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THE BASICS

Getting Them on Their Feet

Many of the activities in this guide depend on student participation. At the ASC, we believe that your students will appreciate Shakespeare’s plays better, will find them more interesting and more relevant, and will enjoy the process of learning more if they study them with a consideration of the medium for which Shakespeare wrote them: the stage. More specifically, for the playhouses that he knew and worked in, like the Globe and the Blackfriars Theatre.

The following activities will help warm your students up to the idea of exploring the play as an action-based experience, not just words on a page.

Playing the Plot:

- Shakespeare’s plots are the least important part of his plays. In all but one instance, he borrowed the shape of his stories, in pieces or wholesale, from available sources. This activity is decided to cover the plot right at the start, so that your students can focus on the important things: his wordcraft and his stagecraft.
- Walk your students through the story of the play, without lines.
  - Give each student a nametag with the name of a character on it. These nametags can be downloaded for printing and lamination at http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=116. Some tags may have a star or a heart on them; characters with a star will die during the course of the play, while characters with a heart either begin the play paired off or will be married at the end, and those hearts are labeled with the name of the character’s partner.
  - Have the entire class stand up wearing their nametags.
  - Say, “If you have a star, die. Go ahead, get on the floor, do it as dramatically as you can.”
  - Get everyone back up.
  - Have any characters with hearts find their partners. Explain that these characters will all be married, or at least on their way to the altar, by the end of the play.
- This activity will help your students understand who the characters are, how they are related to each other, and what they do during the course of the play, and it will hopefully alleviate confusion as you work through specific scenes.

Staging a Scene:

- Before you ask for volunteers, define the scene.
  - Briefly review the action of the scene. What happens to whom and in what order?
  - What does this scene offer for exploration?
  - What will the students’ responsibilities be? Those sitting should be working, too.
    - Describe the size and function of each role in the scene.
    - Some of your more bashful students may not want to tackle a role with a lot of lines, but might feel comfortable approaching a smaller part.
    - Cast as many non-speakers as are appropriate for the scene. You may discover as you go along that more non-speakers are called for.
    - Make sure you ask those not speaking to be “doing” whatever the character might be doing during the scene.
    - Students remaining in their seats should be following a specific character or playing director.
- You may want to do a “read-around” of the scene before you actually get it on its feet, to help your students feel comfortable with the words and the language. Start at the beginning and go around the room, having each student read a complete thought, stopping at a period, semi-colon, or question mark. The next student takes up and continues from there, and so forth.
- Ask for volunteers. If you’re lucky, you’ll get them – if not, consider any of the following suggestions:
  - Begin your unit with shorter scenes, scenes without long monologues, and scenes with a lot of people in them. These conditions will put less pressure on your students and may help ease them into the work.
○ Pick on your unruly students. Give them something to do. This approach may work particularly well with comic or physically active scenes.

○ Try a process called “feeding in” lines, where two students portray each character. One will have script in hand and whisper the lines in small chunks to the other, who will then repeat them at normal volume while going through the staging. This method works particularly well for scenes with a lot of physical action, as it frees up your actors’ hands. (We gratefully acknowledge the work of our friends at Shakespeare & Company for the development of this technique).

○ Split students into smaller groups to work on scenes.
  ▪ Your students may feel more comfortable testing things out for themselves if they don’t feel they’re doing so for an audience on the first try, but you can still observe each group and make suggestions to them.
  ▪ Come back together as a class and have each group present their version of the scene. This method will also give you the opportunity to explore different choices.

● Consider having your students keep a participation log and requiring each student to participate in an on-their-feet staging at least once during the unit.

● At the end of the scene, be sure to release the participating students back to their seats and thank them for helping you.

Additional Exercises

● The first time out, you may want to make some time for a theatre game that gets all of your students up, out of their seats, and participating. See our website for some good suggestions: http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?page=116
The Basics

The Elizabethan Classroom

While 20th and 21st century theatres offer playwrights many configurations for entrances, exits, or lights, Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote their plays with the configuration of early modern playhouses in mind. These buildings offered audience members a different perspective on plays than 21st century audiences have. Playhouses such as the Globe, the Blackfriars, and the Theatre featured seating on three sides of the stage, shared light – where audience members could see the actor and the actors could see them – and a limited number of doors for entrances and exits. Shakespeare takes these staging factors into account in his writing of the plays, and we encourage students and teachers to consider them as they study the plays, in an Elizabethan Classroom.

In this formation, teachers and students can easily stage scenes from Shakespeare. The setup provides opportunities for the students to search the text in order to support their arguments.

Materials

- A classroom
- Student desks or chairs
- A large surface such as a teacher’s desk or a long table.
- Scenes/text from Shakespeare’s plays

Before students arrive (or with their help), place desks on three sides of an imaginary square (see the diagram).

At the front of the room, place a table or instructor’s desk.

When room is arranged, explain to students the similarities to the theatre spaces of early modern England: (entrances on either side of the table, above is on the table, below is under, the Discovery space can be achieved by entering Center, in front of the table).

Using the Stage

- **Geography of the Space**: The most basic tool your students need to have in order to understand how to use the space is the vocabulary of the stage’s geography.
  - **Upstage and downstage**: Directions on the stage are given from the actor’s perspective, standing on stage, looking straight out at the bulk of the audience -- in an early modern theatre, this would be out towards the pit. Downstage means further towards the lip of the stage, by the audience. Upstage is the region closer to the doors and
  - **Stage right and stage left**: Also from the actor’s perspective, looking out at the audience. Stage right is the side on the actor’s right hand, stage left is on the actor’s left hand.
  - **Center**: The middle of the stage. You might also find it useful to use terms such as left-center, down-center, right-center, and up-center to give directions with greater precision.
  - Practice using these terms as directions: Have a student take the space, then call out directions such as “upstage left” or “downstage center” in order to give your class a concrete example of the terms in use.

- **Diagonals**:
  - When your students begin doing Shakespeare on their feet, they will probably stand in clumps, facing straight out towards the audience. Encourage them to think of different ways to stand and different shapes to create between each other -- to face their scene partners directly, even if it means turning their backs to part of the audience. The beauty of a thrust stage is that the audience can always see someone’s face, and each actor is always clearly visible to at least part of the audience.
  - Encourage your students to spread out and to use all of the available playing space, and to think of the stage as a grid, with horizontal and vertical lines. They should aim never to stand on the same horizontal or vertical line as another actor. This means that they will need, instead, to stand diagonally to one another -- what actors call “working the diagonals.” The diagram shows the most basic diagonals available -- from upstage right to downstage left, and upstage left to downstage right -- but the possible stage pictures are nearly infinite. You could draw other diagonals from the doors to center or down-center, from the gallant stools to any location on stage, or even in a vertical dimension as well, from a point in the balcony to a point on stage.
  - Have your students think in triangles, especially for scenes with three people or groups. If one actor stands upstage, slightly left of center, position your other two actors in the downstage right and downstage left corners, facing towards your upstage actor.
Now try rotating this triangle around the stage, placing different characters in different positions while maintaining the basic shape and the distance between them. Does one character gain or lose power through this movement?

Now try keeping one shape but altering the distance between actors.

Add a fourth person to the stage. How does each of the other actors need to adjust to make space for this additional body on the stage?

Discuss with your students that there are only two times actors NEED to stand close to one another onstage, those times are for a KISS or for a KILL. In all other scenes, actors should maintain some space.

Consider how different stage pictures can draw the visual focus of the audience. On a proscenium stage, center is generally the most powerful, eye-drawing position. On a thrust stage, however, this position can actually be one where an actor can get lost, especially if there are many other bodies on stage at the same time.

**Embedded Stage Directions:**

- If your students have read other plays, they may be used to seeing many explicit stage directions. In Shakespeare, however, most of the directions for action are implied rather than spelled out directly. The clues lie in the text:
  - If one character tells another to rise up, that implies that the other character must have knelt or sat down at some point previously.
  - A character who says, “I am hurt” has injured himself in some way, possibly in a fight.
  - When Juliet tells Romeo, “You kiss by the book,” this indicates that he has kissed her, probably immediately preceding the line.
  - Based on these textual clues, actors have to determine where the actions take place and how long they last.

