

Multiple Personalities

The ultimate goal of this exercise is to get the students to take on different roles in order to practice a variety of performance techniques.

Spend a few minutes writing down some emotions. I tend to think that emotions work well for this exercise because they automatically charge the piece with feeling and they have to keep in mind that they have to carry that tone throughout their performance. The idea is to get a few different types of emotions down on the page for future use. Make sure to let them know that any performance is going to be affected by tone / emotion. Also be sure to stress that they're not just observers / readers in these pieces; they are supposed to become someone else, almost like an actor on stage.

Once they have a few ideas they have a couple choices:

Write one poem about any topic they want. If they need some prompting on this one you may have to think on your feet a bit. But once they're finished writing it, they can choose one of those emotions and perform the piece multiple times from different perspectives, choosing certain gestures from the list that Allyson gave us. They may surprise themselves and find out that a certain emotion really captures a piece better than initially thought.

Pick one of their older pieces and do the same thing.

Write a poem that changes from one extreme to another. I like to think of this as sort of the Jekyll and Hyde type of piece. Happiness to anger, quiet nostalgia to fast-paced anxiety, etc. In this one I would suggest starting with something that is either real or something that they've seen before. Once they have the beginning, they can make up the rest. As with the other two options, be sure to incorporate some gestures.

Remember that this exercise is not so much about getting them to write a bunch of concrete details as it is packing an emotional punch through performance. There are so many different ways to perform a poem.