

Monologue and duologue

Vickie Smith

A level – Edexcel Component 2

A level

Introduction

This scheme of work aims to prepare students for their A level Component 2 exam for the Edexcel specification, which requires them to perform a monologue or a duologue. The first few lessons are about exploring skills and then the focus is on the monologue/duologue that they choose to perform for the exam. While the scheme of work is presented as seven lessons, many of these will take at least 2 hours to get through and they will need rehearsal time to reflect in between.

Vickie Smith has been a drama teacher for 16 years and is currently the Head of Sixth Form at Chichester High School. Before this she was an AST of Drama, and she teaches all Key Stages. She is also an examiner for A level Theatre Studies.

Lesson 1

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have:

- ▶ Discussed the assessment criteria for Component 2
- ▶ Developed a skeleton script using given circumstances to give it context
- ▶ Evaluated the effect that given circumstance have on a scene.

Starter

Introduce Component 2. Talk through the assessment and answer any questions the class has based on assessment process.

Explain that they will explore approaches to what makes a good monologue/duologue before they begin the actual assessment.

Warm-up: Given circumstances exercise

Students split into pairs and are given a character and a scenario by the teacher. E.g.:

Characters – A: bored shop worker, she is 23 and it's her birthday today; she is going out tonight. B: customer who is 43 years old; she has recently split up with her husband and is feeling lonely; she is shopping to keep herself busy, but also wants someone to talk to. Scenario: The shop is 5 minutes from closing and B has just arrived and wants to try a range of clothes on. In pairs create a spontaneous improvisation using this information. Discuss how the information helped. What is this information called? (Explain given circumstances – link to Stanislavski.)

Main content

In new pairs hand out a section of script from Frantic Assembly's *Stockholm* by Bryony Lavery – the section where they first meet is excellent. What given circumstances are we already given? Students need to decide on the rest of the given circumstances surrounding it. Explain that until they provide given circumstances it won't make sense. What sort of given circumstances do they think they need to consider?

1. Character
2. Setting
3. Situation

Allow independent rehearsal time considering given circumstances; teacher moves around the space giving guidance where needed.

Performance of work

Discuss how different each interpretation was – why was this? (Because of the chosen given circumstances.) Link this to characters and how the elaboration of the given circumstances allowed them to develop the characters more thoroughly. Clarify that this will be slightly different in the exam because they will be provided with more substantial given circumstances by the whole script so will not make them up. Explain that they will look at this in more depth in the next lesson.



Overall aim

To develop performance skills in preparation for Component 2.

Plenary

Why is it important that we understand the play and what is happening to the characters at the point we are performing?

Lesson 2**Learning objectives**

By the end of the lesson students will have:

- ▶ Evaluated a previous assessment piece, demonstrating an understanding of the assessment criteria and the expectations that are required
- ▶ Identified the given circumstances in the duologue and used these to bring the characters to life
- ▶ Recognised the importance of knowing the context of a monologue/duologue.

Starter

As students enter the room, hand out a copy of the assessment criteria that can be found in the specification online. Discuss the key words in this.

As a class, watch an example of an excellent duologue, preferably from past work from students, while referring to the assessment criteria. Explain that they are going to mark the performance using the assessment criteria.

Discussion: Where would they place the performance and why? Explain the mark the candidate received for this performance, using the examiner's comments to justify why they awarded that mark. If you are not showing a student's past performance, then have prepared an assessment of that duologue prior to the lesson; there are many examples on YouTube. Discuss the relevance of this task as they are yet to choose their monologues/duologues. Why do they think it is important for them to do this exercise this early on? It is essential that they understand the standard they need to achieve to succeed at the highest level.

Main content

Begin with a vocal and movement warm-up and recap what we mean by given circumstances.

As a class, reread the duologue they looked at last lesson; what given circumstances did they derive from just the duologue?

Explain the context of the duologue within the play in which it is set, and conduct a Q and A. Was this context brought out successfully in any of the performances? It is likely that it will not have been – why? (Because they have not read the rest of the play and did not have a full understanding of where it sits within the piece.) Is it important to have an understanding of the whole play before attempting to bring a section of it to life? Why?

Introduce the idea of the importance of knowing the context of where a monologue or duologue sits within a play and the given circumstances provided not only in the monologue/duologue, but the play as a whole. Link this back to the criteria.

Rehearse the duologue again, considering the context of the piece. What changes do they need to make in light of this?

Plenary

Have one of the pairs re-perform their duologue; ensure they have a more in-depth knowledge of the given circumstances and the context in which the duologue sits within the play.

Discussion: Does this affect the way they play the piece?

Homework

Bring in any potential monologues/duologues for perusal next lesson; inform them that they will also be given by you a selection of monologues/duologues that you think would work successfully.

Lesson 3

Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Understand the overall aim of the project
- ▶ Have discussed their interpretation of their monologue/duologue with their partner
- ▶ Have organically blocked their actor in the monologue/duologue.

Starter

Explain that while every student will perform a monologue/duologue as part of the exam, they will initially pair up with another individual or pair so that they have someone with whom to discuss the work.