- Beware of brackets; if a modern editor has added, changed, or moved a stage direction, that direction will appear in brackets. If your students see a bracketed direction in their texts, ask them to question whether or not they think it is necessary or appropriate. They may also wish to examine the text of the play in other editions or in the Folio (available online) to see how else that direction might appear.

- The text might also indicate the need for a prop, without explicitly stating that a character enters with one or receives one from another character.

**Potential for Audience Contact:**

- You will explore this more thoroughly in Asides and Audience Contact, but for now, have your students notice what opportunities an early modern stage offers for audience contact. The students directly in front of the stage might be those in the pit, or in the galleries. Students sitting stage left or stage right could be the gallants, sitting on stools actually on the edge of the stage.

- How might it change an actor’s choices to have the audience sitting so close?

- How does having gallants sitting on the stage affect things like fight choreography?

- Remember that early modern theatres also had tiered seating, so there would be audience members available for contact vertically as well as horizontally.

**Activity**

Explore the following staging conditions, using the suggested passages from Shakespeare’s plays:

- **Lights on Theatre:** the audience becomes participants, even characters at times
  - Hamlet’s internal debate over killing Claudius while he is at prayer (“And am I then revenged / To take him in the purging of his soul, When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?”) becomes a conversation with an audience member (Hamlet, 3.4.73-96)
  - Henry V’s “We band of brothers...” makes the audience part of the army (Henry V, 4.3.8-67)
  - Benedick’s “One woman is fair, yet I am well. Another is wise, yet I am well” becomes an opportunity to identify women in the audience. (Much Ado About Nothing, 2.3.26-34)
  - For more, see Asides and Audience Contact.

- **Onstage:** the five entrances and exits give options to the actors
  - Play with the Rude Mechanicals’ “Are we all met?” (A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 1.2.1-5, 3.1.1-6)
  - Look at the first entrance in any play in the canon, decide who comes on first, where, and with whom

- **Playing Darkness:** look for embedded stage directions
  - Hamlet’s “Who’s there?” tells the audience it is dark, other textual clues provide even more acting clues...
Macbeth’s 2.2 becomes an exercise in finding the exact moment when Lady Macbeth’s eyes adjust enough for her to see the blood on his hands...

FURTHER EXPLORATION
Ask students to use the language and the available options of the Elizabethan Stage to direct the first 20 lines of any scene, any difficult moment you encounter while working with the play, or your students’ Line Assignments. Ask them to look for and to mark the following:

- Embedded stage directions
- Indicated use of props (lanterns, swords, letters, etc)
- Difficult staging moments (darkness, fights, crowded scenes, use of the trap or the heavens)
- Opportunities for audience contact (explored further in Asides and Audience Contact.)
Elizabethan Classroom Diagram

Stage Right Door

Teacher's Desk or Table
(can serve as the balcony,
discovery space, or the trap)

Stage Left Door

upstage

stage right

downstage

stage left

student desks arranged in horseshoe shape
**The Basics**

**Asides and Audience Contact**

Shakespeare often leaves characters onstage by themselves. Sometimes these characters are working through an issue, sometimes they are letting the audience see what they are thinking (but aren’t able to talk about in front of other characters); sometimes they are letting the audience in on a secret. These moments in which characters have “no one else to talk to” (except the audience in an early modern theatre) have been interpreted throughout their performance histories in various ways. In modern, proscenium productions, actors and directors bring them to life as an explication of the character’s inner thoughts—sort of “thinking aloud” or “to oneself” moments. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some of the speeches were simply cut or re-arranged or staged differently. In Shakespeare’s lifetime, though, the speeches would have had a different life. They would have been opportunities for the characters to engage with the audience, to bring them into the story, to ask questions (and possibly, receive answers).

With the audience on three or four sides of the playing space in universal lighting, actors have the opportunity to engage them, whether in monologues or during group scenes. This contact can have several effects, drawing the audience in, enhancing a character's appeal, and making the audience part of the world of the play. Audience contact thus offers actors in a lights-on theatre opportunities that proscenium stagings in the dark don’t have.

In this activity, your students will examine asides and audience contact, two conventions of Shakespeare’s plays that allow the soliloquy in the dramas to become conversations rather than internal musings, and which allow actors to bring the audience in on the action of the play.

**Asides**

Every student of Shakespeare who has read a modern edition of his plays will recognize the word “aside,” but not every student will necessarily recognize its meaning.

**Brainstorm:**

Ask your students: How would you define the word aside?

The Oxford English Dictionary shows that it wasn’t until 1727 (more than 100 years past Shakespeare’s death) that the word took on these meanings:

- “Words spoken aside or in an undertone, so as to be inaudible to some person present;”
- “words spoken by an actor, which the other performers, on the stage are supposed not to hear.”

Notice that it doesn’t say who is supposed to hear. We assume the audience will be the “auditors” but in many playhouses the audience, who is sitting in the dark, in front of the stage, may not be the obvious choice.

While there are over 550 instances of the word “aside” used as a stage direction in early modern drama, only six times (and only twice in Shakespeare — in *Pericles* and in the Quarto version of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) does it seem to indicate the delivery of speech, in which the writer (or the prompter) marks that an actor should deliver a speech to the audience as opposed to the other characters onstage. This discrepancy suggests that playwrights simply assumed that actors could address the audience at almost any time. Look at your edition of the plays and note how many more than two they include.

At the ASC, in the setting of the Blackfriars Playhouse, we have found that almost anything a character says can become an opportunity for a character engage the audience in these ways. In this activity, your students will explore how the spaces make this possible.

**Activity**

- Review the *Elizabethan Classroom* and consider the configuration of the playhouses for which Shakespeare wrote.
- Choose one of the following lines:
  - “I love nothing in the world so much as you, is not that strange?” From *Much Ado About Nothing*. You will need a Beatrice (auditor) and a Benedick (speaker).
  - “You told a lie, an odious, damned lie.” From *Othello*. You will need an Emilia (speaker) and an Iago (auditor).
- First, decide which part of this line could be an aside (correct answer is all of it except for “you”).
Now, have your students draw arrows which show us how asides would work in a proscenium. How does “A” speak so that “B” doesn’t hear when there is no one else there (because of the fourth wall)?

- For the first example, the audience is all in front of the stage. How does the actor deliver the aside? (Let participants try it; eventually, the arrow should point downstage) And how does the other actor “not hear it”? (arrow points at “A”)

Now, look at the other example. At the Blackfriars, where can an actor take an aside?

- The arrow can go everywhere -- the audience is potentially on all four sides of the stage.

There are a couple of variations on “asides” you can discuss.

- In a “Normal,” the other character (our B) clearly doesn’t notice that the speaker is talking to the audience.
- In a “sophisticated aside” the other character actually comments on the speaker’s “absence” or distraction. This happens in several plays we’ve done at the ASC including *The Changeling*, *Revenge’s Tragedy*, and *Henry VI, Part 1*. Note the following example, where Margaret notices that Suffolk is talking, but not to her.

**SUFFOLK**
Fond man, remember that thou hast a wife;
Then how can Margaret be thy paramour?

**MARGARET**
I were best to leave him, for he will not hear.

**SUFFOLK**
There all is marr’d; there lies a cooling card.

**MARGARET**
He talks at random; sure, the man is mad.

**SUFFOLK**
And yet a dispensation may be had.

**MARGARET**
And yet I would that you would answer me.

--- *Henry VI, Part 1*, 5.3

**Audience Contact**
If a character is engaging the audience often and in “privileging” ways, then the audience can become an ally -- which means the audience can also become a conspirator of sorts, complicit in a villain’s crimes or a lover’s schemes. You will want to look at several scenes to determine when a character is talking to the audience and when s/he might be forging those connections.

