

The Monologue Project: A Scheme of Work

Introduction to the project: why base an entire project around monologues?

Monologues are an accessible way of allowing both young and old students to create their own drama, whether their narratives are based upon memory, history or even imagination. Monologues offer an opportunity to teach a wide range of drama concepts, styles and practitioners across all age ranges. We've come up with a three-stage monologue project, or scheme that could easily be adapted for any age range or class, to help ensure that you cover many aspects and skills needed for any drama course. The project can easily be adapted for different age groups, time allowances etc. You can easily select which theory you will cover. It will also provide you with a formal assessment opportunity for each student.

Overview of the Project: The Three Stages

The monologue project can be planned around three stages. How long you spend upon each stage will depend upon class age/size/ability/timetable allowances etc.

Stage One-Choose and Research a Historical Event	Stage Two-Turn the Research into Narrative/Stories	Stage Three-Build the Stories into Performance
<p>Monologues can be used to show students that drama can become a bridge between history and reality, therefore students could be asked to focus upon a historical experience or event. For example, the scheme could run alongside national memorial days throughout the year such as Holocaust Memorial Day (you will find great free resources and stimulus material for this online). Students will start to realise that monologues can provide a version of history to ensure that audiences never forget. Students should select or be given a historical event and this will offer them a chance to write themselves into history. This stage of the project will involve students embarking upon research, collecting documents, pictures, music, photographs, interviewing people, perhaps creating research displays, improvisations of life at the time etc.</p> <p>Throughout this stage students should be looking to find the 'story' of the history or the personal experience that they might like to base their monologue around.</p>	<p>Students could then embark upon producing their research into narrative or stories. Rather than launching straight into a polished monologue, students should share their research in small groups as a 'story.' Each student must present some of their research as a story to the others in order to understand that storytelling can be a powerful tool to use when creating drama. Students could be encouraged to take notes as they listen to the stories of others. Students could even be asked to think about how they present these stories to others, more experimental students might want to present the stories as pod casts, images, a series of blogs, projections or filmed footage as well as live story telling.</p> <p>Students could be encouraged to consider the most successful story-telling methods. This stage will also offer up opportunities to look at practitioners such as Brecht and his ideas/rehearsal games about witnessing and re-telling events in the third person. Monologues allow students to think about how they, as performers, switch from the role of a third person researcher into the first person voice of the story.</p>	<p>Finally students could start building these stories into monologues. The eventual outcome would be for all students to perform their monologue during a class performance. At this stage students should study effective monologues from the stage or even film to learn writing and performance tips. Students could be encouraged to think about writing literary features into their work such as themes or symbols: for example, all students could be asked to bring in an object that they feel is a symbol for their historical event. For example, if researching into the Holocaust, the symbol of shoes could be used to signify the objects left behind when the Jews entered the gas chambers and the metaphorical end of their journey etc.</p> <p>This stage will also offer students the opportunity to consider the actor's relationship with their character. Students may want to try to 'live' the role, whereas others might want to maintain a greater degree of distance between themselves and their role, perhaps switching from past to present, presenting their historical monologue in a modern day context, juxtapose different stories etc. It is a great way to contrast the teachings of Stanislavski's realism with the stylised devices of Brecht. Students could be encouraged to spend time thinking about how they will prepare for their role and place themselves in the history of the piece. They could consider whether they want their monologue to produce a faithful, realistic version of history, or perhaps a more distorted, reinvented history, using different performance approaches to achieve their purposes.</p> <p>This stage will require students to look at the delivery of their monologue in terms of movement, vocals, approaches to their roles etc. drawing inspiration from famous actors, styles and practitioners.</p>

Breaking down the project: Part 1 and 2

Stage One- Teaching Suggestions

Select the historical event that you will focus upon with the class. Explain to the students that they must collate as much research as they can about this historical event. They should try to find as many pictures, video footage, interviews, newspaper articles etc. Ask students to focus upon the people involved and their experiences. Encourage students to look at all sorts of people: the victims, the perpetrator etc. They need to look at the human experience of this event from all angles.

