



Use the following checklist as you bring your characters to life!

CHARACTER CHECKLIST

- READ** the entire text several times. Look up unfamiliar words.
- CUT THE TEXT.** Decide on the climax, then work backward, including what is necessary and excluding what is not. Be sure to have a mix of emotions: for example, do not cut out the only humorous moment in a dramatic script.
- Label the **PLOT ARC**. The elements should include the exposition, the inciting incident (problem), the rising action (complication), the climax (turning point), the falling action, and the resolution (denouement).
- PLAY!**
- Decide on the **MAIN GOAL(S)** of each character. Write out how each character attempts to achieve the goal(s) if they succeed or are foiled, and how they respond to success or interference. Note how the tactics change.
- Label the **BEAT**. These are individual segments of the script. By script, we don't mean a play necessarily, but the cutting your students have created.

Beats occur:

- When someone enters or leaves.
- When something interrupts the scene: phone-call, doorbell, etc.
- When ideas or emotions shift.
- When desires, wants, or tactics shift.

There can be tens of beats in a forensic cutting. Draw a line under each beat, and label in the margin the change that justifies each sequence as an independent beat. Then, jot down how each beat relates to each character's overall spine (goal). In other words, see how and why the puzzle pieces fit together. To learn more about beats, read this article, [***Understanding Beats Analysis for Scripts.***](#)

CHARACTER CHECKLIST continued

- COMB** the play for **CHARACTER CLUES**. Find lines in the script that provide clues into each character's physical look and demeanor, intellect, emotional range, levels of response, social behaviors, ethical standards, economic status, psychological togetherness, sense of humor, level of comfort with people, new situations, conflict, and so on. Find evidence in what the character says, does, likes, dislikes, thinks, what others say or do not say about them; in the objects with which the character surrounds themselves or the people with whom the character surrounds themselves, and so on.
- Analyze each line for **SUBTEXT**—what the character wants, feels, thinks, remembers, and senses as they speak each line. Keep in mind the character's primary goal as you unearth these hidden levels of meaning.
- Find a **VOICE** for each character.
- Find a **BODY** for each character. Remember: a character exists from foot to head, and you must map out the position of all parts from top to bottom. Chart your bodies out. During the speech year, go back and look at your charts!
- EXPERIMENT!**
- Have an exact picture of the **ENVIRONMENT/SPACE** where the scene occurs or about which the characters speak. Know colors, shapes, textures, furniture, props, clothing, etc. By mapping out the space in its entirety, the character can move around more realistically and respond to external conditions.
- Once you have read and re-read the play, analyzed it for development, combed it for character clues, visualized its spaces, then you need to make **CHOICES**.
- Employ an acceptable **TECHNIQUE** regarding Focus, locus, visualization, character transition, pantomime, 3D reality.
- Spend a day **BEING** each character outside the script: speak, walk, gesture, think, react, and choose as the character would. Do not break character!
- If using Prose or Poetry, decide what the **NARRATOR** likes and dislikes; then, have the narrator show favoritism or disdain when appropriate. Remember that the narrator is the audience's "up close and personal" guide through the story, making them understand every word's real, coherent meaning.
- PRACTICE INCESSANTLY** in front of an experienced director and alone at home. Make use of mirrors and **VIDEOTAPING**. **OBSERVE PEOPLE** whenever and wherever you can. Note how they talk, walk, act, react, express themselves, socialize, gesture. Note what their faces do when they think, when they show various emotions; note how their bodies express thoughts and feelings; note their "status" before different people, and so on.

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