Activity One: Introduce the Monologue

Purpose:
- To define a monologue and the silent partner.
- To introduce the tools of subtext and turning points—the emotions and motivations behind the words an actor says, a reader reads, a writer writes, and how they change in key story moments.

Materials Needed:
2 – 3 copies (depending on your class size) each of:
- Duncan, Elena and Zareen: “What Three Emotions?” Handouts (see pages 27 - 29).
- Duncan, Elena and Zareen Monologues Handouts (see pages 30-32).
- Katie, Carlos and Alan Monologues for classroom posting (see pages 35-37).
- “Discovering Emotional Subtext” Handout (see page 47).
- Pencils

Overview of the Process for Activity One:
Step One: Read Pictures for Emotion
Step Two: Introduce a Monologue and the Silent Partner
Step Three: Introduce Turning Points
Step Four: Introduce Emotional Subtext
Step Four: Identify Emotional Subtext
Step Five: Refine the Monologue Definition
Step Six: Reflect

Step Four of this activity uses monologues from Short Scene and Monologues for Middle School Actors, one of two collections I have written for classroom use. (See List of Suggested Resources on Page 53.)
Activity One: Introduce the Monologue

Step One: Read Pictures for Emotion
1. Divide your class into groups of three. Distribute the handouts “What Three Emotions?” There are three different handouts, each picturing a different student. Give each group only one handout, so that two to three groups will have “Duncan,” two to three groups will have “Elena,” etc., depending on your class size.

2. Meet Duncan, Elena and Zareen. They are students, standing in a school hallway. He/she is talking to someone. Take a close look. Notice how different each character looks in the three pictures. What do you think this person is feeling in each of the three pictures?

   - Look at his/her face.
   - Look at how he/she is holding her body.
   - What do you think might be happening?
   - Who do you think he/she might be talking to?

   Chose one word that you think best describes that emotion and write it in the box under each picture. Take two minutes.

3. Ask groups with the same character to combine and compare their emotion words. Are they similar? Different? There are lots of good answers. Ask students to describe what they noticed about the person’s face or gestures that gave them clues about what he/she was feeling. Provide evidence for your word choice.

Step Two: Introduce a Monologue and the Silent Partner
1. The pictures you just viewed were taken of student actors when they were performing a short monologue. Do you have any ideas what a “monologue” is? The word is based on two Greek words: “monos” that means single or alone and “logos” that means word or speech. So a monologue is when one character is speaking without any other characters talking. Monologues can be found in dramatic writing; that is, in plays. They are usually the length of a short paragraph and last for several moments on stage. Playwrights use them to delve into the deepest parts of a character—to give the audience a chance to experience the character in a way dialogue does not.

2. It is helpful to consider the difference between dialogue and monologue to better understand monologue. Pick two students and ask them to improvise a quick dialogue. Let’s imagine that you are two students, in a hallway, talking about what you’re going to do after school. Think on your feet. (Model one or two lines of what they might say.)

   Student A: So are you going to the game this afternoon?
   Student B: Sure! Then I’ve got music lessons. Do you take lessons?
Activity One:  
**Introduce the Monologue** (Continued)

Once the students have exchanged eight to ten lines of dialogue, you can stop them. *That’s “dialogue”—two characters talking to each other. In a monologue, only one character is talking. But there is another (imaginary) character on stage—*the silent partner. He/she is there because it makes the writing more *dramatic.*

The character speaking needs or wants something from the silent partner, even if it is just to *listen.*

3. Distribute Duncan, Elena and Zareen Monologue Handouts (pages 30–32), matching monologue to pictures. *Now you have an example monologue that goes with your “What Three Emotions” picture, written by students like you. You’ll see the emotions that the young writer “read” in the pictures in the three boxes below the monologue. Are they the same or different from your emotion words? What clues of body, face and gesture do you think they used? Note how there are multiple ways to read a picture.*

4. *Now everyone in your group take a turn sharing the monologue with your group. Try to capture the emotions from the boxes in your voice, face and body. Use the pictures as inspiration. Imagine you are talking to the silent partner—the student’s friend.*

Having the students up and moving encourages them “try out” being the character. *Say the words out loud. Imagine how the character feels. Stand in their shoes.*

5. Once students have finished, describe how you noticed them using their voices, bodies and faces. Begin a list of specific things the students do well to communicate emotions using the chart—*Communicating Emotion.* (See page 38) This allows students to construct criteria for effectively presenting their writing “on-stage.” *Can anyone tell me something one of your classmates did with their face, voice or body that really let you know how they were feeling when reading the monologues? Add to this list as you work as a reference for students not only to implement the ideas themselves, but also to offer useful suggestions for strengthening the communication of their peers.*

Examples: *What if you... crossed your arms, covered your ears, spoke more slowly, paused longer ...*
Activity One: 
Introduce the Monologue (Continued)

Step Three: Introduce Turning Points

1. Duncan, Elena and Zareen were certainly feeling some strong emotions in the monologues! Three different emotions. Let me read Duncan’s monologue (or ask an expressive student to read it). Listen carefully for the two places in the monologue where Duncan’s emotions change very strongly.

   **DUNCAN**

   Why don’t you just go away and leave me alone! I never ever want to see you again. [tp] Wait. Don’t go. [tp] I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it

2. As a class, identify the two specific points in the text where the emotions clearly change:
   1) Between “…see you again” and “Wait.”
   2) Between “…don’t go” and ‘I’m sorry.”

*Actors call these moments in a monologue “turning points.”* Sharp, strong turning points between very different emotions are what make monologues interesting and dramatic.

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**A Turning Point**

A Change in the emotion a character is feeling because he/she Discovers Something New About

What is happening or What he/she is Feeling

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4. Ask students to read the Elena and Zareen monologues and identify the turning points as a class. Write “TP” in the place where you hear the turning point in the text.

   **ELENA**


   **ZAREEN**

   Don’t worry. Just tell me what’s on the test. You won’t get in trouble. [tp] Hurry, the teacher’s coming. Quick! Tell me! [tp] Don’t you understand? I can’t fail!
Activity One: Introduce the Monologue (Continued)

Step Four: Introduce Emotional Subtext

1. Reading these monologues out loud gave you the chance to stand in the shoes of these characters and experience how they feel. Actors call the emotions “beneath the words” of a character the “subtext.” To discover these emotions, the actor must imagine what a character feels and why.

Key Questions an actor asks:

- What do I know about this character?
- What can I infer about this character?
- What can I draw from my own memory and imagination to enrich and deepen my understanding of this character?
- How can I use my voice and body to communicate the subtext through the text?

2. Ask students to look again at their “What Three Emotions” handout. You dug deeply into those pictures to discover the emotional subtext. The only thing you knew was that it was a student (WHO) in a classroom (WHERE.) You had to read “between the lines” to imagine what might be happening and who they might be talking to.

This three emotion, two-turning point monologue is the model of the structure that we will be using to write monologues together. We will be using tools that actors use--the finding of turning points and emotional subtext--to explore the emotions and motivations (the “whys”) of characters from literature, history and your own imagination.

We will “step inside their shoes” to imagine what is happening to them and how they feel.

Have you ever felt like Duncan, Elena or Zareen? This is called “empathy”--when you can feel the feelings of someone else.

Our goal is to become deeper readers and more vivid, dramatic writers.

The activity continues.