

SESSION 5 – SCRIPT ANALYSIS

Writer's Intent & Story Structure

HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- 1) How are you doing with learning your terminology? Remember, you don't need to memorize all of the terms (although it would be beneficial for you to do so), just continue to study it as you move through the course.

Those who understand language understand the life of that language.

SCRIPT ANALYSIS

Script analysis is extremely important to being a good actor. The script is the blueprint for the construction of the project (story).

“A builder must first understand the blueprints before building the structure.”

~ Coach Banks

1. WHAT IS SCRIPT?

A. The story from which you learn your lines.

B. Types of scripts:

- **Stage Play (Theater)** -
- **Teleplay (TV)** -
- **Screenplay (Film)** -

C. Other terms for script:

- **Copy** -
- **Sides** -
- **Book** -
 - a. Off-Book (memorized)
 - b. On-Book (still learning lines)

- c. When you are Off-Book, someone else is On-Book cueing your lines.
- **Scene -**

2. SCRIPT ANALYSIS

We must place important emphasis on the analysis part of Script Analysis. Analysis is the investigative process of breaking the script down to its core essences in order to find out what's really going on (with moments, story and character) at a deeper level.

As an actor, it's your job to analyze the script in order to find out more about your character, the other character(s), the story, the location, and the plot. An actor who properly analyzes a script will complete a detailed analysis. This is in complete contrast to the actor who simply looks it over and/or just memorizes it.

A. Shallow Analysis versus Thorough Analysis - Crime Scene Analogy

(1) Shallow Analysis -

- a. The witness
 - Sees and calls in the crime.
 - They saw the crime, they did not analyze it.

(2) Detailed Analysis -

- a. Cops
 - Initial assessment and quarantine
- b. The Detectives/Investigators
 - Investigate and collect evidence
- c. CSI Techs
 - Analyze evidence
 - Forensic study

NOTE: Check out the definition of Writer's Intent on the Terminology Sheet. Through the process of Script Analysis, the actor will better understand Writer's Intent. Script Analysis takes time, effort, and energy... it's work! You must continue to do the work in order to become good at it.

B. Types of Stories In Film and Television

Next to each type, write down how long each of these runs (in minutes and pages):

(1) Commercials - _____ Minutes/Seconds _____ Pages

(2) Half Hour Shows (Sitcoms) - _____ Minutes _____ Pages

- a. The way you determine the length of a show/film is: **One page of copy equals approximately one minute of storytelling.**
- b. Example: A 20-page teleplay will be closely equal to _____ minutes

(3) Hour Long Shows (Dramas) -

(4) Full Length Features -

NOTE: For TV, the length of a script will need to factor in the amount of time dedicated to commercials, (i.e. a 30-minute show will not actually be 30 minutes. Instead, it will be about 20 pages/minutes to allow for approximately 10 minutes of commercials.) Also, exposition and stage direction may take up additional pages. Ultimately, a teleplay can be anywhere between 25-40 pages.

C. Script Structure -- Where Your Sides Fit Into the Whole Story

- When you receive sides for an audition, more often than not, you won't be given the opportunity to read the entire script. This means you'll have to do some detective work to analyze the small bit of copy available to you. Understanding script structure will help you put pieces of the story-puzzle together.

(1) Page Numbers

- a. When you get sides for an audition, it helps to pay attention to the page numbers to figure out what point in the story (i.e. beginning, middle or end) your scene is taking place.
- b. Even if you know very little about the entirety of the script, by looking at the page numbers, you'll know about where your sides fit into the story as a whole. This information is helpful for your understanding of where your character may fit into the story's arch.
- c. Page numbers can be found in the upper right hand side of the pages of the script. (See example below)

(2) Scene Numbers

- a. There may or may not also be a scene number. Be careful not to confuse the page number with the scene number. The page number is generally in the far top right corner of the page.

Page # → 10.

Scene # → 3
3A

INT. OFFICE BUILDING – DAY

Robert approaches new recruit BECKY MILLER, a professional looking woman, with a jovial smile and hand extended. Becky receives Robert's smile and the two shake hands.

