The aim of this Digital Theatre+ Practical Workshop Guide is to deepen and enrich understanding of the play as a blueprint for performance, encouraging the student to approach the material using the investigative and interpretive methods of the actor, director or voice coach.

The workshop, suitable for Key Stage 3 and above, can either be divided into 4 x 40 minute sessions or run for 2.5 hours all the way through.

TANGIBLE LEARNING BENEFITS

Below is a list of tangible learning benefits, tailored to the UK further education curricula, which this guide supports.

- Interpret text
- Create and communicate meaning
- Realise artistic intention in text-based drama
- Analyse and evaluate their work
- Understand the connection between theory and practice in a range of periods
- Evaluate live/captured production
- Refine analytical thinking and research
- Explore the relationship between theory and practice
- Develop an analytical framework for the making, performing, interpreting and understanding of drama and theatre
- Understand the construction of performance text to convey meaning.
PREPARING THE SPACE

Welcome students to the session, in which they will be experiencing the play as if in the REHEARSAL ROOM rather than the classroom. Today is a chance not to study but to play – to try to work together on text as actors and director might work. It isn’t about being a good actor, but about seeing how we can deepen our understanding of the play by playing with it in the kinds of ways that actors might do in the rehearsal room.

Turn the class room into a rehearsal space by moving the tables and chairs out of the way, and making sure all bags/coats etc. are not blocking the space. Come and stand in a circle to begin. When we make a production we start with just this – the company, an empty space, and some text.
SESSION ONE

**Length:** 40 minutes

**What you will need:**
- Storytelling endings on cut up pieces of paper.

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**WARMING UP**

Even for professional actors it can be hard to just start speaking or acting big chunks of text, especially when that text was written hundreds of years ago and may have some pretty complicated words and ideas in it. So, like actors we are going to make that easier by warming ourselves up, which will also get us feeling more playful, alert and engaged.
1.1 INTRODUCING THE PLAY

PASS THE BEAT

- **Teacher** starts by clapping towards the student on their left. That student then claps to their left and so on all round the circle until it gets back to the teacher.

- **Ask** the students to give the clap a rating out of 10 for enthusiasm, energy and speed (where 10 is highest). They will probably give a four or five because the clapping will have been quite slow and cautious.

- **Ask** them to pass the beat again, but this time see if they can get a rating which is a bit higher.

- **Take** a step out at this point to give yourselves a bigger circle. This way the students will have to be much more physical with their clapping.

- **Keep** the beat going round and encourage the students to challenge themselves more and more until they get their rating up to a 10.

- **When** you think they have peaked and you can feel the energy whizzing round the circle, stop and get them all to have a celebratory clap together.

- **Ask** them:
  - **What made us get better at the task?**
  - **What made us able to pass the beat more quickly and dramatically?**
Discussion:

Encourage as many responses from different students as possible, so that they can feel right from the start how much an actor is able/expected to contribute to the rehearsal process, and how helpful it is that they share their observations.

Prompt them if they are unconfident or unsure what you mean:
• **What** did we have to DO to pass the beat more successfully?

**Elicit responses about having to:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Be more alert</th>
<th>Concentrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate</td>
<td>Be ready</td>
<td>Be energetic</td>
</tr>
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</table>

• **Ask** them to think about the importance of being both ready to receive, and passing on with precision, focus and direction.

• **Encourage** them to notice that we feel less inhibited or self-conscious when we really put all our attention into doing something for the group (or the ‘story’).

• **Ask** them what we did physically to help us get better. Elicit ‘we bent our knees to get more grounded/ we twisted/turned/we were much more physically engaged’.

All the qualities and skills we have identified are going to be invaluable to us throughout the workshop, since they are the crucial elements of good acting, especially in Shakespeare. Otherwise the language and ideas will sound very dead and boring, and the actors will seem overwhelmed by the material.
DEVELOPMENT

Put into practice everything you have talked about by having another go at passing the beat, challenging them to start immediately at rating 10.

- **Call** out reminders of all the things you have got them to notice, so that they are all concentrating, listening, bending their knees to feel more grounded, twisting energetically, breathing deeply, and passing with real focus and intention.

