

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY PACK

HEDDA GABLER

**BY HENRIK IBSEN
IN A NEW VERSION BY BRIAN FRIEL**



DIRECTED BY CHELSEA WALKER

HEDDA GABLER WAS STAGED IN SHERMAN'S MAIN HOUSE DURING THE AUTUMN SEASON OF 2019.

The following pack provides some production background and context as well as providing you with the tools to answer an exam question on the Actor In Performance elements of this production.

There are both practical and academic questions within this – please be safe when completing the practical exercises.

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All production photography in this pack taken by Mark Douet.

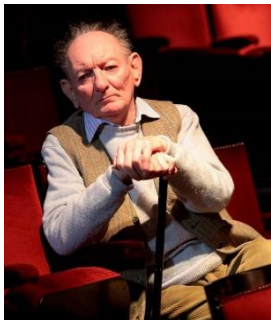
PRODUCTION CREATIVES

Chelsea Walker - Director

- Chelsea was the 2017 winner of the prestigious Sir Peter Hall Director Award.
- In 2018 she directed a revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire* for a UK tour.
- She has twice been a finalist for the JMK Directing Award.
- She was nominated for Off West End awards for her productions of *Low Level Panic* and *Cougar* (Orange Tree Theatre).
- As a director she has worked at Soho Theatre (*Shudder* by Jodi Grey), Hampstead Theatre (*You's Two* by Georgia Christou) Southwark Playhouse (*Klippies* by Jessica Sian) and The Finborough Theatre (*P'yongyang* by In-Sook Chappell and *Chicken Dust* by Ben Weatherill).
- Chelsea is a script reader for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and Old Vic theatre.



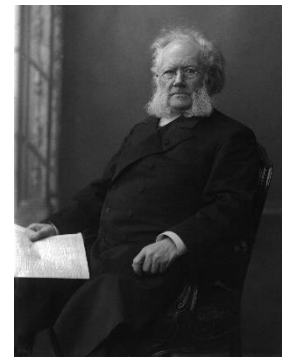
Brian Friel – Playwright



- Brian Patrick Friel ("Irish Chekhov") was born 9 Jan 1929 in Knockmoyle and died 2 Oct 2015 in Greencastle.
- Across fifty years Friel published 24 plays and is regarded as one of the greatest English-language dramatists.
- His first stage plays were *A Doubtful Paradise* (1960) and *Philadelphia Here I Come!* (1964). It was the latter play which made him famous in Dublin, London, and New York.
- The 1972 *The Freedom of the City* takes influence from Friel's involvement in the infamous Bloody Sunday protests.
- He was a member of the *American Academy of Arts and Letters*, the *British Royal Society of Literature* and the *Irish Academy of Letters*.
- His play *Dancing at Lughnasa* earned a Tony Award and Olivier Award for Best Play.
- Friel is known for translations of early Realism including four Chekhov's (*Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Yalta Game*, *The Bear*), two Turgenev's (*Fathers and Sons*, *A Month in the Country*) and of course Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*.

Henrik Ibsen – Playwright

- Ibsen was born in 1828 in Skien, a town in the south of Norway (he died in 1906).
- His family were too poor for him to study art or for his preferred career in medicine.
- His first play, a historical drama in verse, was about the assassinated ancient Roman revolutionary, Catiline.
- *Catiline* was rejected by the Christiania theatre, but they did accept and perform *The Warrior's Barrow* in 1850.
- He was poet and stage manager at the Bergen theatre. Here he learned stagecraft and produced one original play a year.
- Ibsen suffered from depression during this part of his life, experiences of which are found throughout his work.
- The success of his play *The Pretenders*, saw him awarded a scholarship, enabling him to access culture across Europe.
- Upon returning to Norway he produced a new play every two years and became Norway's greatest dramatist.
- His tombstone is inscribed with a hammer, the miner's symbol, alluding to his poem "Break me the way, you heavy hammer, / To the deepest bottom of my heart."



