

CHAPTER 7

Characterization



Chapter Outline

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Spotlight on Terms

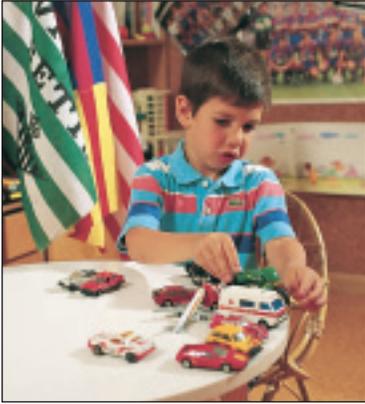


- ♦ analyze
- ♦ characterization
- ♦ first person
- ♦ mannerisms
- ♦ monologue
- ♦ soliloquy
- ♦ stereotypical character
- ♦ stock character

P

characterization

developing and portraying a personality through thought, action, dialogue, costuming, and makeup.



The pretending that you did when you were younger was the first step you took toward learning characterization.

pretending to be someone else is a game that most of us have played. Perhaps you have seen your younger brothers or sisters act out characters as they play with their action figures or dolls. Most of us have participated in this form of characterization we call pretending. In the theatre, however, **characterization** involves more than just pretending to be a character in a scene or play. It also involves making others believe that you are someone else. Whether you have created your own original character or are portraying a role written by a playwright, your job as an actor is to make the character real for the audience.

One of the most exciting parts of theatre is to have the opportunity to “try on” and experiment with different characters. Professional actors know that there are techniques they can use to make the characters they play seem real. These trained actors know that their inner thoughts and outward actions work together to develop a character that the audience believes is real. Actors find it is enjoyable, yet challenging, to use the mind, face, body, and voice to think, talk, act, and react like someone else.

Improvisation activities have given you a foundation for portraying different characters. Now you will participate in activities that will help you understand how to develop a believable character. The characters that you create in this chapter will be based not only on your imagination but on all the characters you have ever met—in books, in movies, on television, and in real life.

LESSON 1

Stock Characters and Stereotypical Characters

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Understand the process of characterization.
- ◆ Begin to create stock and stereotypical characters.

Warm Up



Have students stand in a circle facing center. Taking turns, each participant physically and vocally creates an imaginary character whose name begins with a particular letter of the alphabet. The first person might say with a southern accent, “My name is Abby, and I’m from Atlanta, and I like apples.” Continue until all the letters of the alphabet have been used.

Sometimes when you watch a play, movie, or television program, you recognize a character type and automatically know how that character will act. Many of the popular 30-minute situation comedies on television have character types that are easy to recognize. These character types are known as stock characters and stereotypical characters.

Stock Characters

A **stock character** is a familiar character who is the same type of character in every play. Stock characters were an important part of the commedia dell’arte style of theatre. The audiences of the 1500s quickly identified each character based on what they had seen the character do or say in previous plays. Characters such as the villain, the hero, the

The expression on Lucille Ball's face could be seen in almost any episode of *I Love Lucy*. How would you describe "Lucy"? What stereotypes do you associate with her?



clever servant, the fool, and the heroine were expected to appear in play after play, always looking and acting the same way.

Stereotypical Characters

stereotypical character

a familiar character identified by an oversimplified pattern of behavior that typically labels the character as being part of a group of people.

Another type of character we often see played by beginning actors is the stereotypical character. A **stereotypical character** is a familiar type of character whose tag, or label, identifies a particular group or segment of society. If the labels "politician," "cheerleader," "television evangelist," and "jock" automatically bring to mind visual images, then those particular character types have probably become stereotyped for you. The stereotypical picture that many of us have of a grandmother is a gray-haired old lady wearing sturdy shoes and a knitted shawl. But how many grandmothers do you know who fit this picture?

When creating characters, it is important to avoid negative ideas concerning occupation, race, gender, age, ethnic heritage, or religion. Negative stereotypes result when groups of people or individuals are misrepresented in a discriminatory or prejudicial way.