- **Encourage** them to go incredibly fast and be as physical as possible. (Again make the circle bigger so that they can twist more.)

- **When** you have got it going really well in one direction, stop them and make them do it in the other direction so that they are warmed up on both sides.

VOICE

Explain you are going to pass the beat round the circle again but this time you are also going to count out loud as you clap.

- **Teacher** starts at one and the student to the left says two and so on until you have got all the way round the circle.

- **Keep** going round and round, encouraging them to make the counting as energetic and enthusiastic as the clap.

- **Remind** them it is really important that everyone hears the number really clearly so that they know where they are in the chain.
• **Once** they are confident, tell them to change places in the circle and remember which number they are.

• **Count** from one to the last person again, but since they are no longer next to the same people tell them to put their hands in to the middle of the circle really strongly when they say their number, and let the next person put their hands on top of theirs. (A bit like a mass game of the old fashioned one potato/two potato).

Finally, ask them to keep counting as above but this time respond to your directions, so they have to do the counting **AS IF** it is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A warning</th>
<th>A joke</th>
<th>A threat</th>
<th>A cry for help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An advert on the</td>
<td>A BBC reporter</td>
<td>A ghost story</td>
<td>A secret</td>
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<tr>
<td>shopping channel</td>
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<tr>
<td>A love song</td>
<td>Saying goodbye</td>
<td>Asking someone</td>
<td>Turning someone</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to someone</td>
<td>on a date</td>
<td>down</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you love</td>
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</table>
1.2 INTRODUCING THE STORY OF THE PLAY

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Divide them into four teams, and tell them each team is going to have five minutes to prepare a version of the story in the style of a fairy tale called ‘Beauty and the Beast’, which they will share with the rest of the group.

What they need to know:

- **Beauty is Blanche** and **Stanley is the Beast**.
- Include **Stella** (the Sister) and **Mitch** (the Gentleman) in the tale.
- Each team will have to include a different ending – they need to come and pull a piece of paper out of your bag which will tell them what their ending needs to be.

Your pieces of paper are:

- Beauty marries the Gentleman and lives happily ever after.
- The Beast and Beauty start to understand and respect one another and become firm friends.
- Beauty is physical overpowered by the Beast and is banished to the wilderness where she will be forever cold.

Written by Zoe Waites
Beauty and the Sister leave the house and start a new life far away from the Beast.

Discussion:

After they have performed, ask them what the different versions made them feel.

• **If** you hadn’t read the whole play, which ending seemed most likely/most hopeful/most ridiculous?
• **Why** do they think that any of the endings would or wouldn’t happen?

Encourage them to think about the way the characters in the play are stuck in the identities which they and society have created for themselves. They are all trapped and there doesn’t seem to be the possibility of an alternative ending:

• **Why** might Williams have been interested in exploring this?
SESSION TWO

**Length:** 40 minutes.

**What you will need:**
- Scrap paper
- Pencils
- Hat or bag for collecting
- An envelope with quotes from the play (see 2.3 Introducing Language, page 13) cut out into individual pieces.
2.1 INTRODUCING CHARACTER

- **With all the students** standing in the circle, ask the students if they could only have one word to sum up the character of Blanche and one word to describe Stanley, what would those words be?

- **Hand out** the paper and pencils and have them all write down their words in secret, fold up the paper and then put it into your hat/bag.

- **Shake** the bag and then invite the students one by one to pick out a word, and then create a still image of that word, whilst the rest of the group try and guess what the word is and which character it refers to.

- **Keep** going until all the words have been used up and the papers left in the middle.
• **Get** the students talking about which words seemed most helpful, and why.

• **Encourage** them to start thinking as actors rather than readers, and to try to think beneath the words to work out what makes a person come across in a certain way, or have certain characteristics.

• We call these ‘**inner**’ and ‘**outer**’ characteristics.

• **Encourage** them to start to identify inners and outers, by picking up the words that are still in the centre of the circle and talking about them. For instance, if they think Blanche is vain, attention-seeking, snobbish, flirtatious (outers) what might the inner characteristics be that provoke that behaviour?
  - Insecure?
  - Lonely?
  - Fearful?
  - Damaged?

