unfair, tragic attack.

Situation: This radio play by African American playwright Adrienne Kennedy grew from a time in her own past when she waited in London for three weeks for her husband to return from Africa. In this scene, the two American women, desperate to escape their nerve-wracking and lonely waiting for even a little while, join a group that meets to read aloud from the classics.

DR. FREUDENBERGER Your sister-in-law and I have had a good talk. I was thinking, since you're both here waiting for Professor Alexander, perhaps you'd welcome a little diversion. I'd like to invite you both to my home. My wife and I have a dramatic circle. We're currently reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* Readings will distract you both while you're waiting for Professor Alexander. Suzanne, you could read the role of Lucy, and Alice, you might read Mina. My house is in the Little Boltons.

ALICE ALEXANDER Very well. Thank you, we are lonely. We know no one here. We're to see a West African writer, but he's in Paris. We will be happy to come to your dramatic circle.

DR. FREUDENBERGER Lovely. Please come this evening, you're nearby. My wife, Heike, is a translator. She makes tea. We have sherry.

ALICE ALEXANDER Thank you.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER Thank you. Goodbye, Dr. Freudenberger.

ALICE ALEXANDER Goodbye, Dr. Freudenberger.

DR. FREUDENBERGER Oh no, please, please. I'm Sebastian.

(Overlapping goodbyes)

ALICE ALEXANDER As we left I heard Dr. Freudenberger reading the paper I'd given him.

DR. FREUDENBERGER "My life was transformed. Violence flared savagely when mobs appeared and the courtyards of the Tuileries ran with the blood of Swiss Guards. Danger struck everywhere."

(Music—Wagner chorus. Dramatic circle greetings)

ALICE ALEXANDER We arrived at eight for the reading of *Dracula.* Dr. Freudenberger's parlor was small and dark with water-stained gold-and-white wallpaper. His tall wife, Heike, poured tea. Dr. Freudenberger sat behind a large desk, we read from crimson books. He had a giant handwritten script. We later discovered that all the participants were his patients. We read sitting in a circle.

(Music and voices in background)

DR. FREUDENBERGER Ladies and gentlemen, please, everyone. We have two new actors tonight. They're both from America. I've invited them here to join us while they're here in England. In fact, both are writers themselves. Mrs. Alexander, Suzanne, writes essays and plays and Miss Alexander, Alice, writes poetry. So, let us begin.

Dracula, Chapter 15. Dr. Stewart's diary continued: "For a while sheer anger mastered me, it was as if he had, during her life, struck Lucy on the face. I smote the table hard and rose up as I said to him, 'Dr. Helsing, are you mad?' He raised his head and looked at me. And somehow the tenderness of his face calmed me at once. 'Would that I were. My madness were easy to bear compared with truth like this. Oh, my friend, why think you did I go so far round? Why take so long to tell you so simple a thing? Was it because I hate you and have hated you all my life? Was it because I wished to give you pain? Was it that I wanted now so late revenge for that time when you saved my life from a fearful death?'"

WOMAN *(Reading)*: "'Oh, no. Forgive me,' said I. He went on."

WOMAN *(Reading)*: "We found the child awake."

DR. FREUDENBERGER "It had had a sleep and taken some food and altogether was going on well. Dr. Vincent took the bandage from its throat and showed us the punctures. There was no mistaking the similarity to those which had been on Lucy's throat. They were smaller and the edges looked fresher, that was all. We asked Vincent to what he attributed them and he replied that it must have been a bite of some animal, perhaps a rat, but for his own part he was inclined to think that it was one of the bats which are so numerous on the northern heights of London. 'Out of so many harmless ones,' he said, 'there may be some wild specimen from the south of a more malignant species. Some sailor may have brought one home and it managed to escape or even from the zoological gardens a young one may have got loose, or one he bred there from a vampire. These things do occur, you know. Only ten days ago a wolf got out, and was, I believe, traced up in this direction. For a week after the children were playing nothing but Red Ridinghood on the heath. And in every alley on the place until this bloofer lady scare came along. Since then it has been quite a gala time with them. Even this poor little mite when he woke up today asked the nurse if he might go away.'"

(Music. Voices)

ALICE ALEXANDER After reading *Dracula* we had tea and sherry and listened to music. Dr. Freudenberger pulled his chair next to the divan.

(Piano music—Chopin)

DR. FREUDENBERGER Tell me about your teaching in Ghana.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER Oh, we teach Césaire, the plays of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Richard Wright and many other writers.

DR. FREUDENBERGER And do you write plays?

SUZANNE ALEXANDER My most recent play is *She Talks to Beethoven,* a play set in Ghana about a time two years ago when David disappeared.

DR. FREUDENBERGER He has disappeared before?

SUZANNE ALEXANDER There were threats against his life, and he disappeared to protect me from danger.

DR. FREUDENBERGER He must love you a great deal.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER We went to school together as children. We won the state reading contest together.

ALICE ALEXANDER After tea we read *Dracula* again. Then we started to say good night. Sebastian was once more at Suzanne's side.

DR. FREUDENBERGER How do you spend your days in London?

ALICE ALEXANDER Well, we walk all over, in Primrose Hill, Regent's Park, along Charing Cross Road. After we leave American Express we take tours of Trafalgar Square. Yesterday we went to Windsor in the rain.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER Victoria grieved for Albert there.

ALICE ALEXANDER In the evenings we return on the tour bus to Old Brompton Road and sit by the gas fire and write David.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER Where is he? Where's my husband?

DR. FREUDENBERGER Suzanne, you must rest. I'll walk you both home, you're just along the road. Perhaps I can help you. I know someone at the American Embassy, I'll ring there tomorrow. Also, another patient's daughter has lived in Ghana for years. I'll talk to her, but, Suzanne, you must not think of returning to Ghana. It might kill the baby. I forbid it.

SUZANNE ALEXANDER I understand.

DR. FREUDENBERGER I'll go with you to talk to the American ambassador tomorrow.

The Mask of Hiroshima

by Ernest Ferlita (1966)

Characters: CHORUS—The chorus is dressed in black and functions much like the choruses in Greek classics. The chorus recounts the human side of the dropping of the atomic bomb and recounts the details of the present.
OKUMA—He is a small Japanese man of sixty. His wife died seven years ago in the atomic

explosion. He is a tailor and wears a kimono.
SHINJI—He is a Japanese man of twenty-nine who wears Western clothes. He is Okuma's son-in-law and a teacher. His wife, Hisa, is pregnant and has a fever.

Situation: The action of the play takes place in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1952, seven years after the city was destroyed by an atomic bomb. There is a bare platform at centerstage, and in front of the platform is the acting area of dream and memory. At the start of the play, the characters sit in full view of the audience. The chorus sits apart and then approaches the audience. In this scene, Okuma and Shinji discuss what is best for Hisa.