CHARACTER LIST

ORIGINAL CHARACTERS – 1879	SHERMAN CAST - 2019
Hedda Tesman (née Gabler) She is considered one of the greatest dramatic roles in theatre. She is the daughter of the famous General Gabler. Ibsen intended for the title to show that the character's personality was a reflection of her father rather than her husband. As the play begins, she has returned from her honeymoon with George Tesman. Hedda is an intelligent, unpredictable, who is not afraid to manipulate her husband and friends in a multitude of ways.	Heledd Gwynn
George Tesman Hedda's husband. George was raised by his Aunt Ju-Ju. Despite his apparent immaturity he is an intelligent scholar who divides his interests between research, travel and his wife. Although he is unable to support the lifestyle she is used too, nor does he realise that she is manipulating him. He is hoping for a professorship in history. At the beginning of the play it appears that his great rival, the notorious alcoholic Eilert Lövborg is no longer a threat.	Marc Antolin
Juliana Tesman George's aunt who has raised him since early childhood. She is called Aunt Ju-Ju by George. Originally named Mariane Rising by Ibsen after his own aunt, Mariane Paus. Although she was renamed, her character's attitudes were modelled after Mariane. Despite her hints that Hedda should be pregnant she is well-meaning and tries to get along with Hedda. However, the difference in their class presents many barriers.	Nia Roberts
Thea Elvsted Thea was bullied by Hedda when they were school mates. She is also a former acquaintance of George. Thea is nervous and shy, and trapped in an unhappy marriage. Despite her meekness she (much like Nora in <i>A Doll's House</i>) breaks bond with convention, thereby providing an alternative to Hedda's unhappiness. Thea possesses the courage to change her life and leave her marriage in pursuit of the man she loves.	Alexandria Riley
Judge Brack Brack is a low ranking judge. He has connections around the city, and often the source of information about George's professorship. A worldly and cynical man, he enjoys meddling in other people's affairs.	Richard Mylan
Eilert Lövborg Lövborg is George's biggest competitor in academia. He once shared a close relationship with Hedda. Although a genius he was a social outcast following a series of drink related scandals. However he has published a book to rave reviews and has another even more promising manuscript. Thea (his muse) helped him with both manuscripts.	Jay Saighal
Bertha A servant of the Tesman's, who tries to please her new mistress, but Hedda is quite dissatisfied with her.	Caroline Berry
Aunt Rina Rina is dying at the start of the play. She lives with Juliana and helped raise George. She never appears onstage.	

CONTEXT

Hedda Gabler is recognized as a classic of realism, nineteenth century theatre, and world drama.

Ibsen was known for making countless revisions to his work in order to bring out the maximum meaning in the fewest words, constantly seeking the right combination that ensured his characters were represented real people that would be familiar to his audiences. This combined with his poetic abilities contributed to the concise prose that defined his style of theatre.

Although the themes of mental health, family and woman's place in the world seem as relevant as ever in the #Metoo era, it is important to remember that Ibsen was attacking his own societal structures head-on.

The Original Play

The world premiere took place on 31 January 1891 in Munich. Ibsen was disappointed by the performance of Clara Heese who played Hedda due to her declamatory and melodramatic style. Despite this translations and productions in various countries followed. The British debut was also in 1891, and was unusually for the time directed by the American actress Elizabeth Robins, who played Hedda.

Glenda Jackson returned to the RSC to play Hedda in a Trevor Nunn directed production which was later adapted into the 1975 film *Hedda*. Her performance was nominated for an Oscar as leading actress.

More recently a 2011 production of the play in Tehran was shut down and the director (Vahid Rahbani) successfully taken to court as the content was deemed to be "vulgar", "hedonistic" and filled with symbols of a "sexual slavery cult."

Friel's adaptation of the play was first staged at The Old Vic theatre (in London) with Sheridan Smith in the title role.

Initial reactions

Prior to Hedda there had never been a female role of such complex and troubled nature. More importantly women were able to recognise their own lives being represented so accurately onstage.

However, not all reactions were positive one critic labelled the character of Hedda as "a horrid miscarriage of the imagination, a monster in female form to whom no parallel can be found in real life". For some reviewers the play itself was equally repelling; "What a horrible story! What a hideous play!" and "The play is simply a bad escape of moral sewage gas".

Whilst the predominant male reaction tended to be negative, women identified fully with Hedda. Elizabeth Robins, the first English actress to play Hedda and later a suffragist, famously wrote how "one lady of our acquaintance, married and not noticeably unhappy, said laughing 'Hedda is all of us'". Middle class Victorian women adopted Hedda as one of their own. As a result *Hedda Gabler* ran for an unprecedented six weeks (rather than the one or two performances usually seen with Ibsen's work).