• **Help** them be brave about making suggestions. They shouldn’t feel they have to achieve a correct answer but just urge themselves towards a greater breadth in understanding, rather than limiting themselves to a rigid point of view.

• **Talk** to them about how an actor playing the part needs to see things both from the outside, and from the inside, i.e. from their character’s point of view. If you are playing the part you need to look at the world from their perspective, or fight their corner, irrespective of whether you agree with their behaviour.
2.3 INTRODUCING LANGUAGE

Tell the students to take two quotes (or more depending on the number of students) from the bag you prepared before the session.

Now, then, let me look at you. But don’t you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till I’ve bathed and rested! And turn that over-light off! Turn that off! I won’t be looked at in this merciless glare!

They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!

She’s just all shaken up and hot and tired and dirty!

Out there I suppose is the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir!

You haven’t said a word about my appearance.

Daylight never exposed so total a ruin!

He’s on the road a good deal.

I’m only passing through.
My clothes’re stickin’ to me. Do you mind if I make myself comfortable?

It’s hard to stay looking fresh. I haven’t washed or even powdered my face and – here you are!

Traveling wears me out.

She’s soaking in a hot tub to quiet her nerves. She’s terribly upset.

Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand new human being!

Would you think it possible that I was once considered to be – attractive?

After all, a woman’s charm is fifty per cent illusion, but when a thing is important I tell the truth.

The blind are leading the blind!
I feel so hot and frazzled. Wait till I powder before you open the door. Do I look done in?

I think I will bathe.

I can’t stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action.

Why, on our wedding night – soon as we came in here – he snatched off one of my slippers and rushed about the place smashing the light-bulbs with it.

In this dark march toward whatever it is we’re approaching...Don’t – don’t hang back with the brutes!

Soft people have got to shimmer and glow – they’ve got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a – paper lantern over the light.... It isn’t enough to be soft. You’ve got to be soft and attractive. And I – I’m fading now! I don’t know how much longer I can turn the trick.....

Is that streetcar named Desire still grinding along the tracks at this hour?

I am ashamed of the way I perspire. My shirt is sticking to me.
And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that’s stronger than this – kitchen – candle.

Temperature 100 on the nose, and she soaks herself in a hot tub.

Her future is mapped out for her.

A hot bath and a long, cold drink always give me a brand new outlook on life!

Oh, I hope candles are going to glow in his life and I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles lighted in a white cake.

I like it dark. The dark is comforting to me.

I don’t want realism. I want magic. Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don’t tell truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it! – Don’t turn the light on!

Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub! And such a filthy tub!
Never inside, I didn’t lie in my heart...

You’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.

You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor!

I understand you are going on a trip.

Yes, Blanche is. She’s going on a vacation.

I’m anxious to get out of here – this place is a trap!

And I’ll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard – at noon – in the blaze of summer – and into an ocean as blue as my first lover’s eyes!
• **Ask** the students to speak their section of text, reading round the circle.

• **Tell** them that listening to the others is as important as reading their own.

• **Once** you’ve heard all the lines, ask them to read them again with a new instruction.

• **Tell** them to imagine that they are creating a dream-like sound installation for an exhibition.

• **They can speak** at any moment (rather than in the previous order) and also repeat as many times as they want, either their own lines or others people’s lines.

• **Ask** them to echo any words that seem particularly useful or recurrent, and to vary the way they speak, so to experiment with different volume (from whispering to shouting), differences in pace (very quick or slow), changes in rhythm (jolting or fluid), and tonal intensity.

• **When** you feel it has had enough time stop the students and ask them which ideas or words seemed most prevalent, or most evocative.
2.4 DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE

Ask the students if they can identify recurrent themes or motifs in this selection of quotes.

- Light/darkness
- Cleaning/washing/looking attractive
- Travelling/making journeys
- Truth/illusion.

Get them to read their text out again, this time in association with the other ones that deal with the same theme, so that the group hear the power of that repetition and development.

- **What** do these motifs in the writing do to the listener?
- **How** do they impinge on us and wind us into the nightmarish world of the play?

**Discussion:**

Support the students in discussing the following thoughts:

- The recurrence means the audience has no way to escape from the claustrophobia of the small apartment.