Chorus Here we are in the city of seven rivers.
Seven years have passed, seven years
since that drift of elemental power
unleashed its light across our sky
to dim the rising sun.
*(*OKUMA *rises.)*
The man of many moons is Mister Okuma.
He is a tailor by trade.
His daughter Hisa is in bed with a fever,
and here he waits,
in the Hospital of the Red Cross.
*(*SHINJI *rises and paces. He walks with a slight limp.)*
Waiting with Okuma is Shinji Ishikawa.
Shinji is his son-in-law.
He is a teacher.
He remembers the last time his wife was sick.
But now there is more to fear,
for now she is with child.

OKUMA I hope it is a boy.

SHINJI I know that's what Hisa wants.

OKUMA Everybody wants a boy. Some day it may be possible to decide ahead of time.
Then they will have to pass a law against boys.
(Quickly)
But I'll have you know I was very glad
when my little Hisa was born.
Yes, yes, that was a day
oversprinkled with flowers.
(There is a rumble of thunder.)
It is going to rain.
*(*SHINJI *moves a couple of paces to see if the doctor is on his way, limping slightly.*
OKUMA *watches him.)*

OKUMA I am ashamed.

SHINJI Why?

OKUMA I am ashamed that I alone, of all my family,
passed through that day unhurt.
On you, on Hisa, I see its marks so clearly;
on my wife it was the mark of death.
Why was I spared?
What god made me go alone the night before
to see my mother in Mukaihara?
"Come with me," I said to my wife.
"No," she said, "they will blow up the train."
And she begged me not to go.
When I got back and found her body,
the dark flowers of her kimono
had sucked in the sun
and left their shapes upon her skin.
*(*SHINJI *turns his face away. A clock strikes seven.)*

OKUMA *(After the first stroke)*
Seven o'clock. Seven is a good number.
Nothing bad ever
happens at seven.

The Dining Room

by A. R. Gurney Jr. (1982)

Characters: FATHER—Father insists on proper speech and behavior from his children and on perfection from his maid.
ANNIE—Annie, the family maid, is hard-working and polite despite having such a perfectionist employer.
GIRL—Father's daughter, she absolutely adores him. He is affectionate toward her but is continually correcting and instructing her.
BOY—Like his sister, he adores his father; and like his sister, he is constantly being corrected or instructed.

Situation: This play has just one set, a dining room. In this play, Gurney portrays dining rooms as symbolic of the changing lifestyle of the American upper middle class. Here he portrays the dining room as it once was—the center of family life.

FATHER Annie. . . .
(ANNIE *is almost to the kitchen door.*)

ANNIE Yes, sir. . . .

FATHER Did I find a seed in my orange juice yesterday morning?

ANNIE I strained it, sir.

FATHER I'm sure you did, Annie. Nonetheless I think I may have detected a small seed.

ANNIE I'll strain it twice, sir.

FATHER Seeds can wreak havoc with the digestion, Annie.

ANNIE Yes, sir.

FATHER They can take root. And grow.

ANNIE Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

(ANNIE *goes out.* FATHER *drinks his orange juice carefully, and reads his newspaper. A little* GIRL *sticks her head out through the dining room door.*)

GIRL Daddy. . . .

FATHER Yes, good morning, Lizzie Boo.

GIRL Daddy, could Charlie and me—

FATHER Charlie and I. . . .

GIRL . . . Charlie and I come out and sit with you while you have breakfast?

FATHER You certainly may, Lizzikins. I'd be delighted to have the pleasure of your company, provided—

GIRL Yippee!

FATHER I said, PROVIDED you sit quietly, without leaning back in your chairs, and don't fight or argue.

GIRL (*Calling into kitchen*) He says we *can!*

FATHER I said you *may*, sweetheart.
(*The* GIRL *comes out adoringly, followed by a little* BOY.)

GIRL (*Kissing her* FATHER) Good morning, Daddy.

BOY (*Kissing him too.*) Morning, Dad.
(*They settle into their seats.* ANNIE *brings out the* FATHER'S *"breakfast."*)

ANNIE Here's your cream, sir.

FATHER Thank you, Annie.

ANNIE You're welcome, sir.
(ANNIE *goes out. The children watch their* FATHER.)

BOY Dad. . . .

FATHER Hmmm?

BOY When do we get to have fresh cream on our shredded wheat?

GIRL When you grow up, that's when.

FATHER I'll tell you one thing. If there's a war, no one gets cream. If there's a war, we'll all have to settle for top of the bottle.

GIRL Mother said she was thinking about having us eat dinner in here with you every night.

FATHER Yes. Your mother and I are both thinking about that. And we're both looking forward to it. As soon as you children learn to sit up straight. . . . (*They quickly do.*) . . . then I see no reason why we shouldn't all have a pleasant meal together every evening.

BOY Could we try it tonight, Dad? Could you give us a test?

FATHER No, Charlie. Not tonight. Because tonight we're giving a small dinner party. But I hope very much you and Liz will come down and shake hands.

GIRL I get so shy, Dad.

FATHER Well you'll just have to learn, sweetie pie. Half of life is learning to meet people.

BOY What's the other half, Dad?
(*Pause. The* FATHER *fixes him with a steely gaze.*)

FATHER Was that a crack?

BOY No, Dad. . . .

FATHER That was a crack, wasn't it?

BOY No, Dad. Really. . . .

FATHER That sounded very much like a smart-guy wise-crack to me. And people who make cracks like that don't normally eat in dining rooms.

BOY I didn't mean it as a crack, Dad.

FATHER Then we'll ignore it. We'll go on with our breakfast.
(ANNIE *comes in.*)

ANNIE (*To* GIRL) Your car's here, Lizzie. For school.

GIRL (*Jumping up*) OK.

FATHER (*To* GIRL) Thank you, Annie.

GIRL Thank you, Annie. . . . (*Kisses* FATHER) Good-bye, Daddy.

FATHER Good-bye, darling. Don't be late. Say good morning to the driver. Sit quietly in the car. Work hard. Run. Run. Good-bye.

(GIRL *goes off.* FATHER *returns to his paper. Pause.* BOY *sits watching his* FATHER.)

BOY Dad, can I read the funnies?

FATHER Certainly. Certainly you may.

(*He carefully extracts the second section and hands it to his son. Both read, the* BOY *trying to imitate the* FATHER *in how he does it. Finally—*)

FATHER This won't mean much to you, but the government is systematically ruining this country.

BOY Miss Kelly told us about the government.

FATHER Oh, really. And who is Miss Kelly, pray tell?

BOY She's my teacher.

FATHER I don't remember any Miss Kelly.

BOY She's new, Dad.

FATHER I see. And what has she been

telling you?