**Activity**
- Place students in groups (as many as there are characters in the scene you will be looking at).
- Give your students a selection of text from your play.
- Ask them to go through the scene and, looking only at their assigned character, mark up the text according to what kinds of asides and audience contact they think are most appropriate, according to the following key:
  - Fill in the brackets:
    - 1=casting the audience
      - Making the audience members into characters who have an implied involvement in the scene or in the greater world of the play. They may be named or unnamed, but must be specific identities.
      - Examples: Henry V casting the audience as his army, Portia and Nerissa (in *The Merchant of Venice*) picking out specific audience members to represent suitors
    - 2=allying with the audience
      - Making audience members colleagues or co-conspirators, looking to the audience for support or affirmation
      - Examples: Iago explaining his schemes to the audience, any character sharing a joke with an audience member rather than with another character (often at the other character’s expense)
    - 3=seeking information from the audience
      - Questions that can be taken to the audience instead of, in addition to, or in the absence of other characters on stage
Examples: Hamlet asking if he should kill his uncle while Claudius is at prayer, any character asking what time it is or where someone else is could potentially take the question to the audience

- 4 = making the audience member the object of the line
- Often, though not always, making the audience member the butt of a joke. Unlike casting the audience, this type of contact does not make the audience member part of the world of the play; they simply become a helpful illustration for the benefit of another character and/or the rest of the audience.
- Examples: Benedick (in Much Ado about Nothing) finding fair, wise, or virtuous women, Dromio (in The Comedy of Errors) making jokes about bald men

- 5 = to the other character
- As regular conversation, intended for the other character to hear

Select one student from each group to act out the scene.

Have your representatives act out the scene, directing their lines according to their own determinations. Have the other members of their groups call out “Stop!” if they disagree with the representative’s choice and want to see it tried another way.

Discuss:
- How many lines could be taken to the audience in multiple ways?
  - Are there any lines which must be directed to another character?
  - Are there any lines which must be delivered as asides, so that the other character cannot hear?
- Which aside most surprised you when it worked?
- What was the aside that seemed the most natural?
- Which aside most endears the character to the audience?
- What do asides/audience contact do for the character?
- Is it better if only one character or all characters use audience contact?

Line Assignments
Your students will mark their Line Assignments according to the method in this activity as homework. They should copy one moment for discussion into their Promptbook, as well as answering the additional questions. On your next class meeting, stage some of your students’ favorite discoveries, or ask who had trouble deciding where a line should be directed, and try to find the best choice through active exploration, as you did with your in-class exploration.

THE BASICS

Choices

In the American Shakespeare Center study guides and workshops, we frequently ask students and performers to consider the different choices they might make, given the clues within the text. The creation of character, whether fictional or real, results from “thought,” vocal, and physical choices. ASC Education encourages you to explore opportunities for choice within the texts of the plays as a means of helping your students to read the stage. The following options should come in handy when it comes time to play with the text on its feet. Begin by asking your students try them on, in unison or individually, then discuss how each affects audience perception of character and the student playing the choice.

Vocal Choices
Because we place such value on the primacy of the language in early modern plays, the vocal delivery of those words carries great importance. Using the basics of everyday communication, keenly focused to Shakespeare’s words, and with an awareness of the clues presented by the rhythm and metrics of both verse and prose lines, your students will be able to explore a wide variety of vocal deliveries.

Basics:
- *Vary pitch.* Say the line in a higher or lower voice.
  - Read-around with the instruction that each student must vary the pitch within their own line, then again, this time varying his or her pitch from the previous student.
- *Vary volume.* Whisper, shout, murmur, scream, etc.
  - Again, with the same read-around instructions as above.
- *Vary pace.* Say the line faster or slower, perhaps take a pause or breath.
  - And a third time with the same instructions.
Advanced: These choices will be more accessible to your students after they have covered Basics: Verse and Prose, as these are choices presented by the rhythm or meter of a given line.

- **Pronunciation:** Scansion can help clue an actor in not only to correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words and names, but also to variations on common pronunciations.
  - Often in verse, suffixes may break into more syllables than we are used to in modern English. “Banished” can become “Ban-ished,” “exclam”ation” can become “ex-cla-ma-ti-on.” These variations do not occur every time a word has one of these or other suffixes, but they may be present. Encourage your students to look for these opportunities if they are stuck on a line.
  - Too, words can be compressed, or “elided,” into fewer syllables. Compressed words will often solve a challenging scansion conundrum, and can provide clues about character (see speed).
- **Speed:** End-stops, elision, caesuras, enjambments, and irregularities provide information on the speed of delivery.
  - Stops, whether at the end of lines or in the middle of them, slow a speech down. They may not indicate full pauses, but they affect the cadence of speech nonetheless.
  - Enjambments (sentences which carry on through more than one line) create a sense of rushed speech, as one line moves on into the next. A speech with many enjambments or elisions may indicate a character in a hurry, experience a rush of emotion, or fast-talking another character.
  - Trochees at the beginning of a line often indicate a quick beginning, a “powering-through”, or attention-getting sensations.
- **Pronouns:** Pronouns do not usually fall in stressed positions, so when they do, Shakespeare is telling us something important.
  - If the pronoun is personal -- “you,” “I,” “mine,” “they” -- try to determine why the person indicated by the pronoun is so important to the speaker at that moment. Is he accusing? Threatening? Questioning? Asserting his status? Is he using the pronouns to assume either an offensive or a defensive position in the conversation?
  - If the pronoun is demonstrative -- “this” or “that” -- the pronoun indicates distance, and the stress calls significant attention to that distance. A “this” object or character is close, while a “that” object or character is far, across the stage, or perhaps not even on it. Ask your students to explore possible reasons for the character to stress the closeness (protection, ownership) or the distance (disgust, fear).
- **Articulation:** A character who speaks very precisely sounds different than a character who uses a lot of elisions and contractions. Ask your students to look at their lines and see if they have characters who speak precisely or who speak sloppily.
  - What causes someone to speak in a way that is overly-precise? Is the character trying to impress someone? Is it in a formal setting? Is she looking down on someone? What might precise speech indicate about rank?
  - Conversely, what causes someone to speak in a way that is sloppy or imprecise? Is the character ill-educated? Drunk? Dizzy? Encourage your students to explore the possible options when they see a character whose speech is habitually irregular.
- **Patterns, and Breaking Them:** Many characters speak predominantly in a certain way, and their patterns of speech provide many clues to an actor -- the scansion may indicate well-ordered thoughts, or very simple ones, or tangled complexities. If a character suddenly speaks in a way that is unusual for him or her, however, that can be a clue as well.
  - If a typically well-organized speaker suddenly has lines with a lot of caesuras, enjambments, trochees, or spondees, that indicates something about that moment. The speaker may be confused, overwrought, angry, or distracted, all of which are playable options for an actor.
  - Similarly, if a character whose speech is usually jumbled and broken suddenly has lines written in regular pentameter, that may indicate a moment of discovery or meaningful clarity.
  - Ask your students to examine the possible “why”s behind all of these departures from a character’s normal patterns.

**Physical Choices**

Over the centuries of performance, actors working together, with directors, and with coaches have developed several “languages” to describe the act of creating movement that appears to resonate with a character’s intent or state of mind. These languages are useful in exploration of play texts as a way of embodying, or physicalizing, the words on the page.

The following techniques offer a short-hand method for the communication of certain physical and mental choices. We recommend working as a group, in a circle or spread out in an empty room, if possible, to explore the connotation of each of the following. Then, try them attached to
lines, pairing movement to some of the lines from your play. Tell your students not to worry about the appropriate context of the lines right now; this exercise is meant to help them find all the different ways they can perform the same words.

