

Acting Companies: Performance Preparation

Editing

1. Make copies of the scene for everyone in the company
2. Read the scene aloud going around the group. As you read, circle any words and phrases you don't understand.
3. For those words, decide on a definition. Only if you feel a pressing need, get a definition from notes, dictionary, or the teacher.
4. Read the scene again, deciding together what each speech means.
5. Read the scene again, deciding on the objective of each character. Agree on the subtexts.
6. Decide how your passage fits into the context of the act and the whole play.
7. Read the scene again to edit out lines. Remember that your performance is limited to ten minutes, but cut only lines unessential to the scene's meaning.
8. Read the scene again; decide if the editing works.

Casting

9. When everyone has a comfortable understanding of the scene, cast parts.
10. If you don't have enough people in your company, you may have members "double," that is, play two roles—or, if the extra characters have only one or two lines, you might find other ways to work the scene.
11. If you have too many people, you may split larger parts (have two Violas, for instance) or consider including choral reading.
12. Appoint a director to oversee the whole production.

Blocking

13. Read thorough the scene, locating character entrances and exits. They do not have to be in the places the original script has them.
14. Decide on appropriate placement and movements for the characters and write them into your script.
15. Move through the blocking several times, talking about what to do is not the same. Are you avoiding lining up like prisoners awaiting execution?

Characterization

16. Read through your lines silently and aloud many times until you're sure you understand what you want every word, phrase, and sentence to mean.
17. Identify your character's objective in the passage.
18. Decide what words, phrases, or ideas need to be stressed and indicate them on your script.
19. Decide where pauses are appropriate and indicate them on your script
20. Identify your movements and gestures.
21. Read your part aloud many times. You are to memorize the part fully, but you should feel comfortable with it when you perform for the class. You will not read your lines during the performance.
22. Enjoy yourselves. But remember that you will play the scene 'straight.' *Parodies forfeit all credit.*

Furniture, Props, Costumes

23. Decide if you need furniture. Remember that classroom desks can be trees, walls, nearly anything.
24. Decide what props you need and who will bring them. Rehearse at least twice with all the physical pieces you will use.
25. Decide on costumes. These should not be elaborate but should clearly suggest your character.

Rehearse

26. Rehearse your scene several times. Remember the more you practice, the more relaxed you will be.
27. Get on your feet and go through the scene, acting out the parts.
28. Use your notes on blocking to help you decide where to come in, where to stand, which direction to turn while speaking, where to exit, and the like.
29. Listen to your director for suggestions about changes in blocking, movement, inflections, pauses, characterization, and the like.
30. Consider making a video of your rehearsal. Then watch it and decide what you want to improve. Improve it.
31. Recruit someone from outside your team to act as prompter during your performance.

adapted from *Shakespeare Set Free*.

Annotating a Scene: Building a Promptbook

The stage

1. Scenery Describe the scenery at the scene's opening and use marginal notes to show where changes are needed.
2. Costumes Describe the costumes at each character's entrance and with marginal notes where changes are needed.
3. Sound *Effects:* Show with a marginal note at the appropriate line; indicate if the sound is to precede, accompany, or follow a specific word, phrase, or speech.

Music: Identify the music and show with a marginal note at the appropriate line where it is to begin and where it is to end.
4. Lighting Identify what kind of lighting is to be used; describe colors and brightness; identify characters to be lit differently from the rest of the stage; use marginal notes to indicate lighting changes or spotlights on characters or objects.
5. Properties Identify the props needed for the scene in a separate list at the end of the script.
6. Blocking Indicate in the margin at the appropriate line where characters are to enter, stand, change position on the stage, and exit.
7. Gestures and Business. Indicate marginally gestures to be made by the speaker (or by others on stage) and "business," telling which character is to start and stop doing what at what points

The script

1. Cut lines Indicate lines to be cut by a single line through the words to be deleted.
2. Rearrange lines Indicate lines to be moved by arrows or by recopying.
3. Reassign lines Indicate lines to be given to different characters by changing the speech label.
4. Stress Indicate words or phrases to be stressed by underlining.
5. Pauses Indicate pauses by a double slash: [//].