BOY She said there's a depression going on.

FATHER I see.

BOY People all over the country are standing in line for bread.

FATHER I see.

BOY So the government has to step in and do something.
(*Long pause. Then—*)

FATHER Annie!

ANNIE (*Coming out of kitchen*) Yes, sir.

FATHER I'd very much like some more coffee, please.

ANNIE Yes, sir.
(ANNIE *goes out.*)

FATHER You tell Miss Kelly she's wrong.

BOY Why?

FATHER I'll tell you exactly why. If the government keeps on handing out money, no one will want to work. And if no one wants to work, there won't be anyone around to support such things as private schools. And if no one is supporting private schools, then Miss Kelly will be standing on the bread lines along with everyone else. You tell Miss Kelly that, if you please. Thank you, Annie.

(ANNIE *comes in and pours coffee.* FATHER *returns to his paper.* ANNIE *has retreated to the kitchen.* BOY *reads his funnies for a moment. Then—*)

BOY Dad. . . .

FATHER (*Reading*) Hmmm?

BOY Could we leave a little earlier today?

FATHER We'll leave when we always leave.

BOY But I'm always late, Dad.

FATHER Nonsense.

BOY I am, Dad. Yesterday I had to walk into assembly while they were still singing the hymn.

FATHER A minute or two late. . . .

BOY Everyone looked at me, Dad.

FATHER You tell everyone to concentrate on that hymn.

BOY I can't, Dad. . . .

FATHER It's that new stoplight on Richmond Avenue. It affects our timing.

BOY It's not just the new stoplight, Dad. Sometimes I come in when they're already doing arithmetic. Miss Kelly says I should learn to be punctual.

FATHER (*Putting down paper*) Miss Kelly again, eh?

BOY She said if everyone is late, no one would learn any mathematics.

FATHER Now you listen to me, Charlie. Miss Kelly may be an excellent teacher. Her factoring may be flawless, her geography beyond question. But Miss Kelly does not teach us politics. Nor does she teach us how to run our lives. She is not going to tell you, or me, to leave in the middle of a pleasant breakfast, and get caught in the bulk of the morning traffic, just so that you can arrive in time for a silly hymn. Long after you've forgotten that hymn, long after you've forgotten how to factor, long after you've forgotten Miss Kelly, you will remember these pleasant breakfasts around this dining room table.

The Belle of Amherst

by William Luce (1978)

Character: EMILY—Emily is the historical character Emily Dickinson, a well-known nineteenth-century poet. In this scene she is fifty-three. She has auburn hair parted in the middle and drawn back to the nape of her neck. She is wearing a simple, white, full-length dress. She is a recluse who possesses tremendous inner strength.

Situation: This one-character play takes place in the Dickinson household in Amherst, Massachusetts. This monologue, set in 1883, opens the play. Emily has invited the audience to tea.

EMILY *(She enters, carrying the teapot. She calls back over her shoulder.)* Yes, Vinnie, I have the tea, dear!

(She places the tea on the tea cart, then looks up wide-eyed at the AUDIENCE. *Slowly she picks up a plate with slices of dark cake on it, walks shyly downstage, and extends it to the* AUDIENCE.*)*

This is my introduction. Black cake. My own special recipe.

Forgive me if I'm frightened. I never see strangers and hardly know what I say. My sister, Lavinia—she's younger than I—she says I tend to wander back and forth in time. So you must bear with me. I was born December tenth, eighteen thirty, which makes me—*fifty-three!*

Welcome to Amherst. My name is Emily Elizabeth Dickinson. Elizabeth is for my Aunt Elisabeth Currier. She's father's sister. Oh, how the trees stand up straight when they hear Aunt Libbie's little boots come thumping into Amherst! She's the only male relative on the female side.

Dear Aunt Libbie.

But I don't use my middle name anymore—since I became a *poet.*

Professor Higginson, the literary critic, doesn't think my poems are—no matter. I've had seven poems published—anonymously, to be sure. So you see why I prefer to introduce myself to you as a poet.

Here in Amherst, I'm known as Squire Edward Dickinson's half-cracked daughter. Well, I am! The neighbors can't figure me out. I don't cross my father's ground to any house or town. I haven't left the house for years.

The Soul selects her own Society—
Then—shuts the Door.

*(*EMILY *turns to the window, still holding the cake.)*

Why should I socialize with village gossips? There goes one of them now—Henrietta Sweetser—everyone knows Henny. She'd even intimidate the anti-Christ. Look at her! She's strolling by the house, trying to catch a glimpse of me. Would *you* like that?

So I give them something to talk about. I dress in white all year around, even in winter. "Bridal white," Henny calls it.

(She mimics back-fence gossips.)

"Dear, dear! Dresses in bridal white, she does, every day of the blessed year. Year in, year out. Disappointed in love as a girl, so I hear. Poor creature. All so very sad. And her

sister Lavinia, a spinster too. Didn't you know? Oh, yes. Stayed unmarried just to be at home and take care of Miss Emily. Two old maids in that big house. What a lonely life, to shut yourself away from good people like us."

Indeed!

You should see them come to the door, bearing gifts, craning their necks, trying to see over Vinnie's shoulder. But I'm too fast for them. I've already run upstairs two steps at a time. And I hide there until they leave. You can imagine what they make of that!

One old lady came to the door the other day to get a peek inside. I surprised her by answering the door myself. She stammered something about looking for a house to buy.

(Mischievously)

To spare the expense of moving, I directed her to the cemetery.

A Raisin in the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry (1959)

Character: MAMA—In her early sixties, Lena Younger is graceful, soft-spoken, and strong, both physically and emotionally. She wants her children, Walter and Beneatha, to be self-confident and well-respected, and she knows she must be the first one to make them feel that way.

Situation: Written by an African American playwright, this play is set in Chicago's South Side sometime after World War II. The apartment that the Youngers—an extended African American family—live in is cramped and shabby. In this scene, Mama finds a good use for a large share of the insurance money she received at her husband's death.

MAMA *(Crosses R. to* WALTER*)* Listen to me now. I say I been wrong, son. That I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you. *(She turns off radio)* Walter—*(She stops and he looks up slowly at her and she meets his eyes evenly.)* what you ain't never understood is that I ain't got nothing, don't own nothing, ain't really wanted nothing that wasn't for you. There ain't nothing as precious to me—there ain't nothing worth holding on to, money, dreams, nothing else—if it means—if it means it's going to destroy my boy. *(Crosses U.R.C. to buffet for her pocketbook and money. He watches her without speaking or moving.)* I paid the man thirty-five hundred dollars down on the house. That leaves sixty-five hundred dollars. Monday morning I want you to take this money and take three thousand dollars and put it in a savings account for Beneatha's medical schooling.