**Lines to Try**
"When shall we three meet again?" (*Macbeth*, 1.1)
"Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1)
"O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth" (*Julius Caesar*, 3.1)
"The King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make" (*Henry V*, 4.1)
"To you I give myself, for I am yours" (*As You Like It*, 5.2)

**Basics:**
- **Vary stance or posture.** Stand and move in a tall and straight manner, crouch, ground yourself (a steady stance with both feet in contact with the floor). Stand or move like someone of a different gender.
  - For each of these, you may wish to follow the same First 100 Lines instructions as for the Vocal Choices.
- **Vary pace or gait.** Instead of walking, run (or skip, jump, hop, etc.). This is especially useful for entrances and exits. Decide whether movement is controlled and precise, or loose and relaxed; swift and direct, or halting and hesitant; easy or labored.
- **Vary the leading* body part.** For example the head, the chest, the left hand, etc. This body part could be important to the character or be related to their goals.
  *(the part which an actor places forward and/or highlight)*

**Advanced:** The techniques described in the following pages are examples of those that some professional actors learn and utilize during the rehearsal process and in performances. Your students may find these methods helpful ways to approach the idea of physicalizing a certain emotion or nuance.

**Laban**
Movement is rarely just one thing or another; all motion includes the confluence of different elements: speed, direction, angle, torque, etc. In Laban, eight basic types of movement help players to meld the worlds of weight, focus, and speed. A movement’s **speed** may be **sudden** or **sustained**. A movement’s **weight** may be **light** or **heavy.** A movement’s **focus** may be **direct** or **indirect**. Laban assigns an action verb to each possible combination of those three elements:

- **Dab** = Sudden, Light, Direct
- **Glide** = Sustained, Light, Direct
- **Flick** = Sudden, Light, Indirect
- **Float** = Sustained, Light, Indirect
- **Slash** = Sudden, Heavy, Indirect
- **Wring** = Sustained, Heavy, Indirect
- **Punch** = Sudden, Heavy, Direct
- **Press** = Sustained, Heavy, Direct

Encourage your students to think about what each of these active verbs "looks like" and to try them on. The following diagram may assist your students in thinking about the relationships between these ideas.
LEADING CENTER

Head, heart, gut, and groin are areas of the body that a line could “come from” – a point of focus for thought and motion, as opposed to the Stanislavski approach of recalling a moment where you used your “head” or your “heart.” Which area to choose depends on the intentions of the line. A student can highlight the area by leading with it, changing the pitch, volumes, pace, etc.

**Head:** Head lines and characters are smart, logical, and possibly calculating. A head line could perhaps be more nasal and/or high pitched. Picking up the pace could mean the character is thinking at a mile-a-minute. Alternately slowing down could mean they are deliberating and considering.

**Heart:** Heart lines and characters are all about care of something (another character, a thing, a place). These lines are kind, warm, and emotional. Think about what the character cares about, then think about the state of that thing. What is happening to the cared-for-thing will inform whether the character is happy, sad, upset, etc. This, in turn, informs pace, volume, and pitch.

**Gut:** Gut lines and characters are action oriented and quick to anger. Lines from the gut should be louder and in a deeper voice. Stances that take up more room and/or are extremely stable are good for these characters.

**Groin:** Groin lines and characters manipulate others, they want something and will get it. These lines could be sexual in nature, but don’t have to be. Slowing the pace of a line could indicate they are considering or plotting. Think about what the character desires then find ways to highlight this goal. For example, if the character wants to murder their scene partner they might rest their hand on their sword (or other weapon) and cock that hip out.

**AUDIENCE/RELATIONSHIP CHOICES:**

Who is the character saying the line to? Their ostensible conversational partner, as indicated by the script, may not be the only receiver. Perhaps another scene partner is the target audience, or a member of the audience itself. See Asides and Audience Contact activities for more assistance.

These are all suggestions. Above all, the word “choice” is an invitation to experiment. Exploring the infinite variety of choices can give you new incite to a character that may not be immediately apparent from looking at the text alone.
The Basics

Line Assignments

This activity is designed for use in conjunction with ASC Unit Plans, though it can have applications across the board. You will assign each student responsibility for a block of text. Each student will take this section of the play through the activities in the Basics section -- all activities that ASC actors use when studying their roles and preparing to put up a show.

In addition to providing each student with a unique section of text on which to practice the Basics, this assignment gives each student ownership over a particular part of the play. They will become intimately familiar with the characters in their blocks, with the scansion patterns and rhetorical devices, with the opportunities for audience contact, and when it comes time to cut the play, they will want to defend their own lines and protect them for cutting.

Your Students’ Line Assignments

- For advanced, AP, or college students, we recommend approximately 100 lines (or, to ASC’s performance model, 5 minutes of stage time). An advanced student should have no trouble working through a block of text this size for one night’s homework.
  - As an example, or a salve, let your students know that the ASC actors have done this work before their first rehearsal, for each character the play – for Hamlet, that could amount to 1500 lines (in just one of the five shows the actor will be in during that season).
  - As an alternative, you may wish to assign 100 lines of one character to each student.
- For less advanced students, you may want to reduce the number of lines to 50 or even 25 (suggested for middle-schoolers). In these cases, you will not want to work straight through from the beginning; rather, spread the Line Assignments out across the five acts, so that your class still gets a sense of the scope of the full play, rather than just the first act or two.
- Consulting a line count graph for the play may help you break down the assignments for your class’s needs. Please see our website (http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=116) for an account of lines in plays across the canon, based on Stanley Wells’ Dictionary of Shakespeare.

Some students may have large blocks of text within a single scene; some students may cross two, three, or even four scenes in a block of the same size. Depending on the size of your class, you may not get all the way through to the end of the play, even with 100 lines each, or you may reach the end and have to loop back around. You may wish either to start again at the beginning, or to double-up some of the more important speeches or complex staging moments.

Throughout your exploration of your play, whenever you examine a scene in class, ask the student or students who have those lines as their assignment to present for the class:
  - Any irregular scansion.
  - Any verse-prose shifts.
  - Any significant embedded stage directions.
  - Any significant rhetorical devices.

Assessment

The objective of these exercises is to invite your students to explore the infinite variety available to actors playing the roles. Many lines will offer alternate possibilities that will allow you and your students to discuss the preferred choice for their interpretation of the scene and characters. We do not expect that your students will scan their lines completely “correctly” -- especially since so many lines may have alternate possibilities -- or that they will catch every rhetorical device Shakespeare uses, nor do we expect you, as a teacher, to scan and analyze every line of the play in order to grade your students’ work. When students complete the activities in this guide, they will understand the concepts behind the work, as well as what benefits these tools provide to an actor--namely, the identification of moments in which an actor must make a concrete performance choice based on something s/he notes in the text.

The best way to assess what your students discovered about their lines is through discussion in the classroom and through active staging. Ask them to share their significant discoveries and, when possible, ask them to act those key moments out, to demonstrate the variety of choices the discovery opens up for the actor. We recommend that students keep a Promptbook, a binder or portfolio in which they collect their Line Assignment exercises and other handouts, notes taken during class, journal entries, and personal performance assessments. For an example of a
Promptbook, please download Student Promptbook from http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=116. This page also provides you with a Teacher Rubric for tracking student achievements, classroom discussion, and active participation.
The Basics

Verse and Prose

Verse

Shakespeare wrote most of the verse in his plays in iambic pentameter, a style consisting of ten syllables per line – five metrical feet, each consisting of one unstressed and one stressed syllable. The process of marking the stresses in a line is called scansion. By writing plays in iambic pentameter, Shakespeare was, in a way, directing the actors of his company. By scanning the lines themselves, your students can discover those directions and the opportunities for choice embedded within the text. Scansion is a valuable tool for both scholars and actors, because determining where the stresses go can reveal much not only about how the line might be delivered and about character, but also about what words in the line are most important. Scansion can also aid your students with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.

In this active physical and vocal demonstration of Iambic Pentameter, students will gain an understanding of the placement of the stress, feminine line endings, and the importance meter plays in the performance and understanding of early modern plays.

Materials
- 11 students
- 11 chairs
- Iambic lines from Shakespeare
  - See suggestions on next page, or have your students pull favorite lines from their Line Assignments.

