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**The Drama Classroom Companion**

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**THE *Drama* CLASSROOM  
C O M P A N I O N**

Lindsay Price & Kerry Hishon



The Drama Classroom Companion  
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# The Drama Classroom Companion

## *Lindsay Price & Kerry Hishon*

The Drama Classroom Companion is filled with articles and exercises to build the skills needed for theatrical performance as well as real world skills like creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Every drama educator needs more. More resources, more exercises, more help, more time. That's where The Drama Classroom Companion comes to the rescue! Over the past year, we've been writing articles and sharing exercises specific to building skills in the drama classroom. They first appeared on the [Theatrefolk Blog](#) but now we've organized everything in one place just for you. This book is formatted on 8x11 paper for easy photocopying. Exercises and articles come with a handout that you'll be able to immediately use in the classroom.

It is the ultimate classroom resource!

The wonderful thing about skill building in the drama classroom is that it often results in multiple outcomes. Improving diction and projection are vital vocal skills for a theatrical performance. They're also real world communication skills. Figuring out how to costume a play involves critical thinking, a skill that is vital to the workplace. And of course, when students work together to create a piece, they improve collaboration skills which is a necessary skill in daily life.

No other class encourages students to develop real world skills like the drama classroom. It's more than putting on plays or doing improv scenarios. So, when admins or colleagues walk into your space and remark "*They're just playing games,*" you can reply with confidence, "*They're building skills.*"

Enjoy. And thank you for what you do!

-Lindsay Price & Kerry Hishon

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# Chapter 3

## Critical Thinking: Character Development Skills

In the drama classroom, one way to apply critical thinking skills is to have students work on character development. To analyze a character and to infer details can encourage students to be thoughtful and thorough—whether it's through studying a play you're reading in class, scene study, or in rehearsal. It can help them develop empathy as they put themselves in another person's shoes. That is a real life skill that will serve them for the rest of their life.

### Character Development Skills

- Character Specific Voice
- The Character Profile
- Character Wants Exercise
- Do You Know Your Character?
- Want vs. Need
- Reflection in Role: Character Development through Script Analysis

# Character Specific Voice

by Lindsay Price

If you want your students characters to be three dimensional, you have to consider character voice. What words does this character choose? What's the structure of their language? How do they communicate? A character specific voice not only gives an actor something to play, but it also lifts the character off the page.

## How do we define a character specific voice?

### 1) Define their vocabulary

What words does this character use when they talk? Do they stick to one syllable or do they reach for the ten dollar words? Do they use ten dollar words even when they don't know what they mean? Do they pronounce them correctly? Do they use words associated with a favourite pastime? For example, if they like Star Wars, do they talk about the Force? If they like football, do they frame everything in terms of offense and defense? Do they show off their knowledge of physics or fashion? Word choice is key to creating a specific character.

### Exercise

Play with word choice by putting two different characters into the same scenario. The location is a courtroom. The situation is that one of the characters is trying to talk the judge out of giving them a parking ticket. Define the vocabulary for each of these characters. What words would they choose to communicate to the judge? Do they succeed in the end? Does their word choice improve their situation or make it worse? You may want to divide students into groups first and give them a couple of characters to brainstorm their vocabulary and word choices.

- Scientist
- Fashion Model
- Artist
- Computer Programmer
- Chef
- Ballet Teacher
- Lawyer
- Construction Worker
- Librarian
- Personal Trainer

## 2) Define their language structure

Once you look at the “what” of your character’s voice, you want to look at the “how.” How are their sentences constructed? Do they speak with grammatical correctness or with a lot of sentence fragments? Do they say “I am unfamiliar with that term,” or “I don’t know” or “Dunno”? Do they speak in short, clipped sentences or long, run-on sentences? What is the character’s primary punctuation? Do they speak in blunt statements or exclamations? Do they go off on tangents? Defining the “how” in a character’s voice is the best way to write the sound of a character. It also gives the actor playing that role a playbook in terms of vocal pace, speed, tone, and tension.