*(*WALTER *rises, crosses U.C.)*

The rest you put in a checking account—with your name on it. And from now on any penny that comes out of it or that go in it is for you to look after. For you to decide. *(Puts money on coffee table and drops her hands a little helplessly)* It ain't much, but it's all I got in the world and I'm putting it in your hands. I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be.

The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds

by Paul Zindel (1970)

Character: BEATRICE—Beatrice Hunsdorfer, a widow, is the anxious mother of two high school students, named Ruth and Matilda.

Situation: This scene takes place in the kitchen of Beatrice's house, which was converted from a vegetable store. She is calling her daughter's science teacher, Mr. Goodman, to question the safety of a project he has assigned.

BEATRICE Mr. Goodman please. *(Pause)* How would I know if he's got a class? *(She finds a cigarette next to the hot plate.)* Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman? Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen. Yes, I'll wait. *(She lights her cigarette.)* Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen? *(Pause)* Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman, how are you? I'll bet you'll never guess who this is . . . It's Mrs. Hunsdorfer—remember the frozen foods? You know, Ruth tells me she's your new secretary, and I certainly think that's a delight. *(She picks up the phone, crosses to U. of the kitchen table, puts the phone on the table, and sits.)* You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop . . . *(Pause)* The attendance? Isn't that charming. And the cut cards! Imagine. You trust her with . . . Why I didn't know she could type *at all* . . . imagine. *(Pause)* Of course, too much work isn't good for anybody, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never heard of a girl who failed absolutely everything regardless of what she was suffering from. I suppose I should say recovering from . . . *(Pause)* Oh, I'll tell you why I'm calling. It's about those seeds you gave Matilda. She's had them in the house for a while now and they're starting to grow. Now she tells me they had been exposed to radioactivity and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I naturally associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds in my living room. Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else? *(Pause)* Oh . . . *(Pause)* It does sound like an interesting project . . . *(Pause)* No, I'm afraid that at this very moment I don't know what a *mutation* is. *(Pause)* Mr. Goodman . . . Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll get down to the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know all about mutations . . . *(Pause)*

No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know I'm not stupid . . . I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough to worry about without sterility. *(She rises, picks up the phone, crosses R. and returns the phone to its shelf.)* Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our high schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. Really, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman. *(She hangs up the phone, and then turns front.)*

I Remember Mama

by John van Druten (1944)

Character: KATRIN—Katrin is a petite blonde in her early twenties.

Situation: This monologue opens the play and functions as a prologue. The play takes place in and around San Francisco in 1910. Seated at a desk facing the audience, Katrin is writing a reminiscence of her childhood.

KATRIN *(Reading)* "For as long as I could remember, the house on Streiner Street had been home. Papa and Mama had both been born in Norway, but they came to San Francisco because Mama's sisters were here. All of us were born here. Nels, the oldest and the only boy—my sister Christine—and the littlest sister, Dagmar." *(She puts down her manuscript and looks out front.)* It's funny, but when I look back, I always see Nels and Christine and myself looking almost as we do today. I guess that's because the people you see all the time stay the same age in your head. Dagmar's different. She was always the baby—so I see her as a baby. Even Mama—it's funny, but I always see Mama as around forty. She couldn't *always* have been forty. *(She picks up her manuscript and starts to read again.)* "Besides us, there was our boarder, Mr. Hyde. Mr. Hyde was an Englishman who had once been an actor, and Mama was very impressed by his flowery talk and courtly manners. He used to read aloud to us in the evenings. But first and foremost, I remember Mama."

The Taming of the Shrew

by William Shakespeare (1592)

Character: KATHERINE—newly married

Situation: Katherine's husband has just instructed her to tell her headstrong women friends what they owe their husbands. Katherine (ironically?) does just that.

KATHERINE: Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks and true obedience;
Too little payment for so great a debt.
Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.
. . . . . .
My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more,
To bandy word for word and frown for frown;
But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,

That seeming to be most which we indeed
least are.
Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
And place your hands below your husband's
foot:
In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready; may it do him ease.

I Love You, I Love You Not

by Wendy Kesselman (1988)

Character: DAISY—Daisy is a typical adolescent who is on a roller coaster of emotions. She feels that her parents are overbearing and that they do not understand her.

Situation: This play is set in the present in a country house, where Daisy is visiting her grandmother, Nana, for the weekend. Nana buys old classic books for Daisy. In this scene, Daisy's parents have called to make sure she is eating correctly and doing her homework.

[Light comes up on DAISY, *talking on the phone.]*

DAISY I hear. *(Long pause)* I hear you. *(Pause)* I hear you, Ma. *(Pause)* Okay. *(Pause)* Okay. *(Pause)* I said okay, didn't I? *(Pause)* O-KAY. *(Pause)* I'm sorry. *(Pause)* I said I was sorry. *(Pause)* I said it, didn't I? Didn't I? Didn't I just say it? *(Pause)* Well I did. *(Pause)* Well maybe you didn't hear me. *(Pause)* I'm not. *(Pause)* I'm not, Ma. *(Pause)* I'm not using a tone. *(Pause)* I am listening. *(Pause)* I—yes I am. *(Pause)* I am, I am. *(Pause)* Ma please. *(Pause)* Oh please don't. *(Pause)* Don't put him on. *(Pause)* Ma, do you have—Hi. *(Pause)* Fine. How are you? *(Pause)* Of course I heard her. I just talked to her. I am not using a tone. Why do you two always say the exact same thing? I mean, always.

DAISY *(After a pause)* I'll practise, okay? *(Pause)* I'll eat. *(Pause)* I'm already eating. *(She grabs a piece of cake and stuffs it into her mouth.)* I'm eating, I'm eating. *(Pause)* No, I didn't. *(Pause)* Uh . . . *(Looking at Nana)* "ANNA KARENINA." *(Pause)* Just a few. Not many. *(Pause, looking at the books.)* About twenty. *(Pause)* They're not dirty. *(Pause)* They're not old. *(Pause, picking up an ancient book whose pages are falling out)* Well, maybe just a little old. *(Pause)* I have room. *(Pause)* On the top shelf. *(Pause)* The *very* top. *(Pause)* I know I can get them out of the library. *(Mumbling half to herself)* It's just not the same.

Fences

by August Wilson (1985)

Character: ROSE—She is a forty-three-year-old woman, devoted to her husband Troy and their son, Cory.

Situation: Written by an African American playwright, this play is set in 1957. It is the story of the Maxsons, who live in an ancient two-story brick house set off a small alley in a big-city neighborhood. Just before this monologue, Rose told her husband that she knows about his affair with another woman.

ROSE I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about

me. Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? You not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Troy. I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams . . . and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom.