Just as this is happening, through the huge front windows, we can see a black and white POLICE CAR pulling up to the building's front doors.

ROBERT THOMPSON
You must be Becky Miller?

BECKY MILLER
Yes! It's a pleasure to meet you sir.

ALL CAPS =
1st appearance

(3) What do Page and Scene Numbers Indicate?

- a. The page number will give you an idea of which ACT the scene is found in. (first act, second act, or third act)

Example: In a 100-page script:

- The first _____ pages, roughly, are Act 1 (The Opening Act)
- The next _____ pages, roughly, are Act 2 (The Middle Act)
- The last _____ pages, roughly, are Act 3 (The Closing)

(4) Character Names

- a. If your character is just being introduced to the story for the first time, their name will be written in _____ letters in the stage direction.
- b. If the character has already been introduced, their name will be written in _____ letters in the stage direction.
- c. If you know the page number and you combine this understanding with the visual hint of the case lettering of your character's name, you'll more likely be able to better determine your character's place in the big picture of the story (arc).
- **For Example:** If the page number is 85 and your character's name appears in all caps, this indicates your character has arrived for the very first time towards the end of the story (act three). Therefore, it is likely that your character contributes to the resolution of the story instead of further conflict (which usually takes place in act one or two).*

***NOTE:** These are not hard and fast rules that work all the time. However, this information can assist you with a general understanding of story structure, page numbers (and what they indicate), as well as basic screenplay formatting. Keep in mind, information equals power!

(5) Basic Story Structure:

- a. Scripts have a _____, _____, and _____.
- b. A basic three act story arc is generally structured as follows:

