



Sample Pages from Audition Toolkit

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The Audition TOOLKIT



By Lindsay Price, Craig Mason & Kerry Hishon

The Audition Toolkit

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The Audition Toolkit



Whether you're holding auditions for your next full-length or competition one-act, or you've got a mock audition unit in your program, or you just want to teach students the skills that are necessary for the audition process, you want your students to do their best. How do you give students what they need so they can demonstrate their abilities in under two minutes?

Auditions are a unique situation that require more than talent. The most talented students can fall apart during an audition. And it's more than just delivering that monologue: confidence, communication, active listening, flexibility, work ethic, and proper preparation all factor into the presentation.

The Audition Toolkit is divided into two sections:

1. Teachers

Articles on planning your own auditions and exercises to incorporate audition skill building into your program.

2. Students

Articles, tips, and technique sheets that you can print off and give directly to students for their own audition preparation. Most handouts come with a Reflection or exercise.

You can teach students to present their best selves in an audition situation!



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22 articles and exercises + audition templates

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Audition Tips

from the Director's Side of the Table



You've decided on the show your school is going to produce this year. You've obtained the performance rights and paid for the royalties. You've got the show dates in place, and you've booked the venue. Now, the next step is to assemble a cast – which means auditions! **The following five steps** will help you to get organized for the upcoming auditions. The more you have planned out in advance, the smoother your audition day will run.

STEP ONE: PUBLICISE

How will you spread the word about your auditions? Will you put up flyers and posters? If your school has a newsletter, website, or social media, you should also use those channels. In the audition notice, include the dates and times available to audition (as well as callback dates, if you wish to have callbacks), whether students can drop in or must book an appointment, and what type of material will be expected at the audition (a prepared monologue, a song, cold reading, or something else).

STEP TWO: PLACE

Where will the auditions be located? Do you have to book a room in advance? Be sure that whatever location you choose is clean and bright and has adequate space for the actual auditions and for a waiting area for the other auditionees. If possible, try to cover any windows or keep the door shut for the privacy of the student currently auditioning and for the nerves of the other students waiting to audition.

STEP THREE: PEOPLE

Who will watch the auditions? Is it just the director (or, if it's a musical, just the musical director and choreographer)? Or will it also include other teachers, the stage manager, and/or someone else?

I highly recommend having someone to help outside the audition room, acting as a "waiting room" attendant. This person helps people sign in, collects information sheets, takes photos of the students (if you haven't worked with them before), answers questions, and maintains order outside the audition room. This allows you to be free to focus on the auditions. This person can also secretly keep an eye on students and report back to you about their behavior before and after the auditions. Was a certain student disturbing others while they were waiting? Were they quiet and shy? Were they polite to the other students? These observations can be extremely useful in the casting process – you want talented actors of course, but you also want to work with students who are committed to the process and not divas when they're out of the room.

STEP FOUR: PAPERWORK

Auditions often require a lot of paperwork, such as:

- Sign-up sheets for before the audition
- Sign-in sheets, so you can see who actually showed up for the audition
- Signs indicating where auditions are being held
- Audition information sheets (what do students need to prepare?)
- Blank paper for taking notes
- A calendar with rehearsal and show dates
- Extra copies of the script (and score, if applicable)
- If you are doing cold reads, copies of the scenes that students will read from

Be sure to have all these prepared ahead of time!

STEP FIVE: "PROPS"

It's best to set up your audition space ahead of time so you're ready to go on the day of auditions.

Here is a list of items you'll need to make your life easier on audition day:

- A table and chairs for the artistic team (you might want a second table and chairs outside of the audition room if you have a "waiting room" attendant)
- Paper and pens/pencils for taking notes
- A camera to take photos of the students to attach to their information sheets
- A clock, to keep you from running over time
- If you are directing a musical, you'll need a CD player or an iPod dock for playing accompaniment tracks and/or a piano or keyboard for your accompanist

With a little bit of planning, your auditions will run smoothly – one less thing you will have to worry about. Good luck with your upcoming auditions!



How Should YOU Prepare for Auditions?



You've chosen your play. Your audition date is set. But how else should you prepare before audition day?