But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . . with the darkness falling in on me . . . I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man in the world. And wherever you was going . . . I wanted to be there with you. Cause you was my husband. Cause that's the only way I was gonna survive as your wife. You always talking about what you give . . . and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take . . . and don't even know nobody's giving!

The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe

by Jane Wagner (1986)

Character: TRUDY—Insane is the first adjective that comes to mind when describing this bag lady. The truth is, Trudy is madly sane. She is brilliantly perceptive, very funny, and highly verbal. She is not intimidated by reality.

Situation: Set in modern-day Manhattan, this scene focuses on Trudy, a bag lady who wanders through the city's streets verbalizing her thoughts. This monologue opens the one-woman play.

TRUDY Here we are, standing on the corner of
"Walk, Don't Walk."
You look away from me, tryin' not to catch my eye,
but you didn't turn fast enough, *did* you?

You don't like my *ras*py voice, do you?
I got this *ras*py voice
'cause I have to yell all the time
'cause nobody around here ever
LISTENS to me.

You don't like that I scratch so much; yes, and excuse me,
I scratch so much
'cause my neurons are
on *fire.*

And I admit my smile is not at its Pepsodent best
'cause I think my
caps must've somehow got
osteo*porosis.*

And if my eyes seem to be twirling around like fruit flies—
the better to see you with, my dears!

Look at me,
you mammalian-brained LUNKHEADS!
I'm not just talking to myself. I'm talking to you, too.
And to you
and you
and you
and you and you and you!

SCENES
Monologues for Men

Cyrano de Bergerac
by Edmond Rostand (1897)

Character: CYRANO DE BERGERAC—Captain of the Cadets of Gascoyne, Cyrano is the greatest swordsman in France, able to defeat a hundred enemies singlehandedly. He is also a wit, a poet, and a philosopher, generous and honorable. All of these impressive qualities, however, seem to be overshadowed by his astonishingly large nose.

Situation: This monologue is part of a scene in which Cyrano confesses to his friend, Le Bret, that he loves Roxanne. Le Bret tells Cyrano to reveal his love to Roxanne and assures Cyrano that he is a hero in her eyes. Cyrano responds with this speech.

CYRANO My old friend—look at me,
And tell me how much hope remains for me
With this protuberance! Oh I have no more
Illusions! Now and then—bah! I may grow
Tender, walking alone in the blue cool
Of evening, through some garden fresh with flowers
After the benediction of the rain;
My poor big devil of a nose inhales
April . . . and so I follow with my eyes
Where some boy, with a girl upon his arm,
Passes a patch of silver . . . and I feel
Somehow, I wish I had a woman too,
Walking with little steps under the moon,
And holding my arm so, and smiling. Then
I dream—and I forget . . . And then I see
The shadow of my profile on the wall!

Julius Caesar
by William Shakespeare (1599)

Character: MARK ANTONY–A close friend and political ally of Julius Caesar's, Antony knows that Caesar did not want to be king of Rome.

Situation: Caesar has been assassinated for political reasons. His assassins, who include Brutus, have allowed Antony to speak at Caesar's funeral on the condition that he say nothing to make the crowd riot against the assassins, who control Rome now that Caesar is dead. Antony wants to see Caesar's assassins brought to justice.

MARK ANTONY Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,

Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgement! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me:
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

[later in the same funeral oration]

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O, now you weep; and, I perceive, you feel
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

[At the play's end, Antony stands over the body of Brutus, who has fallen on his sword in remorse for his part in Caesar's murder.]

This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world 'This was a man!'

Wine in the Wilderness

by Alice Childress (1969)

Character: BILL—A confident artist, Bill Jameson is preparing for an exhibition.

Situation: This comedy-drama is set in a one-room apartment in a Harlem tenement building. The apartment is in a state of artistic disorder, decorated with pictures and ornaments from a variety of cultures. Bill is preparing a triptych (three paintings that combine to form one work) for an upcoming exhibition. In the following scene, Bill is about to start painting a woman named Tommy when a phone call from his agent delays him. Unbeknownst to her, Tommy represents Bill's image of a lost and abandoned African American woman.

BILL . . . *(Phone rings. He finds an African throwcloth and hands it to her.)* Put this on. Relax, don't go way mad, and all the rest-a that jazz. Change, will you? I apologize. I'm sorry. *(He picks up the phone.)* Hello, survivor of a riot speaking. Who's calling? *(*TOMMY *retires behind the screen with the throw. During the conversation she undresses and wraps the throw around her. We see* TOMMY *and* BILL, *but they can't see each other.)* Sure, told you not to worry. I'll be ready for the exhibit. If you don't dig it, don't show it. Not time for you to see it yet. Yeah, yeah, next week. You just make sure your exhibition room is big enough to hold the crowds that's gonna congregate to see this fine chick I got here. *(This perks* TOMMY's *ears up.)* You ought to see her. The finest black woman in the world . . . No, . . . the finest *any* woman in the world . . . This gorgeous satin chick is . . . is . . . black velvet moonlight . . . an ebony queen of the universe . . . *(*TOMMY *can hardly believe her ears.)* One look at her and you go back to Spice Islands . . . She's Mother Africa . . . you flip, double flip. She has come through everything that has been put on her . . . *(He unveils the gorgeous woman he has painted . . . "Wine in the Wilderness."* TOMMY *believes he is talking about her.)* Regal . . . grand . . . magnificent, fantastic . . . You would vote her the woman you'd most like to meet on a desert island, or around the corner from anywhere. She's here with me now . . . and I don't know if I want to show her to you or anybody else . . . I'm beginnin' to have this deep attachment . . . She sparkles, man, Harriet Tubman, Queen of the Nile . . . sweetheart, wife, mother, sister, friend. . . .The night . . . a black diamond . . . A dark, beautiful dream . . . A cloud with a silvery lining . . . Her wrath is a storm over the Bahamas. "Wine in the Wilderness" . . . The memory of Africa . . . the *now* of things . . . but best of all and most important . . . She's tomorrow . . . she's my tomorrow . . .

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown

by Clark Gesner, based on the comic strip *Peanuts* by Charles M. Schulz (1968)

Character: CHARLIE BROWN—Although Charlie Brown is a bright young boy, he lacks self-confidence. He often feels lonely, depressed, and sorry for himself.

Situation: This monologue is set in a typical American school yard during lunchtime.

CHARLIE BROWN I think lunchtime is about the worst time of the day for me. Always having to sit here alone. Of course, sometimes mornings aren't so pleasant, either—waking up and wondering if anyone would really miss me if I never got out of bed. Then there's the night, too—lying there and thinking about all the stupid things I've done during the day. And all those hours in between—when I do all those stupid things. Well, lunchtime is *among* the worst times of the day for me.