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT (1879)

- Between 1814 (with the establishment of the Eidsvold constitution) and 1885 (when King Oscar II relinquished his last powers) there were huge changes in the politics of Norway.
- Economic and social upheaval accompanied these political shifts. It was possible to move up (and down) the social ladder.
- Despite these changes society was still dominated by patriarchal dogma; denying freedom of expression for women.
- Lower class woman worked in factories, but were expected to choose marriage and motherhood rather than work – anything else was considered tragic.
- It was a matter of great shame for a middle class woman to work as it indicated her husband could not provide for the family.
- The ideal woman was portrayed as void of desire herself and loved for her virtue, not her flesh.
- Women were discouraged from bookishness and vocational aspirations; keeping them away from economics and politics.
- Mothers educated their daughters in the body taboos that defended purity and taught the social duties that marked a woman's place in society.
- The potential for public scandal regarding sex constantly hung over women; threatening social status.
- By the 1880s Norway had established a woman's rights movement and in 1882 women were admitted to University.
- 1884 saw the founding of Norwegian Women's Movement Association – which remains active to this day.
- That year Ibsen petitioned to the government insisting that married women be granted rights to earnings and property.
- Meanwhile in the UK, the Coronation Suffrage Pageant of 1911 featured Hedda Gabler herself (Elizabeth Robbins) who led the Actresses' Franchise League towards its goal of emancipation.
- This conflict between the old and new orders caused many middle class women (such as Hedda) to suffer an identity crisis.

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT (2018)

- People now have more access to more knowledge and opportunities, due to technical advances making us more aware of other people's cultures, communities and environments.
- However, this also creates a greater awareness of what separates us from other people – rather than what makes us the same.
- Today the #MeToo, #TimesUp and #ERA5050 movements are drawing attention to current gender inequalities and working to address them.
- In 2018 Women's Marches across the globe to show support and pressure governments into change.
- There is great debate surrounding the unequal tax policy on sanitary products - #PeriodPoverty
- 26% of people aged of 18 and 32 were married in 2013, compared to 48% of baby boomers who tied the knot at the same age.
- Compared to the two previous generations, nearly twice as many 20-something women are employed. Prioritizing professional development has significant economic benefits too.
- Millennial women are also more likely to have received a bachelor's degree than women of any previous generations.
- However, studies have shown that the stigma associated with being single has not diminished, despite these advances.
- Recent bestselling novels such as Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* centre on wilfully self-destructive heroines.
- Other fictional characters from the last decade such as Miranda and Samantha on *Sex and the City* display similar scepticism about the till-death-do-us-part part of marriage.

<p>MENTAL HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps due to his own circumstances Ibsen was interested in the science of mental illness. His play <i>Ghosts</i> is another example of him trying to assess this through his dramatic work. • Women's mental health issues were given the term 'hysteria'; believed to be caused by the uterus rather than environmental factors. • Women were expected to lead an insular life. Sunlight and exercise were considered bad for their health. • There was great prejudice against the mentally ill as the causes of these were unknown. It was assumed to be the devil's work or retribution for sins. It was also something that was believed to be passed through generations of families so was often kept quiet. • The rejection of the romanticism of mental health within literature towards the end of the nineteenth century led to a period of it being a highly controversial subject. 	<p>MENTAL HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite well publicised campaigns relating to men's mental health, these conditions amongst women are on the rise – at almost three times the rate of men. • One in five women (19%) experience a Common Mental Disorder (such as anxiety or depression). • A 2016 inquiry into mental health found that one in four women aged 16 to 24 had experienced anxiety, depression, panic disorder, phobia or obsessive-compulsive disorder, and one in five said they had self-harmed at some point in their life. • There is a much better understanding of the environmental factors that effect women's mental health such as social isolation (due to longer life expectancy), lack of mobility and fear. • Currently the age of the selfie (and Instagram culture) promotes the constant need for the seeing out of perfection. This culture creates a wide gulf between our realities and imagined selves.
<p>FEMALE SUICIDE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of male-to-female suicides in the 1880s was 4 : 1, despite this evidence suicide was seen as a female 'affliction'. • Victorians feared suicide far more than they did murder. • Suicide as a source of anxiety and disgrace for both families and individuals – which could impact for generations. • People who took their own lives were portrayed as poor and desperate; these were unhappy, lonely, lovelorn, mad, and financially ruined members of society. • There were two main beliefs surrounding women and suicide. Firstly that more women than men were confined for insanity and suicide was a result of insanity. Alternatively women were seen as physically and mentally weaker. Resisting suicide took willpower and courage (masculine characteristics); women would more readily fall victim to suicidal impulses. 	<p>FEMALE SUICIDE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of women killing themselves in the UK hit its highest level in a decade in 2016 • According to the Office of National Statistics, 1,566 women killed themselves in 2015 — a rate of 5.4 suicides per 100,000 people. • Marriage appears to be less protective against suicide for women than for men this may be down to factors such as arranged and early marriage, motherhood, low social status, domestic violence, and economic dependence. These environmental factors encourage them to remain within unhappy marriages. • Domestic abuse is one of the most significant precipitants of female suicide. • A recent study found lower female suicide rates in countries with social structures that emphasised social equality.