**Exercise**

Write a monologue using the same scenario with two different characters. A boy is asking the head cheerleader out on a date. Be specific with the language structure. Depending on the boy’s character, what is his primary punctuation? Sentence length? Does he use contractions? Does he speak in complete thoughts or sentence fragments?

- Debate Team Member
- Quarterback
- AV Club Member
- Student Council President
- Math Club Member
- Environment Club Member
- Yearbook Editor
- School Spirit Leader

## 3) Define how they communicate

Theatre is a communicative form. A character’s main job is to communicate their story, viewpoint, and personality to an audience. Decide how you want the audience to perceive a character and how well you want the character to communicate. Is your character direct? Are they vocally high status? Do they tell the truth all the time? Do they speak in statements? Do they get to the point? Do they state their opinions with confidence?

Or is your character indirect. Are they vocally low status and insecure? Do they take forever to get to the point? Do they peter off at the end of their sentences? Or punctuate every line with a nervous laugh? Do they verbally meander? Do they lie?



Once you decide what a character says, and the structure of their speech, you can establish a character's specific voice.

### Exercise

Choose one of the character types from the previous exercises. Write a monologue in which that character talks to their parents about something they've done. Before you start, decide if the character is direct or indirect.

- If your character is **direct**, then your character is: confident, truthful, concise, and is high status.
- If your character is **indirect**, then your character is: insecure, untruthful, rambles, and is low status.

Include all four elements in the monologue.

**Variation:** Choose a character who is typically indirect and write them as direct for this scenario, and vice versa. Many times people act out of character when they are in a unique situation. Never be one of those actors who states, "My character would never say that!"

## Language Profile Sheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CHARACTER: \_\_\_\_\_

The best way to learn about your character is to write for them. Write in their voice, defining their vocabulary and language structure. Define how they communicate.

Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Small	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Large
Favourite Pastime			
Favourite Words			

Speed	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast
Tone	<input type="checkbox"/> Melodic	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Shrill
Volume	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Loud
Rhythm	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Metered	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick
Pitch	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> High
Primary Punctuation	<input type="checkbox"/> Ellipses	<input type="checkbox"/> Periods	<input type="checkbox"/> Exclamation Points
Sentence Length	<input type="checkbox"/> Clipped	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured	<input type="checkbox"/> Run-On

### My character is....

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low Status       | <input type="checkbox"/> High Status       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insecure         | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Untruthful       | <input type="checkbox"/> Truthful          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meanders vocally | <input type="checkbox"/> Gets to the point |

# The Character Profile

by *Lindsay Price*

A character profile gives an actor a document to refer to throughout the rehearsal process. It compiles all the information an actor needs for a character in one place. This includes details gleaned from the script like name, age, family information, personality traits, and key plot points.

But sometimes the script doesn't contain all the information an actor needs to complete the character profile. For example, the script might not identify character likes, dislikes, and memories which are important to know. These are the details that help build a three-dimensional characterization. Human beings are made up of the small details—the more a student knows, the more alive their character will appear onstage.

When students get to a question in the character profile that they can't answer from the text, they'll have to fill in the blanks. If they know their character, they should be able to come up with appropriate details.

There are boundaries. Remind students that the details they create have to remain consistent to the world of the play. This becomes especially important when you're doing a play in a specific time period.

The character profile gives your students something tangible to complete as part of their character development. It also gives you something tangible to assess. It's much easier to assess a document for thorough and thoughtful answers than assessing a student's acting.

Check out the blank character profile on the next page.

## Character Profile

Fill out the information for your character on a separate sheet.

### Basic Details

- Name, Age, Occupation (use "student," if they're too young to have a job)
- Main Personality Traits (list your character's top 3 traits)
- What is the most important moment for you? Explain your answer.
- What is the most important line you say? Explain your answer.

### Motivation Details

- What do you want? (provide proof from the text to support your want)
- What is in the way of what you want? (provide proof from the text)
- Do you get what you want in the end? Why or why not?