Shakespeare's Plays

Plays ranked by length

Play	Lines	Words	Speeches
1 Hamlet	4,042	29,551	1,136
2 Coriolanus	3,752	26,579	1,107
3 Cymbeline	3,707	26,778	856
4 Richard III	3,667	28,309	1,086
5 Othello	3,551	25,884	1,185
6 Troilus and Cressida	3,531	25,516	1,139
7 Antony and Cleopatra	3,522	23,742	1,177
8 King Lear	3,487	25,221	1,067
9 Winter's Tale	3,348	24,543	746
10 Henry IV, Part Two	3,326	25,706	904
11 Henry V	3,297	25,577	741
12 Two Noble Kinsmen	3,261	23,403	838
13 Henry VIII	3,221	23,325	711
14 Henry VI, Part Two	3,130	24,450	794
15 Romeo and Juliet	3,099	23,913	840
16 Henry IV, Part One	3,081	23,955	776
17 All's Well That Ends Well	3,013	22,550	936
18 Henry VI, Part Three	2,915	23,295	813
19 Merry Wives of Windsor	2,891	21,119	1,022
20 Measure for Measure	2,891	21,269	899
21 Love's Labor's Lost	2,829	21,033	1,050
22 As You Like It	2,810	21,305	815
23 Richard III	2,796	21,809	554
24 Much Ado About Nothing	2,787	20,768	979
25 Merchant of Venice	2,701	20,921	636
26 Henry VI, Part One	2,695	20,515	662
27 Taming of The Shrew	2,676	20,411	893
28 King John	2,638	20,386	549
29 Twelfth Night	2,591	19,041	925
30 Julius Caesar	2,591	19,110	794
31 Titus Andronicus	2,538	19,790	567
32 Timon of Athens	2,488	12,748	802
33 Pericles	2,459	17,723	638
34 Macbeth	2,349	16,436	649
35 Two Gentlemen of Verona	2,288	16,883	858
36 Tempest	2,283	16,036	653
37 Midsummer Night's Dream	2,192	16,087	504
38 Comedy of Errors	1,787	14,369	608

Total: 112,230 830,056 31,909
 Average: 2,953 21,844 840
 High: 4,042 29,551 1185
 Low: 1,787 12,748 504

Plays ranked by unique words

Play	Unique words
1 Hamlet	4,700
2 Henry V	4,562
3 Cymbeline	4,260
4 Troilus and Cressida	4,251
5 King Lear	4,166
6 Henry IV, Part Two	4,122
7 Henry IV, Part One	4,122
8 Richard III	4,092
9 Henry VI, Part Two	4,058
10 Henry VI, Part One	4,058
11 Coriolanus	4,015
12 Winter's Tale	3,913
13 Antony and Cleopatra	3,906
14 Two Noble Kinsmen	3,895
15 Othello	3,783
16 Love's Labor's Lost	3,772
17 Romeo and Juliet	3,707
18 Richard II	3,671
19 Henry VI, Part Three	3,581
20 King John	3,567
21 Henry VIII	3,558
22 All's Well That Ends Well	3,513
23 Titus Andronicus	3,397
24 Measure for Measure	3,325
25 Macbeth	3,306
26 Pericles	3,270
27 Timon of Athens	3,269
28 Merry Wives of Windsor	3,267
29 Merchant of Venice	3,265
30 As You Like It	3,248
31 Taming of The Shrew	3,240
32 Tempest	3,149
33 Twelfth Night	3,096
34 Midsummer Night's Dream	2,984
35 Much Ado About Nothing	2,954
36 Julius Caesar	2,867
37 Two Gentlemen of Verona	2,718
38 Comedy of Errors	2,522

Total: 137,149
 Average: 3,609
 High: 4,700
 Low: 2,522

"The Witches' Spell"

