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## TEACHER'S WORKBOOK

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### Gemstoning:

### Character Creation Exercise for The Classroom & Production

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#### Abstract

*In the summer of 2023, we participated in an online training course with the Stella Adler Studio of Acting titled Awareness Without Judgement: A Teacher Training Intensive. Over the weeks, we studied with three main teachers at the Studio on Character, Technique, and Script Interpretation with 'master classes' led by actors and scholars scattered over the weeks. The course is designed for theatre practitioners who want more in-depth experience and exposure to the more pedagogical side of acting and performance; in other words, for acting teachers who want to use the techniques of Stella Adler within their teaching. Given this gap in our training and a shared desire to better our ability to teach budding actors and performers, we participated. However, we also knew that we would need a lot of repositioning, from how they teach the material to their students to how we would have to teach the material to our students. This pedagogical translation is the impetus of our Great Ideas of Teaching. We want to create a method for bringing Adler's ideas to our educational institutions. Our G.I.F.T allows students to create their character, starting from an impulse of a single emotion for both in-person and online settings. It is part written exercise and part physicalization exercise. The resulting approach to character creation is a sense of individualized ownership in the students in the characters they create and interpret.*

*"Your job as actors is to understand the size of what you say, to understand what's beneath the word." — Stella Adler*

In the summer of 2023, we participated in an online training course with the Stella Adler Studio of Acting titled Awareness Without Judgement: A Teacher Training Intensive. Over the weeks, we studied with three teachers at the Studio on Character, Technique, and Script

Interpretation with ‘master classes’ led by actors and scholars. The course is designed for theatre practitioners who want more in-depth experience and exposure to the more pedagogical side of acting and performance; in other words, for acting teachers who want to use the techniques of Stella Adler within their teaching. Many of our classmates were alumni of the Studio, either through their conservatory certificate program or partnership with New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. While we are both stage directors by trade and training, neither of us self-identify as ‘actor’ or have any direct training with the Studio. Our artistic praxis occurs off-stage and within the classroom. Given this gap in our training and a shared desire to better our ability to teach budding actors and performers, we participated. As Stella Adler once said, one’s talent is in their choice. We wanted to better the choices for our students.

Early during the training, we both realized how different conservatory-style teaching was compared to what we experienced as undergraduate and graduate students. By ‘conservatory,’ we refer to artistic institutions that solely teach within an artistic discipline. While they are more common outside North America, theatre conservatories require students to focus on one area of theatre-making, so acting students only study acting. Within North America, this often means conservatory students do not matriculate with a degree but instead a certificate or other similarly named credential. This contrasts with university undergraduate training programs for theatre arts, both B.A. and B.F.A., as there is general education coursework and commonly required classes outside of the student’s preferred emphasis. These programs also award a full bachelor's degree instead of a certificate. Conservatories usually cater to students ranging in age and background. These types of students would be called ‘non-traditional’ in university parlance, and some participants might hold degrees in theatre arts or other fields of study. The Stella Adler Studio, which has offices in New York City and Los Angeles (The Art of Acting Studio), offers a 3-year

Professional Conservatory – their principal program – in addition to a shorter ‘evening conservatory’ programming and various short courses for teens and professionals.

For decades now, The Stella Adler Studio of Acting has partnered with New York University’s Tisch School and other similar studies within the city. This partnership is structured so students graduate with an undergraduate degree (B.F.A. in Drama) from N.Y.U. yet receive their arts training from one of those professional studios (often kept separate from other conservatory students and classes.) While students in other more traditional departments might take coursework outside their focus, these undergraduate students solely focus their theatre training within the studios and learn. Stella Adler Studio of Acting has produced many famous and well-regarded actors, both through their conservatories and partnership with Tisch.

Because of this structure, conservatory classes are often far longer than the 50 or so minutes that our classrooms provide. In addition, the students who attend these types of training programs often begin with more experience or raw talent; that is not to say that undergraduate training programs lack talented beginners, but conservatories have highly competitive auditions, which only a handful of universities could compare within that regard. This is echoed in that many undergraduate students are fluid in their desires and academic expectations, while conservatory students have a narrower focus on their professional and career ambitions. In turn, the Studio’s pedagogy presented during our summer intensive was crafted for a type of student not commonly found within our classrooms and rehearsal halls.

