

Performance Exercises
Performance Studies by Ronald Pelias

1. Read carefully the key questions for analyzing texts—the “pentad” (48-50). Work through these questions in relation to your story. Then ask: How does this analysis affect your understanding of the passage? How might it affect the way you perform it?
2. Be sure to include an analysis of the narrator’s and each character’s social location (demographics)—gender, ethnic/racial origin, social class, economic level, age, occupation, rural/urban origin, and so on. How do the social locations of the characters compare with your own? What difference might they make in your performance?
3. What is the narrator’s tone? What is the motivation and purpose for telling this? What does the story “do”? What does the narrator want to happen as a result? To individuals? To a community?
4. Do the exercise on “changing speakers” (93) for your passage. To help with this exercise, you may want to pose the questions on “imaginative entry (97-98) in relation to each of the characters. How does this exercise affect your understanding of the passage? How might the experience of this exercise influence the way you will perform it?
5. Choose several key lines from your passage and do exercises 1 and 2 on “vocal variety” (71). This will help you become aware of “subtext”—the message you are giving by the “way” you say a line.
6. Do the exercises on “vocal behavior” (72-73) on your passage, perhaps with another person.
7. Do the exercises on “bodily behavior” (76-77) on your passage, perhaps with another person.
8. Try doing different things with your hands. Vary the hand uses throughout the passage and with different characters.
9. Do the exercise on “finding behaviors and responding again” (98) on each of the characters in your story. What are the clues in the passage to guide your choices?
10. At some point, do the relaxation exercises (78-79) before you practice your passage. What difference does it make?
11. If you have a physical habit you need to break, try the exercise on exaggeration (82).