Beginning actors find stock and stereotypical characters an easy starting point, choosing to portray characters from books, plays, and movies. If you re-create the role of the class clown, the helpful policeman, the spoiled brat, or the teenage bully, you have an idea of what to do and how to act, because you have seen these characters played many times before.

Think of the way you would use your body and face to physically create a frozen statue of these modern stock and stereotypical characters:

psychiatrist
handsome movie star
cowboy/hero
rich socialite
miserly businessman

secret agent
clumsy waiter
photographer
district attorney
traffic cop

secretary
nanny
baby-sitter
newspaper reporter
writer/poet
gangster
dentist
short-order cook
gorgeous fashion model
strict school principal
private detective
military officer

bellhop
cab driver
butler
flight attendant
mad scientist
stern teacher
surgeon
rock star
snoopy neighbor
nurse
clown
librarian

ACTION

1. Trying on Characters

- a. Take turns moving around a chair or walking around the room as your teacher calls out the various character types from the preceding list. Notice how you and your classmates change physically and mentally each time a new character is assigned.
- b. Select one of the characters from the list. Write down the way you would walk, talk, and act as that character. Give yourself a name, occupation, hometown, and reason for visiting the classroom. Become the character as you walk to the front of the classroom or to the center of the acting area. In character, introduce yourself to the class.
- c. Working with a partner, improvise the meeting of two of the characters from the list. Talk and act as if the characters were meeting in one of the following places:

at the grocery store	at a laundromat
in a shopping mall	on another planet
in the school cafeteria	in a haunted house
on an airplane	on a television talk show
on a desert island	at a trial
at an amusement park	at the beauty/barber shop
in the principal's office	

LESSON 2

Creating Original Characters

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Use observation, emotional memory, and imagination in creating original characters.
- ◆ Develop skill portraying the physical attributes of characters.

As you continue your study of characterization, you will move beyond stock and stereotypical characters to ones you create on your own. In this lesson, we will concentrate on creating original characters.

Warm Up



Observation—Your teacher will divide your class into pairs. After observing each other for at least 1 minute, each student will write a detailed description of his or her partner on a 3-by-5-inch index card. Your teacher will then collect the cards and pass them out at random. Each student will read aloud the card received and attempt to identify the student described.



An actor's art is like a beggar's bag . . . he should pick up everything he comes across.

Sakata Tojuro



If you are like most people, you frequently find yourself in large crowds, such as you see here. Next time, pick out different individuals in the crowd and observe them carefully.

Observation

One of the most important skills you can develop is the ability to observe real people. Observing real people in real situations will help you develop original characters. Your purpose in observing is to “collect” as many different qualities as you can. As you begin to “people watch,” your memory bank will become a virtual storehouse for all the wonderful ideas you will collect. By borrowing bits and pieces from many different characters, you can actually create a whole new being. You will then use your own mind, voice, face, body, and imagination to give your own interpretation of the character, making the character come alive for your audience.

It is a good idea to record in a notebook the different ideas that you collect from your observations and relationships with real people. Then when you need to create an original character for class, you can refer to your notebook. You might choose to speak with the British accent you heard on television but walk and move like the man you see every week in the grocery store. Your character’s unconscious habits of pushing up her glasses and shifting from foot to foot could be the same unconscious gestures you observed your history teacher use.

External Characteristics

When you observe people, you will first notice their outwardly visible qualities, or external characteristics. Suppose that a new student comes to your class. What is the first thing that you notice? Appearance, of course! Now look at your classmates. What are the different components of their appearance? Your answer probably includes age, gender, height, weight, hair color, skin tone, manner of dress, and degree of attractiveness.



OUR THEATRE HERITAGE



The Elizabethan Age

In England, the Renaissance is known as *The Elizabethan Age*. This period was named after the powerful English ruler Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled Great Britain for forty-five years, from 1558 to 1603. Elizabeth's reign began a period of English history during which language and literature flourished. At the heart of the English Renaissance was the love of language and the art of theatre.