- The almost obsessive mantra-like repetitions make us feel how acutely Blanche is hemmed in to her own turmoil, how desperately she tries to refute it and change it, but without any practical way of extracting herself.

- The motifs are mainly established by Blanche, thus ensuring that we are caught in the net of her thoughts, and therefore can have sympathy for her.
• The sense of hiding in the darkness makes us feel permanently uneasy or even frightened, but also makes us desire a clear light.

• The sticky heat and the futility of the constant washing make us uncomfortable and extremely aware of the latent sexual charge between the characters.

• The sense of Blanche trying to wash herself clean gives an upsetting parallel for her sense of sex as something ‘dirty’.

• The pull between the dark and the light, or the clean and the unclean, is the central metaphor for the magnetism between Stanley and Blanche and also a signifier of the rigidity of the social mores of the period.
SESSION THREE

Length: 40 minutes

What you will need:
- Copies of Blanche’s speech available on page 22.

3.1 KEY SCENE/SPEECH STUDY

With the students in a circle, hand out copies of the following speech. Tell them you are going to try out various rehearsal exercises together which will give them a glimpse of how an actor might start not only to understand a scene, but, crucially, explore how to actually play it.
BLANCHE:

He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery—love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn’t like a man’s, although he wasn’t the least bit effeminate looking—still—that thing was there.... He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we’d run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me—but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty—which wasn't empty, but had two people in it... the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years....

[A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She claps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking.]

Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

[Polka music sounds. In a minor key faint with distance.]

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later—a shot! [The polka stops abruptly.]

[BLANCHE rises stiffly. Then, the polka resumes in a major key.]
I ran out--all did!--all ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. "Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!" See? See what! Then I heard voices say--Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired--so that the back of his head had been--blown away! It was because--on the dance-floor--unable to stop myself--I'd suddenly said--"I saw! I know! You disgust me..." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this--kitchen--candle...
• **Standing in a circle**, ask the students to read round one line at a time, as if they are one voice.

• **Get the students** to read round again, and focus this time on really passing the energy to one another to tell the story (as with the beat in **SESSION ONE**) so that it really flows and has lots of natural conversational vigour.

• **Clarify any meaning issues.**

• **Ask** the students why Blanche is speaking. Somehow, at this point, it must feel like she has to speak about what happened in order to allow herself to become intimate with Mitch.

• **Ask** the students what its like to recount a memory. Explain that this is a challenge for the actor, because we don’t want to be generalised or do fake ‘remembering’ acting.

• **Invite** a couple of volunteers to recount a meaningful memory of their own, and ask the others to watch and listen very closely to see what the person does, and how they speak.

• **Ask** the students for their thoughts about what it is like to revisit something as painful and life-changing as this.
  
  • **How might different actors interpret the speech differently?**
  
  • **Might Blanche be hungry to unburden herself, or does she go through the recollection reluctantly?**
  
  • **Is she driven by shame, or by desire for intimacy?**
  
  • **Or by the opportunity of connecting with a time when she was happy?**
  
  • **Does the experience feel like a torment or more of a relief to say out loud?**
  
  • **How might an actor behave during the telling?**
• Would you look directly at Mitch whilst talking or can you only recount the experience if you don’t have eye contact?

• Let the students try any of these options (or their own ideas) for short sections of the speech.

• **Finally, ask** for two volunteers to come into the circle: one student to be Mitch and one volunteer to read Blanche’s speech again.

• **Encourage** them to see if they can allow all the things we have just been discussing to bear fruit.

• The student playing Blanche should focus on really believing that they are recounting their own memory of a real, painful event, allowing themselves to really see those sights and be affected by them in the telling. They can use Mitch however seems most natural in the moment.
SESSION FOUR

**Length:** 40 minutes

**What you will need:**
- Copies of Blanche and Stanley’s scene for each student – available on page 27.
4.1 KEY SCENE/SPEECH STUDY

SCENE TEN

[BLANCHE has been drinking steadily since MITCH left, has dressed herself in a crumpled white satin evening gown and the tiara... She is talking to herself in the mirror – and people who aren’t there....]