Main content

Students are given time to decide if they are performing a monologue/duologue and to make decisions about what they are performing. Allow a lesson to read the play from which the monologue/duologue is taken.

Ask the class individually to read through the monologue/duologue that they will be performing. They need to consider what they want their interpretation of the monologue/duologue to be, and that this interpretation needs to be in the context of the play. Where do they see it being set? Who is the person? What do they think their through-line of action is?

Ask individuals to pair up with someone in the class that they will work with in exploring their monologue/duologue. It works well if someone performing a monologue can pair up with someone else performing a monologue.

In pairs discuss visions for monologues/duologues.

Go through this list of what they need to do in preparation for performance:

- ▶ Ensure lines are learnt.
- ▶ Block and rehearse scene – use partner to give feedback.
- ▶ Symbol – what will it be; what will it represent and when will it be used.
- ▶ Climax/anti-climax is important to build and/or release the tension created in drama. When is the climax/anti-climax in their monologue/duologue? How will they show that using only the actor?
- ▶ Rehearsal time – splitting time evenly between both pairs/individuals and meeting the list above, ask students to block the script organically. This is where they just act what feels right.

Plenary

In pairs ask them to label themselves A and B. Then take it in turns to mould their partner into an image that captures the character they are playing.

Homework

Learn lines.

Lesson 4

Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Be able to identify key aspects needed to make a performance work
- ▶ Understand the meaning of units and objectives and super-objective
- ▶ Be able to write down their units and objectives and super-objective.

Starter

Start with performance of a monologue by the teacher, followed by a discussion of what are the key aspects that make a performance work. By performing a monologue to the class you are demonstrating the skills through modelling; I tend to perform Pogo's monologue from *Pond Life*.

Explain that in the next two lessons they are going to be focusing on Stanislavski techniques. Explain that Stanislavski was a practitioner of Naturalism who introduced a variety of ways to develop a character. They may have looked at some of these techniques before.

Main content

Introduce Stanislavski's units and objectives – give examples on the board.

Ask students to read individually through their scripts and identify the units in their monologue/duologue; this is where the character's objective shifts, or there is a change in the scene.

Read through the script, considering the units that they have identified, what do they think the objective for each unit is? Ask them to write these in pencil on their script.

In pairs, rehearse monologues/duologues, figuring out ways to show the objectives through movement and voice. Ideally there should be a movement or action that helps convey the objective; this is the sub-text of the monologue/duologue. If they are doing a monologue they may not have many changes, but should be able to find at least one.

Introduce and explain the given circumstances, the circumstances provided by the script. Explain how they should use this information – if the character is 28 years old they need to act 28; if they are from America then they need to use the accent, etc.

Ask students to read through the whole script, including stage directions; what others say about their character and what their character says. While reading through they need to note down any given circumstances that they find – no detail is too small.

Allow time for students to rehearse monologue/duologue, focusing on using the given circumstances and units and objectives to show their character.

Plenary

Explain the super-objective – the character's main objective throughout the play. What is it that they want to achieve throughout the whole play?

Ask students to decide on their characters' super-objective.

Homework

Ask students to familiarise themselves further with their objectives and given circumstances in preparation for the next lesson.

Lesson 5**Learning objectives**

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Understand the meaning of the 'magic if' and imagination
- ▶ Have developed their monologue/duologue.

Starter

Arrive a few minutes late to lesson, flustered and upset. Explain that you are really sorry that you are late – you need their help, you have lost your wedding ring (or something equally important) somewhere at school today. You've searched all of the office, the only place left is the classroom, so can they please help you find it. Observe students throughout, pick out little things they do and remember them – keep it going for as long as possible.

Stop the class searching and ask them to sit down. Tell them that it is important to get on with the lesson and you will deal with the ring (or whatever) later. Ask them to try to remember everything they did during the search – how they felt, what movements they did.

Explain that they have just taken part in an exercise – they now need to repeat the search, this time trying to recreate what they did and how they felt the first time they did it. Be prepared for students to feel upset that you lied to them.

Once they have finished, sit the class down and discuss their 'performance'. Discuss the exercise. Why bother doing it? Discuss the fact that doing something for real is one thing; imitating that activity in such a way as to convince an audience that it is real is an altogether different thing, and infinitely harder to pull off.

Main content

Discuss the Stanislavski system – as a practitioner he created a system which he believed could be used to develop one's acting. Central to this is believing in what you are doing. Only if an actor believes will an audience believe.

Ask the whole class to sit in a circle. Introduce a screwed-up piece of paper, explaining that the piece of paper is actually a baby bunny rabbit; it is only 5 days old so is currently very fragile. Pass the baby bunny rabbit around; when you begin to pass the paper round be very careful with it, as if it is the most precious thing in the world. This will then be modelled by the students. As the bunny rabbit is passed around the room talk about it, telling the class about its details: the

softness of its fur, the way its nose twitches, its light grey colouring and white paws - the more detail the better. When the 'rabbit' is returned place it on the floor, encourage it to hop along ... and then violently stamp on it. Those who react and show upset were truly beginning to believe.