Well, I guess I'd better see what I've got. *(He opens the bag, unwraps a sandwich, and looks inside.)* Peanut butter. *(He bites and chews.)* Some psychiatrists say that people who eat peanut butter sandwiches are lonely. I guess they're right. And if you're really lonely, the peanut butter sticks to the roof of your mouth. *(He munches quietly, idly fingering the bench.)* Boy, the PTA sure did a good job of painting these benches. *(He looks off to one side.)* There's that cute little red-headed girl eating her lunch over there. I wonder what she'd do if I went over and asked her if I could sit and have lunch with her. She'd probably laugh right in my face. It's hard on a face when it gets laughed in. There's an empty place next to her on the bench. There's no reason why I couldn't just go over and sit there. I could do that right now. All I have to do is stand up. *(He stands.)* I'm standing up. *(He sits.)* I'm sitting down. I'm a coward. I'm so much of a coward she wouldn't even think of looking at me. She hardly ever *does* look at me. In fact, I can't remember her ever looking at me. Why shouldn't she look at me? Is there any reason in the world why she shouldn't look at me? Is she so great and am I so small that she couldn't spare one little moment just to . . . *(He freezes.)* She's looking at me. *(In terror he looks one way, then another.)* She's *looking* at me.

(His head looks all around, frantically trying to find something else to notice. His teeth clench. Tension builds. Then, with one motion, he pops the paper bag over his head.)

A Thousand Clowns

by Herb Gardner (1961)

Character: MURRAY—Murray Burns is in his mid-thirties and used to write for a television situation comedy. He has been unemployed since he quit that job.

Situation: Murray has a one-room, second-floor apartment on the Lower West Side of Manhattan. Murray's older brother, Arnold, acts as Murray's agent. Here, Murray confronts his brother, whom he considers a prize example of a total conformist.

MURRAY Oh, Arnie, you don't understand any more. You got that wide stare that people

stick in their eyes so nobody'll know their head's asleep. You got to be a shuffler, a moaner. You want me to come sit and eat fruit with you and watch the clock run out. You start to drag and stumble with the rotten weight of all the people who should have been told off, all the things you should have said, all the specifications that aren't yours. The only thing you got left to reject is your food in a restaurant if they do it wrong and you can send it back and make a big fuss with the waiter. *(*MURRAY *turns away from* ARNOLD, *goes to window seat, sits down.)* Arnold, five months ago I forgot what *day* it was. I'm on the subway on my way to work and I didn't know what day it was and it scared the hell out of me. *(Quietly)* I was sitting in the express looking out the window same as every morning watching the local stops go by in the dark with an empty head and my arms folded, not feeling great and not feeling rotten, just not feeling, and for a minute I couldn't remember, I didn't know, unless I really concentrated, whether it was a Tuesday or a Thursday—or a—for a minute it could have been *any* day, Arnie—sitting in the train going through any day—in the dark through any year—Arnie, it scared the hell out of me. *(Stands up)* You got to know what day it is. You got to know what's the name of the game and what the rules are with nobody else telling you. You have to own your days and name them, each one of them, every one of them, or else the years go right by and none of them belong to you.

Man of La Mancha

The book for this musical was written by Dale Wasserman (1966).

Character: CERVANTES—A tall, thin man in his late forties, Cervantes displays a gentle courtliness. He is so honest that he is almost self-destructive. Cervantes's life is a catalog of catastrophe, and yet he never gives up hope or loses his sense of wonder at the world.

Situation: This musical play is an adaptation of *Don Quixote* by Cervantes. Born in 1547, Cervantes was a contemporary of Shakespeare. Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, set in Spain at the end of the sixteenth century, is about an idealistic knight whom everyone believes is insane. In this scene, set in a prison cell in the city of Seville, Cervantes muses about what madness actually is.

CERVANTES I have lived nearly fifty years, and I have seen life as it is. Pain, misery, hunger . . . cruelty beyond belief. I have heard the singing from taverns and the moans from bundles of filth on the streets. I have been a soldier and seen my comrades fall in battle . . . or die more slowly under the lash in Africa. I have held them in my arms at the final moment. These were men who saw life as it is, yet they died despairing. No glory, no gallant last words . . . only their eyes filled with confusion, whimpering the question: "Why?" I do not think they asked why they were dying, but why they had lived. *(He rises, and through the following speech moves into the character of* DON QUIXOTE.*)* When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies? Perhaps to be too practical is madness. To surrender dreams—this may be madness. To seek treasure where there is

only trash. Too much sanity may be madness. And maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it should be.

The Piano Lesson

by August Wilson (1990)

Character: BOY WILLIE—He is a thirty-year-old man who has an infectious grin and a boyishness that is apt for his name. He is brash, impulsive, talkative, and somewhat crude in speech and manner.

Situation: Boy Willie needs cash so that he can buy some land that has just been put on the market. After not having seen his sister for three years, he arrives at her house at five o'clock in the morning and tries to persuade her to sell her piano.

BOY WILLIE Now, I'm gonna tell you the way I see it. The only thing that make that piano worth something is them carvings Papa Willie Boy put on there. That's what make it worth something. That was my great-grandaddy. Papa Boy Charles brought that piano into the house. Now, I'm supposed to build on what they left me. You can't do nothing with that piano sitting up here in the house. That's just like if I let them watermelons sit out there and rot. I'd be a fool. Alright now, if you say to me, Boy Willie, I'm using that piano. I give out lessons on it and that help me make my rent or whatever. Then that be something else. I'd have to go on and say, well, Berniece using that piano. She building on it. Let her go on and use it. I got to find another way to get Sutter's land. But Doaker say you ain't touched that piano the whole time it's been up here. So why you wanna stand in my way? See, you just looking at the sentimental value. See, that's good. That's alright. I take my hat off whenever somebody say my daddy's name. But I ain't gonna be no fool about no sentimental value. You can sit up here and look at the piano for the next hundred years and it's just gonna be a piano. You can't make more than that. Now I want to get Sutter's land with that piano. I get Sutter's land and I can go down and cash in the crop and get my seed. As long as I got the land and the seed then I'm alright. I can always get me a little something else. Cause that land give back to you. I can make me another crop and cash that in. I still got the land and the seed. But that piano don't put out nothing else. You ain't got nothing working for you. Now, the kind of man my daddy was he would have understood that. I'm sorry you can't see it that way. But that's why I'm gonna take that piano out of here and sell it.

A Few Good Men

by Aaron Sorkin (1990)

Character: JESSEP—In his forties, Jessep is a lieutenant colonel who is devoted to the Marine Corps.

Situation: Jessep is giving testimony at the court-martial of two marines charged with unofficially disciplining another marine so violently that the marine being disciplined died. This type of internal, unofficial discipline is known as a "Code Red." Jessep has just been told to tell the truth about "Code Red."