ACT I -

Beginning

Introduction with a set up

ACT II -

Middle

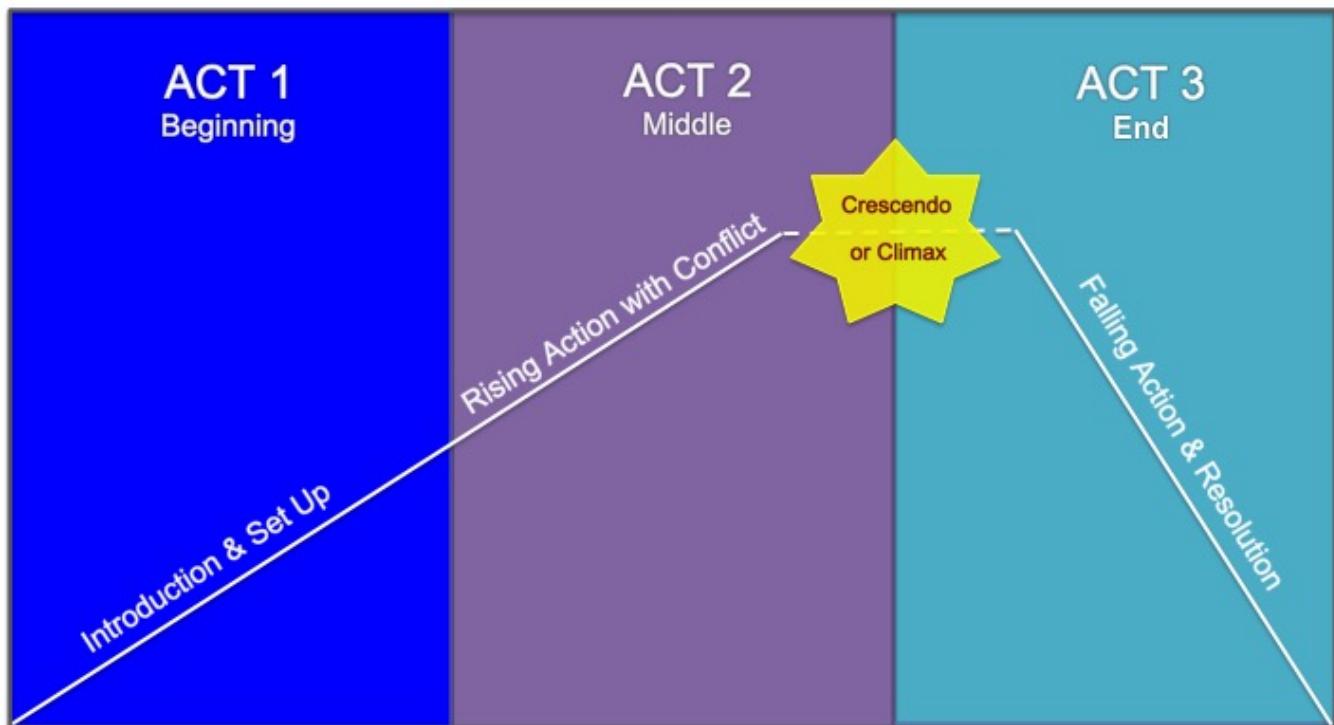
Rising action with conflict

Crescendo or climax (can be at the end of Act II or beginning of Act III)

ACT III -

End: Falling action with resolution

Three-Act Story Structure



D. How To Get Better at Script Analysis

- _____ a lot of scripts. The more you read, the more you'll be able to _____ story. Period!
- If you don't like reading, you may want to reconsider acting because you'll be reading scripts, sides and copy throughout your entire acting career.

E. When reading the script, ask yourself these questions:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?

F. Significant Nouns

(1) You should look for significant nouns in a script when you're doing script analysis.

- **Significant Noun -**

(2) Learn how to pull significant nouns out of the script and ask yourself questions, like:

- How do they make you (as the character) feel?
- What do they make you deal with?
- How do they apply to your character?
- How do they apply to the story?
- More directly, what's your relationship to the significant noun?

(3) Once you identify the significant nouns, you'll need to learn how to make them work in a line of dialogue.

- **Example:** Roger/Regina was reminded of his/her childhood when he/she saw the little red wagon in the playground.

The significant nouns in this example are:

1. Roger/Regina (the character/you)
 2. The Little Red Wagon
 3. Park/Playground
 4. Childhood
- Stuff, then Explode the Significant Nouns - You need to flesh out each of those nouns and the stories behind the nouns. Always connect an emotion to each noun. You'll need to do this work with all of the significant nouns in all of your dialogue... all of the time!

When actor Sir Michael Caine receives a new script, he reads it 250 times. Why?

G. Writer's Intent

- Writer's Intent -
- It's **not** the job of the actor to take the writer's intent and turn it into something _____.
- The job of the actor is to bring the writer's intent to _____ through our acting and our _____ of what the writer is desiring to communicate.
- It's important to have a passion for understanding the writer's intent! Who, what, when, where & why.

“It’s the actor’s job to understand what the writer was initially intending In order to bring those words to life... in the best possible way.”

~ Coach Banks

H. The Black Lines & The White Lines

- The Black Lines have been created by the writer. We don't change the black lines. Think of them as the writer's art work.
- The White Lines consist of all the space around the written words - beats, moments. The actor owns the white lines. Think of them as the actor's art work, their subtext.
- Memorize the dialogue as it's written. You can't change or improvise the lines. Improvisation is the exception to the rule... not the rule!
- We should only improvise when given the _____ or _____ to improvise.
- Our job is to make the dialogue look as if it's improvised.

“Lack of preparation does not make for a spontaneous performance.”

~ Robert Downey Jr.

DEMO: Cold Read & Script Analysis

PART 1: Ice Cold Read

Jack will be doing an Ice Cold Read of a piece of copy one page in length (aka sides). An Ice Cold Read means he has never seen this script before. Coach Banks will be reading across from him as if he were a casting director who is auditioning Jack for a part.

PART 2: Script Analysis

The information below pertains to script/scene analysis in general and not just to this demonstration.

FINDING THE WHO - WHAT - WHERE

- 1) What is the **WHO** in this scene? This includes all of the characters who are physically in the scene, as well as characters who are mentioned in the dialogue.

- 2) What is the “who relationship,” or, the **WHAT** in this scene? When looking at relationships in a scene, you need to ask yourself: “Is the relationship familiar or unfamiliar?” How (un)familiar? Again, you must do this with all of the characters physically present, as well as those mentioned in the scene.

- 3) **WHAT** is the plot of this scene? What’s the scene about?

