



21M.710 Script Analysis

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Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull" Actor's Notebook Assignment

+ **Select ONE character from "The Seagull" to explore.** You may pick any of the central characters, male or female. Think about which character intrigues you the most, or which character you would find most challenging and exciting to portray if YOU were actually going to rehearse and perform a production of this remarkable play!

+ **Pick TWO specific scenes from the play that feature your character in an interaction with at least one other character.** If possible, please pick scenes from different acts of the play, so that you can consider the character's "arc" or journey through the play as a whole. Each of the four acts of "The Seagull" takes place at a different time (with a longer leap in time from Acts 3 to 4), and the characters undergo **changes** -- some subtle, and some significant. You might try finding interactions with different characters, so that you can consider different relationships within the play. The scenes do not need to be long, just substantive enough to identify specific **choices** that your character is making.

+ **In addition, find ONE moment in the play when another character talks about your character when he or she is *not there*.** Note what an actor can glean about character from having the omniscience to observe and analyze the entire play!

+ **The actor uses his or her own life and identity as a kind of "lens" for understanding and analyzing character.** One's complex, authentic, contradictory SELF is the vehicle for expression, as it comes into contact with the words and ideas of the playwright. Think about how aspects of your own life -- your memory, your beliefs, your emotions, and your physical body -- contribute to your individual and subjective interpretation of the play.

+ **PRINT OUT A COPY OF EACH SCENE AND MAKE YOUR NOTES ON THE ACTUAL SCRIPT!**

Make notes both about what you KNOW from reading and what you can IMAGINE based on it.

+ **For each scene, look for specific clues in the TEXT that give you concrete information about the CHARACTER (based on LANGUAGE and its expressions of IDENTITY and BEHAVIOR), and his or her RELATIONSHIPS to others.**

+ Additionally, try to determine what is "going on" with the character -- what he or she might be thinking and feeling -- that is NOT said. This is the SUBTEXT.

+ An actor's performance should be intellectually, emotionally, and physically ACTIVE. What VERBS would you use to describe what your character is DOING in the scene? What is he or she trying to accomplish, in body, mind, and heart? What HAPPENS? As an actor, what would YOU DO on stage?

+ Drama is predicated, in part, on experiences of CHANGE or TRANSFORMATION. In what ways does your character experience significant change in his or her life within the play? Where do we see signs or examples of this in the text?

+ Your actor's notes should show that you have considered and the following principles of psychological acting, and thought about how they affect your CHARACTER and your RELATIONSHIPS:

+ Your OBJECTIVES. What do you WANT in the play as a whole and in each scene in particular?

+ Your OBSTACLES. What is IN YOUR WAY? What stops you from getting what you want?

+ Your TACTICS. What do you DO to get what you want? When do your tactics CHANGE and how do you shift your approach?

+ Your STAKES. How much does it MATTER? Why? How can you make it matter more?

+ Your CONTRADICTIONS. What OPPOSING forces do you see within the character? What internal dilemmas is he or she facing?

+ Remember, there are no "correct" answers for this exercise, only insightful, imaginative, and subjective responses to your reading of the play, and ideas for performing the role in an active, original, and well-thought-out way!

Your "The Seagull" Actor's Notebook will include the copies of the 3 scenes with your hand-written notes on the script, as well as any additional typed-up (or hand-written) notes to explain, amplify, or expand on your ideas. This is informal writing, but should still be thoughtful, specific, and clear.

BE PERSONAL! BE CREATIVE!

Any length, as needed. Please make sure your name is on it and that the pages are stapled together!

Due: Wednesday, April 4