Discuss the difference between pretence and belief – to get the proper empathy from the audience they must believe you, not just watch you pretending to be someone else. Explain that belief is helped by fact – recap on the bunny exercise, the reason why some of them got attached to the piece of paper was because they were given details about the 'animal'. Explain that the given circumstances are these facts; they are the details that they need in which to start to believe. Explain that one of the ways to help with their given circumstances is through the use of the 'magic if'.

Ask students what they think the 'magic if' is. The 'magic if' is imagination; for example, 'If this piece of paper is a baby bunny rabbit then why is it here? Does it have siblings? Where are its parents? The magic if encourages the mind to ask questions which will in turn give you the belief you need to provide more detail, more facts, more 'given circumstances'. The scripts that they have already provide them with some facts; these are the given circumstances they wrote down in the last taught session. Explain that they now need to use their imaginations to fill in the blanks and they should do this with the aid of their partner.

Plenary

Identify three things that you have developed about your character today that change the way you will perform your monologue/duologue.

Lesson 6

Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Have applied the magic if and imagination to develop their monologue/duologue
- ▶ Have planned their outer production.

Main content

Discuss the effect that the given circumstances will have on their characterisation and acting out of monologue/duologue. One of the given circumstances might be that the character is feeling angry; if the character is sitting down, this will affect the way they sit. Ask, how does the character sit when they are angry?

Ask students to rethink the performance of their monologue/duologue. They can make changes to their performance if they wish to – they may choose to have someone on stage, or they may decide that their character is on their own. If they are on stage by themselves, they need to focus on creating a rapport with the audience. Plan performance: how will they use their partner - as a fellow actor or as a member of the audience? It is important to note that if they are performing a monologue for the exam they are not allowed another actor on stage. However, it is good to encourage them to rehearse with a fellow actor to explore how they react to that character.

Rehearse, sharing time equally.

In the last 20 minutes of the lesson, ask students to think about the outer production in preparation for an initial performance to their peers next lesson.

Things to consider:

- ▶ The use of set and props – what will they need to make their performance come alive?
- ▶ The use of lighting – keep it simple, and complete cue sheet
- ▶ The use of sound and/or music – will they use it to help create atmosphere? Complete cue sheet
- ▶ The use of costume – what does the actor need to wear to help communicate the character to the audience.

Rehearsal time, bearing in mind all of the above.

Plenary

Production meeting: what needs to be brought in for the next lesson?

Lesson 7

Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Have explored and developed characterisation
- ▶ Have identified changes that need to be made.

Starter

Ask the class to split into groups of 4. Explain that they are going to use hot seating to develop their character further, including how they behave when answering particular questions.

Hot seating exercise. In groups choose three questions each for each character. The questions should focus on allowing the character to develop and allow the actor to think about information that is *not* provided in the script. Each character takes it in turns to be hot seated with all other members of the group asking their three questions.

Main content

Explain that they will now continue to explore their character while thinking about everything they know so far.

Explain that creating a posture, gesture and walk as part of characterisation, along with the way that voice is used is essential in creating a believable performance. Remind them to think about their characters' objectives as they do this, as their character's movement or gesture may help in their communication.

Instruct the class to walk around the room neutrally. As they are walking, ask them to think about who their character is, helping them to create a character profile in their mind. This should be inspired by everything they have learnt about their character over the last few lessons. Bearing in mind all this information, ask them to think about what part of the body their character would lead by. They should let this affect their walk, the pace, etc. Encourage them to also think about a gesture that might help symbolically represent their character.

Ask them now to develop this through interaction with others; as they are walking around the room they need to start acknowledging other people, so they need to keep thinking about who their character is, i.e. would they smile, grunt, etc.? As they are doing this ask them to start to consider a voice that would suit their character (this will be inspired by what they have already developed in previous sessions). They need to think about pitch, pace, tone and volume; allow them enough time to develop something of quality. In their initial pairs ask them to discuss what they have learnt about their character, and how does this change their piece.

Rehearse monologue/duologue, applying their new-found knowledge. What effect does this have?

Plenary

Go over units and objectives. Have these changed since they began the process? If so, make these changes now.

Homework

Learn lines in preparation for peer performance.

Lesson 8

Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson students will:

- ▶ Have performed their monologue/duologue
- ▶ Have evaluated each other's work
- ▶ Have identified what they need to work on to prepare for performance.

Starter

Character warm-up – this can be similar to the previous lesson.

Main content

Performance of work followed by evaluation by peers:

Evaluation should include:

- ▶ How controlled is their use of voice and movement (clarity, pace, inflection, projection/gesture, stillness, stances, contact, use of space and spatial relationships)?
- ▶ Do they have a clear understanding of the character and its context within the script?
- ▶ Do they have a good rapport with the audience/other actor?
- ▶ How clear are their artistic intentions?

Plenary

They should set themselves three targets to work on in preparation for exam.

From this point forward students should work independently to prepare for examination with teacher giving regular feedback.