Despite these differences, we both felt very positive towards the training presented; as working artists, we saw great value in the exercises and approaches to performance. However, we also knew that we would need a lot of repositioning, from how they teach the material to their students to how we would have to teach the material to our students. This pedagogical translation

is the impetus of our Great Ideas of Teaching. We want to create our own way for bringing Adler's ideas to *our* classrooms and like-minded educational institutions.

While the three key courses provided a lot of exercises and training regimens, we felt strongly about their exercise in gemstoning a character. As the course title is "Awareness without Judgment," the entire course's motto is not to judge within our work. While this connects to many aspects of arts education, it primarily warns actors not to make value judgments about their character – even those who play the villain must not moralistically condemn them as such. However, a more nuanced interpretation of the term "judgment" relates to an actor's awareness of deciding *who* a character is too early. Just like gemstones have different faces that look inward to the jewel, actors must examine their characters from various angles to avoid any hasted analyses or proclamations. Only once the actor completes this multivalent character examination can they truthfully - and with great dimensionally - embody their character, honoring all their complexities and contradictions. This idea of gemstone is meant to allow the student to approach character creation thoughtfully and holistically by investigating the pluralistic connotations, definitions, and meanings of words.

### **In the Classroom: How to make a gem of a character**

*"Growth as an actor and as a human being are synonymous."* — Stella Adler

Regardless of the activity's modality (online or in person), students may come in with little to no experience in the actor's approach to character development. This activity can be used in class and production to create original characters (i.e., generative theatre-making) or expound upon an existing scripted character (i.e., interpretative theatre-making).

In practice, this activity was presented as the first acting project of the semester in a regional university where students come with a range of understanding of theatre and acting

practice. The starting element was given to them. Students also worked through an example element together. The activity for an original character is ideally facilitated with 12 students over three weeks, meeting for an hour and a half twice a week. The activity for a scripted character is ideally facilitated during the first week of rehearsal during table work over one to three days and referred to throughout the rehearsal process. The activity for both iterations is described below. While describing the activity, this article uses an informative speech to explain the process.

### *Gemstoning: The Basics*

When an actor takes on a role to play a character, they strive to present someone else's truth paradoxically. This ultimately presents a challenge for them: how to understand another to truthfully perform the narrative fully? Character work is a tool for actors to embody another; it dually holds dramatic analysis and creative imagining to promote a verité within an actor's portrayal of another's lived experience. While the student may identify with some aspects of the character, they nonetheless should work to create somebody that is not themselves. This gemstoning exercise offers actors an actionable sequence to incorporate their artistic and creative impulses within the accuracy desired within performative storytelling.

To begin, the instructor asks their students to sit in a circle as much as possible. Speaking to the group in a circle creates an equitable space for all to hold the same amount of space in a room. The instructor should either provide the worksheet detailed below or ask that students bring blank paper or a notebook. The instructor should provide their understanding of character work and Stella Adler's history with character instruction.

### *Step One: Exploring Adjectives*

To start the *gemstoning*, instruct the students to show being shy performatively. Give them space to explore, if they wish, to physically find 'shyness' first. The instructor may coach

through their exploration or give time in silence for the students to investigate and experiment. This first step should be done collectively and last about 3-5 minutes. After the allotted time, have the students come back to the circle. Then ask the prompt: what did you do? They should feel free to discuss this openly in conversation with the class and/or jot down notes on the worksheet or in a notebook. Have them observe and report on what they did. Try to walk them back if they begin to psychoanalyze; encourage them to respond more and think less.

Once they've started this conversation, have them answer or discuss what they noticed notice others do in the class. Note together similarities and differences in each student's interpretation of *shyness*. If choices were especially exciting or intriguing, have the class explore those choices, either verbally or through presentation. Some potential guiding questions to ask during this portion are: 1. What stimulates you? 2. What is something that appears ordinary but is extraordinary and external? 3. How can this work be a rigorous investigation? Once you have had them attempt to perform the concept of shyness, move on to Step Two.

#### *Step Two: Looking On All Sides*

Instruct the students to consider how one looks at a diamond or gem. Explain that when looking at the stone from all sides, you slowly start to see new facets or elements of the stone. Instruct them to hold an imaginary gemstone in their hand. As they turn the gemstone, the light catches the sides differently; the clarity varies, and the color seems to move. We are going to apply this same idea to character work. Inform the students that we will begin creating a character who, at their core, is shy.

