

Shakespearean Scene Analysis

Name _____

Using your script and a separate piece of paper:

Step 1) **Translation.** Know what you are saying. Go through each line in your scene and write the following:

- a. Definitive Paraphrase – line by line using dictionary, editors notes, thesaurus. Get as close to exact meaning as possible.
- b. Connotative Paraphrase – put each line “in your own words.” You can include modern slang, emotional associations, and personal connections – but be careful not to stray to far from author’s intent.
- c. Germinal Paraphrase – short sentence or phrase that wraps up the “essence” of the thought (use for longer passages, soliloquies, monologues.)

Step 2) **Scansion.** Use this tool for finding additional meaning in the text, the rhythm (“music”) in the verse, the emotional tone, and the important words.

- a. Mark all punctuation. Especially notice end stops.
- b. Divide into “feet” (two syllables per “foot”). Mark unstressed (-) and stressed (/) syllables.
- c. Mark all alliteration (consonance, assonance, other sound devices as appropriate.)
- d. Mark all antitheses.
- e. Choose **Operatives**. One operative word per line that will be the focus of your characters vocal energy.

Step 3) **Character Analysis / Given Circumstances.**

- a. List all the facts you find about your character.
- b. List all the suppositions you make about your character based on:
 - what you say about yourself
 - what other characters say about you
 - actions/behaviors
 - missing information that needs to be answered (use the facts as your guide)
 - relationships
- c. Identify the Given Circumstances for the scene (external and internal) -
 - Who** – are you talking to? What is the nature of this relationship? Status?
 - What** – what has just happened prior to the scene? What information and/or expectation is your character bringing into the scene? What is the urgency of the scene or is there any?
 - Where** – Where does the scene take place? Consider territory, public/private, familiarity, indoor/outdoor.
 - When** – What time is it? How much time do you have? What season is it? What is the weather like? Climate?
 - How** – how are you feeling? Emotional state? Physical state?
- d. List any Given Circumstances (social, political, historical) for the play and the which influence your character and the scene you are in.

Step 4) **Central Event**

From your character's perspective, what is the central event of this scene? What happens? What decision, discovery or reversal occurs? What is the key to the scene, the most important line? What will your character do next?

Step 5) **Essential Actions** (Beat Work)

- a. Write down the **Literal Actions** of your character. A basic description of what is happening in the scene.
- b. What does your character **Want** the other character to say or do RIGHT NOW (expressed as an action). What happens if your character gets what they want? What happens if they do not get what they want?
- c. What are the **Essential Actions** of the actor (not the character) in the scene. *See back*
- d. Create an "**As If**" that relates the characters wants to your own life. This is an exercise in imagination meant to keep you the actor living truthfully on stage.
- e. Create a list of at least 5 **Tactics** (using transitive verbs) to get what you Want.
- f. Divide the scene into **Beats** based on your characters wants not your tactics.

Remember an **Essential Action** must meet the following criteria:

- 1) It must be Physically Capable of Being Done
- 2) It must be specific (Stanislavski used to say that generality is the enemy of all art, so get specific)
- 3) It must have its test in the other person
- 4) It must have a physical cap (a sign that you have achieved the essential action transformed into a physical essence)
- 5) It must not be manipulative (don't try to control the other actor, influence yes, but not control)
- 6) It must not presume a physical or emotional state in self or other (getting someone to stop crying... presumes...)
- 7) It must not be an errand (Send a message – that's an errand – to get someone to do my bidding, now that's an Essential Action)
- 8) It must be in line with the playwright's intentions
- 9) It should be fun.