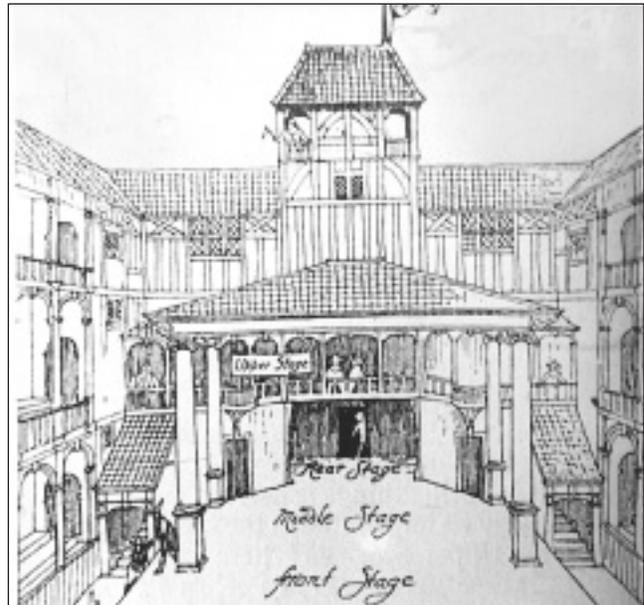
Several developments during Elizabeth's reign helped the theatre to thrive. As one example, acting changed from an amateur to a professional status. The citizens who had performed the medieval religious plays and the plays in the homes of nobility were replaced by companies of professional actors who played regularly around London and throughout the country. This development gave playwrights a more stable and experienced group of performers for whom to write more detailed and complicated plays.

Along with this rise in the profession of acting came the building of permanent theatres, public buildings where all classes of people could attend performances. These permanent buildings began to replace the temporary stages that had been set up in the town squares or in cathedral yards. The new theatre buildings created spaces dedicated specifically to the presentation of theatrical events.

Because of the church's earlier policy, which looked at all theatre that was not religious in nature as an evil activity, the city of London did not permit theatre buildings to be erected inside the city limits. Therefore, the permanent theatres so popular during the Elizabethan period were located outside the city, across the Thames River, and audience members had to leave the city to see a play. The audience knew that a play was going to be presented at one of the theatres across the river by seeing a flag fly from high atop the theatre, which was the signal that there would be a performance that day. Of these theatre spaces, the most famous was the Globe Theatre, which was the location for the presentation of Shakespeare's plays.

Most Elizabethan theatres were circular or octagonal structures of about three stories, with an open roof. We know that the Globe was such a building.

The raised platform stage was surrounded by the audience on three sides, and was closer to a contemporary thrust stage than to a proscenium arch stage, which was so popular at this same period in time in Italy. Behind the platform stage was a stage house, known as a *tiring house*, which served as a backdrop



The flag flying from the top of this Elizabethan theatre meant that a play was to be presented that day.

for the action. This structure served as backstage space for changing and storing costumes and props and the few scenic pieces used in the productions. At the back of the platform was an area called the *inner stage*, a roofed area that could be separated from the front of the platform to suggest an interior setting. Above this, on the roof of the inner stage, was a second playing space, a sort of balcony where some of the scenes might be played. This was, no doubt, where Shakespeare's famous balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* would have been played. There was a third level of platforming above this balcony stage space, which was called the *musicians' gallery*, where a small group of musicians might be stationed to provide music during the play. There was usually a roof coming out from the top of the stage house to

Historical and Cultural Perspectives



The Elizabethans loved to go to the theatre. In this artist's rendering of an Elizabethan production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* you can see that the least expensive seats actually meant no seats at all. How would you feel about standing up through an entire play?

protect the various layers of playing space from direct sunlight or rain.