JESSEP Captain, for the past month, this man has attempted to put the Marine Corps on trial. I think somebody . . . better address this question or people are liable to start listening to him.
[KAFFEE: Why is it impossible—?]
[JESSEP: Because you can't handle it, son. You can't handle the truth. You can't handle the sad but historic reality.]
[KAFFEE: What reality are you referring to, Colonel?]

JESSEP We live in a world that has walls. And those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? You? *(To Sam)* You, Lt. Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom. You weep for Santiago, and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. The luxury of the blind. The luxury of not knowing what I know: That Santiago's death, while tragic, probably saved lives. And my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you . . . saves lives. You can't handle it. Because deep down, in places you don't talk about, you *want* me on that wall. You need me there. We use words like honor, code, loyalty. We use these words as a backbone to a life spent defending something. You use them as a punchline. I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom I provide, then questions the manner in which I provide it. I'd prefer you just said thank you and went on your way. Otherwise, I'd suggest you pick up a weapon and stand a post.

My Children! My Africa!

by Athol Fugard (1989)

Character: MR. M—A schoolteacher in a black township in South Africa, Mr. M is a truly inspiring teacher who helps young people navigate the treacherous waters of apartheid.

Situation: After learning that his brightest students have organized an illegal political action committee, Mr. M reports them to the police.

MR. M We were on our way to a rugby match at Somerset East. The lorry stopped at the top of the mountain so that we could stretch our legs and relieve ourselves. It was a hard ride on the back of that lorry. The road hadn't been tarred yet. So there I was, ten years old and sighing with relief as I aimed for the little bush. It was a hot day. The sun right over our heads . . . not a cloud in the vast blue sky. I looked out . . it's very high up there at the top of the pass . . . and there it was, stretching away from the foot of the mountain, the great pan of the Karoo . . . stretching away forever, it seemed, into the purple haze and heat of the horizon. Something grabbed my heart at that moment, my soul, and squeezed it until there were tears in my eyes. I had never seen anything so big, so beautiful in all my life. I went to the teacher who was with us and asked him: "Teacher, where will I come to if I start walking that way" . . . and I pointed. He laughed. "Little man," he said, "that way is north. If you start walking that way and just keep on walking, and your legs don't give in, you will see all of Africa! Yes, Africa, little man! You will see the great rivers of the continent: the Vaal, the Zambesi, the Limpopo, the Congo

and then the mighty Nile. You will see the mountains: the Drakensberg, Kilimanjaro, Kenya and the Ruwenzori. And you will meet all our brothers: the little Pygmies of the forests, the proud Masai, the Watusi . . . tallest of the tall and the Kikuyu standing on one leg like herons in a pond waiting for a frog." "Has teacher seen all that?" I asked. "No," he said. "Then how does teacher know it's there?" "Because it is all in the books and I have read the books and if you work hard in school, little man, you can do the same without worrying about your legs giving in."

He was right, Thami. *I* have seen it. It is all there in the books just as he said it was and I have made it mine. I can stand on the banks of all those great rivers, look up at the majesty of all those mountains, whenever I want to. It is a journey I have made many times. Whenever my spirit was low and I sat alone in my room, I said to myself: Walk, Anela! Walk! . . . and I imagined myself at the foot of the Wapadsberg setting off for that horizon that called me that day forty years ago. It always worked! When I left that little room, I walked back into the world a proud man, because I was an African and all the splendor was my birthright.

(Pause) I don't want to make that journey again, Thami. There is someone waiting for me now at the end of it who has made a mockery of all my visions of splendor. He has in his arms my real birthright. I saw him on the television in the Reverend Mbop's lounge. An Ethiopian tribesman, and he was carrying the body of a little child that had died of hunger in the famine . . . a small bundle carelessly wrapped in a few rags. I couldn't tell how old the man was. The lines of despair and starvation on his face made him look as old as Africa itself.

He held that little bundle very lightly as he shuffled along to a mass grave, and when he reached it, he didn't have the strength to kneel and lay it down gently . . . He just opened his arms and let it fall. I was very upset when the program ended. Nobody had thought to tell us his name and whether he was the child's father, or grandfather, or uncle. And the same for the baby! Didn't it have a name? How dare you show me one of our children being thrown away and not tell me its name! I demand to know who is in that bundle!

(Pause) Not knowing their names doesn't matter anymore. They are more than just themselves. The tribesmen and dead child do duty for all of us, Thami. Every African soul is either carrying that bundle or in it.

What is wrong with this world that it wants to waste you all like that . . . my children . . . my Africa! *(Holding out a hand as if he wanted to touch Thami's face)* My beautiful and proud young Africa!

Application ACTIVITIES

Scenes

1. From "A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues," choose a scene for two people that you will direct. Review the entire play to better understand the characters and the subtext of the scene. Hold auditions for the parts (pp. 349–355) and issue critiques (p. 336). After you have cast the roles, review the different approaches to characterization as well as stage business and blocking found in Chapter 4. Hold several practices, and then present your scene to the class. After you have directed the short scene, try directing a short play or a longer scene.

2. The time and place in which a play is written often have a tremendous effect on the work. Select one of the scenes from "A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues" and research the history of its setting. Also, investigate the trends in theater at the time (see Chapter 7). After doing this, evaluate and analyze the historical and cultural influences on the play. Does the play directly reflect its time period? Does it follow the trends in the theater at that time? Describe the effects in an essay. Cite examples from the play.

3. Working in a group, choose a scene from "A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues" and focus on portraying the particular time period and culture that are represented in that selection. This may take some research. As you prepare the selection for presentation, pay close attention to dialect (see pages 147–150), costumes (see Chapter 12), and the characterization (see Chapter 4). Make sure your portrayal is a valid representation of the culture and the time.

Monologues

1. Choose a monologue from "A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues" and study it carefully in the context of the entire play. Present your interpretation of the monologue to the class. You might choose to rewrite or reword the selection, placing it in another time period or setting. It is important to simplify or intensify the meaning for your audience. Remember that this should not be a word-for-word presentation, but your interpretation of the work.

2. Choose a character from one of the monologues. Study the monologue within the context of the entire play. Either write a response to that monologue in the voice of the character who is addressed or rewrite the monologue in any voice you choose. Deliver your monologue to the class, emphasizing the emotions that the original monologue stimulated.

Readers Theater

Plays that might be difficult to stage can often be presented from scripts by a reader or a group of readers. Strictly speaking, **readers theater** is not acting, but it is most definitely theater. In readers theater, a reader serves as the medium to bring the drama and its characters before an audience. Through voice, facial expressions, and controlled but meaningful gestures and stances, the reader creates an imaginary stage peopled with interesting characters.

The appeal of readers theater depends on the interpreters' capacity, through vocal and facial expression, to involve the audience emotionally in the ideas of the author. Unlike conventional theater, the action in readers theater is imaginary rather than physical.