Describe 3 things that intrigue you about the themes surrounding Sherman Theatre's *Hedda Gabler*:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____



LISTEN TO – HEDDA INSPIRED MUSIC:

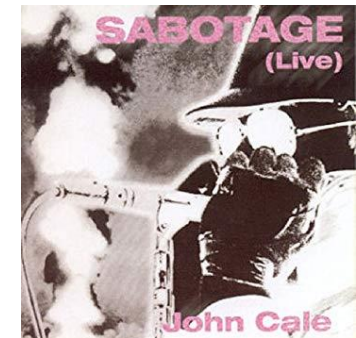


If Eilert Løvborg Wrote A Song, It Would Sound Like This
by Broken Records, 2009.

and

Hedda Gabler by John Cale, 1976.

Consider how, and which aspects of the play might have influenced these musicians in their writing.



Which character(s) within the play might they relate to most and why?

What other music might reflect the mood / themes / your ideas of the play?

ACTING SKILLS – VOCABULARY**Physicality**

Link the definitions with the correct word and the correct part of the body.

Gait

Eye Contact

Facial Expression

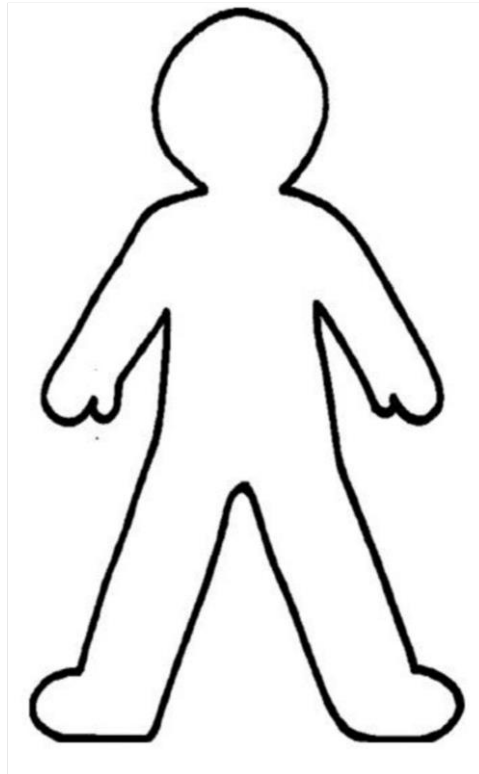
Gesture

Pace

Posture

Proxemics

Stance



The position in which someone holds their body when standing or sitting

A person's manner of walking.

The way someone stands, especially when deliberately adopted.

The amount of space between people and their surroundings.

The look on someone's face that conveys a particular emotion.

Where the actors gaze is focused.

The speed at which someone walks, runs, or moves.

An action performed to convey a feeling or intention.

Vocal

Link the definitions with the correct word and draw a symbol in the box that represents the word.

Accent

Speed in speaking.

Volume

Tone

The manner of speaking that expresses a particular feeling or mood.

The flow/frequency of words and phrases

Give particular emphasis or importance to a point, statement, or idea.

Stress

A temporary stop in action or speech.

Quantity or power of sound; degree of loudness.

Pause

Inflection

The modulation of intonation or pitch in the voice.

A distinctive way of pronouncing a language (associated with country, area, or social class)

Pitch

Pace

The degree of highness or lowness in the voice.

Rhythm

GETTING UNDER A CHARACTER'S SKIN

Internal and External Pressures – Part 1

These exercises are intended to help actors in making quick and instinctual decisions.

