

WRITING AN INTERIOR MONOLOGUE



Interior Monologue is a literacy strategy that invites students to explore the complex thoughts and feelings of a character. Through tableaux, discussion of background information, and guided imagery, students discover a strong first person voice. Though characters may range from fictional to non-fictional, those from a novel or play to those from a mural or a painting, the process and the questioning follow the same lines.

Step 1

WARM UP

Enter the strategy—take a risk safely! Stand and imagine you are a character in a specific situation identified in the novel, play, poem, painting, mural, etc. Consider the conditions of the character's environment and feel his/her physical reaction. What sounds and voices does he/she/it hear? Where is the focus of concentration? Recreate his/her position and freeze. Then, as a class, generate details to capture the sensory images. Write observations on the board.

Step 2

FILL THE STAGE WITH NARRATIVE POSSIBILITY

Describe his/her relationship with other characters. Notice moments of conflict and ambiguity. In some documents, narrative is defined, and sub-text and gaps need exploration. In others, characters are unknown by name but symbolize a crucial moment, and their story is open for specificity. Imagine a significant interaction and dramatize. What feelings did s/he reveal or conceal? What is his/her role in the whole story/event?

Step 3

FIND A VOICE

Ask a student to answer the previous questions in the character's voice. Use the first person pronoun I, not s/he. Ask another student to say the same words with a different tone. Compare gestures. Notice the volume, the pace, and emphasis. Is the tone serious, light, sarcastic, assertive, etc.? Establish that there are many voices to the times or setting of a story, novel, mural, etc.

Step 4

BUILD COMPLEXITY / FILL INFORMATION GAPS

Continue questioning in order to sharpen the images. Imagine his/her joys, struggles, and dreams through first person voices, (e.g., "When I am..., I will..." or "I can't stop thinking of..."). Help students

notice opportunities to weave in historic information. Enact moments not presented in the story or mural (e.g., a promotion, an accident, time with family).

Step 5

BUILD ATMOSPHERE AND SYMBOLISM AS CHARACTER

Imagine the sound and voice of inanimate objects or conditions surrounding the character. How do they speak to him/her? Create tableau.

Step 6

THE ART OF WRITING: MAKING DECISIONS

From a wide array of possibilities, the students must choose details to create a character and write his/her interior monologue. To help focus, have students briefly answer questions on paper:

- Who and where are you when you're reflecting on this significant moment in your life (at home, outside)?
- What is your immediate emotion? What do you feel in your body? Your heart?
- What is the atmosphere? What is the voice of the conditions or your feelings?
- Is there anyone nearby (friend, relative, stranger)?
- Is there anything you clearly remember? Something unforgettable?
- What are the sounds, the movements, the colors?

- What are your feelings for/attitude toward the other characters?
- What questions do you have? What will you do? What do you want?
- Do you say any words out loud?

Step 7

WRITE IN FIRST PERSON

Review everything you have imagined and noted so far. Hear your character's tone of voice and begin your monologue. Write for about ten minutes.

Step 8

SHARE ALOUD

Honor the Past/Question the Future/Reflect on the Present.