

## Shakespeare in the Restoration Theater

### Paper #3: Character Analysis Paper

Due on day of your performance  
(Hard copy for this one)

The goal of this paper is to combine character analysis with theatrical preparation so that even if you aren't an actor, you'll come away from this exercise with a better understanding of your character. There are several components to the assignment; take each one seriously. The day you perform your monologue, you will hand in the following (note: this is not necessarily the order in which you will want to complete these portions; you might want to jump back and forth between sections 2 and 3 as some of those questions complement each other):

1. A summary of your piece, written in modern English as you would say it if you were the character. Try to capture the nuance of the language as closely as possible.
2. written answers to the following questions (based on Steve Shade's "The Basics" handout)
  - a. Who am I? (think rank, age, gender, etc, not just character name)
  - b. Where am I? (situation and location)
  - c. What am I literally doing? What might I be doing?
  - d. What has just happened prior to this speech that might affect my behavior?
  - e. To whom am I speaking? (give the name, but also define the relationship)
  - f. Why am I speaking? What do I want or expect to gain by speaking?
  - g. Why do I want it? (look through the text for specifics)
  - h. What am I willing to do to get it? what means might I use? (make this list as long and specific as possible, backed up by the text)
  - i. What stands in my way? What obstacles must I overcome? What interferes with what I want? Whom must I overcome? With whom might I seek alliance?
  - j. What happens in the course of the speech? In what ways do I alter my approach or what I want in response to another character or my own thoughts?
  - k. What comparable situation might I have experienced (or might face in the future) that could parallel the character's essential action or motivation?
  - l. What work does this scene do in the larger play? Is it a turning point? A beginning? An end?
3. a copy of your script marked up for:
  - a. breathing – where are your options for catching your breath? (indicate with ‘)
  - b. units of action – where does the mood shift? intensify? speed up? slow down? (draw lines dividing sections, and label)
  - c. specific language analysis of words that seem important: ie why “dragon” and not “lion” or why “wrath” and not “anger”? and the action words that cue you about intent (circle key words, provide at least a few sentences analyzing significance)
  - d. if your piece is poetry, indicate where the stressed syllables fall, and note enjambed lines. (iambes are usually marked ‘ ’ ’ ’, trochees ‘ ’, etc)
  - e. physical cues – where might you move? Walk? kneel? dance? raise your arms? turn your back on the audience? Look up or in one direction or another?

4. a one paragraph description of what you think is going on in this scene and how you plan to convey it.

Memorization tips: Overall, remember our visiting director's advice to memorize meaning, not just words, and to try taking a deep breath when you get stuck. A class that did a similar activity offers the following additional tips about memorization:

- Write out what you are trying to memorize
- Make an outline of the major points of your speech so you can remember those if you forget the words
- Make sure you have rock-solid comprehension of the lines – preparing a line-by-line close paraphrase is an excellent idea
- Think about pronunciation and gesture as you memorize so that they become part of the memory
- If possible, practice in front of people to help overcome stage fright
- Practice at full tilt, maybe even over the top, so that you remember the emotion and blocking, and so if you get nervous those elements will be there as second nature
- If you find a routine trouble spot, have a paraphrase in mind to move past that point
- Don't cram
- Use props if possible to draw on muscle memory as well as mental
- Focus on a key word to remind you of specific gestures
- Take advantage of dramatic pauses to remember lines
- Don't break character – if something goes wrong, cover. If you break character, you'll probably lose your place