KNOW THE PLAY

By the time you get to auditions, you should know the play backward and forward – mostly because this is going to help you cast the show.

Create a character description for each character. The description should list the character's traits – a big laugh, someone who is quick to anger. The description should also note any unique skills the character has (and the actor needs) – juggling, dancing the tango. Try to avoid identifying a character by physical attributes: *Juliet is slim with long brown hair*. Be open to what your students bring to the table with their abilities, their stage presence, and their command of performance basics such as diction and projection.

KNOW YOUR VISION

Not only do you need to know the play, you need to know your approach. What's your vision for this particular piece? Is there a specific theme you want to bring to life? Is there a specific point of view you want to express? Is there a genre you want to play with? (e.g. a Japanese Noh version of a fairy tale) Is there an era you want to bring to life (A 1950s version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.)

Knowing your vision is going to help you cast the play. For example, if you want to explore the abstract, you can include an abstract exercise in your audition and see how the students respond.

AUDITION INFORMATION SHEET

At the same time you announce the auditions, you should have an audition information sheet available. This sheet provides the actors with all the information they will need to audition. Be specific so everyone knows what's involved. Students need to know what play you are auditioning. And they need to know the rehearsal schedule and what your expectations are for that schedule.

This is the most important item – **your expectations**. If students must be available for every rehearsal during tech week, then you can't cast someone who's going to be on vacation. What are your expectations surrounding missing rehearsals? Are you going to be accommodating if students are involved in other clubs or teams? If this is an in-class project, will any after-school rehearsals be necessary?

The more information you give, the fewer surprises you'll encounter. There's nothing worse than discovering the perfect actor only to find out they're not available.

Audition Information to Include:

The Play and Characters

- What is the play about? Include a short synopsis.
- What's the genre? Is the play a comedy, drama, absurd?
- Who are the characters? Include a character breakdown (roles, genders, ages).
- Are copies of the script available? Will actors be able to read the play before the audition?

Actor Audition Prep

- What type of audition is it? (prepared monologue, cold reading, group exercises)
- What should actors prepare? (a two-minute memorized contemporary monologue, a one-minute monologue and a one-minute song, be prepared to move so bring comfortable clothes)
- What are the date, time, and location of the audition?
- Is there a sign-up sheet? Where is it?

Rehearsals and Performance

- When and where are rehearsals?
- What's your policy on missing rehearsals?
- Which rehearsals are mandatory?
- What are the performance dates?

Casting

- Will there be callbacks? If so, when?
- When and where will the cast list be posted?



Types of Auditions



There is no one type of audition that is the be all and end all that works for every student, every director, and every show.

While the most common audition type is the prepared monologue, it's not the only one. It's not even necessarily the best one. The monologue audition only shows how well an actor prepares a monologue, which may or not be helpful to the final product.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF AUDITIONS?

Prepared Monologue

Students prepare and memorize a monologue no more than two minutes long. Provide a sign-up sheet to schedule students for a specific time. After a student presents their monologue, provide a simple direction to see how the student handles it. For example, *play this character as a pirate*. Do they take direction well, or have they prepared their monologue to be performed in one way and one way only?

The goal of this audition: To see how well students prepare. Have they prepared a suitable monologue? Can they take direction? Are they committed? Are they in the moment? Are they willing to take risks?

The prepared monologue puts everyone on a level playing field – they're all given the same direction and the same amount of time to prepare. It's pretty clear to see, without any distraction, who is prepared and who isn't.

However, some students get incredibly nervous during auditions. They dry up. Also, some actors are great at learning monologues...and not much else. They don't thrive or grow during rehearsals.

A couple of tips: If you're doing this for a class, assign the monologues or have students submit their monologue ahead of time. This way you can circumvent repeat monologues, or monologues that are inappropriate.

Exercise: Have students submit their monologue and a Reflection paragraph on why it's a suitable choice for the play or project they're auditioning for. How is the piece similar to a specific character in the play? How will their monologue showcase a student's abilities?

Remind students that over-dramatic monologues are never a great choice. It's easy to assume they would be because they're emotional. But, nine times out of ten, the piece you're going to remember is not the one where the student yelled for two minutes but the one that made you laugh.

