



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Creating a well-rounded and complex character

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Circle-ify!

Activity One: How your character stands

Activity Two: How your character moves

Activity Three: How your character speaks

- Think of a line in your script that represents your character well.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Please sit with your
scene partner and your
journal. Have
something to write with.

ACTING ARTICLE

Character building and what makes a truly great actor

What makes an actor truly great? The actor's job is to bring a scripted character to life. RADA's Dee Cannon outlines 10 questions that must be addressed in order to create a fully-realised three-dimensional person

ACTING

Acting technique is paramount to anyone wanting to be a serious actor. It's quite easy to imitate a character or even an emotion, but where's the depth in that?

How do you bring the dialogue alive? How do you know what choices to make? The goal of a trained actor is to become a fully realised three-dimensional character, with a rich backstory.

Your character must be truthful, not thin, one dimensional, stereotype or cliché.

ACTING

1. Who am I?
2. Where am I?
3. When is it?
4. Where have I just come from?
5. What do I want?
6. Why do I want it?
7. Why do I want it now?
8. What will happen if I don't get it now?
9. How will I get what I want by doing what?
10. What must I overcome?

1. WHO AM I?

The first question is dealing with the type of person you are.

When you play a character in theatre, TV or film, you should know your character as well as you know yourself. As an actor you have to plant those memories, anecdotes and backstory.

1. WHO AM I? – HOW DO YOU BUILD A CHARACTER?

- *The Script*

- give you some initial information about your character
- what other characters say or think about your character can be very revealing.
 - Write all of these things down!

- *Research*

- The time, place – read books, websites, watch movies

- *Imagination*

- Fill in any gaps with your own imagination!

1. WHO AM I?

Activity:

In your journal, write a descriptive paragraph about your character's childhood. Write about his/her family, parents, siblings. Write about his/her experience in school. Describe the home that he or she grew up in.

This is not thorough, yet. Take the time later on your own to write down some more ideas about your character's backstory.

2. WHERE AM I?

- You might find in the script a description of the room you're in

But what does it mean to you?

- Is your character familiar with the surroundings?
 - Is it the first time you've entered this room?
- You need to establish your relationship with your environment because this affects the way you use yourself.
 - The geography will have an impact too

2. WHERE AM I?

Activity:

- With your scene partner, write down where your scene takes place. How does this location connect to each of your characters? This can be in point form.

3. WHEN IS IT?

1. What time of day?
2. What time of year?
3. What year? Modern or period piece?

Activity:

- With your scene partner, write in point form the answers to the above three questions.

4. WHERE HAVE I JUST COME FROM?

- What has your character has been doing, where have they been?
- **When you make an entrance on stage it shouldn't look as if you've just stepped on stage from behind the curtain.**
- What is your state of being supposed to be on your entrance?
 1. Does it tell you in the script?
 2. Has your director informed you of what they would like it to be?
 3. Do you have to invent it?
 4. What's just happened in the scene before?

Just think about real life: where you come from will have conditioned your mood.

4. WHERE HAVE I JUST COME FROM?

Activity:

- With your partner, write down where each of you have just come from. Think about the state of being you are in as the lights come up, or as you enter. Where have you just been? Write this down (can be point form).

5. WHAT DO I WANT?

- This is a key question.
- "Want" means what do you need, what is your intention, your motivation, your action?
 - You should always have an objective.
- Often in a good script, an objective is written into the scene: to end the affair, to propose, to move out.
- Your action can change from scene to scene but you should always work out what you are meant to be doing.

5. WHAT DO I WANT?

- Instead of sitting doing nothing, give yourself a physical action, which can be anything that fits your reason for being in that room, from making a salad to polishing your nails.
- The importance of this is so that you don't look or feel silly on stage doing nothing.
- *You must have a life on stage, you must have a purpose for walking and talking*
 - Don't forget you're trying to be truthful and three-dimensional, and in real life, no one ever comes into a room and stands with their hands by their sides or sits with their hands in their lap and just talks.

5. WHAT DO I WANT?

Activity:

- With your partner, discuss what each of you wants in the scene.
- This is often a more challenging and complex question than the previous ones. Your motivation may change a few times in the scene. You may have one major motivation, and several smaller ones.
- Discuss with your partner, write down your thoughts. This may be a longer conversation, and these thoughts might change as you rehearse.

MORE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

6. Why do I want it?

You must always have a strong justification for your action. Having a strong justification means you have a strong motivation.

7. Why do I want it now?

The "now" gives you an immediacy that is crucial in acting and in any drama.

8. What will happen if I don't get it now?

The stakes should always be high. Otherwise so what? The consequences of not getting what you want should always be very important to you.

MORE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

9. How will I get what I want by doing what?

Once you've worked out what your action is (question 5) you then have to work out your smaller action, which is called an "activity". **You need to work out how you are trying to affect the other person with what you are saying.**

Break your script up into chunks: every time you have a new change of thought, you need to find a transitive verb, a verb that is active, such as to beg, to entice, to charm, to get sympathy.

Remember that this technique is not about the emotional content of what you are saying or feeling but about what you want the other person to feel psychologically.

So, you have to think: how can I affect the other character by doing what? At this stage you should know who your character is, and your choice of active verbs should be informed by your character choice.

It's really about what you don't say and trusting that actions will speak louder than words.

MORE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

10. What must I overcome?

Every actor should always have an inner and an outer obstacle. The outer obstacle is the resistance (usually the other character) to obtaining your action. The inner obstacle is your inner conflict, which you must always plant in a scene even though it can change. There must always be a problem you are trying to overcome.

If you think of yourself in life, you're never without an inner obstacle.

You'll have seen scenes on stage or screen where the inner obstacle has not been properly planted: you get a load of actors just shouting, over-emoting and sometimes just playing the aggression. If the inner obstacle is there, the anger, fear or hate, for example, then you've got something to fight against in the scene. Much more interesting.

FINAL THOUGHTS

To fully transform into a character, to be truthfully and emotionally connected needs hard work, technique, good direction.

But the audience should see none of this. They should see nothing other than the fully realised three-dimensional character right in the truth of the moment.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Think back to the character development activities we did earlier this week.

Remember to use your well-developed body language, movement and voice.