



FINDING THE VOICES IN A SOLILOQUY

There are a number of ways to split up a soliloquy in order to discover and identify the conflicting feelings and ideas a character may have. This method is used by Chris Renino of Scarsdale High School in Scarsdale, NY, who developed it from techniques used by Tony Hill, formerly Education Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Michael Tolaydo. (In *Shakespeare Set Free*, Renino applies a more detailed version of the method to the “If it were done when ‘tis done” soliloquy in *Macbeth*, on which it works equally well.)

1. Ask students to stand in a circle in an open space. Distribute copies of this passage, the first 22 lines of Juliet’s soliloquy at the beginning of Act 4, scene 3.
2. Ask one student to begin reading aloud from the beginning of the passage until she encounters a full stop—a period, semicolon, question mark or exclamation point. After the full stop, the next student reads until the *next* full stop, and so on around the circle.
3. After the group has gone through the soliloquy once, ask two students to come into the center of the circle and, facing one another, alternate reading until a full stop.

Example:

Student 1: Farewell.
Student 2: God knows when we shall meet again.
Student 1: I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life.
Student 2: I’ll call them back again to comfort me.

... and so on.

4. Pause to discuss the meaning of the lines and the conflicting emotions Juliet feels here. What will almost certainly happen to her if she does *not* take it? What could happen if she does? What reasons has she to trust the Friar? To mistrust him?
5. Next, divide the entire class into two choruses, facing each other. Each chorus reads to a full stop, as before. Before they begin, tell students to speak louder and louder as they read, so that by the end of the reading they are shouting at each other.
6. Select one student to play Juliet. (Have her practice the passage while the rest of the class works on the above activities.) Instruct the class to mill around the room in random patterns and have “Juliet” try to make eye contact with them. She can even touch them and attempt to speak to them. However, they are to turn away each time she approaches them.
7. Discuss what discoveries students made in the course of this activity.



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Juliet speaks. The nurse has just left the room and she is alone, about to take the potion the Friar has given her which, he has told her, will put her into a deathlike sleep for 42 hours.

Farewell. --- God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life.
I'll call them back again to comfort me. ---
Nurse! --- What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?
No, no, this shall forbid it. Lie thou there.
What if it be a poison which the Friar
Subtly hath ministered to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonored
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is. And yet methinks it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point.
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?

Romeo and Juliet, 4.3.15-36