We are hopeful that this will prevent them from over intellectualising their characters. In the creation of these activities we have taken influence from both Stanislavski's *Given Circumstances* and Michael Chekhov's *Visualisation and Physicalisation*.

In part 1 we begin by gathering the 'facts' about the character – these do not need to be 'correct' or well researched, just instinctual to the actor.

Firstly, choose any character from *Hedda Gabler* – this should not be one that you have interrogated fully.

Now ask yourself the following about the character you have chosen. Make sure to note down all of your responses.

N.B It is essential that you just write down the first thing that comes into your mind. You should give yourself less than 30 seconds to think about your response to each of these.

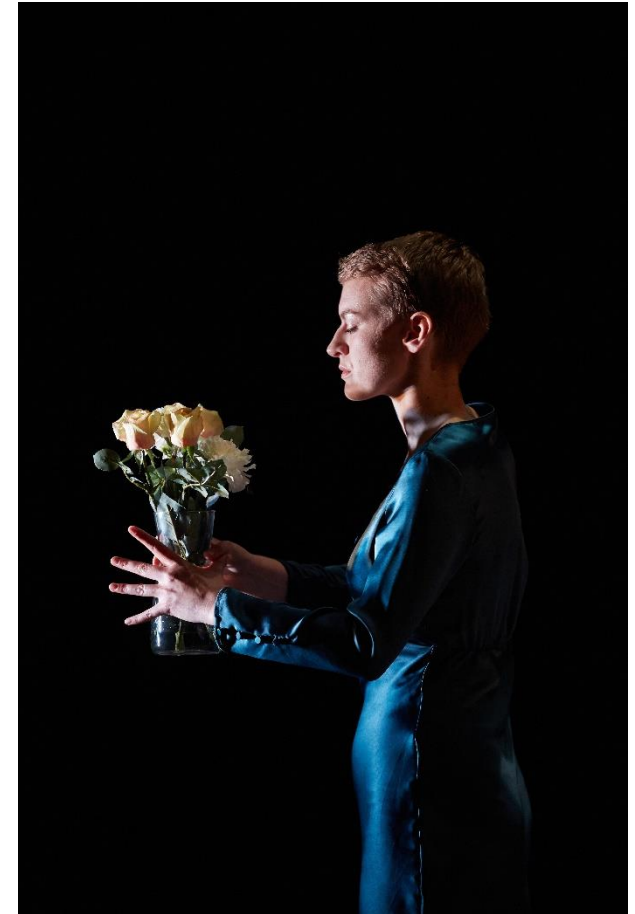
What is the character's name? // Their age? // What colour are their eyes?
 How long is their hair? // What is their family? (Siblings etc) Where does the character live?
 What do they wear on a daily basis? // What is their education?
 Who are their friends and enemies? // What do they eat for lunch?
 What is their favourite music? // What do they do with their spare time?
 What phrase do they say a lot?