Students could be encouraged to create a display wall around this event or use ICT to collate their research-perhaps creating a pinterest board, or a digital presentation/scrapbook of their findings.

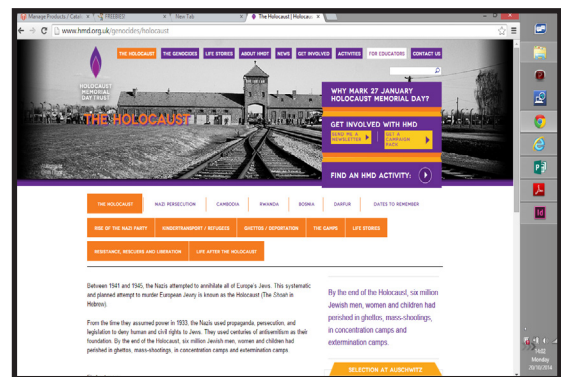
At this point, concentrate upon the event as a whole, rather than just one person's stories. Students need to be able to learn about a range of human experiences, before focusing upon one person's story.

Once they have collated their research, students could create improvisations, role plays etc. concentrating upon the lives of the different people they have found and world in which they live. Ask students to arrive at lessons with objects that the characters in their researched worlds would bring, for example favourite items of clothing, snacks, favourite books, music etc.

Resources to help this stage

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust have a great website which offers great stimulus materials such as their 'Untold Stories' focusing especially upon people and objects. It not only includes survivors' stories, but photographs and pictures of their surviving objects. All are available free to download at:

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/hidden-histories>



Stage Two-Teaching Suggestions

Students could be asked to identify with one person from their research. Try to encourage the class to each select a range of diverse people, so that the end monologues will be much more varied and each person is doing something different.

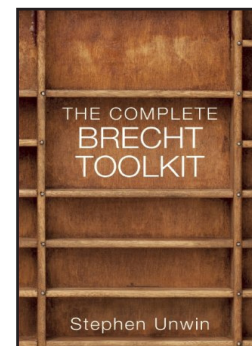
Put the class into small groups and ask each student to present their person's 'story'. They need to be able to tell a group who their person is, what has happened to them, the effect it has had upon them, what they have experienced etc. Students should be given time to prepare this. They need to understand that story telling is a powerful tool when creating drama, and story telling can take many different forms. Students could consider whether they want to present their character's 'story' as a standard oral tale, or perhaps use more experimental forms such as pod casts, images, projections, dance, mime, filmed footage, poetry, headlines etc. This will help students to consider the range of story telling methods they have available. The story, at this point, should not take the form of a narrative. Rather, it should be presented perhaps like a fairy tale, 'once upon a time,' or an informal discussion.

At this point, it might be useful to offer students the opportunity to look at practitioners such as Brecht and his ideas/rehearsal games about witnessing and re-telling events in the third person. Students may want to think about whether they are going to tell their 'story' to the rest of the group as if they are the person, as if they are merely reading the account or as if they are a third person narrator/researcher. Students should question their purpose, do they want the rest of the group to believe and become emotionally involved with their story (perhaps like Stanislavski's audiences), or do they want their audience to remain detached (like Brecht's aims for theatre)?

When ready, each student should present their 'story' to the rest of the group. Explain to students that storytelling can be a powerful tool to use when creating drama. Students could be encouraged to take notes as they listen to other's stories, perhaps drawing ideas and inspiration from the story telling methods used.

Resources to help this stage

To encourage students to experiment with different and unusual elements of storytelling, they could be asked to study silent movies, or practitioners such as Charlie Chaplin, even Marcel Marceau. (There are plenty of free clips available on You Tube.) Such performers will help students to realise that stories do not just have to be told through words.



The Complete Brecht Toolkit £10.99 by Stephen Unwin is a great book to introduce students to Brecht's rehearsal ideas and acting styles, which could help students at this stage think about their story telling methods and how to keep their audiences detached.

