

SESSION TWO - WHEN THE DUST WRITES BACK

FOCUS

This session delves into non-verbal storytelling and the importance of vocal expression. As the phantom's actions escalate from moving objects to direct communication, the activities focus on how actors can convey complex emotions and narratives without words, and how sound itself can become a character.

LISTENING GUIDE (EPISODE 2)

Pre-listening Discussion:

- "At the end of the last episode, a hat mysteriously moved. If you were the phantom, what would you do next to make sure people knew you were there?"

Post-listening Discussion:

- "The message on the mirror says, 'Some secrets should stay buried'.1 What kind of secret do you think the phantom is protecting?"
- "The phantom makes a sound like 'CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER played backwards and slowed down'.1 Why is a sound like that scarier than a simple 'boo' or a ghostly moan? What does it make you imagine?"
- "Mr. Silas tells Jax to 'leave the past where it belongs'.1 Do you think he knows what the secret is? Why or why not?"



VOCABULARY SPOTLIGHT



Props (Properties):

Any moveable object that an actor uses on stage.⁸ In the story, the plaster skull, the mannequin's hat, and now the dusty mirror are all important props that move the plot forward.

Prop Master:

The person on a creative team who is in charge of finding, making, and managing all the props for a show.⁹ Ms. Periwinkle mentions that Mr. Silas is the theater's prop master, among his many other jobs.

Projection:

Speaking loudly and clearly enough for your voice to be heard by everyone in the audience, even in the very back row. The actors in the story had to project their scared voices over the chaos of the phantom's sounds.

Articulation:

Speaking clearly and pronouncing every part of a word so that the audience can understand you.

Tableau:

A French word for a silent, frozen picture created by a group of actors to represent a scene or an idea. Plural is "tableaux".

THEATER GAME: LIVING PICTURES (TABLEAUX)

Objective: To tell a story without words or sound, focusing on using clear body language, facial expressions, and spatial relationships to convey a narrative moment.

Instructions:

- a. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 students.
- b. Assign each group a key moment from Episode 2 to depict in a series of three tableaux. The goal is to create a "comic strip" of the scene with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Scene ideas:

- **The Mirror Message:** 1) Maya walks past the normal, dusty mirror. 2) Maya returns and sees the writing, reacting in shock. 3) Jax and Leo join her, looking at the message with a mix of fear and curiosity.
- **The Horrifying Sound:** 1) The actors are rehearsing on stage, looking focused. 2) The distorted laughter erupts, and the actors freeze in terror, covering their ears. 3) The cast dissolves into chaos, pointing fingers and arguing.
- **The Warning:** 1) Jax approaches Mr. Silas, asking a question. 2) Mr. Silas leans in, giving his stern warning. 3) Mr. Silas slams the trapdoor shut, and Jax jumps back, startled.

1. Give the groups 5-7 minutes to plan their three frozen pictures.
2. Have each group present their tableaux. After each presentation, ask the audience what story they saw and what emotions the actors were conveying.



ACTING EXERCISE: FOUND OBJECT STORYTELLING

Objective:

To practice improvisation and character creation by building a short narrative around a single prop, inspired by the mysterious and significant props in the Trillberry theater.

Instructions:

1. Gather a collection of simple, everyday objects (a key, a glove, a teacup, an old photograph, a single shoe, etc.) and place them in the center of the room.
2. Have each student choose one object that speaks to them.
3. Give them one minute to think about a character who might own this object.
4. One by one, have each student stand up and deliver a short, improvised monologue (30-60 seconds) as their character, using the prop as the focus of their story.
5. Prompts to help them think:
 - "What secret does this object hold?"
 - "Where has it been? Who gave it to you?"
 - "Why is this object the most important thing you own?"