Cold Reading

Students are given scenes from the play to read and present on the day of the audition. Schedule students to audition in groups and allow them time to read over and rehearse their scene. If time and scheduling allow, give students the opportunity to read more than one scene.

The goal of this audition: To see how students fit with specific roles in the play. It also gives you the chance to see how students work together when they are thrown into a group. Who gets flustered and who shines? This type of audition takes some of the pressure off students – they don't have to prepare; they just have to show up. This can be more welcoming to new actors.

A cold read can be exciting because everyone gets to work with the script right away. Be aware that some actors don't read well when put on the spot. If so, give them extra time to prepare.

Rehearsed Scenes

All students are given scenes to prepare ahead of time. They either choose the groups on their own or you can create the groups at your discretion. Post a sign-up sheet a week before and, based on who signs up, post the groups the day before the audition along with their assigned scene.

The goal of this audition: To give students a chance to prepare so you can see what they bring to the scene. Do they have the scene fully blocked or do they just read the lines? Do they create clear characters? How do students work together when they have a chance to rehearse?

Improv and Group Exercises

If you're putting together an ensemble-driven or a devised piece, try a group exercise approach. All students arrive at a designated time. Run the audition much like a workshop or class. Lead a warm-up and provide exercises.

Some examples: Create a tableau based on a specific theme. Improv a scene based on a location and an object. Play the mirror game in pairs and then expand it to include groups of four, eight, or more.

This method is effective but tricky because you're wearing two hats – director and teacher. You may find it helpful to record the session.

The goal of this audition: To see how students think on their feet and to discover their abilities to create without a script. How do they work together when there isn't a net? Who brings ideas to the table and who freezes when asked to contribute?

Self Casting

Have you ever tried letting your students cast themselves? This is a technique best left for your senior students, perhaps for a class project rather than a drama club production.

If you have a small group of students, hand the power over to them. After the auditions, tell students they have to cast the play themselves, keeping in mind they have to choose actors who are best for the selected roles. If two students want the same role, the group is going to have to figure it out for themselves.

The goal of this audition: To give responsibility and ownership to students. It also gives them the opportunity to show their negotiation skills. How skilled are they as a group to make decisions on their own? Can they cast the play on merit rather than popularity?

Exercise: Try a mock self-casting exercise with your seniors. Use the play they're studying in class. Tell students they have to cast the play using their fellow classmates and that they have to come to a consensus. What happens? Be there to monitor and moderate but leave the final decisions up to them. Have students write a Reflection at the end. Were they able to negotiate and work together? Did the process descend into chaos? If so, why?

Choosing the Right Monologue

Checklist



DESCRIPTION

Students will read the criteria for choosing the “right” monologue for an audition, discuss the criteria, and then apply the criteria in an exercise.

MATERIALS

- Choosing the Right Monologue – Checklist
- Choosing the Right Monologue – Checklist Exercise (includes two monologues)
- Choosing the Right Monologue – Checklist Exercise (Answer Key)

INSTRUCTION

1. Give students the Checklist.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will read the Checklist aloud.
3. Each group will discuss the Checklist:
 - a. Why is it important to consider these elements in choosing a monologue?
 - b. Did anything surprise them on the Checklist?
 - c. Do they agree or disagree with the points made? Would they change anything?
4. Bring the class back together. Groups will share their findings.
5. Give each group the Checklist Exercise sheet with the two monologues.
6. Each group is to read the two monologues aloud. One is a good audition piece, the other is less so.
7. Based on the criteria outlined in the Checklist, have students determine which piece is a good audition piece.
8. Bring the class back together. Each group will share their findings.
9. Read the provided Checklist Exercise Answer Key – it offers observations on the two monologues.
10. Discuss the observations. *Do students agree or disagree? Why?*

ASSESSMENT

- Observe how students work in their groups. Are they engaged in the conversation or do they let others take the lead?



Choosing the Right Monologue

Checklist



What makes a monologue the “right” monologue? There are many unique factors. It has to be right for you. It has to be right for the moment. And what makes a monologue right for you won’t make it right for the person sitting next to you. But there is a checklist that everyone can follow to find the right monologue for them.