Breaking down the project: Part Three

Stage Three Teaching Suggestions

Before writing their monologues students could draw inspiration from great film monologues or theatrical speeches. Students could be asked to bring in their own favourites. As a class, they should watch these and analyse the effective performance techniques used within such pieces.

Students could then be asked to focus upon the acting style they will use for their monologue, because this will impact upon how they will write it.

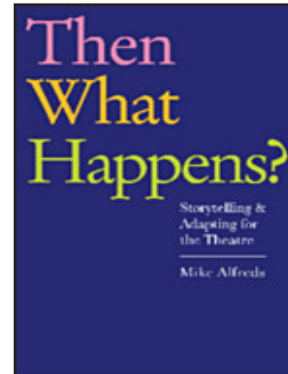
Students could be encouraged to think about writing literary features into their work such as themes or symbols: for example, all students could be asked to bring in an object that they feel is a symbol for their historical event. For example, if researching into the Holocaust, the symbol of shoes could be used to signify the objects left behind when the Jews entered the gas chambers and the metaphorical end of their journey etc.

When starting to approach their role and consider how they will write the monologue, students could be introduced to key practitioners' styles such as Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Chekhov, even Jacques Copeau, Brecht, Artaud. Students could decide whether they want to create an epic, stylised monologue or the naturalism that Stanislavski was famous for. They should study different types of writing and try to identify naturalistic elements in comparison to more stylised writing ideas.

Finally, once students have written their own monologues, students could consider how they will approach and prepare their performance. They could work in pairs, one person assuming the role of director and one the actor. Using their own monologues they should experiment with different directorial ideas. They could draw influence from directors such as Grotowski or Peter Brook. It would be a great opportunity for students to experiment with famous rehearsal games, perhaps drawing influence from Stanislavski's system, or Meyerhold's system of Biomechanics. For students to be able to analyse their own writing and scripts in terms of practitioners' features will help reinforce the drama concepts. For example, students could be asked to analyse their own monologue in terms of Stanislavski's subtext ideas.

The final aspect of the project is for each student to perform their monologue. This could provide a formal assessment opportunity for each student.

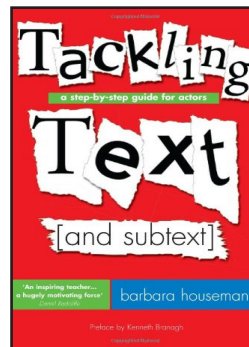
Resources to help this stage



Then What Happens?
£14.99
BOO2114

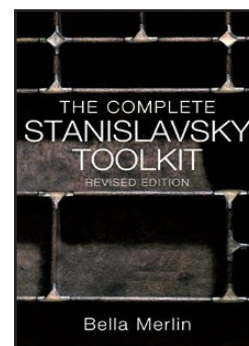
A great book to help show how to turn a story into a theatrical performance and what makes good narrative.

Effective film monologues or speeches for a class to explore would be Charlie Chaplin's monologues, these are especially good if students want to try to inject comedy into their work, or Al Pacino's speech to the school in *Scent of A Woman*, Jack Nicholson in *A Few Good Men* ('You can't handle the truth') De Niro in *Taxi Driver*. ('You talkin' to me') Many of these film clips can be located for free on YouTube. Students could then study effective monologues from drama, perhaps from plays they have studied or other examples such as Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Ophelia in *Hamlet* etc. There's some great plays made up entirely of monologues such as *The Adventures of Wound Man and Shirley*.



Tackling Text
£12.99
BK66

A useful book to provide a wealth of practical exercises to use with any texts or scripts-great for rehearsing monologues.



The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit
£10.99
STAN578

A useful book to provide understanding of all of Stanislavski's theories and ideas, with a variety of practical rehearsal ideas which students could apply to their monologues.

show your students some good monologues.... check out our monologue and duologue range in our bookshop!