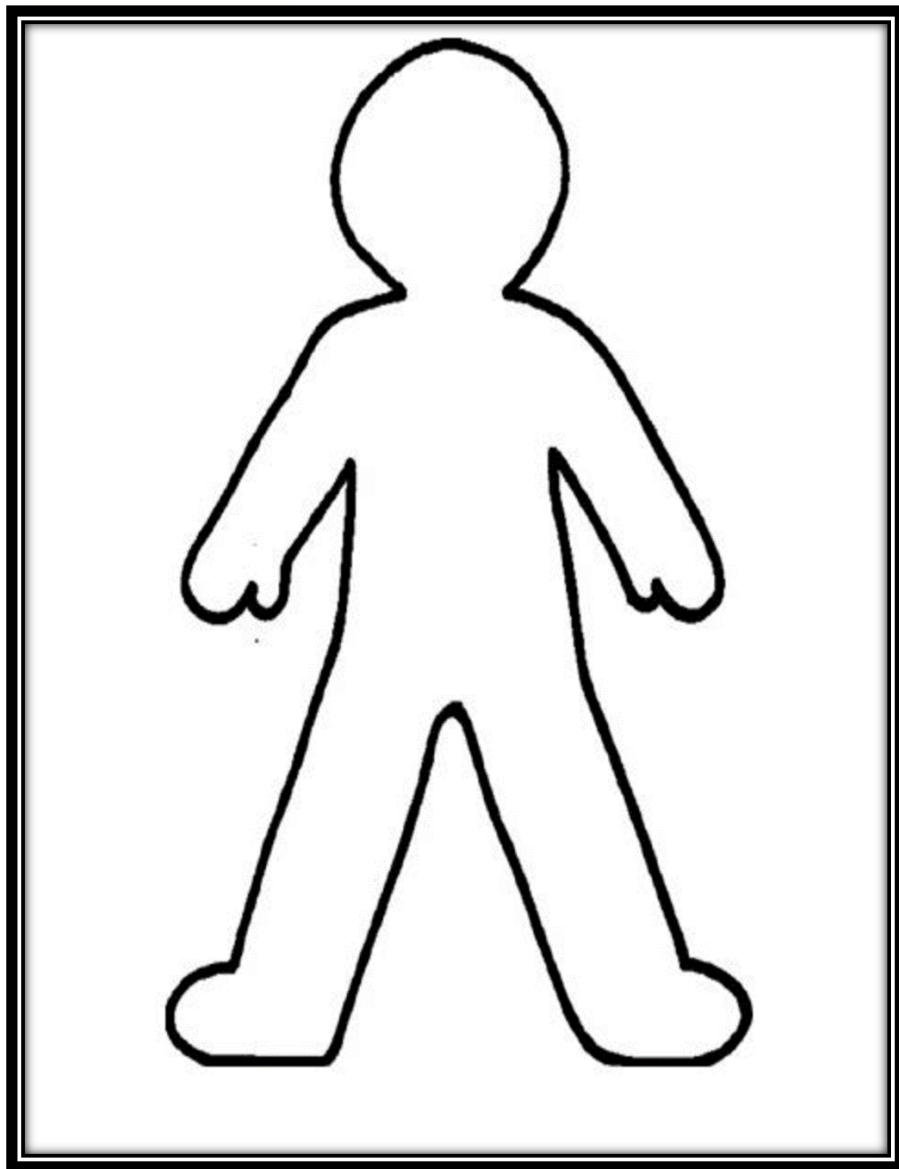
Finally ask these important questions.

What do they want? (*i.e Objective*) // **Why** do they want it? // **What** is stopping them getting it? (*i.e Obstacle*)

Now you have this list of information double check that it all makes sense. Give yourself a few minutes to make adjustments where necessary.

You now have all the information that you need to get started on the second part of this exercise.





GETTING UNDER A CHARACTER'S SKIN

Internal and External Pressures – Part 2

Having created a list of things which our character experiences in their everyday life, this exercise will explore how these will affect the tension held within their body. Look at the figure opposite. Consider that it is the outline of your character.

Internal Pressure

What things push outwardly from your character? *These are things over which they have some control. (Write some of these inside the figure).*

- Their fears (People / Things / Places they are afraid of).
- Their desires (What they want / like).
- Their physicality (How they look / Stand / Sit / Walk).
- Their opinions (What they think of everything).

External Pressures

What things put pressure on your character? *These are things over which they have no control. (Write some of these around the figure.)*

- Work (To provide top service).
- Exams (To get results).
- Friends (To do what they want / need).
- Family (To do what they expect).
- Enemies (To avoid them).
- Environment (Where they work / live / play / shop etc).

Consider where in their body do these things place pressure on them?

Another way to look at these as your characters versions of Stanislavski's objectives and obstacles. You may find it useful to consider the internal pressures **OBJECTIVES** and the external pressures as your **OBSTACLES**.

GETTING UNDER A CHARACTER'S SKIN

Internal and External Pressures – Part2

On the right this example figure has had its obstacles and objectives changed into arrows that represent the force being placed on their body from outside or in. It is possible to create a character just by playing their pressure points and walking in their skin. Stand up and try to replicate the physicality it will create if you follow these forced arrows (you could also want to walk this around the room).

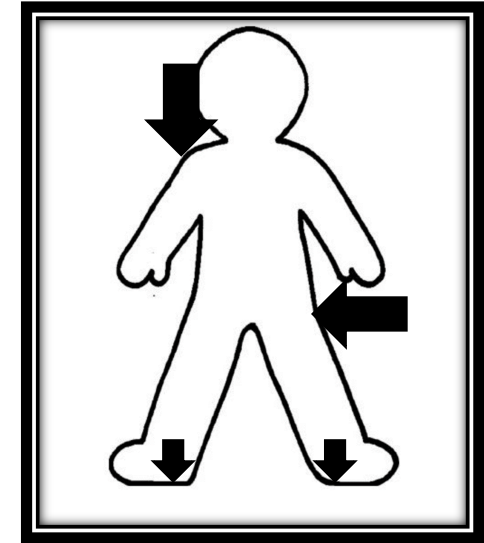
Describe how it effects your body (using the physicality key words above):

You could also try this section with your own character.