The form of the English plays written in this period was different from the plays being written in Italy and on the European continent. The English did not follow the new neoclassical ideal (which required their plays to observe strict unities of time, place, and action). Instead, the English dramas of the period were structured in a series of brief scenes, which frequently changed location from place to place. These quick shifts in action required that the Elizabethans adopt a much freer use of stage space. They didn't use the perspective painting and wings used by the Italians. Instead, the Elizabethan stage was an open platform with little or no scenery placed on it. This platform was a neutral playing area, which could become many different locations in the same play. When one group of characters left the stage and another group entered, the audience knew that the scene was changing. An actor might carry on a single piece of furniture to suggest the location of the next scene. A throne, for example, might indicate a palace setting; a table and a few props might indicate a dining hall. At other

times, a character might signal the next location by announcing it in the early lines of the scene. This type of signal to the audience is called *spoken decor*. Language was important in Elizabethan plays in all respects, even scenery!

Another noted feature of Elizabethan drama was the use of poetry. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was one of the first playwrights to utilize a special type of dramatic poetry called *iambic pentameter*, which is written to contain five beats or stress points per line. Words in iambic pentameter have two syllables to each beat and when spoken, stress is placed upon the second beat. This makes the language almost musical in nature.

By far the most important playwright during this period was William Shakespeare, whom you will read about later in this book. ■



Notice the sparse set in this modern-day recreation of an Elizabethan drama. Elizabethan theatre-goers were accustomed to using their imaginations to visualize the play's settings.

What mannerisms can you pick up in this classroom? What can you tell about these students by observing their posture and expressions? Practice your observation skills in your own classrooms.



“ An actor should be observant not only on the stage but also in real life.
Konstantin Stanislavski
”

mannerisms
unconscious habits or peculiarities.

Next, notice the posture and stance of the students in your class. Do they stand tall and straight or slouched and slumped? What about the way they sit? Do you notice any particularly interesting forms of posture?

Watch as your classmates move around the room. Everyone moves with a unique rhythm. One student might move at a frantic pace, while another might bounce or glide from place to place. These movements can be imitated as you develop your original characters.

Take special note of interesting habits. When simple behaviors such as nail biting, raising an eyebrow, or twisting a lock of hair are unconsciously repeated, they are called **mannerisms**. Certain mannerisms may become associated with a particular character. Whenever we see that character, we expect to see the familiar mannerisms as well.

Vocalization

Once you have developed your original character, you will want to be sure that the character can come alive vocally. A character's voice is easier to discover after you have established the external and internal characteristics. Actors need to be able to adapt their own voices to reflect a character's external and internal characteristics.

As a student actor, you will want to listen to as many different voices as possible. For each voice, notice the quality and tone, the patterns of speech, and the accent or dialect. The illusion of a character can be totally lost if the character's voice is not suitable. For example, if you have created an authoritarian, masterful character who dominates everyone around her, you will want your character to have an appropriately powerful voice to go along with her personality. A deep, brusque voice might be more believable to the audience than a soft, sweet voice.

Listen to teachers, friends, television personalities, and public figures to hear the special qualities in each voice. As you listen to differ-



Have you seen the famous Christmas movie *It's a Wonderful Life* with Jimmy Stewart? Watch this movie, then discuss with your classmates the ways that this famous actor makes his character's internal characteristics apparent. Does his voice contribute to his characterization?

Teaching Suggestion: If you have specific qualities you wish students to observe, you may want to prepare a "fill-in-the-blank" type guideline. One such example is found in your Teacher Resource Binder.

ent voices, take notes about the way they sound. Professional actors often work with recordings of dialects and accents to achieve vocal variety, master a particular vocal quality or tone, and build a collection of voices. Many actors study for years with vocal coaches or voice teachers to enhance their voices.

Internal Characteristics

Learning about a character is like opening a present. Regardless of the size of the package or the way it is wrapped, you never really know what is inside until you open it and take a good look. As we get to know a person or a character, we discover that there is more involved than just the outside packaging, or external characteristics. Your goal as an actor is to look beyond one-dimensional stock or stereotypical characters and create a character who is complex and three-dimensional.

The dimension, or depth, of a character is based on what's inside the character. In addition to thinking about how your character looks, you also need to think about your character's inner qualities—the internal characteristics. These internal qualities include every aspect of the character's identity: background and life experiences, personality, intelligence, educational opportunities, personal interests, job or occupation, and physical, mental, and emotional health. Also included would be the character's place or role in society, as well as beliefs, attitudes and values, and wants and needs.