Shakespeare

Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 1

Background Effects

1 Witch	Thrice the brinded cat hat mew'd	1
2 Witch	Thrice: and once the hedge-pig whin'd.	1
3 Witch	Harpier cries: -- 'tis time, 'tis time.	1
1 Witch	Round about the caldron go;	2
	In the poison'd entrails throw.--	2
	Days and nights hast thirty-one	2
	Swelter'd venom sleeping got,	3
	Boil thou first i' the charmed pot!	3
All	Double, double toil and trouble;	3
	Fire, burn; and, caldron, bubble.	1 & 3
2 Witch	Fillet of a fenny snake,	2
	In the caldron boil and bake;	2
	Eye of newt, and toe of frog,	2
	Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,	1
	Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,	1
	Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,--	1
	For a charm of powerful trouble,	1, 2 & 3
	Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.	3
All	Double, double toil and trouble;	3
	Fire, burn; and, caldron, bubble.	3
3 Witch	Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,	1 & 2
	Witches' mummy, maw and gulf	3
	Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,	3
	Root of hemlock, digg'd i' the dark	1 & 2
All	Double, double toil and trouble;	3
	Fire, burn; and, caldron, bubble.	1, 2 & 3

1. Wind *Group 1 = Sounds of wind*
2. Dogs (wolves & the like) *Group 2 = Wild dogs howling &c.*
3. Birds (owls & the like) *Group 3 = Owls hooting, birds of prey &c.*

Rhythm and Meter

Say!

I like green **eggs** and **ham**!

I **do**! I like them, **Sam-I-am**!

And I would **eat** them **in a boat**.

And I would **eat** them **with a goat**...

And I will **eat** them **in the rain**.

And **in the dark**. And **on a train**.

And **in a car**. And **in a tree**.

They **are so good**, so **good**, you **see**!

So I will **eat** them **in a box**.

And I will **eat** them **with a fox**.

And I will **eat** them **in a house**.

And I will **eat** them **with a mouse**.

And I will **eat** them **here and there**.

Say! I will **eat** them **ANYWHERE**!

I **do so like** green **eggs** and **ham**!

Thank you! **Thank you, Sam-I-am!**

If we **shadows have** offended,

Think but this, and all is **mended**,

That you **have** but **slumb'red here**

While these **visions did** appear.

And this weak and idle theme,

No more yielding but a dream,

Gentles, do not reprehend.

If you pardon, we will mend.

And, as I am an honest Puck,

If we have unearnèd luck

Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,

We will make amends ere long;

Else the Puck a liar call.

So, good night unto you all.

Give me your hands, if we be friends,

And Robin shall restore amends.

[*Exit.*]

(A Midsummer Night's Dream, 5.1.423-38)

Early Modern English Grammar

Pronouns and Verbs

㉙ The Second Person Familiar

Modern English has dropped a set of pronouns and verbs called the “familiar” or “thee and thou” forms once used among close friends and family and to children, inferiors, animals, and inanimate objects. These old forms did, though, survive into Elizabethan England and appear frequently in Shakespeare. They correspond roughly to the *tu* forms of the Romance languages, the *ty* forms of the Slavic languages, the *su* forms of Greek, and the *kimi* forms of Japanese. Shakespeare will have characters shift from the ‘you’ to the ‘thou’ forms with purpose.

	Singular			Plural		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Subject [nominative]	I	thou	he/she/it	we	you	they
Object [accusative]	me	thee	him/her/it	us	you	them
Possessive adjective [genitive]	my <i>mine</i> *	thy <i>thine</i>*	his/her/its	our	your	their
Possessive pronoun	mine	thine	his/hers/its	ours	yours	theirs

*Substitute forms used before a noun beginning with a vowel

㉙ Second person familiar verb inflections

Second person singular (familiar): adds the ending **-est**, **-st**, or **-st**.

Examples: thou givest, thou sing'st
irregular example: thou **wilt** hear

Some irregular verbs:

<i>present:</i>	you	are	have	will	can	shall	do
	thou	art	hast	wilt	canst	shalt	dost
<i>past:</i>	you	<i>were</i>	<i>had</i>	<i>would</i>	<i>could</i>	<i>should</i>	<i>did</i>
	thou	wast	hadst	wouldst	couldst	shouldst	didst

The negative of the second person familiar is often formed by adding the word *not* after the verb.

