



The English-Speaking Union
National Shakespeare Competition
MONOLOGUE LESSON PLANS



Week 3: Going in Circles: Exploring the Monologue's Reach

NOTE: This lesson will take 1 x 50 minute class period.

- **What's On for Week 3 and Why?**

This week students refine their understanding of their monologues and expand their physical engagement with the text.

- Students will:

- Complete a “three-circle” reading of their monologues, an activity developed by Patsy Rodenburg, Director of Voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.
- Recite the middle third of their monologues for each other.

- **Which Standards Are Highlighted?**

Common Core English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-12. 4 & 5

NCCAS National Theatre Education:

- NCCAS.NSTE.9-12.2 & 3

- **What Will You Need?**

- An open workspace (that can comfortably accommodate the whole class);
- *Instructions for Students* (Note: Students should already have this handout from Week 1.)

- **What Will You and Your Students Do?**

Note: First collect homework from Week 2 (each student's 100-word scene summary and the *Be a Textual Investigator* exercise).

Warm-Up:

1. Students warm-up by completing a “three-circle” presentation of their monologues:

- a. **Circle 1**

Students walk around the workspace in a private, introspective way. When you ask them to stop, instruct them to recite their monologues aloud (but quietly to themselves) in as deeply a personal and reflective way as possible.

- b. **Circle 3**

Students pick up their pace. Ask them to run throughout the workspace as though trying to catch an important bus. When they stop, instruct them to recite their monologues as loudly and physically as possible. They should deliberately overact (like they were performing the monologue for the entire universe).

- c. **Circle 2**

Students walk around the room again, but this time in a confident, centered manner. When they stop, instruct them to perform their monologues again. For this round, they should become their characters by both reaching inward for emotional truth and extending outward to connect with the audience.



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2. After the students have finished these three circles, discuss the exercise as a class. Remind them that they should aim for Circle 2 in their presentations—a clear, organic and rich performance that is neither so private nor introspective that it doesn't connect with the audience nor so overacted that it lacks depth and truth.

Class Activity:

3. Students share the beginning and the middle sections of their monologues with each other. One at a time, each student should read their summary sentences for the beginning and middle sections of their monologue. Then they recite those sections of the monologue from memory.

Note: If the class is small enough, do the recitations one at a time with everyone standing in the same circle. If the class is larger, break the students up into smaller circles.

- **How Did It Go?**

To assess this lesson plan in your classroom, ask yourself:

1. Did each student thoughtfully complete a 100-word summary of the monologue's scene and the *Be a Textual Investigator Handout*?
2. Did each student participate in the physical exercises, especially the "three circle" reading?
Did each student participate in the class discussion about the "three circle" reading?
3. Did the class as a whole come to a conclusion about what circle displays the most effective delivery?
4. Did each student write a clear summary sentence for the middle third of their monologue?
5. Did each student present the beginning and middle sections of their monologues for their peers?

- **What's for Homework?**

Ask the students to complete the following assignments for next week:

1. Finish reading the play.
2. Complete the *Become Your Character* exercise (homework since Week 1).
3. Continue working on fully understanding the monologue's text (focusing on the final section).
 - a. Write a one sentence summary (in their own words) of the final third of the monologue.
Place this sentence summary in the margin of their working copy of the text.
 - b. Finish memorizing the monologue.