Utilizing *shy* as a primary character trait or element, instruct your students to take a moment and write down a time when they felt shy. After 2-3 minutes of silent contemplation, ask a few students share their personal moments. After this brief sharing, instruct your students to

then write a synonym for *shy*. Go around the circle and have them list their classmates' responses. If a student has the exact synonym as another, have the group brainstorm an additional or similar synonym. If a student has more than one, have them jot them all down but only allow them to share their most exciting word for the time being. After everyone has gone, explain that through language, and have a comprehensive list of vitalizing words for *shy*. From this list, they will begin to craft a never-before-seen character. While right now, they do not have the character, they are exploring the concept of *shyness* as the character's foundation.

### *Step Three: Finding Impressions*

At the end of this class, assign your students' homework. They must write out 5 impressions of *shy* by continuing to *gemstone* the word. Now that they have a list of synonyms as inspiration, they can begin to add a more creative and narrative aspect to the character trait. This will work to complete section 1 of the character breakdown: Shy Statements. While they may write more, each student will need at least at least 5 for each category.

1. Synonyms – ex. “Shy is unobtrusive.”
2. Metaphors – ex. “Shy is a flower that only blooms a night.”
3. Physicalizations – ex. “Shy is nervous twitching fingers.”
4. Insights or Folk Wisdom – ex. “Shy is the groundhog seeing their shadow.”

Encourage your students to leave space between each impression so that it stands out on its own. They may choose to use the synonym they already came up with for class but do encourage them to explore other synonyms if possible.

*Step Four: Rehearsing the Statements*

When your students return to class, inform them that we are now moving into a rehearsal phase with our character breakdown. To start, ask for a volunteer. For their first rehearsal, instruct the student to read impressions from category 1 (synonyms.)

Shy is...

Shy is (then read out an impression)

Shy is (then read out an impression)

Shy is (then read out an impression)

Shy is (then read out an impression)

Then have the same student go again. For their second rehearsal, they should share their impression from the first-person perspective.

Shy is...

I am (then read out an impression)

I am (then read out an impression)

I am (then read out an impression)

I am (then read out an impression)

I am shy.

Instruct your students to have their senses feel for a spark as they offer their impressions. Coach them to take their time to explore them; they should physicalize and live in the moment through this personal I-statement. In this dual format, you will go through each category (synonymies, metaphors, physicalizations, and folk wisdom).

If a student is struggling, ask: How do we make it feel truthful? Suggest that they do not read it from the page but look and speak the impression. Memorized. This often helps them fully



embody the declarative statement as they are ‘in the moment.’ The student may look down after each statement to quickly memorize the next one. They can take as long as they need going from impression to impression. Have the students star or circle the impressions to which they connect.

Additionally, you have them include a full-body action for each impression. For example, the impression written down might be “shy is hiding behind a full glass at a party.” The student can start the second rehearsal silently with pantomimed glass in their hand, maybe tilting their head down, furtively looking around the circle with just their eyes; they want to make sure everyone can see that they are occupied as not to be approached by a partygoer. Or maybe they hunch their shoulders around the glass, even hold it with two hands giving a closed-off body posture, avoiding eye contact while barely sipping so no one can assume they need a refill. After the impression is explored physically, have the actor say, “I am hiding behind a full glass at a party” while executing this action.

Impressions should not be lengthy or wordy. We do not want to create overly complex, multi-stepped impressions. Let the character be embodied through physicalizing rather than just the declarative statement. Be judicious in how much time you allow each student to explore each impression physically. As an instructor, if a moment excites you, or if a student struggles to explore their impression fully, you should coach them to live in the moment, one impression at a time. Once the student have stated their impression, they would stop just a moment and then start to physicalize the next impression entirely as their own exploration. Once the student has gone through all five impressions, they would end their turn of exploration by stating, “I am shy.”

For example, a list of 5 impressions might look like this:

Shy is...

Shy is taking acceptable risk.

Shy is scoping the lay of the land first before leaving the treeline.

Shy is letting eyes and sentences drop.

Shy is the bird that wants the breadcrumbs just thrown.

Shy is a toy at the bottom of a cereal box.

I am shy.

After a few students have gone, instruct the group to talk about the impressions most excited them. What felt different between ‘shy is’ and ‘I am’? Which of your statements felt most alive to you? It can be more than one. For homework, instruct the students to complete Section 1 of the Character Breakdown (included below) and introduce two other character traits or elements. Instruct your students to work on gemstoning one of the primary character traits. A suggestion might be ‘meticulous’ or ‘gregarious’ but feel free to include any adjectives you like. You may also allow your students to continue to explore ‘shy.’