Activity: Iambic Bodies
- Ask for 10-11 volunteers, depending on the line you choose. The 11th will be needed if the line has an feminine ending.
- Ask volunteers to line up in front of the classroom, with a chair behind each one. You may wish to couple up your iambs by placing their chairs close together, then a space, then the next two chairs.
- Say your chosen line, from the examples below, to the class.
- Ask the class to repeat the line.
- Assign one syllable (or beat) of the line to each volunteer from right to left.
- Have students practice saying the line in order, each contributing his or her own syllable on cue.
- Have students practice saying the line in order, each contributing his or her own syllable on cue.
- Have only the standing students say their syllables, again, with those standing putting greater emphasis on theirs.
- Have only the standing students say their syllables.
- Discuss the possible meanings derived from these stresses.
- Have only the sitting students say their syllables.
- Discuss the possible meanings derived from the unstressed syllables.
- Ask your students to select lines from the text to try.
- Discuss the “Terms to Know” from the Student Handout.

Lines to Try:

To MORrow AND to MORrow AND to MORrow
(more and more and more) – Macbeth

With LOVE’S light WINGS did I o’er PERCH these WALLS
(Love’s wings I perch walls) – Romeo and Juliet

To BE or NOT to BE that IS the QUESTion
(be not be is quest...of the whole play) – Hamlet
You BLOCKS, you STONES, you WORSE than SENSEless THINGS
(blocks stones worse sense things) – Julius Caesar

PROSE

Your students may initially fear verse far more than prose; after all, prose is the form that dominates their reading elsewhere, in novels, textbooks, magazines, and online. In Shakespeare, however, prose may actually be more difficult for your students to work with, since prose is more likely to be heavy with colloquialism, and its rhythms are more likely to be idiosyncratic to a particular character’s way of speaking. When working through a prose section of a play, therefore, your students will need to look for different indications of rhythm than they do in verse:

- Identifying Prose from Verse: Depending on how your text is laid out, your students may have trouble distinguishing verse from prose at first glance – and may end up trying to scan their prose lines for iambic meter. The shortcut is this: in most texts, the first word of each verse line is capitalized, while prose lines, written as normal sentences, do not capitalize the first word after a line break.
- Sentence Length: Have your students go through the block of prose and find all of the sentence breaks. Are the sentences short and concise? Or does the character run on, linking many clauses together? How much variation is there in the length of the sentences?
- Unfinished Thoughts: Have your students identify the subject of each independent clause, then determine where that thought reaches completion – or if it does.
- Questions: Does the speaker ask questions? Does anyone answer them?
- Interruptions: Does the speaker interrupt himself, or does someone else interrupt him?
- Shifts in Focus: When does the speaker change the subject? Does it come as part of an interruption?

Working with Verse and Prose

- During the Iambic Bodies activity, encourage your students to try their favorite lines (from Lesson One homework) out loud.
- After working through the Iambic Bodies activity, select a few lines to mark up as a group.
  - First, discuss breaking a line into feet. This will reveal the first round of choices: namely, if any elisions need to occur. A normal line must end its tenth syllable with a stress; a normal line including a feminine ending must end with its eleventh syllable unstressed.
  - If you have a Smart Board or an overhead projector at your disposal, you may wish to display the completed lines up on the screen, so that you can mark any questions or changes as you go along. Otherwise, you may wish to write out lines on your chalkboard or whiteboard. This visual will help students feel more confident when it comes time to mark scansion on their own.
- Divide your students into groups. How many and how large will depend on your class size.
- Assign each group a small section (10-20) lines to scan.
- Work through these lines as a class.
  - Discuss “Basics—Choices” with your students.
  - Have each group read their lines, emphasizing their scansion decisions and the choices they have made.
  - Did any group find irregularities?
  - Did any group find lines that could be scanned more than one way?

Suggested Homework: Have your students scan their Line Assignments and note any irregularities or ambiguities. They should choose their favorite line or sentence, copy it down in their Promptbooks, and be prepared to share that line with the class, as well as responding to the additional prompts.

- For prose heavy plays, or characters, have your students pay particular attention to word order, sentence length, and transitions. In lieu of scanning, have them mark: the beginnings and ends of sentences, the beginnings and ends of independent clauses within those sentences, unfinished thoughts, interruptions, questions, and shifts in focus.
○ If a student’s Line Assignment includes both verse and prose, they should identify when the shifts occur and who instigates them.
○ Spend the first few minutes of the next class discussing any exciting discoveries your students made in their homework, using the following suggestions for leading discussion:
  ▪ If one student notices a particular character with a lot of irregularities, ask if anyone else in the class noticed a similar pattern in that same character elsewhere in the play. Is it normal for the character, or is it unusual?
  ▪ Conversely, is any character completely regular? Does that change over the course of the play, or remain constant?
  ▪ Ask if there anyone has a line they had particular trouble with, or that they think could be scanned in multiple ways. Have the student direct her classmates in different variations of the meter, then discuss the possibilities presented by each variation.
  ▪ Did anyone identify shifts from verse to prose, or vise versa? What seems to instigate the change?

**Further Exploration:** Discuss, in an essay or journal response, the clues that the scansion of a speech within your students’ 100 lines provides an actor. Note regularity, irregularity, and other playing clues the text provides. Have your students draw conclusions about character or make suggestions regarding the playing of the scansion.
STUDENT HANDOUT - Verse and Prose

Shakespeare wrote most of the verse in his plays in **iambic pentameter**, a style consisting of ten syllables per line — five metrical feet, each consisting of one unstressed and one stressed syllable. The process of marking the stresses in a line is called scansion. Scansion is a valuable tool for both scholars and actors, because determining where the stresses go can reveal much not only about how the line might be delivered and about character, but also about what words in the line are most important. Scansion can also aid your students with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.

**Terms to Know:**

- **foot**: the basic unit of blank verse, usually two syllables
- **iamb**: a metrical foot containing an unstressed beat, then a stressed beat.
  - As in: expense, before, admit, compare, degree
- **trochee**: a metrical foot containing a stressed beat, then an unstressed beat. Shakespeare’s most frequent variant on strict iambic pentameter is to begin a line with a trochee, and most given names are trochees.
  - As in: beauty, error, vanish, lovely, Richard, Henry
- **spondee**: a metrical foot containing two stressed beats. Spondees may occur in hyphenates or with exclamations.
  - As in: O Fool; well-loved; Peace, ho; careworn
- **feminine ending**: an additional unstressed syllable at the end of a line.
  - As in: To be or not to be, that is the question.
- **elision**: the merging of two syllables into one
  - As in: heaven becoming heav’n, never becoming ne’er.
  - In some places, you may notice the expansion of a form we generally elide in modern American English. A word like profession may be four syllables or three depending on its usage: "pro-fess-ee-un" or "pro-fes-shun". When you see "-ion" ending a word, check the scansion to see if it elides or not.
- **caesura**: a hard break in the middle of a line.
  - As in: But soft! | | What light through yonder window breaks?
- **end-stop**: a line that ends with a period, a semicolon, a question mark, or an exclamation point, concluding the thought or sentence.
  - As in: Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
    Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
- **enjambment**: a line or series of lines without end-stops, continuing the thought from one line to the next.
  - As in: How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame →
    Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose, →
    Doth spot the budding beauty of thy name.
- **shared line**: when two (or more) characters share one line of iambic pentameter between them. As in:
  - Lady Macbeth: They must lie there; go carry them, and smear
    The sleepy grooms with blood.
  - Macbeth: I’ll go no more.
How to Mark Scansion:

Foot: a vertical line between the feet:

Unstressed syllable: a curved u-like shape above the unstressed syllable:

Stressed syllable: a small vertical or slanted line above the stressed syllable:

Caesura: two vertical lines:

Examples:

He is | a dream | er; | | let | us leave | him: | | pass.

Double, | double, | toil and | trouble

Shall we | be sun| der’d? | | Shall | we part,| sweet girl?