Readers theater takes many forms. The possibilities are limited only by the imagination. The subject matter can be any form of literature: poems, novels, short stories, or plays. It might involve many readers or a single reader. It can include an introduction, selected scenes, narrative connections, or summaries of certain portions of the action. Stage sets, lighting, and costumes are always simplified. Although by using simple movements a reader might provide a general impression of a character, the play is actually being read to the audience—there is no illusion of a fourth wall.

READINGS BY ONE PERSON

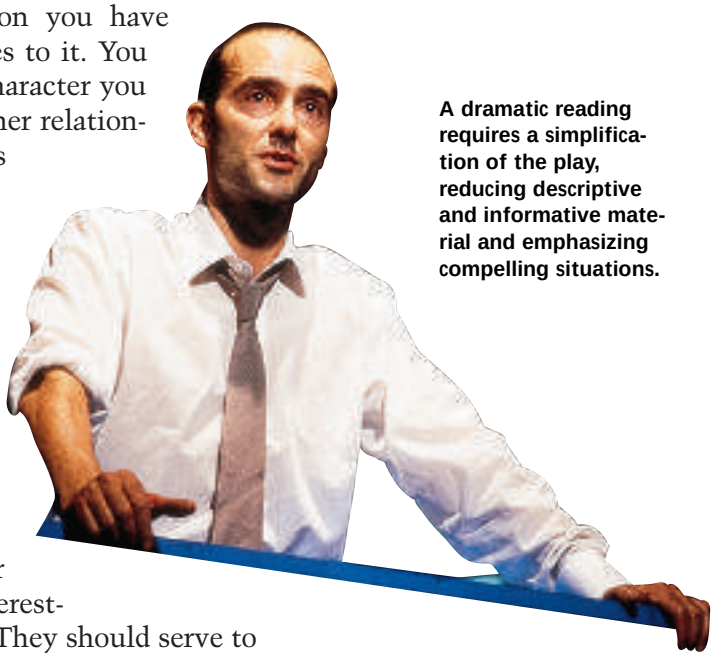
Platform readings of a play by one person usually take one of two different forms: a play review or a dramatic reading. In the former, the play is presented through selected scenes in conjunction with a well-prepared discussion of the author and the literary value of the play. In the latter, the

play, usually in condensed form, is read without comments or possibly with a short introduction and narrative connections between scenes. Some dramatic readings, called **monodramas,** involve "becoming" a single character or the author. Although these two forms of platform readings differ in their purposes and their degrees of formality, both require careful selection and editing of the play and any connecting or background material.

In selecting the literature for presentation, always consider the audience that will hear it. Your selection should not only suit your talents but should also be one you thoroughly enjoy. Your enthusiasm will be contagious.

Because both the play review and the dramatic reading involve interpretation, the principles that apply to all work in drama apply here. You must understand the play as a whole and how the specific selection you have chosen to read contributes to it. You must understand every character you present, including his or her relationship to other characters and to the theme of the entire play. You must be able to re-create their emotions in your presentation.

One-person readings require attention to the following elements:



A dramatic reading requires a simplification of the play, reducing descriptive and informative material and emphasizing compelling situations.

Play Reviews

- Choose passages for reading that are interesting in themselves. They should serve to exemplify the author's style as well as to bring out the personalities of the characters.
- Choose passages that lend themselves to effective reading. Occasionally it is wise to read one act in its entirety, but usually cuttings from a number of scenes are more interesting.
- Take particular care in condensing the plot. Read and study the play thoroughly; then consult any available sources for concise summary information.
- Avoid boring your audience with lengthy discourses on the author's philosophy and literary style.

- Before performing the scenes from the play, briefly describe the main characters. If possible, quote lines that characterize them, using either their own lines or those of other characters.

Dramatic Readings

- Choose passages with strong emotional appeal, preferably with an intermingling of humor and pathos.
- Reduce all descriptive and informative material to a minimum, leaving only compelling situations that lead up to a dramatic climax.
- Choose contrasting characters so they will be easily identified.
- Assume a suitable voice and move sufficiently to suggest the posture and location of each character when he or she speaks.
- Give necessary stage directions, and describe the set clearly. Although subordinate to the dialogue, these should never be presented casually.

GROUP READINGS

A play read by a cast demands careful planning and rehearsal. The play, of course, must be cut carefully to make the action flow properly. The main thrust of the plot must be clear; detailed subplots and lengthy speeches should be eliminated. The passages containing the best scenes of conflict and those essential to the theme should be retained.

In readings of this type, it is sometimes necessary to have a narrator read any introductory or descriptive material and summarize important parts that have been omitted. The narrator can affect the entire presentation, perhaps more than any other person. Situated outside the cast on a platform or behind a lectern, the narrator must have a voice that is clear and pleasing. An effective narrator must possess a strong sense of timing and climax.

Group readings offer unusual opportunities for creative presentations. If you have black or very dark drapes, the performers can wear black clothes and be lighted by spots so only their faces stand out. Spotlights or other individual lighting units work well against neutral curtains, screens, and walls. The performers might stand behind music stands or sit on stools. The stage might contain essential furniture, and the performers might dress in limited costumes to bring more reality to their roles. Settings and costumes, however, should help to create an illusion, so they should not be too striking or realistic. Group readings can take several popular forms.

Choral Reading In a choral reading, a number of actors serve as a chorus or as a narrator. They speak or chant lines individually, in small alternating groups, or in unison. Choral reading can be a powerful form of theater if the script is carefully designed.

Chamber Theater Chamber theater takes a non-dramatic literary work, such as a short story, a children's tale, or an essay, and turns it into a script. Stage directions and narrative phrases are often read. Lines are not necessarily limited to the one actor reading the part; they can even be broken into fragments and read by other actors.

Combination Reading and Performing This type of readers theater combines reading actors and performing actors. As the readers deliver the lines, the performing actors pantomime the action. This approach works well with children's theater and can be varied in many ways. For example, children might be invited to participate by furnishing sounds or by becoming objects, such as trees or doors.

BENEFITS OF READERS THEATER

One great advantage of readers theater is that it does not require memorization, so rehearsal time can be spent developing interpretation skills. Therefore, when a readers theater production is being cast, careful attention must be given to vocal effectiveness and facial flexibility.

Readers theater offers unique opportunities for actors. It is the only form of theater in which one person can take two or more parts without the help of makeup or costume. Because of its focus on the script, readers theater offers excellent opportunities for actors to perfect their interpretive skills while involving the audience in a genuine dramatic experience.

Group readings, such as *Love Letters,* by A. R. Gurney Jr., performed here by Kitty Carlisle Hart and Tony Randall, allow readers theater to be creative and flexible.