Desires, thoughts, feelings, reactions—these are all internal characteristics that are revealed as you get to know the character. Getting to know a character is much like becoming friends with a new acquaintance: It takes time and careful study.

In 335 B.C., Aristotle, an important Greek philosopher, defined character as the sum total of an individual's actions. In theatre, it is the actor's responsibility to use words and actions to explain to the audience what the character is doing and why. When the actor is able to think the inner thoughts of a character and react as the character would in a given situation, then the audience is able to see and believe.

ACTION

Real-Life Application: You may want to use this opportunity to explain to students the importance of developing good observation skills not just in acting, but also in real life. Ask students to cite examples of crimes that have been solved or criminals who have been apprehended as a result of someone's observations.

1. People Watching

- Carefully observe your friends, classmates, parents, teachers, and even total strangers for a length of time specified by your teacher. Look for interesting external characteristics to use when creating original characters.
- Notice the different ways that people walk, sit, stand, and carry their bodies.
- Pay special attention to unusual mannerisms and habits.
- Listen, and try to reproduce the different ways that people talk.
- Record all of your observations in your theatre notebook.

2. Building a Character

- Physically and vocally build an original character, putting together the bits and pieces obtained from your observations of people. Try

walking, sitting, standing, and talking like your original character. Check your original character in front of a mirror to see if you are physically projecting the image you want to convey.

- b.** On the assigned day, come to class as your original character. At the appropriate time, your teacher will invite you to model your character in front of the class.
- c.** Discuss with your classmates the value of observation and “people watching” when developing a character’s external characteristics.

3. Character Improvisations. Working with a partner, use sensory and emotional recall to choose movements and dialogue that will create believable characters and actions in one of the following settings.

- a.** A daughter tells her elderly mother that she has to move to a nursing home because the daughter can no longer care for her mother at home.
- b.** There are two survivors at the scene of an airline crash.
- c.** The principal tells a first-year teacher that her discipline in the classroom is ineffective.
- d.** A surgeon must tell his patient that he has an incurable disease.
- e.** Two waitresses discuss the manager, who is misusing the restaurant’s money.
- f.** Two elderly people are bird-watching in a city park.
- g.** A woman’s fiancé has just given her a diamond ring that she suspects is fake.
- h.** A very shy girl is asked to the dance by the school’s most popular boy.
- i.** A wife encourages her overweight husband to go on a diet before his high school reunion.
- j.** A bellhop delivers numerous pieces of luggage to a hotel room, and the businessman gives him a \$1 tip.
- k.** The president of the United States and his head of security must decide how to respond to a threat on the president’s life.
- l.** A young bride serves a less-than-desirable meal to her husband.
- m.** A couple are dividing up the property during a divorce settlement, and they can’t decide who gets the vacuum cleaner.
- n.** After an unsuccessful weekend of fishing, an inexperienced fisherman attempts to purchase fish from an old man who has a plentiful catch.
- o.** A teenager backs into a new car in the parking lot. The driver of the other car is hard of hearing.
- p.** While in the veterinarian’s office, two pet owners brag about the talents of their cats.
- q.** A judge sentences a pickpocket to 3,000 hours of community service.
- r.** An airline reservation clerk is unable to find a reservation for an impatient businesswoman trying to get to Chicago.
- s.** On the afternoon of the prom, a hairdresser cuts a teenager’s hair too short. The teenager becomes hysterical.
- t.** An elderly man and an elderly woman meet on an airplane and compare grandchildren.
- u.** A receptionist refuses to allow an impatient customer to see her boss.
- v.** Bound for new lives in America, your ancestors share their hopes.





LESSON 3

Writing Original Monologues

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Use analysis in developing a character.
- ◆ Write a monologue revealing the innermost thoughts of an original character.
- ◆ Perform a monologue using vocal and physical characterization.
- ◆ Perform a monologue using appropriate staging techniques.

