

# Active Listening Through Cue Scripts! Lesson Plan

## OBJECTIVE (STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...):

- ★ **Define** and **understand** the purpose of a cue script, and **play** through a scene using them
- ★ **Infer** characterization, stage directions, and other clues into a scene through reading a cue script
- ★ **Interpret** and **perform** a scene using cue scripts
- ★ **Analyze** characters and themes in a Shakespearean text

## MATERIALS & SPACE NEEDED:

- ★ Create “U of Learning” (thrust space)
- ★ Back/front copies of Merchant 3.3 and Hamlet 1.2 to hand out
- ★ Cue scripts for every character in Julius Caesar 3.1 (the assassination) OR any other group scene of your choice
- ★ Sample cue script/scrolls
- ★ OPTIONAL - for more information and in-depth explanations of the research, read *Shakespeare in Parts* by Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS:

- ★ Cue script
- ★ Cue
- ★ Role vs. roll
- ★ Prompt copy
- ★ Foul papers manuscript
- ★ Fair copy
- ★ scrivener
- ★ Repeated cues
- ★ Double cues
- ★ Embedded stage directions

**TOTAL TIME:** 60 min

**Suggested # of PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## DEMO/DEFINE (5-10 min):

- ★ Brief history of early modern rehearsal conditions and print culture
  - Printing was an expensive process; theatre companies did not print their scripts for actors
  - After the playwright scribbled his “foul papers” manuscript of a play, it was re-copied by a scrivener in secretary hand (very neat, pretty cursive)
    - Probably only one (maybe two) copy of “fair copy” manuscript
      - too time consuming and expensive to make one for every actor
      - too risky to have a lot of copies (could be stolen and performed by a rival company because no copyright laws!)
      - This was the prompt book; most likely what a printed edition was made from later
    - Each actor was given his **role** on a **roll** (that’s where the term comes from!)
      - Had only one or two words to listen for and the actor’s speeches
      - Narrow strips of paper or vellum attached to wooden dowels, pages/pieces stitched together depending on how many lines the actor had
      - These were the actors’ property, unlike the prompt book which belonged to the company
        - Actors commonly bequeathed all of their roles to another actor upon retirement
  - Actors during this time only had two or three days to rehearse a new play after receiving their roles
    - No director! The 10-15 actors in the company collaborated as a company, with maybe a senior member of the company (actor-manager) having more sway in decision making.
    - Bulk of rehearsal time most likely reserved for large group scenes, fights, and dance numbers
    - A scene with only one or two people in it might never be rehearsed before performance, which means **knowing your CUES was as important as knowing your own lines!**
  - Discuss what a CUE is and how to identify it
    - What information would each actor know just from their script?
    - What would they NOT know until rehearsal?

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- ★ *Because Shakespeare was himself an actor, and he knew his company intimately, he could use the technology of the cue script to his advantage, eliciting responses from actors and creating moments of tension or hilarity on stage through a manipulation of actors' CUES.*

## PRACTICE (10-15 min)

- ★ Scenarios (played out with volunteers) - a demonstration of Shakespeare's "directing" through the technology of cue scripts
  - Repeated Cues: Casting a production of *Merchant of Venice 3.3*
    - Need a Shylock (instructor)
    - Need an Antonio
    - Need a Sally (Salerio, Solanio, or Salarino - dealer's choice - are interchangeable)
    - Need a jailor
  - Antonio probably played by Richard Burbage (one of the most famous actors of his time and a senior member and shareholder in the company), Sally by a journeyman (a younger actor who wanted to be a shareholder someday). **Your only job is to pick up on your cues (start talking the *second* you hear them)!**
  - Begin scene. Students will probably balk at being interrupted at first.
    - Point out the next words Shylock speaks after the false/repeated cues - they generally boil down to "stop talking, I'm not done yet" - *almost as though Shakespeare expected his actors to interrupt each other in these moments*
  - Doubled Cues: Use *Hamlet 1.2*
    - Cast Hamlet, Marcellus, Barnardo, Horatio volunteers
    - Read through scene, pick up on those cues
    - Redirect when encountering doubled cues (when M and B speak at the same time) - are they surprised that they are saying the same words at the same time? What are the playable options?

## PERFORM (20-25 min):

- ★ Assign parts from a **third text** to small groups and hand out cue scripts
  - Some great options are: 3.1 of *Caesar*, 1.1 of *Hamlet*, 2.1 of *Shrew*, 4.1 of *Macbeth*
- ★ Examine individual cue scripts for clues
  - What information is there and what is NOT?
  - What information might someone else's script provide for YOU?
- ★ Have students rehearse the scene and perform it for the class
  - This requires tons of ACTIVE LISTENING
  - **No one person has all the information, but everyone has some!**

## DEBRIEF/CONCLUSION (2-5 min):

- ★ Final questions
- ★ Discoveries from staging, "A-ha moments"
- ★ Takeaways, lessons learned

## SUGGESTED EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS:

- ★ Layer in BLOOD workshop elements for final "bathing in Caesar's blood" moment
- ★ Layer in EMBEDDED STAGE DIRECTIONS workshop elements for heightened understanding of text

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***SUGGESTED ADAPTATIONS & ACCOMMODATIONS:***