BLANCHE: How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock-quarry? If anyone’s sober enough to drive a car! Ha-ha! Best way in the world to stop you head buzzing! Only you’ve got to be careful to dive where the deep pool is – if you hit a rock you don’t come up till tomorrow....

[STANLEY appears around corner of building, he’s had a few beers and is carrying some quart bottles with him]

BLANCHE: How is my sister?

STANLEY: She is doing okay.

BLANCHE: And how is the baby?

STANLEY: The baby won’t come before morning so they told me to go home and get a little shut-eye.

BLANCHE: Does that mean we are to be alone in here?

STANLEY: Yep. Just me and you, Blanche. Unless you got somebody hid under the bed. What’ve you got on those fine feathers for?

BLANCHE: Oh, That’s right. You left before my wire came.

STANLEY: You got a wire?

BLANCHE: I received a telegram from an old admirer of mine.

STANLEY: Anything good?

BLANCHE: I think so. An invitation.

STANLEY: What to? A fireman’s ball?

BLANCHE: A cruise of the Carribean on a yacht!

STANLEY: Well, well. What do you know?
BLANCHE: I have never been so surprised in my life.

STANLEY: I guess not.

BLANCHE: It came like a bolt from the blue!

STANLEY: Who did you say it was from?

BLANCHE: An old beau of mine.

STANLEY: The one that give you the white fox-pieces?

BLANCHE: Mr. Shep Huntleigh. I wore his ATO pin my last year at college. I hadn’t seen him again until last Christmas. I ran in to him on Biscayne Boulevard. Then – just now – this wire – inviting me on a cruise of the Caribbean! The problem is clothes. I tore into my trunk to see what I have that’s suitable for the tropics!

STANLEY: And come up with that – gorgeous – diamond – tiara?

BLANCHE: This old relic? Ha-ha! It’s only rhinestones.

STANLEY: Gosh. I thought it was Tiffany diamonds.

BLANCHE: Well, anyhow, I shall be entertained in style.

STANLEY: Uh-huh. It goes to show, you never know what is coming.

BLANCHE: Just when I thought my luck had begun to fail me –

STANLEY: Into the picture pops this Miami millionaire.

BLANCHE: This man is not from Miami. This man is from Dallas.

STANLEY: This man is from Dallas?

BLANCHE: Yes, this man is from Dallas where gold spouts out of the ground!

STANLEY: Well, just so he’s from somewhere! [he starts removing his bowling shirt]

BLANCHE: Close the curtains before you undress any further.

STANLEY: This is all I’m going to undress right now. [rips a beer bottle out of the bag] Seen a bottle-opener? I used to have a cousin who could open a beer bottle with his teeth. That was his only accomplishment, all he could do – he was just a human bottle-opener. And then one time, at a wedding party, he broke his front teeth off! After that he was so
ashamed of himself he used t’ sneak out of the house when company came... [he gets the bottle open, either on the edge of a table, or ? – and a geyser of foam shoots up, dousing him over the head] Ha-ha! Rain from heaven! [he extends the bottle toward her] Shall we bury the hatchet and make it a loving-cup? Huh?

BLANCHE: No, thank you.

STANLEY: Well, it’s a red letter night for us both. You having an oil-millionaire and me having a baby. [he goes to the bureau in the bedroom and crouches to take something out of the bottom drawer]

BLANCHE: What are you doing in here?

STANLEY: Here’s something I always break out on special occasions like this. [stands and turns, waving something that is crimson red silk around] The silk pyjamas I wore on my wedding night!

BLANCHE: Oh.

STANLEY: When the telephone rings and they say, “You’ve got a son!” I’ll tear this off and wave it like a flag! I guess we are both entitled to put on the dog.

BLANCHE: When I think of how divine it is going to be to have such a thing as privacy once more – I could weep with joy!

STANLEY: This millionaire from Dallas is not going to interfere with your privacy any?

BLANCHE: It won’t be the sort of thing you have in mind. This man is a gentleman and he respects me..... What he wants is my companionship. Having great wealth sometimes makes people lonely! A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man’s life – immeasurably! I have those things to offer, and this doesn’t take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart – and I have all of those things – aren’t taken away, but grow! Increase with the years! How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures locked in my heart. I think of myself as a very, very rich woman! But I have been foolish – casting my pearls before swine!

