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# Vocal Awareness

In your exploration notes, you need to show that you have explored the play from a vocal perspective. This sheet outlines some ideas for you to consider.

## Cicely Berry, Voice and the Actor

Cicely Berry is Voice Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. She feels that a voice coach is one of the most important members of a theatre ensemble, and much time should be spent working with the actors on their voices.

Berry feels that voices are responsible for bringing emotion to a role. In her book, *Voice and the Actor*, she discusses how actors can fall in to the trap of using the 'wrong voice.' Wrong voices fail to reflect feelings, do not reveal any type of expressions and generalise roles. She encourages actors to use breathing and speaking exercises so that the actors become more aware of their own voice.

**When compiling your exploration notes you need to consider what vocal approaches you have used when looking at the plays.**

Brook is also a famous theatre practitioner who believes that actors should experiment with language and tries to show actors how to use vocal impulses through sound. Brook believes that actors need to be theoretical and practically prepared to use their voice when approaching a role. He uses breathing activities with actors to enable actors to have an awareness of their vocal muscles.

When considering vocals, it is important to remember the power of silence. Peter Brook feels that silence has the power to confuse, disturb and even embarrass an audience.

When approaching a play from a vocal perspective some directors feel that an important part of vocal awareness lies in actors' ability to listen. It could be argued that, when actors really listen to each other on stage, they will react to the words with genuine emotions, whereas if the actors do not really listen, this may result in a prepared, rehearsed response.

Because some practitioners feel that movement and vocals are inextricably linked, they feel that actors should have some training to ensure that movements are in coordination with the vocals and breathing. Meyerhold was a key believer in this and even designed his own system of training, called Biomechanics.

## Patsy Rodenburg

Patsy Rodenburg is famous for her books and theories about how actors should approach the vocal aspects of a role. She has worked at the Royal National Theatre, the School of Speech and Drama and the Michael Howard Studio for actors in New York. She is regarded as one of the most influential theorists and voice coaches in drama today. She feels that there is a strong connection between the body and the voice and so actors need to be trained how to use both within a performance.

## Vocal Exercises

Some directors feel that actors need to focus upon their pronunciation and enunciation and so use approaches in rehearsals such as:

Asking the actors to say tongue twisters,

Or saying words with their mouths open as wide as they can and then with their mouths as small as they will go. These exercise helps actors to understand the sounds they can make with their mouths.

## Vocal Characterisation

When approaching a role you also need to think about the character in terms of their vocals. You need to consider the following aspects:

- How the character will speak in terms of speed?
- Their accent,
- Their use of volume,
- Whether they have any speech impediments,
- Do they mispronounce words?
- What is their vocal quality-do they speak harshly, softly, etc?
- Does anything happen in the play to affect their voice?
- How does their speech differ or show similarities to other characters?
- Does their way of speech suit style of the play/context?