Visualisation and Physicalisation

Building on from this exercise we will now try Michael Chekhov's *Visualisation and Physicalisation* exercise. This encourages an actor to inhabit a characters physicality by first imagining it then stepping into it, and taking it on – considering Stance, Hips, Feet, Hands, Arms, Chest, Neck, Eye Contact, Facial Expression. **Ask someone to read these instructions aloud. It is important to take your time.**

1. Stand relaxed with your feet shoulder width apart and arms by your side.
2. Keep your eyes closed until told to open them.
3. Imagine the character is right in front of you, standing with their back to you.
4. Look down at their feet and slowly track up to the top of their head noting each detail of their physicality as you do.
5. Once you reach the top of the head imagine that they are turning to face you.
6. Observe them in profile from feet to head, then as they face you from feet to head. Now you can see their face note what it looks like.
7. Watch them return to their starting place. Back to you.
8. Now you are going to step into them.
9. Imagine where they are standing has become a giant jigsaw piece into which you will fit your body.
10. Step forward into their body.
11. Push your body into the space; taking on their physicality. Stretch and flex your body and face into the space (hold this for a minute).
12. Now step back out of them and back to your relaxed stance.
13. Open your eyes and consider where the tensions were in your body (ask the person reading out the instructions what they noticed).
14. Why do they hold their tension in that part of their body? // How does it affect the rest of them?



ANALYSIS OF AN ACTOR IN PERFORMANCE:

“ Loevborg: For God’s sake! For all of a week – maybe.”

Hedda: To destroy the one thing in her life that she believed made that life cohere – isn’t that cruel? ”

Describe the elements of the physical performance seen in the photo:

Stance – Wide / Narrow _____

Hips – Back / Forward / Centred / Left / Right / Sat _____

Feet – Planted / Sideways / Spread _____

Hands – Open / Fist / Splayed _____

Arms – _____

Chest – Pushed Out / Collapsed in _____

Neck / Back – Arched / Straight _____

Eye Contact – Held / Broken _____

Facial Expression – Eyebrows / Lips / Forehead _____

Proxemics – Audience / Set / Characters _____

How might this be delivered? (Do not forget the vocal skills key words)

What would this convey to the audience? _____

Consider these questions:

What feelings or events might provoke this physicality? // Why not try the *Visualisation Physicalisation* exercise on this character?

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ANALYSIS OF AN ACTOR IN PERFORMANCE:

“ Loevborg: For God’s sake! For all of a week – maybe.”

Hedda: To destroy the one thing in her life that she believed made that life cohere – isn’t that cruel? ”

Now answer the following question using the skills you have been practicing:

Choosing one of the characters in this moment consider the following:

How might the actor playing your chosen character deliver or react to this line?

What might they be trying to tell the audience?

Give reasons for your answer by referring to the actor’s physical and vocal skills.



(Continue on more pages as required)

ANALYSIS OF AN ACTOR IN PERFORMANCE:

“ Hedda: We’ve got to talk about that Berna creature. ” – Act 4.

Make a decision about how this line might be delivered? (*use vocal skills vocabulary*)

What would you want this to convey to the audience?

Describe these elements of the performance for one of the actors in this image:

Eye Contact

Facial Expressions

Proxemics

What would this convey to the audience?



ANALYSIS OF A SCENE IN PERFORMANCE:

“ Brack:...Eilert Loevborg meant more to you than you like to admit. Am I right? ”
– Act 4.

Answer the following question using the image:

Explain how you might expect the actors in this scene to use their acting skills to sustain the audience’s interest.

You should refer to physical skills, vocal skills as well as your understanding of the play.



(Continue on more pages as required)

ANALYSIS OF A SCENE IN PERFORMANCE:

“Juliana: I was afraid of that.” – Act 1

Answer the following question using the image opposite and your understanding of technical theatre.

Describe the technical aspects that might be present in this scene and how these would work together to convey an emotion to the audience.

Make reference to potential uses of Sound / Lighting / Set and Costume.



(Continue on more pages as required)