Tips and Tricks:

○ When in doubt, say it out loud. Your ear will help you figure out what stresses are most natural. Many words must be pronounced a certain way -- for instance, SYLLable, not sylLAble or syllABLE. Longer words may contain more than one stressed syllable. Use these words to help you test and tune your ears:
  ▪ study, accomplish, never, energize, fulfill, interactive, holiday, university

○ Words that have a lot of consonants together and few vowels -- climb, fright, dwell -- have a heavy sort of sound to them, and so often "want" to fall into stressed positions.

○ Similarly, words with long vowels or double-vowels -- shout, need, poor -- also tend to fall in stressed positions.
  ○ Pronouns rarely fall in stress positions. If you have a stressed pronoun, that’s telling you something important.
  ○ Articles (a, and, the) almost never fall into stressed positions.
  ○ It is sometimes helpful to work from the end of a line backwards, especially if you have a question about where the stresses or foot-breaks should fall in the middle of a line. Once you’ve determined if a line has a feminine ending or not, it becomes easier to find the rest of the divides from there.
Scansion Flowchart
THE BASICS

Paraphrasing

At the American Shakespeare Center, one of the first things the actors do when they receive their scripts is paraphrase their lines word for word. While 98.5% of the words Shakespeare writes into his plays are still in common usage, English is a highly versatile and inventive language, with its multiplicity of word choices for a single meaning, as well as its multiplicity of meanings for a single word. As such, word definitions may have changed over the last 400 years, leaving students and actors some room for exploration and discovery within each one. Moreover, since Shakespeare used over 30,000 words in his plays, and the average English speaker only uses a vocabulary of about 5,000 - 8,000 words on a regular basis, paraphrasing can help ensure that actors (and students) have made the strongest playing choice when it comes to the meanings of various words.

The benefits of a word for word paraphrase extend beyond word meaning, however. Syntax and word order inform actors (and students) about character options and choices. If a character always chooses a 3 syllable word where a 1 syllable will do, or mis-orders her words, or never comes to the end of a sentence, paraphrasing can help students to recognize those traits, providing students (and actors) with playing choices.

Activity

Explore Paraphrasing.

- Use Wordle.net or another cloud-generation program to create a word cloud for the first one hundred lines of the play you are studying.
- Have your students first look at the Wordle, and then circle or highlight any words they do not immediately recognize. How many of them are there?
  - If fewer than 2%, they are well within the range of common usage words.
  - You can explain any proper nouns as unusual names or places that would be familiar with in the context of play-going in London -- to bring the point home, ask if there are any place names in the States that Londoners today would struggle with.
- Discuss what the Wordle tells you about the first 100 lines of the play. Who or what appears to be important?
- Have your students refer to the plain text of the lines and find any words they find unfamiliar. Are there any context clues that provide the word’s meaning?
- Have your students look up the definitions of any still unfamiliar words, (if the Oxford English Dictionary is available to your students, have them use that, because it will show them the accretion of meaning over the years) and at least one “familiar” word, in order that they can examine how its meaning may have changed through time.
- Find a synonym that makes sense in context.
  - check tense and plurality
  - examine whether there is an opportunity for a missing pun or image.
  - “extra points” for keeping the paraphrase in meter.
- Have your students share their discoveries.
- Now, give each student 2-3 lines of a speech to paraphrase word-for-word. They should replace verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs even if the words are familiar to them, but they should not change the order of any words (or prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, or proper nouns).
- Do a read-around of your class’s paraphrased lines.
  - If there is repetition of a word, the students following the first speaker of the word must use the first paraphrase.
  - “Extra points” for the most creative solution.
- Discuss the importance of word-for-word paraphrasing. Often in Shakespeare, it isn’t the words themselves that are difficult, but rather the unusual syntax and sentence structure, and the possible double- or triple-meanings of the words. Your students will learn more about the purpose and impact of disrupted syntax in our R.O.A.D.S to Rhetoric section.
  - Remind your students that Shakespeare’s plays were originally heard, not read. Your students may want to identify times when an audience could hear multiple meanings in one word, enhancing the aural experience.
    - Examples: reign/rein/rain; where/wear;
  - Then, go back and see if your students can use words in their paraphrasing which retain or create that aural experience. This exercise will demonstrate Shakespeare’s verbal creativity and ability to your class.

Some activities throughout this study guide will ask or suggest that your students paraphrase before putting a scene on its feet. You may wish to have them follow this process each time.
Line Assignments
Your students will paraphrase their Line Assignments as homework. They should choose their favorite line or sentence, copy it down in their Promptbooks, and be prepared to share that line with the class, as well as responding to the additional prompts.

You may also wish to have your students create Wordles of their Line Assignments.
William Shakespeare, like most boys of his social status in the early modern period, likely attended a grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon. From the age of about seven on through his teenage years, Shakespeare would have spent much of his time at school studying and conversing in Latin (and possibly Greek) translating the works of great classical authors such as Ovid, Virgil, Plautus, Cicero, and Seneca. From these authors, Shakespeare would have learned not just grammar, but also the art of rhetoric: the composition of words to achieve a desired result. Shakespeare’s plays demonstrate that he had a keen and imaginative grasp of the hundreds of rhetorical devices used by the ancients, devices which helped him craft his words for emotional appeal, comic effect, and persuasive power.

Recognizing when characters use rhetoric is more important than identifying the terms each figure goes by. Once actors and students can identify the basic shapes that rhetorical figures take, they can proceed to determining the playing choices those shapes provide. This section will provide you and your students with the tools to identify those shapes.

To help your students learn the basics of rhetoric, we’ve broken the most common devices down into five categories: Repetition, Omission, Addition, Direction, and Substitution. You can find further explanations of these types in our Teacher’s Guide to Rhetoric, which explicates the devices by name. Whether or not you choose to teach the specific terms to your students, it will be helpful for you to know them. Once you know the devices intimately, their patterns will begin to pop off of the page. Familiarity with the specific devices will enable you to recognize them in use and to show them to your students as examples of each type. For the personal insights of the ASC staff as to the value and excitement of rhetorical exploration, please visit the ASC Education blog: http://americanshakespearecentereducation.blogspot.com/search/label/rhetoric

Notice that these five types of forms are not mutually exclusive. They may overlap and intertwine. A figure of direction may also have within it repetition. You may find omission nested within addition. Some devices straddle the line between one type and another, and there isn’t always a “right answer.” Your students should look to rhetoric for suggestions and clues as a way of opening up the text, not to try and pin it down to any one interpretation or another.

Repetition
Repetition gives speech a cadence, a rhythm to follow. Our brains, which are tuned to appreciate harmony, naturally pick up on these patterns, assisting us in synthesizing ideas. Shakespeare frequently uses devices of repetition within the structure of iambic pentameter, which already has a distinct rhythm; layering the rhetorical device on top of the scansion augments the brain’s ability to hear patterns. You may also find devices of repetition in prose lines, and you may want to ask your students to consider how, or if, they hear the device differently in prose than they do in verse.

Your students will probably be most familiar with repetition in music: both in the melodies themselves and in lyrical refrains. How do these repetitions make a song easier to memorize?

Of sounds:
“O, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound, / That breathes upon a bank of violets, / Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more.”
– Twelfth Night
An author can use repetition of this kind to create an aural mood. An excess of the letter “S” makes a sibilant sound, evoking the image of a snake, and perhaps of a character who is sneaky, surreptitious, or sly. An excess of “O”s produces a mournful, lugubrious noise, wounded and woeful. Ask your students to consider the tonal quality of the repeated sound. What might that indicate about the character or the situation?