Remind the students that the form in their notebook should be “Shy is...” or “Meticulous is...” or Gregarious is...” or any other character trait you select. Refrain from jumping to the “I am” statements as we want to first embrace the panoply of possibilities about the trait. Instruct the students that they will add the “I” when they bring the work into the rehearsal space for the next class session. Your students’ *gemstoning* should embrace synonyms, metaphors, insights, and physicalizations. Encourage your students to try to create a very robust list of impressions for their list. Then, select from that robust list their top 10 for the on-the-feet work they will do next class. They do not need to pre-rehearse the on-your-feet exploration. Lastly, continue to encourage them to consider what they perceived and appreciated from watching others at the end of each student’s presentation.

*Step Five: Adding Another Trait*

When your students return to class, they will each share their chosen character trait. Depending on the time and the number of students you have, this may take more than one class period. In a non-conservatory style class that meets twice a week for an hour and fifteen minutes with 12 students, part 2 may take two days of instruction.

Remind and instruct the students to read each impression to themselves one at a time, memorize it, and then start to present once they see and feel something. They should share roughly two per category but be flexible depending on what they bring to use in class. One at a time have them share in the following format:

I am (Character trait)

I am (then read out impression 1)

I am (then read out impression 2)

I am (then read out impression 3)

I am (then read out impression 4)

I am (then read out impression 5)

I am (then read out impression 6)

I am (then read out impression 7)

I am (then read out impression 8)

I am (then read out impression 9)

I am (then read out impression 10)

I am (character trait)

Again, after 2-3 students have gone, they discuss what they already appreciate. Remind them that they are looking for that new character amid this work, which is this character trait they are gemstoning.

### *Step Six: Declarative Statements*

Once all the students have gone, ask them to turn to a new blank page in their notebooks. Considering all they have personally explored so far with their character trait, they will begin to flesh out their character's "I" statements. Have the students write at least ten "I like ..." statements that might come from a person informed by their chosen character trait and their impressions. Start by having the students consider the impressions they starred or circled that light them up the most. They may then informally share by reading the statements aloud.

Have your students for homework complete Part 2: Sections 3 – 8 of the worksheets. Ask them to think about what this character might wear and bring it to class. Sections 3- 7 are similar to section 2, following the same format but with a different prompt. Instruct your students to write out and list 'I' statements for each section:

Section 3: "I dislike..." or "I don't like..." (10)

Section 4: "I want..." statements (10)

Section 5, "I don't want..." statements (10)

Section 6, 3-5 "I need..." statements. (3-5)

Section 7, 3-5 "I don't need" statements (3-5)

Discuss how wants and needs differ for these characters your students are discovering.

Lastly, have your students complete section 8 of the worksheet. Instruct your students in 2-3 paragraphs to write a recounting of what this person mostly does in a day. Have them write

it/tell it from a 1<sup>st</sup> person recounting. Hopefully, with this last section, we start to hear this character's voice. They should think about what this person might wear after they have completed the writing portion of their homework and come in costume to the next class.

*Step 7: Meeting the Character*

When your students return to class, they should come with their written sections of material and in costume. Again, depending on time and the number of students, this may take more than one class period. In a non-conservatory style class that meets twice a week for an hour and fifteen minutes with 12 students, this may take two days of instruction. Before beginning, explain that today they are going to be meeting their character in circumstance. The student who goes first may be the most coached in this first exploration. To present, the student will return to Section 1. They will start by sharing their character trait choice in the following format:

I am (Character trait)

I am (then read out impression 1)

I am (then read out impression 2)

I am (then read out impression 3)

I am (then read out impression 4)

I am (then read out impression 5)

I am (then read out impression 6)

I am (then read out impression 7)

I am (then read out impression 8)

I am (then read out impression 9)

I am (then read out impression 10)

I am (character trait)

Again, they should explore each impression before reading or stating it out loud. From there, they should stay “in the zone of exploration” but now read out loud their Section 2-7 statements aloud as “I” statements.