### Family Details

- What is the composition of your immediate family?
- Who is the family member that you most get along with? Why?
- Who is the family member that you most dislike? Why?
- Do you wish your family was different? Why?

### Living Details

- Where do you live? What type of building do you live in?
- Who lives there with you?
- How do you live? (are you neat, messy, artistic, spartan?)
- Do you see your living situation changing? Why or why not?
- Where would you like to live?
- Describe your bedroom using the five senses.

### Memories

- Describe your favourite/least favourite memory.
- Describe a childhood memory.
- Describe the memory that impacts how you act in the present.

### Hopes and Dreams

- What do you dream about?
- Describe your ideal day. What do you hope to happen in your life?

# Character Wants Exercise

by Kerry Hishon

Figuring out what your character wants will help you add depth and interest to your character, making them more realistic and believable. A character that doesn't want anything is a boring character. Having a want, wish, goal, or desire will push your character throughout the show. What do they want and how will they go about achieving it?

The following series of questions will help you figure out exactly why your character is in the scene and what they want. Go through your script and make notes while you're thinking about these questions. The script will give you clues and information about what your character wants. For each question, note what it was in the script that gave you that information. List the page number and/or the line number in the script, for you to refer back to. It could be a line spoken by your character, a line spoken by another character, a stage direction, or something else.

If you can't find proof in the script, you may wish to brainstorm some ideas about your character and what they want. Talk to your teacher or start a class discussion to get more ideas and insights!

The following written exercise consists of three sections. You may wish to use just one or two of the sections for your character analysis. You might decide to use just one or some of the questions. The questions will help you start thinking about your character and raise more questions to explore in class.

## Overall Analysis

- 1) What does your character want? What is their wish, goal, or ultimate desire?
  - This should be big—it's the reason your character exists in the show.
  - Why is your character essential to the story?
- 2) How do they attempt to achieve their wants? What actions do they take to achieve their goals?
- 3) Why does your character want what they want? What pushes or drives them?
- 4) Does your character end up getting what they want? Why or why not?
- 5) How does your character grow and change from the beginning of the show to the end?

### Changing What You Want

- 1) Does your character's want stay the same throughout the show, or does it change?
- 2) If your character wants change, what causes the change?
  - Does something happen directly to the character to cause the change?
  - Does another character influence your character?
  - Does your character make a choice to change?

### Influencing Others

- 1) Does your character's want influence other characters' wants?
- 2) Does your character help or hinder other characters' attempts to achieve their wants?
  - Does your character know or realize that fact?
  - How does that make your character feel?
  - Does that help your character get what they want?

That's a lot of questions, isn't it? But asking these questions will get you thinking about your character. Will they get what they want? That can go either way....

Check out the **Worksheet and Evaluation Rubric** on the following pages.

## What Does My Character Want? Worksheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CHARACTER: \_\_\_\_\_

### Overall Analysis

1. What does your character want? What is their wish, goal, or ultimate desire? This should be big. Why is your character essential to the story?
2. How do they attempt to achieve their wants? What actions do they take to achieve their goals?
3. Why does your character want what they want? What pushes or drives them?
4. Does your character end up getting what they want? Why or why not?
5. How does your character grow and change from the beginning of the show to the end?

### Changing What You Want

1. Does your character's want change or stay the same throughout the show?
2. If your character's want changes, what causes the change? Does something happen directly? Does another character influence your character? Does your character make a choice?

### Influencing Others

1. Does your character's want influence other characters' wants?
2. Does your character help or hinder other characters' attempts to achieve their wants? Does your character know or realize that fact? How does that make your character feel? Does that help your character get what they want?