Of words or phrases:
“We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight
on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender…” – Winston Churchill

“Thy Juliet is alive, / For whose dear sake thou wast but lately dead: / There art thou happy. Tybalt would kill thee, / But thou slewedst Tybalt. There art thou happy. / The law that threatened death becomes thy friend, / And turns it to exile: there art thou happy.” – Romeo and Juliet

Why do we repeat ourselves? We repeat ourselves when we want to make a point, when something is particularly important. Have your students look at what words or phrases the characters repeat: Does the character emphasize time-related words (now, soon, then)? Location-based? Conjunctions? Concrete nouns or abstract concepts? We may also repeat ourselves when we’re trying to get attention, either because our intended audience is ignoring us or because circumstances are making it difficult to hear. Have your students consider: Why is the character repeating the words or phrases? How strongly do you, as an actor, want to stress the repetitions?

Of structure:

“I came, I saw, I conquered.” – Julius Caesar

“Her wagon spokes made of long spinners’ legs; / The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers; / Her traces, of the moonshine’s wat’ry beams; / Her collars, of the smallest spider web; / Her whip, of cricket’s bone, the lash of film” – Romeo and Juliet

When an author repeats grammatical structure, it links ideas together in the listener’s mind. For a character, it may indicate a highly-functioning intellect with a sense of a plan. It may also be a way of building to a climactic conclusion.

Omission

Omission leaves something out. These devices interrupt the normal flow of speech or ideas in some way, by leaving out a component of a sentence or a layer of meaning. This omission requires the brain to try to fill in the gap. You students should also consider what omission implies about the listener. Either Shakespeare or the character thinks that his audience (within the play or in the theatre) can fill in the blanks, crediting them with enough intelligence and reasoning to follow along – or, if the gaps are not easily filled, that may be significant.

Of words or phrases:

“The average person thinks he isn’t.” –Father Larry Lorenzoni

"You this way; we that way." – Love’s Labour’s Lost

Leaving out words implies a hurry of some kind. The character’s mind may be jumping from one idea to another, or she may be speaking so quickly that words get left out. Ask your students to consider how omissions affect the rhythm of a speech. Alternatively, a character may omit key words deliberately, rather than on accident, forcing the listener to make assumptions – which may or may not be correct. What could a character’s motivation for that kind of manipulation be?

In the form of understatement or evasion:

“It’s just a flesh wound.” – Black Knight, Monty Python and the Holy Grail

“What, art thou hurt?” “Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch.” – Romeo and Juliet

These devices are less literal forms of omission, but still fall into this category, as the author/speaker is leaving something out: in this case, a level of meaning, rather than any word or phrase. Omission of this sort is often coy, humorous, or sarcastic, but may also be evasive or deceptive.

Addition

Most easily understood as parenthetical statements, these rhetorical devices focus on words which are either extraneous or explanatory – they either elaborate unnecessarily on something which is already clear, or they make clear what was previously vague. Many of these devices slow down a speech, drawing out the tempo. They may overlap with devices of repetition.

Of grammatically superfluous words or phrases:

“Four score and seven years ago…” – Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

“I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks.” – Twelfth Night

Examine what kinds of characters use far more words than are strictly necessary, either belaboring a point, employing a number of supplementary adjectives, or trying so hard to speak properly that they come out on the other side as ridiculous. Frequently
buffoonish characters will use these superfluous devices, elaborating unnecessarily. These devices may also indicate an otherwise sensible character who is now experiencing a moment of emotional turbulence: overwrought, hysterical, irate, or sorrowful.

In the form of overstatement or exaggeration:
"I grant him bloody, luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful, sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin that has a name." -- Macbeth
These devices are the opposite of the understatement devices mentioned under Omission; devices which overstate or exaggerate add a layer of meaning to the words that is not there to begin with. What is the character overstatement, and why? Is the choice conscious or unconscious?
Ask your students to consider how a person acts when he is exaggerating something verbally. What physical exaggerations can accompany the exaggerated speech?

Of description, elaboration, or correction:
"Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and father of the University of Virginia." – Thomas Jefferson's burial monument
"Come, civil night, thou sober-suited matron all in black." – Romeo and Juliet
These devices fall under the “explanation” category of addition, augmenting a sentence which would be complete without them. These descriptions and addresses are “extra” in some way, but still provide information not found elsewhere in the sentence, differentiating them from the first category of superfluous words and phrases. Consider why these devices are necessary to the sentence or line: What information does the device provide? Is it something the theatrical audience already knows or does not know? How about the on-stage audience, if one is present? Does it provide new information, or is it merely a reminder? Does the addition have either positive or negative connotations?

Direction
Direction addresses the order in which the words come. This category is why most students think Shakespeare is hard, because it addresses the creation of unusual syntactical structures. The first thing to do when your students see these devices in use is to have them untangle the sentence – put the words in the order that make the most sense to them. Then ask, "Why didn't Shakespeare just do that? What purpose is there for putting the words in another order?"

Devices of direction are devices of arrangement and rearrangement, and they can either illuminate or obfuscate meaning. A device which arranges words more neatly, by highlighting contrast or building to a climactic point, illuminates meaning. A device which rearranges words into a less sensible order, altering normal English syntax, may obfuscate meaning. These devices may also more literally change the direction of the speech – that is, change to whom a character directs a speech.

In the form of inversion or rearrangement:
"Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." – JFK
"Why should their liberty than ours be more?" – The Comedy of Errors
When words come in a different order than we would expect them, in normal syntax, something is going on in the character’s brain. Whether it indicates a state of disorder or of hyper-organization depends on if the rearrangement of words makes the sentence make more or less sense. A character whose thoughts and words are disordered may be in a state of high emotionality. A character who deliberately arranges his words in an unusual pattern, however, may be trying to make some kind of a point. Look at what words the character brings into positions of greater importance. Does she make any kind of juxtaposition? Or is she connecting thoughts together?

By arranging a series, building, or diminishing:
“All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.” – JFK
"Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will." – The Two Gentlemen of Verona
These devices drive a sentence or a line along, often either by building in force and focus to some climactic end, or by tightening down to a smaller, narrower focus. These devices may include or may occur along with devices of repetition or addition. Ask your students to consider how they could deliver lines with these devices in them. Should they increase volume, or decrease it? What movements could they pair to their words to emphasize the building or diminishing? Can they make themselves seem bigger or smaller to mirror the ideas?

**By arranging contrast:**

“It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues.” —Abraham Lincoln

"Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." – *Julius Caesar*

In theatre, characters often think out loud. These devices examine instances of “either-or”, where a character weighs alternatives either for his in-play audience or for the theatrical audience, or possibly for both audiences. Consider if the ideas are harmonious or opposing. Is the comparison a natural one, or does it seem forced, off-kilter, or inappropriate? Ask your students to think of ways to use physical action to emphasize an “either-or” statement, such as weighing the ideas on their hands.

**By redirecting the focus or object of speech:**

"What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands, and then with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancor – Oh God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the marketplace!” – *Much Ado about Nothing*

These devices are often interruptions of one kind or another. A character may break off in the middle of a sentence, or abruptly begin addressing a different person. Such redirections may be spontaneous – the character discovering something new while speaking – or they may be deliberate, planned diversions.

**Substitution**

Devices of substitution are when, in one way or another, one word or phrase stands in for something else. This may be purely grammatical, or it may be more conceptual and abstract. Metaphors, malapropisms, puns, and rhetorical questions all fall into this category.

**Grammatically-based: Substitution of parts of words, full words, phrases, or structure:**

“Have fun and keep googling!” – Larry Page, co-founder of Google (1st recorded use of Google as a verb)

"He words me, girls, he words me." – *Antony and Cleopatra*

These devices may indicate very high or very low intelligence, depending on what exactly the character does with the wordplay. Intelligent, creatively-thinking characters can substitute one part of speech for another, can insert a synonym with multiple meanings, and can create elaborate metaphors, demonstrating their skill with language and their ability to use words in unique and inventive ways. Characters of low intelligence may exchange one word for another, but unintentionally, rather than for deliberate effect. Their substitutions are slips of the tongue, mistakes, evidence of a disordered mind.

