

READING PLAYS:

An Analytical Guide for Directors and Active Readers

First Impressions

Please note words/phrases, images, actions, scenes that stimulate your imagination; patterns that you detect; analogies of all kinds; political, social and cultural responses. Remember, the best way to read a play is OUT LOUD! *and* repeatedly).

The Play

1. **Story** of the play. A brief distillation of the narrative.
2. **Given circumstances.** Key indications provided by the author, such as period (time) and setting (place), relationships, environment, events/information preceding the beginning of the play or scene, unwritten scenes, and other relevant information in the text.
3. **Title** of the play. Literal and figurative meaning.
4. **Conventions.** What conventions are employed? Name those unique to the play.
5. **Major characters.** What is each character's greatest want and what do they do to achieve it? What is their greatest obstacle? List five key moments for each. Include text revelations, function in play, name, status).
6. **Main character.** Who and why?
7. **Structure.** What *form* does the play take? How does the structure impact meaning? Does the structure suggest tempo or rhythm? Note French scenes.
8. **Language.** Style (poetry or prose and for what purpose?), idioms, irony, subtext.
9. **Patterns:** Symbols, imagery, action, behavior (such as disparity between what a character says and does, etc.).
10. **Rhythm and mood.** Can apply to environment, character, structure, atmosphere and other topics in this section.
11. **Main action or spine** of the play in one succinct sentence.
12. **Theme.** A brief overview. What is the point of the play? What is the playwright saying about a particular subject through this play?
13. **Translation/Adaptation.** Please discuss your choice of translation and/or any cuts you plan to make.

Research

14. **Playwright.** Where does this play fit into his/her canon? What other information about the playwright or play, such as previous productions, is relevant to your preparation?
15. **World of the play.** What rules govern it? This research grows out of given circumstances – period influences, political and cultural landscape, socio-economic factors, etc.– those elements that flesh out the givens of the play through research.
16. **Non-literary research.** Music, film, painting, photography, etc.
17. **Other materials.** Include at least one non-theatrical source that has influenced your thinking about directing the play.

Directing the play

18. **Concept.** What do you want to accomplish in a production of this play? Is there a *metaphor* or *organizing image* that captures the psychic and /or physical space as you envision it? Include any personal *images or impressions* that triggered your thinking. What political, social or cultural issues do you intend to explore?
19. **Style.** How will you direct the play? What conventions, other than those provided by the playwright, will you employ? What approach to speech and voice, movement and gesture will you use? Describe your staging approaches, use of music, objects and other performance elements that will determine the style of your production? How do your stylistic choices relate to period and place?
20. **Design.** Describe your ideas and goals regarding the design of your production. Include choice of theatre or configuration, discussions with designers, resources, staging challenges related to design. Please include the following:
 - at least *ten visuals*, either in single or collage form.
 - a *scale seating plan* with *scale groundplans* for every scene.
21. **Rehearsals.** Techniques and strategies you will employ.