Warm Up



Do you ever express your thoughts aloud, even when no one is around to listen? Think about some of the advantages and disadvantages of talking to yourself.

monologue

a long speech spoken by one person, revealing personal thoughts and feelings.

soliloquy

a monologue usually delivered while the character is alone onstage, thinking aloud.

analyze

to study carefully or examine critically.

Playwrights sometimes use monologues to help the audience understand the thoughts and emotions of a character. A **monologue** in dramatic literature is a long speech spoken by one character, usually revealing the character's personal thoughts and feelings. The use of the monologue in drama dates back to the ancient Greeks. A monologue can be delivered with or without other characters on the stage.

A **soliloquy** is a monologue in which a character is thinking aloud, usually alone onstage. The soliloquy is used throughout the plays of William Shakespeare. Hamlet's famous "to be or not to be" speech is a good example.

Performing an original monologue gives the theatre student an excellent opportunity to **analyze** a particular character, studying it carefully and critically, and then to share the character at a particular moment in time with the audience. Writing an original monologue is a good first step in the playwriting process.

There are many reasons for writing an original monologue. Some students really enjoy the writing process and look forward to using that skill in theatre class. Writing for theatre allows us to share our personal thoughts and feelings, to make statements about our beliefs or needs, and to explore another dimension of theatre—the craft of the playwright.

In her workshop Playmaking and Playwriting, Lou-Ida Marsh suggests six ideas leading to a monologue, a scene, or a play:

1. things we have done or not done in our own lives
2. people we have met, known, loved, hated, feared, or respected
3. ageless stories or myths, perhaps told from a new viewpoint
4. group interaction and artistic collaboration
5. ideas for resolving various conflicts
6. a puzzlement (something we don't understand)

Any of these six ideas could be developed into a dynamic monologue. Which one would you choose?

There are no set rules in playwriting, but some established principles work best. It is important for the audience to know the five Ws (who, what, when, where, and why) as early as possible in the scene or play. The same holds true for your original monologue. Your audience

You may find that you enjoy writing original monologues. Start with a photograph or a single characteristic and let your imagination take over.

Across the Curriculum:

Monologue writing is included in this chapter to strengthen the interdisciplinary approach of writing across the curriculum. You might prefer to have students read their monologues in small groups rather than perform them. If you feel that your students are not ready for this activity, or if there isn't time, have them select and perform a prepared monologue.



should be able to answer the following questions as soon as possible:

- ◆ Who is speaking to whom?
- ◆ What is happening?
- ◆ When is this occurring?
- ◆ Where is this occurring?
- ◆ Why is this happening?

Monologue writing is a wonderful way to develop a “life story” for an original character. A good way to start is with a photograph. Your teacher may have a collection of interesting photographs for you to choose from, or you may prefer to bring a few pictures from home. Also, the librarian in your school library may allow you to look

The following monologue, from the unpublished work *A Full House*, by Vera Olive, is based on something that the author herself once did. See if you can answer the five *Ws* from the information provided in the monologue.

THE CIRCUS

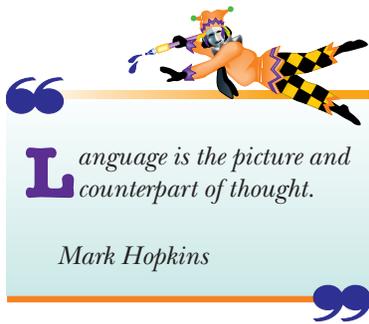
I'm so excited! Mama just said if we kids would get our baths and go to bed early, tomorrow all of us would load up the wagon and go to the circus with our cousins from El Dorado. I'd really like to go to a circus. Come to think of it, I've never been to a circus in all of my seven years. I say, Vera McDonald, you're going to bed early tonight because tomorrow you're going to a real live circus!

There are seven of us kids, plus mama and papa, it will be hot and crowded in that wagon, but I don't mind. Mama said we'd take lots of food. It's almost twenty miles to El Dorado. That's the longest trip I've ever made.