For example, a student, from their impressions of gregarious, might create the following statements:

I like wearing high heels

I like laughing loudly

I want my hair down nice and big

I want to live authentically

I want to make other people laugh

I don't want to come off as too much

I don't want to be a people pleaser

I need community

Once they've read all of them, or if you choose, they may memorize them if you have time; they should stay in the mindset of this character as we begin to meet their character.

I suggest taking notes of your students' impressions as they present. Once they've completed the reading, ask them to put their paper down and embody the character. Instruct the students to explain what they are wearing today as their character. If they are not wearing exactly what they wish to take on this character, ask them to discuss it imaginatively. The key is to see what they are wearing rather than describing it. Remind them to stay in the character mindset.

In showing off their attire, this ‘gregarious character’ might describe themselves wearing contoured make-up, high heels, flared pants, and a sequin top. After they describe their outfit, I, as the instructor, am still trying to meet this character in circumstances. From the students'

impressions and statements, improvise a location and circumstance where they might be asked: “What do you mostly do in a day?” For example, if a student chooses gregarious, and they’ve described some of the statements above, you, as the instructor, will start to imagine them in a circumstance. For this example, you may have the student describe going to a party, how they want to make people laugh at a comedy club, or how long it takes them to prepare for the day. As the students just come up with these answers in character, you might see how you can improve a circumstance to meet this new character and might ask a few clarifying questions: Are you a working adult? Do you live in a bustling city or a small town? Do you do comedy in your off hours? Feel free to improvise what you feel best to help the student fully explore the character through improv. They should be given the space to answer.

Next, you would then introduce the circumstance without names or pronouns. You will need to develop a circumstance based on their previous answers. For example: *You are in the back of a comedy club in a green room. You are set to perform tonight; scouts are here to see the show. This event is set up as a competition and there are other competitors in this space and someone with social media is attempting to interview you before you go on.* You will ask them to describe what they see in detail. Let the student work through what they see, coach them to see it, and potentially ask about the flooring, walls, and furniture to help them build their space. Then, coach the student to describe the other competitors and people in the room in this example. Lastly, ask them to describe the social media reporter in front of them. You will need to adjust and customize the questions for each specific character situation that you guide.

As the instructor, you will then embody a character that would be in the same situation as the student’s maturing character. For example, they might tell you are a social media reporter. You will need to describe yourself to the character briefly but with detail. As the instructor, you

join the circumstance from the sidelines and engage with the character. For example, the instructor, as their character, might say: *Hey! Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me before the show. It's been so great to get to know you so far; the last thing I need for my article is more on the personal side. You know, we've been following your journey through this competition, and our followers are just dying to know, what do you mostly do in a day?*" The student should then respond in character with their response to Section 8. The last question, in character, should be you asking for their name. At the end of the presentation, ask the student to take a moment in stillness and then shake their character off. You would then move to the next student and a new circumstance to meet their character.

Again, after 2-3 students have gone, ask the class what they appreciate about these new characters as we meet them in circumstance. Students often appreciate this exercise as it is a way to explore character without treading into psychoanalysis or overworking a moment. Students see a lot of freedom in this exercise, which is also quite creatively rigorous; affirm that this is a lot but highly rewarding. Often, we ask the students to consider how gemstoning a scripted character might help them in rehearsal and production work. You can use characters from published dramatic texts or expand to literary figures. We will explain sample ways to use gemstoning for actors working on a production.

### **In Rehearsal: how to *gemstone* one's character**

*"By taking elements you observe in life, you can develop qualities in your acting life that you don't ordinarily call upon in your personal life."* — Stella Adler

Gemstoning as a means of character development can and should be used with pre-scripted or published texts. In doing so, the actor would gemstone the character's name rather than define a character trait in this case. For example, if the working text is Lewis Carroll's *Alice*



*in Wonderland*, you would have the students reach the text or story first. Then, you would gemstone the character's name utilizing given circumstances and other script interpretative exercises. Following the same process described above, you would gemstone each word for characters with two names – like the Mad Hatter. As they work through and present the impressions, those that ignite or illicit the most robust response for the actor are what they would continue with through sections 2 through 7. Literary figures and other short and known stories are great places to incorporate as continued practice for the students.

On productions, gemstone can be a useful director's tool when working with actors on character development. The activity helps to uniquely discover aspects of character that might not be explicitly written in the text or even on a well-known character within the canon. However, like all good character development and script interpretation, it is 'mined' from the text.