- 4) Knowing the relationship between the people in the scene (also with the third party, if there is one) is key and extremely important to approaching the scene properly. The more you bring in the relational understanding, the stronger your performance is going to become. **WHAT** is the relationship between all three characters in this scene?

- 5) **WHAT** is your character’s intention? What do you want/need? What do you have to have? Answer these questions in regard to Jack’s character in this scene.*

- 6) What is the **WHERE**? The location of this scene?

Curious about what else you should analyze before performing your cold read? Download the Cold Reading Checklist Document available under your Resource Documents for Download section

*NOTE: Compressed and intended physical action will greatly assist the actor in obtaining their need/want. Move with intent and purpose when you need to reach your desired goal.

PART 3: Cold Read

Now watch Jack do the scene again after he's gathered all the information about the scene. This would be considered a cold read because he is now familiar with the scene and he's completed basic script analysis with the available information.

- 1) How did Jack's performance change?

When you're performing the character at a prepared level, you'll want to have all the information you can. For the audition process, you usually only get limited information--**sides**, which are sections of the script. You don't usually have access to the whole script.

PART 4: Pulling it All Together - Cold Read

Now we'll focus on the technical aspects of cold reading.

- 1) How is Jack handling the copy? How much attention is he giving to the copy versus the casting director (Coach Banks)? Are his eyes in the copy? Are his eyes off the page?

NOTE: Always try to memorize the first and last lines of the scene. It helps make your opening moment and your closing moment more powerful. Doing this will make for a much stronger audition overall.

Work with the **LOCATION** - You want to picture the location, because the location you picture will affect your performance.

- 2) How does the decision to set the scene at a public Coffee Shop affect Jack's performance?
- 3) After watching the scene, go back to the beginning of the demonstration and compare Jack's first Ice Cold Read to this read. What's different?

"A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something."
~ Frank Capra

HOMEWORK: Line Lifting & Eye Contact

1. Line Lifting*

- Download the Line Lifting sheet from the Resource Documents for Download section.
- The Line Lifting sheet will contain the instructions. Work on line lifting for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening, (that's twice a day) for two weeks. The

more you put into it, the more you will get out of it.* Continue reading out loud... every day.

*NOTE: Boredom is simply a lack of creativity.

2. Field Exercise/Observation Exercise - Eye Contact

- Pay really close attention to how much people in your everyday life look you in the eyes. Make a conscious effort to keep eye contact with the people in your life and take note of how many people:
 - Look back at you.
 - Stay connected with you.
 - Will not look at you.
- While this is an observation exercise, it is also giving you an opportunity to work on your eye contact and your ability to communicate with people one-on-one while looking directly in their eyes.*

*NOTE: This may not be as easy as you think.

COMPLETION OF 2ND MODULE!

This marks the end of the 2nd module (Sessions 4 & 5). You'll find Quiz 5 by clicking the Blue TAKE TEST button under this Lesson's main menu.

You must complete and pass the Session 5 Quiz before proceeding with Lesson 7.

The next Lesson (Lesson 7) is your 2nd PRIVATE COACHING SESSION. To set up your private coaching session you must first make sure you have a Skype account. If you do not, you can download the app and sign up for one here: www.skype.com Once you have skype all set up you must fill out the Private Coaching Request form in the next lesson's display page (which you will be able to access after passing the Session 5 Quiz).

Once you fill out the form you will be contacted within 24 hours. If you do not hear from us within that time please email **ACTCOACHING@CLAYBANKSSTUDIO.COM** with the subject line "Request to Schedule Act Private Coaching Session #1" In the body of the email please include your Time Zone and 3 time slots that work for you. Take note, our coaches are located in Los Angeles, (Pacific Standard Time) and our normal business hours of coaching are between 10:00 AM and 6:30 Pm.

In this private coaching session, we'll be checking in with you on your understanding of: Acting Theory & Mechanics, Script Analysis & Scene Study.

You'll also be required to bring a prepared piece of material (memorized) that you have already done the analysis on. Then, you'll be practicing your Cold Reading and Line Lifting technique with a piece of copy that your coach will provide. (You can find scripts online for your prepared piece.)
