

I'm not a dud - Monologue

Aims & explanation:

Number of students: 1 or small group, with or without student audience

Preparation:

This version of the text (see page 3) is deliberately left short but feel free to extend it to suit your own purposes. Once the student(s) have read the monologue, briefly discuss the meaning in the group, e.g. ask: What are the circumstances? (e.g. someone going for a job interview, making a public speech, going for an audition). Where could this take place? (job centre, in a company, theatre, public meeting, etc.). Ask student(s) to move around the room and speak out aloud their lines. Instruct students to play with the words, the effects these can have on the speaker (5 min). Play some music into the room during practice to encourage speaking aloud. Monitor. Ask student(s) during practice how the lines make them feel, when appropriate.

Running the activity:

First, tell students they can perform the text how they see fit. Explicitly say that playing the text is not about acting. Elicit the given circumstances to remind them. If you have an audience (1 or more students), instruct them audience to actively watch and think about differences they observe in performances. Tell the student(s) that they will play the same text twice, perhaps three times. This is for students to get over initial nerves, but also to explore differences in presentation. Run and repeat scene work (4 to 6 min) with audience feedback after a run. Elicit from the audience and the player aspects of behaviour (bodily expression, gesture, movement, emotions, speaking / language). Thank the player for the performance and have a round of applause.

Audience:

Give clear instructions to focus audience reflection and comments on what they see re: 1) bodily expression, 2) movement, and 3) speaking. Tell students not to comment on the '*quality of the acting*' or who performed better, etc. Encourage students to reflect on subtle intonation patterns tied to emotion. This could be an interesting discussion as the speaker doesn't share emotions outwardly but instead internally rehearses confidence and composure. This restrained, quietly determined tone reflects the British cultural norm of "keeping calm and carrying on"—emotion is present, but managed, controlled. Students could speak such lines in their head whilst speaking other parts out aloud. You could explore across the different cultures how students feel about keeping controlled in this way. Also, explore differences in how the players with different cultural backgrounds performed the monologue.

How this text reflects aspects of British culture:

Subject matter: keeping calm, emotionally controlled under pressure, self-persuading.

Speaking: features a combination of aspects of English phonology that could be experienced in an embodied fashion.

- range of long and short vowel sounds (e.g. long 'e': breathe, believe; long 'i': fine, mine;
short: "quit, hit, fit, slip, trip)

- reduced forms (e.g. "won't, don't").

- range of vowel pronunciations (e.g. o: do, won't, not, now, role, one; a: can, mark, back)

- same short vowel sound (e.g. i: quit, hit, fit, slip, trip)

I'm not a dud

“Right, I can do this. I won’t quit. Not now, not yet. I hit the mark. I fit the role.
I’m not a dud, I’m keen, I’m sharp. Just breathe, believe, begin. It’s fine, it’s mine.

One step, then two—don’t slip, don’t trip. Chin up, shoulders back. Smile.
Speak clear. No fear. Just go.

All focus.

Stay calm. Steady. Show them what I can do.”