And, we'll get to spend the night away from home. I'm glad mama and papa will be with us. Once, my sister Pearle and I spent the night away

from home. We stayed at our piano teacher's house, when it was raining so hard we couldn't get home from our piano lessons. Our clothes were so wet, we had to put on Mrs. Muse's big old night gowns and she tied ribbons around the waists to hold them up. After supper she made us a big plate of fudge. It was fun until we were all in bed and I began to get homesick. That was my first night away from home. Pearle said I was just being silly, but I thought that daylight would never come. The next day we had to wear our same clothes to school and our studies seemed like they would never end. By the time we got home, I felt I'd been gone a week. I was really glad to see my mama and papa.

I'm coming mama, I'm going to bed. I don't want to miss that circus.



Language is the picture and counterpart of thought.

Mark Hopkins

Teaching Suggestion:

Throughout the course, keep a file of photographs of various aspects of theatre, including expressions/emotions; makeup/costume ideas; monologue, duet scene, and ensemble performances.

Student Activity: Later in the course, have the students adapt these questions to other characters as they prepare for roles in future productions.

Across the Curriculum: Remind students to use not only their personal experience but also their heritage and their studies in literature and history as sources of inspiration when developing background and personality and selecting movements and dialogue for a character.

Across the Curriculum: Volunteer your theatre students to create still scenes for the art students to draw.

through the discarded magazines and newspapers. Take special note of the interesting photographs of people in articles and advertisements. Select a variety of characters for whom you could create an imaginary story.

Carefully study your collection of photographs. Select one picture to bring to life through characterization. You are now ready to begin your character analysis.

Character Analysis

Use your awareness and imagination to answer the following questions as you develop a background and personality for your chosen character. Answer the questions as if you yourself were really the character.

1. Who are you? What is your name?
2. What is your ethnic background?
3. How would you describe yourself physically? Include your height, weight, facial features, hair color, and skin tone. Also, be sure to note any outstanding physical trait or condition that makes you unique.
4. How would you describe your stance, posture, walk, and movement?
5. What rhythm or tempo do you associate with yourself? Think of a piece of music that would describe yourself. Would the tempo be a waltz, a cha-cha, a march, country swing, or contemporary jazz?
6. What gestures, mannerisms, or habits do you use unconsciously?
7. How do you dress?
8. How do you sound? Describe your voice quality. Is it high or low, nasal or guttural? Do you speak with a drawl, twang, accent, or dialect? Do you make any unusual sounds, such as wheezing or grunting?
9. Think about your background. Where did you grow up? What type of environment shaped your early life? What kind of relationship do you have with your family?
10. Where do you live now? What is your present family status?
11. Think about your intellect. How would you describe your mental capabilities?
12. What is your position in society? Are you rich, poor, important, or powerful?
13. What is your job or occupation?
14. What are your attitudes, values, and beliefs?
15. What is your emotional state?
16. How do you treat other people? How do others treat you?
17. Do you have a secret that you try to hide?
18. What is your greatest want or need?
19. What is the problem or obstacle standing in the way of fulfilling the want or need?
20. To what extent are you willing to go to eliminate the obstacles?
21. What do you enjoy or do for fun?
22. What are you thinking at this moment?
23. What do other people say about you?
24. What phrase or expression do you use frequently?



Lily Tomlin became famous for her comedy monologues as Edith Ann and Ernestine when she appeared on the TV comedy revue *Laugh In*. She still performs monologues before sold-out audiences today.

ACTION

Teaching Suggestion: If video equipment is available, you may want to have students videotape a dress rehearsal for the monologues. After viewing the playbacks, students should write a self-evaluation, recording changes they will make before the performance.

Writing the Monologue

Now that you have completed your character analysis, you can begin to write the thoughts that your character might want to say aloud. Write these thoughts (the monologue) in the **first person**—as if you are the person to whom this story is happening.

Your teacher may want to give you a time limit or word limit for your first monologue. Most beginning students find that they are comfortable memorizing and performing 2 to 3 minutes of speech, or about 200 to 400 words.

