

Curing ShakesFear Series: EMBEDDED STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

- ★ **Identify** and **annotate** four general types of embedded stage directions in Shakespeare’s text
- ★ **Discuss** clues about staging based on different embedded stage directions
- ★ **Interpret** and **perform** a short scene incorporating actions dictated by embedded stage directions

MATERIALS & SPACE NEEDED:

- ★ Create “U of Learning” (thrust space)
- ★ Early Modern dance handout
- ★ 1 exemplary text sample enough for each participant
- ★ Laminated PAPA example packet
- ★ Laminated copy of *R&G Act 1* stage direction and *Hamlet Act 1* stage direction (also embedded in narrative outline)
- ★ pens/pencils for annotation

KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS:

- ★ Embedded stage directions
- ★ Thrust staging
- ★ Entrances/Exits
- ★ Audience contact/direct address
- ★ Here vs. there; This vs. that
- ★ PAPA - Props, Action, Proximity, and Address

TOTAL TIME: 60 min

of INSTRUCTORS: 1-2

Max. # of PARTICIPANTS: 30

Introduction (2-5 min):

- ★ **State objective/purpose of this workshop and how it will benefit them when next encountering any of Shakespeare’s work.**
- ★ Briefly assess group’s prior knowledge of the subject of this workshop

DEMO/DEFINE (5-10 min):

- ★ Use “Hokey Pokey” or “Cha Cha Slide” or early modern (EM) dance handout as warm up and intro to embedded direction concept.
- ★ Introduce concept of stage directions using comparison of *R&G Are Dead* and *Hamlet* examples. Discuss differences.
 - Use volunteers - 2 to act, 1 to read directions from the sidelines
 - For whom is most of this information intended? The actors or the audience? How do you know?
- ★ Define embedded stage directions and how they differ from explicit stage directions
- ★ Background History - why are early modern explicit stage directions so brief?
 - Early modern rehearsal practices - 5-6 plays per week, often all different
 - Show a cue script “side,” discuss etymology of “role”
 - This is why embedded stage directions exist - to “direct” performance through the dialogue without wasting space on the page for explicit directions that no one but the actor sees or hears.

PRACTICE (15-20 min):

- ★ Introduce PAPA acronym as how we classify four general types of embedded stage directions
 - P - Props: “I learn from this letter” etc. Have volunteer read/do example.
 - Use 1-2 card examples; have a volunteer read out loud and all listen for the embedded direction
 - A - Action: “On my knees, I vow...” etc.
 - Use 1-2 card examples; have volunteers read out loud from the sidelines and other volunteers as avatar bodies on stage; all listen for the embedded directions
 - Opportunity to talk about thrust staging and **diagonals**, and **entrances/exits** as they come up
 - P - Proximity: this vs. that, here vs. there, etc.
 - Use 1-2 card examples; have volunteers read out loud from the sidelines and other volunteers as avatar bodies on stage; all listen for the embedded directions

Curing ShakesFear Series: EMBEDDED STAGE DIRECTIONS

- A - Address: direct address (soliloquies, asides, questions, etc.) and terms of address (thou vs. you).
 - Use 1-2 card examples; have volunteers read out loud from the sidelines and other volunteers as avatar bodies on stage; all listen for the embedded directions
- Offer redirects for all situations as needed so participants can see the variety of playable options

PERFORM (15-20 min)

- ★ Break into small groups of 3-5
- ★ Distribute sides from longer scene
- ★ Whole group or small groups:
 - Read together
 - Identify as many embedded stage directions as possible - assign small groups a different part of PAPA
- ★ Discuss and try staging options using avatars/readers
- ★ Talk through/interrogate choices as they happen
 - Groups justify their choices based on text
 - Observers can comment/question/redirect

DEBRIEF/CONCLUSION (2-5 min):

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

SUGGESTED EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS:

- ★ Discuss stage architecture and how it influences performance in our space (borrow from Staging Conditions Workshop)
 - Mention *frons scenae* and house entrances (tour practice)
 - "Great Hall" staging
- ★ Work through annotating a side as whole group, model for participants before splitting into small groups
- ★ Longer scene sides for groups to work with/stage
- ★ More time and discussion after each redirect
- ★ Have each group look for a different kind of embedded stage direction instead of all groups looking for all of them

SUGGESTED ADAPTATIONS & ACCOMMODATIONS:

- ★ If **mobility** is an issue, workshop leaders demo staging and participants redirect them
- ★ If **hearing** is an issue, use more visual aides such as print-outs of terminology, large-font examples, etc.; slower pace of speech; gesticulate more.
- ★ For **younger** participants: more explicit modeling of skill; more frequent movement or active participation