- ☐ **This monologue is in my age range.**
Don’t pick a seventy-year-old character when you’re seventeen.
- ☐ **I connect to this monologue.**
The more you love your monologue, the more fun you’ll have with it, the more you’ll want to work on it, and the more you’ll shine in the audition.
- ☐ **This monologue is under two minutes.**
Always err on the side of too short rather than too long. That way you can play with your monologue rather than rushing to beat the clock.
- ☐ **This monologue fits the criteria of the audition.**
What have you been asked to prepare? Do your pieces contrast? What’s the time limit? Is the play a comedy or a drama? Modern or classical?
- ☐ **This monologue comes from a published play.**
If you want to work on your skills as a theatre actor, use what theatre gives you. Use monologues from published plays.
- ☐ **This monologue is active.**
You don’t have to run in circles to have an active monologue. A character dealing with conflict is active. A character confronting another for the first time is active.
- ☐ **This monologue is emotion-based.**
Choose an emotion-based monologue over a storytelling monologue. Don’t confuse emotion-based with emotional. Being overly emotional (sobbing or shouting for two minutes) comes across as self-indulgent rather than engaging.
- ☐ **This monologue is character-driven.**
There are no lights, no sets, no costumes, no other actors, no rest of the play. Just you and the words. Make sure those words come out of the mouth of a three-dimensional character.
- ☐ **This monologue works out of context.**
If the monologue doesn’t work on its own or without explanation, don’t use it.

Choosing the Right Monologue

Checklist Exercise



Here are two monologues. One is a good choice for a competition and the other is less so. Which is which and why?

Sweep Under Rug, by Lindsay Price

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Counsellor Kelly here on C-I-T-Y with the evening announcements for Blocks 7A through E. I'm so excited to announce the upcoming plans for the tenth annual Bobby Sue birthday celebration! I can't wait! Can you believe it's been ten years? "A Bobby Sue in every home that needs one" has been the motto from the very beginning. We see no reason to change it. When you have a Bobby Sue to tell you what to do, life gets better! Employment is way up; crime is way down. Just the way we like it. Yay! You guys are so good. We're so proud of you! To help celebrate ten successful years, we're going to have an extra special celebration. Party hats and noisemakers for everyone! Just remember to treat them nicely, we'll be collecting them at the end. We'll do a countdown, just like New Years Eve, and we'll all sing together. Won't that be fun? And then, very exciting, a confetti cannon! And then we'll hold a lottery to see who gets cake. I know, I know, I know. Yes it would be great if we could give everyone cake. But in these times, it's just not possible. What can we do? You don't have to eat your piece if you get one. You can always share. That would be such a good thing to do!

Deck the Stage, by Lindsay Price

SHELLEY: You don't get off that easy. Sit down! I haven't even started. Sit down. (*She holds the picture in front of his face*) Ask me who's in the picture. Ask! That's my dad. Pretty handsome guy don't you think? Ask where he is. Ask where he is! Come on, you wanted to talk; ask where he is. I don't know. Isn't that funny? Isn't that a scream? I don't know. Two years ago he went to work on Christmas Eve and he never came home. Don't be. He stole money from his company and ran away with the boss's secretary. Merry Christmas! That's our nearest guess anyway. No one knows for sure because there hasn't been one word. Not one. Not a letter. Not a telegram. Not a postcard. Not an answering machine message. Nothing. He left us with debts up to our ears, and we didn't even get a goodbye. How's your dad? Is he alive? Does he talk to you every day? Well good, 'cause let me tell you, around here there isn't much talking. Around here, we bounce from apartment to apartment and my mom tries to keep working but she's not very strong. My dad knew that. And he left. So you'll have to excuse me if I'm cold, or distant, or pretentious. But my mind's a little full 'cause I only got three hours of sleep after working the night shift at the 7-11. And I could really give a crap about Christmas because all it means is that my father didn't love my mother and he didn't love me.