Ask your students to determine whether the substitution indicates high or low intelligence. How can an actor play that? Ask your students what physical markers they associate with a character of high or low intelligence. Is the character of lower intelligence aware of his slips and gaffs, or does he barrel on confidently? What do you look like when you know you’ve made a mistake? What do you look like when you’re bluffing? Is the character of higher intelligence showing off, or is she more sly about her verbal inventions? What do you look like when you think you’re better than the people around you? What do you look like when you’re playing someone for a fool?

Your students might also consider these devices as status markers that can inform movement and the stage picture. An actor whose character uses a device of substitution intelligently might move to take a more powerful position on the stage; an actor whose character uses a device of substitution accidentally might move to a less powerful position to underscore the mistake.

**Conceptually-based:**

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.” – Thomas Jefferson

"'Tis Joan, not we, by which the day is won, for which I will divide my crown with her." – *Henry VI, Part 1*

Your students may most easily recognize these devices as kinds of metaphors, where a concrete object stands in for an idea or an emotion, or as puns, where a joke depends on a single word standing in for more than one idea. Like the grammatically-based substitutions, these devices can indicate either very high or very low intelligence, depending on whether the substitution is apt or inappropriate.
Notice that these five types of forms are not mutually exclusive. They may overlap and intertwine. A figure of direction may also have within it repetition. You may find omission nested within addition. Some devices straddle the line between one type and another, and there isn’t always a “right answer.” Your students should look to rhetoric for suggestions and clues as a way of opening up the text, not to try and pin it down to any one interpretation or another.
Activity: Working With Rhetoric

Step One: Introducing Rhetorical Concepts

Give your students the following Handout and discuss the 5 different kinds of rhetorical devices. See if your students can offer any examples of each type, either from lines they have looked at already or from modern speeches, movies, or songs.

Work through your First 100 Lines, or a section of them, as a class. First, do a read-around of the scene, with each student speaking one line before passing to the next student. This gives your students the chance to hear patterns within the speech before they start dissecting it.

Divide the class into five groups, and have each group look for examples from one of the five rhetorical types.

In the following examples, the Teacher’s Guides are marked thus:

- Repetition: double underlined
- Omission: Where something is missing, find a circle.
- Addition: [ extraneous words within ]
- Direction: ▲ ◄ ▼ ◄ indicating the movement in the words
- Substitution: ~~ placed over the substituted word

You may want to encourage your students to use the same marks on their worksheets.

Discuss your findings as a class. What category of device appears most often? What character clues can your students infer from that?

Step Two: Discovering the Clues

Have your students work through a passage of text on their own, marking any use of rhetorical devices they find, using the key from the example.

You may use one of the following suggested passages, or you may let them choose passages of their own. (If you are following the ASC Unit Plan, have your students use their Line Assignments, or a section of them, as they have been for scansion and paraphrasing.)

Ask your students to consider the following questions when they see rhetorical devices at use in a character’s speech:

1. Who uses the device?
2. Is the choice deliberate or accidental for the character?
   a. If deliberate, what is the character's goal, and how does the rhetorical device help her achieve it?
   b. If accidental, what does that indicate about the character's grasp of language or state of mind?
3. How can the device affect the rhythm or cadence of the line or lines? Consider:
   a. Speed
   b. Scansion and metrics
   c. Rhyme
   d. Volume
4. How does the device affect a listener's ability to comprehend what the character is saying?
5. Does the device indicate high or low intelligence?
6. Does the device indicate a heightened emotional state?
7. Does the device create power for the character or cause the character to lose power?
8. Is this device usual or unusual for the character?
   a. If usual, what does that indicate about the character on the whole?
   b. If unusual, what does that indicate about the character in this moment?
9. When working with a longer speech or a conversation, what patterns can you notice throughout the passage?
   a. Does any one kind of device dominate a character's speech?
   b. Does the speaker shift devices (and perhaps tactics) mid-stream?

Each device will not necessarily provide an answer for every one of these questions, but it’s beneficial for your students to keep them in the back of their minds while reading or while staging.

Discuss your findings. You may wish to have your students write a short response or analysis as an assessment.

Step Three: Rhetoric in Action
Select a few lines, either from the class example or from the passages your students have worked through, and determine how to represent the devices present in the passage physically on stage. Use **Choices** to help explore the potential physicality of rhetorical patterns. For more on choosing gesture, see Chekov’s theories on “psychological gesture,” summarized in the following blog entry: [http://rickontheater.blogspot.com/2009/10/psychological-gesture-leading-center_27.html](http://rickontheater.blogspot.com/2009/10/psychological-gesture-leading-center_27.html)

Discuss what assigning action to a rhetorical device does for an actor. While these broad gestures are not likely ones that an actor would use in such a blatant way in an actual performance, they approach the idea of taking physical or vocal cues from what the rhetoric tells you about a line.

Have your students try the passage again, this time acting the devices more naturally: creating emphasis with their voices, varying the rhythm of their speech, using meaningful gestures rather than arbitrary ones. How do the devices help with delivery?
When you work through a passage out of Shakespeare’s plays, look for the following five types of rhetorical devices: Repetition, Omission, Addition, Direction, and Substitution. These devices can provide you with character clues, telling you more about the speaker, and they can provide acting cues, indicates on how to behave physically or vocally when delivering the lines.

Repetition
Repetition gives speech a cadence, a rhythm to follow. Our brains, which are tuned to appreciate harmony, naturally pick up on these patterns, assisting us in synthesizing ideas. Shakespeare frequently uses devices of repetition within the structure of iambic pentameter, which already has a distinct rhythm; layering the rhetorical device on top of the scansion augments the brain’s ability to hear patterns.

Omission
Omission interrupts the normal flow of speech or ideas in some way, by leaving out a component of a sentence or a layer of meaning. This omission requires the brain to try to fill in the gap. You should also consider what omission implies about the listener. Either Shakespeare or the character thinks that his audience (within the play or in the theatre) can fill in the blanks, crediting them with enough intelligence and reasoning to follow along – or, if the gaps are not easily filled, that may be significant; a character may be counting on poor comprehension.

Addition
These rhetorical devices focus on words which are either extraneous or explanatory – they either elaborate unnecessarily on something which is already clear, or they make clear what was previously vague. Many of these devices slow down a speech, drawing out the tempo. They may overlap with devices of repetition.

Direction
Devices of direction change the order in which the words come; they are devices of arrangement and rearrangement, and they can either illuminate or confuse meaning. A device which arranges words more neatly, by highlighting contrast or building to a climactic point, illuminates meaning. A device which rearranges words into a less sensible order, altering normal English syntax, may obfuscate meaning. These devices may also more literally change the direction of the speech – that is, change to whom a character directs a speech.

Substitution
Devices of substitution are when, in one way or another, one word or phrase stands in for something else. This may be purely grammatical, or it may be more conceptual and abstract. Metaphors, malapropisms, and puns all fall into this category.

Consider the following questions when you see rhetorical devices at use in a passage:

1. Who uses the device?
2. Is the choice deliberate or accidental for the character?
   a. If deliberate, what is the character’s goal, and how does the rhetorical device help her achieve it?
   b. If accidental, what does that indicate about the character’s grasp of language or state of mind?
3. How can the device affect the rhythm or cadence of the line or lines? Consider:
   a. Speed
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4. How does the device affect a listener’s ability to comprehend what the character is saying?
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a. If usual, what does that indicate about the character on the whole?
b. If unusual, what does that indicate about the character in this moment?

9. When working with a longer speech or a conversation, what patterns can you notice throughout the passage?
   a. Does any one kind of device dominate a character's speech?
   b. Does the speaker shift devices (and perhaps tactics) mid-stream?

Not every device will prompt you to answer each of these questions, but it will be helpful to you to keep them all in mind as you work through a passage.
ASC Study Guides and the Common Core State Standards

- **9th-10th Grade**
  - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
  - Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
  - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
  - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
  - Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
  - Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
  - Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

- **11th-12th Grade**
  - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
  - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
  - Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
  - Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
  - Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
  - Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
  - Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.