For example, in Jordan Tannahill's *Concord Floral*, the actor portraying the character Fox, named after the animal, can gemstone the word 'fox' as a starting point in their actor's praxis. Gemstone is a solid first step in anthropomorphizing more abstract characters for performance. What does 'fox' mean to that actor? The actor might be inspired by a more archetypal connotation, such as 'sly,' 'trickster,' or 'cunning,' or they might gravitate towards other more personal interpretations of 'fox.' Regardless of their decision, it still provides a word to investigate. By considering the various traits of foxes; the actor can choose a trait to gemstone. With gemstoning, they might need to research or draw on previous knowledge. In the previous example, the actor might know or discover that foxes burrow in scavenged places. This insight could lead the actor to choose to have a strong friendship with Couch and Greenhouse, other characters inspired by the thing they're named after, who act as literal and metaphorical refugees

for the other characters. When gemstoning, it can be either director-driven or actor-driven. While an actor has a high likelihood of working with a director unfamiliar with Stella Alder and gemstoning, they can still include this as part of their private praxis. While these discoveries and choices might not ever appear fully and clearly on stage during a performance, they still provide insight for the actors into who their characters are, which ultimately manifests in some form on stage, even if it is layered or abstracted.

One can also find traits drawn more literally from the text. For example, in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, he describes each sister as wearing a specific color (blue for Olga, black for Masha, and white for Irina.) In rehearsals, the director can ask the actors to gemstone these colors. What does blue mean, and how does that begin to shape their Olga? One could also have them gemstone the etymology of their names, which can often be a strong choice particular choice. For example, Irina means 'peace.'<sup>49</sup> The actor playing Irina could gemstone that word. Conversely, this inquiry into the name's etymology might reveal insight into the saint bearing the same name and who is often prayed to for a "swift happy marriage."<sup>50</sup> Within *Three Sisters*, marriage is a core part of Irina's character arch. While this discovery could be a coincidence on Chekhov's part, they still began the character development process, which can change and pivot as rehearsals continue, and new discoveries are made. Because of this, there is still value in gemstoning white or marriage when approaching Irina, one of the modern Western canon's most known and tragic characters. Gemstoning name etymologies connect as well with Shakespeare's characters. Juliet, for example, means 'youthful' or 'Jove's child.'<sup>51</sup> This approach provides the

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<sup>49</sup> Mike Campbell, "Meaning, Origin and History of the Name Irene," Behind the Name, accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.behindthename.com/name/irene>.

<sup>50</sup> "Great Martyr Irene," accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2007/05/05/101297-great-martyr-irene>.

<sup>51</sup> "Juliet - Baby Name Meaning, Origin and Popularity," accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.thebump.com/b/juliet-baby-name>.

actor with an actionable technique to begin their praxis; it is an accessible first step in their personal sequence. While this approach can be useful for generative character creation, the same principles and methods readily apply to interpretative performances.

### **Challenges**

This exercise was created for a conservatory and its structures. Time can be a tremendous pressure on the success of this exploration. In utilizing this in class or rehearsal, one should consider the time needed for the first round. Also, like any activity involving student participation or students with less acting experience, some will be reluctant to participate, given its in-depth approach. One might find that newer acting students will try to bring in their own unique persons into a character, and this will feel laborious or intimidating to them to share their own selves in the process. Expectations should be reiterated that the intention is to either create a new character, form a scratch, or approach scripted character work from a fresh perspective – a perspective still tied to them as it comes from their own interpretations of the traits. It is sometimes comforting to find connections to these characters, but they are not themselves. Gemstoning is character development through an individualistic understanding and one that is distanced enough for sustainable storytelling. This process should not draw parallels to emotional recall work or ‘Method Acting’ but instill privilege (and celebrate) the multivalency with characters, even those who have walked across stages for decades or centuries before.

At the time of this publication, we should note that this exercise has only been utilized in intermediate and advanced acting classes as well as during tablework with casts of collegiate productions. This worksheet may be overwhelming for beginning actors or for students required to take acting courses with no personal motivation to pursue performing arts. If you are interested in teaching this to more novice actors, we might suggest you gemstone an example

character as a group and then have the students develop their own. During the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) 2024, we taught this worksheet as a workshop and created one ‘shy’ character with suggestions from our participants. As a group we quickly worked through the worksheet and explained how they could spend additional time in creating or developing their own. We encourage you to adapt gemstoning as you need in order to meet them where they are in their training and process.

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