Examples: thou art not, thou canst not, thou couldst not

㉙ Third person singular verb inflections

The third person singular often substitutes **-th** for the more modern **-s**.

Examples: she **giveth** (for she gives), it **raineth** every day (for rains).

Romeo and Juliet / 2.2

	Juliet	O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore are you Romeo? Deny your father and refuse your name; Or, if you will not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet... 5 'Tis but your name that is my enemy;... Romeo, doff your name, And for your name, which is no part of you , Take all myself.		Romeo	Alack, there lies more peril in your eye Than twenty of their swords! Look you but sweet, And I am proof against their enmity.
10	Romeo	I take you at your word. Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd; Henceforth I never will be Romeo.	35	Juliet	I would not for the world they saw you here.
15	Juliet	What man are you that thus bescreen'd in night So stumble on my counsel?	40	Romeo	I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes, And but you love me, let them find me here; My life were better ended by their hate, Than death proroguèd, wanting of your love.
20	Romeo	By a name I know not how to tell you who I am. My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself, Because it is an enemy to you ; Had I it written, I would tear the word.	45	Juliet	By whose direction found you out this place?
25	Juliet	My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words Of your tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound. Are you not Romeo, and a Montague?	50	Romeo	By love, that first did prompt me to inquire; He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes. I am no pilot, yet, were you as far As that vast shore [wash'd] with the farthest sea, I should adventure for such merchandise.
30	Romeo	Neither, fair maid, if either <i>thee</i> dislike.	55	Juliet	You know the mask of night is on my face, Else would a maiden blush bapaint my cheek For that which you have heard me speak to-night. Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny What I have spoke, but farewell compliment! Do you love me? I know you will say, "Ay," And I will take your word; yet, if you swear, You may prove false: at lovers' perjuries They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo, If you do love, pronounce it faithfully; Or if you think I am too quickly won, I'll frown and be perverse, and say you nay, So you will woo, but else not for the world. In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond, And therefore you may think my behavior light, But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
	Juliet	If they do see you , they will murther you .	60		

Using the Sounds of Words to Direct

PHONETICS: ENGLISH SOUNDS

STOPS

/p/ park /b/ bark
/t/ to /d/ do
/k/ cut /g/ gut

“NONSTOPS”

/l/ load /r/ road
/w/ woo /j/ you
/m/ my /n/ no

Robert Frost, “Span of Life”

The old dog barks backward without getting up
I can remember when he was a pup.

Shakespeare

1

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun
Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon

Romeo & Juliet, 2.2.4-6

2

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in his petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time

Macbeth, 5.5.2-4

3

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.

Richard III, 1.2.247-49

Cut it out—and write! Troilus & Cressida, 1.1

Enter Pandarus and Troilus.

TROILUS

Call here my varlet; I'll unarm again.
Why should I war without the walls of Troy
That find such cruel battle here within?
Each Trojan that is master of his heart,
Let him to field; Troilus, alas, hath none.

PANDARUS

Will this gear ne'er be mended?

TROILUS

The Greeks are strong and skilful to their strength,
Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant;
But I am weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,
And skilless as unpracticed infancy.

PANDARUS

Well, I have told you enough of this. For my part, I'll not meddle
nor make no farther. He that will have a cake out of the wheat
must tarry the grinding.

TROILUS

Have I not tarried?

PANDARUS

Ay, the grinding; but you must tarry the bolting.

TROILUS

Have I not tarried?

PANDARUS

Ay, the bolting; but you must tarry the leavening.

TROILUS

Still have I tarried.

PANDARUS

Ay, to the leavening; but here's yet in the word hereafter the
kneading, the making of the cake, the heating the oven, and the
baking. Nay, you must stay the cooling too, or you may chance
burn your lips.