Rehearsing and Presenting the Monologue

Prepare for your presentation by memorizing the material you have written. Tape-record your rehearsals and listen carefully to the playback. Are you presenting the character in the way you intended? Hearing a friend read your monologue aloud can sometimes help you with phrasing and emphasis.

When it is your turn to share your monologue, walk to the performance area or to the stage as yourself. If you have planned introductory remarks, they should be delivered as yourself. Pause after the introduction, allowing yourself enough time to physically and mentally take on your characterization. The first words of the monologue should immediately create a picture of your character for your audience. Imagine your character in the setting that you pictured as you wrote the monologue.

If your character is speaking to someone else onstage, also picture that person in your mind. Situate this “listener” downstage, or in front of you, so that you are facing the audience. Once the imaginary listener is placed on the stage, your glances at this character tell the audience a lot about the scene. If the imaginary listener is an adult and the character you are portraying is a child, you would look upward. If the imaginary listener is seated in a chair, you would direct your attention to the level of the listener’s eyes.

Remain in character throughout the monologue. Stay onstage, clearly visible to the audience, until after you have completed the final sentence. Pause slightly, allowing the audience time to realize that the scene has ended. Then leave the stage as yourself.

1. Performance Time. Practice what you’ve learned in this lesson as you do each of the following activities:

- Perform your original monologue for your class or for an invited audience.
- Rehearse a prepared monologue selected from the Playbook in this text or from a book of monologues. Perform the monologue for the class or for an audience.
- Adapt a cutting from a novel or short story into a monologue. Prepare and present the monologue before the class.

■ ■ SPOTLIGHT ON TERMS ■ ■

An important part of theatre is understanding the terminology, or vocabulary, used. Add the new terms and definitions to your vocabulary list in your theatre notebook or folder.

■ ■ FOCUS ON FACTS ■ ■

1. Explain characterization.
2. Why do beginning actors sometimes choose to portray stock characters?
3. What are negative stereotypes?
4. Why should actors become “people watchers”?
5. Explain the difference between external and internal characteristics.
6. Name five interesting mannerisms you could use in a characterization.
7. How can character analysis help the actor develop a character?
8. What five things should the playwright tell the audience as soon as possible?
9. Explain the difference between monologue and dialogue.
10. Explain the difference between monologue and soliloquy.
11. How should the actor prepare for a monologue performance?
12. Describe the steps an actor uses to effectively perform a monologue.

[Answers in Teacher’s Manual, pp.T13–T14](#)

■ ■ REFLECTIONS ■ ■

Discuss the following questions with your class or answer them on paper as instructed by your teacher.

1. Describe something new that you learned about characterization in this chapter.
 2. What part of characterization presented the greatest challenge for you? Why?
 3. What did you learn about the needs and feelings of each of the characters you portrayed?
4. If you had the opportunity to present your original monologue again, what changes would you make? Why?
 5. How can you use the processes of character analysis and writing original monologues in other school subjects?
 6. Describe the activity that helped you best understand characterization. Why did you select this particular activity?
 7. What did the study of characterization teach you about yourself? Was it a pleasant or unpleasant discovery? Why?
 8. Is there anything you would like to change about yourself or your acting after studying this chapter on characterization?

■ ■ THEATRE IN YOUR LIFE ■ ■

Discuss aloud or explain in a short journal entry in your theatre notebook how this chapter has helped you have a clearer understanding of yourself and others.

■ ■ ENCORE ■ ■

The following activities are additional opportunities to portray the original character you developed for your monologue.

1. Your teacher will play the on-the-spot news reporter for television station KWHO, broadcasting live from your classroom. Respond in character to the questions addressed to you during the television interview.
2. Create a French restaurant scene in the acting area using a small table and two chairs. Add a tablecloth and flowers to enhance the mood. Because this Paris restaurant is so crowded, the waiter insists that two strangers dine at the same table. By asking questions, the strangers get to know each other. The focus of the questions should reveal character development to the audience.