

# UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPT

Questions to answer in the FIVE MAJOR AREAS to examine in taking the play apart:

## 1.) What are the GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES of the play?

This concerns all material in a script that delineates the environment- the “special world” of the play in which the action takes place:

\*\*ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS (Specific conditions, place and time)

geographical location, date, economic environment, political environment, social environment, religious environment

\*\*PREVIOUS ACTION ( all that has happened before the action begins)

\*\*POLAR ATTITUDES (points of view toward their environment held by the principal characters)

## 2.) What is the DIALOGUE in the play?

The conversation between two or more characters in a play whose primary intention is to be heard rather than read. It is not merely a verbal interchange between characters but a communication of actions between characters in which each forces his wants and needs on the other. It always exists in the present tense. Look for choice of words, phrases, images, use of specific dialects and the sound of the dialogue.

Directors must learn to hear dialogue in their mind’s ear. Playwrights often arrange their sentence structure to throw the important phrase-the actual point of each line-to the end of the line. This placement makes it climactic. Speeches made up of several sentences are carefully constructed in the same way. When a director is aware of this technique, he can be more certain of getting good line readings from his actors, and he will be more able to accomplish the desirable emphasis that he knows the play requires throughout.

## 3.) What is the DRAMATIC ACTION in the play?

Dramatic action is the clash of forces in a play-the continuous conflict between characters. It is not activity—activities are the externalization of dramatic action. Action is reciprocal—is what one character does to another and how that character adjusts and responds to it.

## 4.) Who are the CHARACTERS in this play and what do they want?

The characters in the play are the instruments that effect the action or are effected by it (forced to take action). Examine each character’s desire, will moral stance, decorum, describe them with adjectives.

## 5.) What is the IDEA of the play?

The idea of the play is the core meaning of what it has to say. The real meaning of the play may be buried in the script and pinpointing it may be relatively difficult. But an idea is always there and the director must seek to find it in the script analysis. The comprehension of the play’s idea will bring unity to the entire production. To find this you can also look at the play’s title, or a philosophical statement in the dialogue in addition to an analysis of the action.