TROILUS

Patience herself, what goddess e'er she be,
Doth lesser blench at suff'rance than I do.
At Priam's royal table do I sit
And when fair Cressid comes into my thoughts—
So, traitor! "When she comes"? When is she thence?

PANDARUS

Well, she looked yesternight fairer than ever I saw her look, or any
woman else.

TROILUS

I was about to tell thee: when my heart,
As wedgèd with a sigh, would rive in twain,
Lest Hector or my father should perceive me,
I have, as when the sun doth light a-scorn,
Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile;
But sorrow that is couched in seeming gladness
Is like that mirth fate turns to sudden sadness.

PANDARUS

An her hair were not somewhat darker than Helen's—well, go to—
there were no more comparison between the women. But, for my
part, she is my kinswoman; I would not, as they term it, praise her,

but I would somebody had heard her talk yesterday, as I did. I will
not dispraise your sister Cassandra's wit, but—

TROILUS

O, Pandarus! I tell thee, Pandarus:
When I do tell thee there my hopes lie drowned,
Reply not in how many fathoms deep
They lie indrenched. I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love. Thou answer'st she is fair;
Pourest in the open ulcer of my heart
Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;
Handiest in thy discourse—O—that her hand,
In whose comparison all whites are ink
Writing their own reproach, to whose soft seizure
The cygnet's down is harsh, and spirit of sense
Hard as the palm of plowman. This thou tell'st me,
As true thou tell'st me, when I say I love her.
But, saying thus, instead of oil and balm
Thou lay'st in every gash that love hath given me
The knife that made it.

PANDARUS

I speak no more than truth.

TROILUS

Thou dost not speak so much.

PANDARUS

Faith, I'll not meddle in it. Let her be as she is. If she be fair, 'tis the
better for her; an she be not, she has the mends in her own hands.

TROILUS

Good Pandarus—how now, Pandarus?

PANDARUS

I have had my labor for my travail, ill thought on of her, and ill
thought on of you; gone between and between, but small thanks
for my labor.

TROILUS

What, art thou angry, Pandarus? What, with me?

PANDARUS

Because she's kin to me, therefore she's not so fair as Helen; an
she were not kin to me, she would be as fair o' Friday as Helen is
on Sunday. But what care I? I care not an she were a blackamoor;
'tis all one to me.

TROILUS

Say I she is not fair?

PANDARUS

I do not care whether you do or no. She's a fool to stay behind her
father. Let her to the Greeks, and so I'll tell her the next time I see
her. For my part, I'll meddle nor make no more i' th' matter.

TROILUS

Pandarus—

PANDARUS

Not I.

TROILUS

Sweet Pandarus—

PANDARUS

Pray you speak no more to me. I will leave all as I found it, and
there an end.

He exits

Much Ado About Nothing: 1.1

Enter LEONATO and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER

Leanato	I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina.
Messenger	He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.
Leanato	How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?
Messenger	But few of any sort, and none of name.
Beatrice	I pray you, is Signior Mountanto returned from the wars or no?
Messenger	I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.
Leanato	My niece means Signior Benedick of Padua.
Messenger	O, he's returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.
Beatrice	I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.
Leanato	Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.
Messenger	He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.
Leanato	You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.
Beatrice	Alas! he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one.
Messenger	I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.
Beatrice	No; an he were, I would burn my study.
Messenger	I will hold friends with you, lady.
Beatrice	Do, good friend.
Leanato	You will never run mad, niece.
Beatrice	No, not till a hot January.
Messenger	Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, BENEDICK

Don Pedro	Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble.
Leanato	Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace.
Don Pedro	You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.
Benedick	If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.
Beatrice	I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.
Benedick	What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?
Beatrice	Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such food to feed it as Signior Benedick?
Benedick	It is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.
BEATRICE	A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.
BENEDICK	God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.
BEATRICE	Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.
BENEDICK	I would my horse had the speed of your tongue-
DON PEDRO	That is the sum of all.
LEANATO	Please it your grace lead on?
DON PEDRO	Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.