STANLEY: Swine, huh?

BLANCHE: Yes, swine! Swine! And I’m thinking not only of you but of your friend, Mr. Mitchell. He came to see me tonight. He dared to come here in his work-clothes! And to repeat slander to me, vicious stories that he had gotten from you! I gave him his walking papers....
STANLEY: You did, huh?

BLANCHE: But then he came back. He returned with a box of roses to beg my forgiveness! He implored my forgiveness. But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one thing of which I have never, never been guilty. And so I told him, I said to him, “Thank you,” but it was foolish of me to think that we could ever adapt ourselves to each other. Our ways of life are too different. Our attitudes and our backgrounds are incompatible. We have to be realistic about such things. So, farewell, my friend! And let there be no hard feelings....

STANLEY: Was this before or after the telegram came from the Texas oil millionaire?

BLANCHE: What telegram? No! No, after! As a matter of fact, the wire came just as –

STANLEY: AS a matter of fact there wasn’t no wire at all!

BLANCHE: Oh, oh!

STANLEY: There isn’t no millionaire! And Mitch didn’t come back with roses ‘cause I know where he is –

BLANCHE: Oh!

STANLEY: There isn’t a goddam thing but imagination!

BLANCHE: Oh!

STANLEY: And lies and conceit and tricks!

BLANCHE: Oh!

STANLEY: And look at yourself! Take a look at yourself in that worn-out Mardi Gras outfit, rented for fifty cents from some rag-picker! And with the crazy crown on! What queen do you think you are?

BLANCHE: Oh – God...

STANLEY: I’ve been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy’s eyes! You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor! I say – Ha! – Ha! Do you hear me? Ha – ha – ha!
• **Tell** the students to get into pairs, find a space in the room and read the scene aloud together.

• **When** they have finished reading they should discuss with their partner what they think is happening in the exchange, and where the balance of power shifts during the scene.

• **Ask** them to try to identify tactics that the characters use to try to get what they want from each other. These will be in the form of active verbs (to threaten, to warn, to intimidate, to charm, to warm, to tease, to provoke, to control, to admonish, to scare, to deceive, to seduce...just a few examples).

• **Bring the students back into the circle and get them to share their thoughts so far.**

• **Ask** for two volunteers to come in to the circle and read, sitting facing each other a metre apart and trying to be as ‘in action’ as possible. They can move closer or further apart whenever it is helpful to their action.

• **Feel free** to stop and start them, and suggest action-ing verbs
  • “Perhaps you could try warning her here.”
  • “Try to intimidate her more.”
  • “Now try charming or soothing her; which do we prefer?”
Discussion:

Ask the students what thoughts/responses they have now to the characters.

• **Can** they see how this approach might start to let the characters be more multi-dimensional?
• **Can** they start to identify any particular tactics that either Stanley or Blanche might use a lot?
• **Where** are the big changes in the scene which propel them into using a new array of tactics?
• **How** are they different from one another in this scene?
• **On the other hand**, are there things they seem to have in common?
• **How** do they both use language? (Blanche is deliberately formal and prim, whilst Stanley mocks her and punctures this by ironically emulating her or using a more colloquial way of speaking.)
• **Do** the students have sympathy for them both, or do they feel very strongly inclined towards one or the other?
• **Why** might Williams play with our responses in this way?

We know because we have read the play that this scene ends with Stanley raping Blanche, but a first time audience member does not. Ask the students to discuss how much of a surprise should it be.

• **Or conversely**, how much awful inevitability might there be to the journey the scene takes?
• **To finish**, ask two more volunteers to read the scene again but this time give them a simple instruction:

the actor playing Blanche should try to secretly leave the room during the scene, and the actor playing Stanley should prevent her from doing so. (All whilst reading the scene.)

• **What** happened?
  • An increased sense of tension and feeling of entrapment?
  • Heightened listening and observation of the other character?
  • More natural and spontaneous decisions made by the actors?
  • Less sense of a planned (‘rehearsed’) scene and more genuine surprises?

• **Remind** them this is not a suggestion for how to stage the scene but a rehearsal exercise designed to release the underlying energy inside the encounter, and to free the actors to be more playful and alive with the material.