Choosing the Right Monologue

Checklist Exercise (Answer Key)



Sweep Under Rug

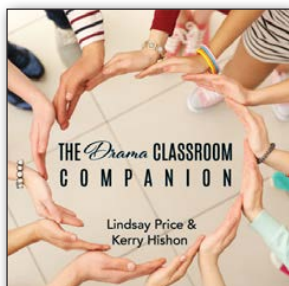
There is certainly a clear character in this monologue, with a specific voice. While there's the potential to have fun with the characters, there's also a lot of plot being set up. There's more storytelling here than any emotional journey – the character's emotional state is exactly the same from beginning to end, and that's an issue if you're looking for a three-dimensional characterization. It's much more about the story and much less about the character.

Deck the Stage

This is a character-driven emotion-based monologue. The character is on a roller coaster of emotion as she not only confronts the person she's talking to, but reveals some very deep wounds about her dad. Not only that, but there are specific clues for how to play the character physically – if she works the night shift at the 7-11, she's going to be exhausted, frustrated, spitting mad. These are specific character clues that will lead you toward a great performance.

Teaching Resources

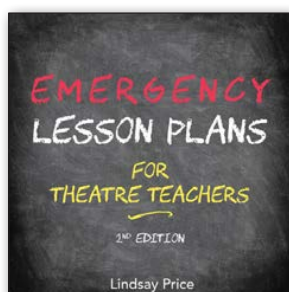
Quality resources to use in your drama classroom



The Drama Classroom Companion

The Drama Classroom Companion is filled with articles and exercises to build the skills needed for theatrical performance as well as real world skills like creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

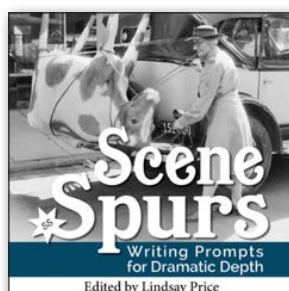
theatrefolk.com/companion



Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers

Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers, 2nd edition gives you the tools and resources you need to confidently leave your class in the hands of a substitute teacher. Customize your lesson plans to suit the specific needs of your class when you can't be there.

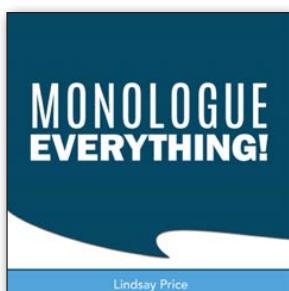
theatrefolk.com/elp



Scene-Spurs: Writing Prompts for Dramatic Depth

Scene Spurs is a collection of photo-based writing prompts developed by playwright Lindsay Price. The set includes 35 different Spurs along with an instruction guide to integrate them into your drama classroom.

theatrefolk.com/spurs



The Monologue Everything Program

Want your students to write their own monologues? Have you tried to incorporate monologue units into the classroom with less-than-satisfactory results?

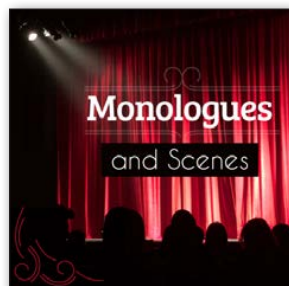
theatrefolk.com/monologue-everything



Practical Technical Theater: The Complete Solution for Technical Theater Classrooms

This series of instructional DVDs is perfect for the teacher who feels more at home with a prompt book than a hammer, and would welcome a new, visually oriented teaching tool for their tech classes and production crews.

theatrefolk.com/ptt



Monologue and Scene Collections

Whether it's for classwork, competitions or auditions, these collections of student-appropriate monologues and scenes can help you find what you're looking for.

All monologues and scenes come from published plays and include running-times, descriptions, character notes and staging suggestions.

theatrefolk.com/collections



The Student Director's Handbook

Help students take their show from first audition to opening night with *The Student Director's Handbook*. This easy-to-use ebook is full of guidelines, tips and templates designed to help students create a vision, circumvent problems and organize rehearsals on their way to a successful production.

theatrefolk.com/student-director



Write Your Own Vignette Play

Your students want to write and perform an original play. You want to include a playwriting unit in your program. But where to start? What if your students have never written a play before? What if you've never written before?

Write Your Own Vignette Play will answer all your questions and more

theatrefolk.com/write_vignette



Competition Material

Plays, monologues, and scenes for drama competitions including royalty information and exemptions.

theatrefolk.com/competition



www.theatrefolk.com/resources