## Evaluation Rubric

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT DOES MY CHARACTER WANT?	NEEDS WORK	SATISFACTORY	PROFICIENT	EXCELLENT
<b>Comprehension</b> Did the student understand the assignment?	1	2	3	4
<b>Effort</b> Did the student provide thoughtful answers?	1	2	3	4
<b>Proof/Examples</b> Did the student provide proof/examples from the script/text?	1	2	3	4
<b>Presentation</b> Are the student's answers easy to read? Spelling/grammar errors?	1	2	3	4
<b>Overall</b>	1	2	3	4

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_ /20

# Teaching Resources

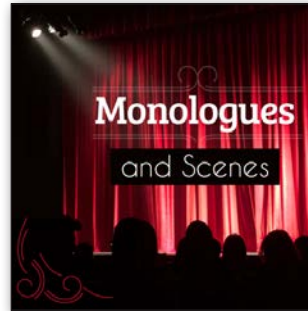
Quality resources to use in your drama classroom



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[theatrefolk.com/companion](http://theatrefolk.com/companion)

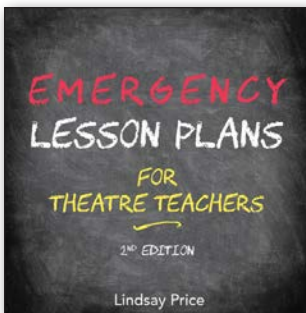


## Monologue and Scene Collections

Whether it's for classwork, competitions or auditions, these collections of student-appropriate monologues and scenes can help you find what you're looking for.

All monologues and scenes come from published plays and include running-times, descriptions, character notes and staging suggestions.

[theatrefolk.com/collections](http://theatrefolk.com/collections)



## Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers

*Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers, 2nd edition* gives you the tools and resources you need to confidently leave your class in the hands of a substitute teacher. Customize your lesson plans to suit the specific needs of your class when you can't be there.

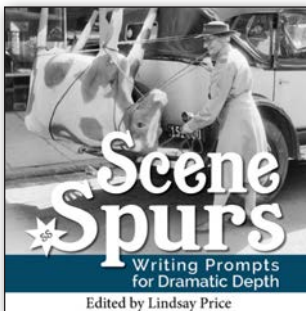
[theatrefolk.com/elp](http://theatrefolk.com/elp)



## The Student Director's Handbook

Help students take their show from first audition to opening night with *The Student Director's Handbook*. This easy-to-use ebook is full of guidelines, tips and templates designed to help students create a vision, circumvent problems and organize rehearsals on their way to a successful production.

[theatrefolk.com/student-director](http://theatrefolk.com/student-director)



## Scene-Spurs: Writing Prompts for Dramatic Depth

*Scene Spurs* is a collection of photo-based writing prompts developed by playwright Lindsay Price. The set includes 35 different Spurs along with an instruction guide to integrate them into your drama classroom.

[theatrefolk.com/spurs](http://theatrefolk.com/spurs)

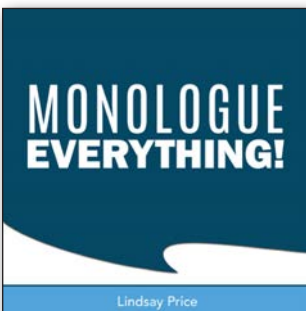


## Write Your Own Vignette Play

Your students want to write and perform an original play. You want to include a playwriting unit in your program. But where to start? What if your students have never written a play before? What if you've never written before?

*Write Your Own Vignette Play* will answer all your questions and more

[theatrefolk.com/write\\_vignette](http://theatrefolk.com/write_vignette)



## The Monologue Everything Program

Want your students to write their own monologues? Have you tried to incorporate monologue units into the classroom with less-than-satisfactory results?

[theatrefolk.com/monologue-everything](http://theatrefolk.com/monologue-everything)



## Competition Material

Plays, monologues, and scenes for drama competitions including royalty information and exemptions.

[theatrefolk.com/competition](http://theatrefolk.com/competition)



## Practical Technical Theater: The Complete Solution for Technical Theater Classrooms

This series of instructional DVDs is perfect for the teacher who feels more at home with a prompt book than a hammer, and would welcome a new, visually oriented teaching tool for their tech classes and production crews.

[theatrefolk.com/ptt](http://theatrefolk.com/ptt)



[www.theatrefolk.com/resources](http://www.theatrefolk.com/resources)