CHARACTER and ROLE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

The following resources supply approaches used singularly or in combination to analyze the character you are playing. None of them are academic exercises, but rather important tools to unlock the character process for the actor. Included are the following five character development tools:

- **Character Analysis Questions**

Although the questions are many and very involved, in order to create the full life of the character, the actor should know the answers to all these questions regarding:

Physical
Social
Psychological
Moral
The Play

- **Uta Hagen's NINE Questions**

  The famous acting teacher, who died in March of 2004 is noted for her work as an actress and teacher/coach of some of the most respected actors of today. Her book Respect for Acting is must reading for all serious actors and students of the theatre. Knowing the answers to her "NINE QUESTIONS" is an important tool to use for scene and monologue work. Many actors used these questions only.

- **Seven Steps to Heaven**

  Jerry Crawford's approach to scene work for actors and directors. This is possibly the best way to organically approach a process for working on your material.

- **Character Biography**

  Taken from the video "Building a Character" this form is useful to help create the full given circumstances of the character and his full life. Although the document may change during the rehearsal processes, actor's are encouraged to do this work early and then reflect/change are the process work grows.

- **Short Form Role Analysis**

  Used with the character biography, this is the **best** pre-rehearsal work for the actor to complete to prepare for working on a scene/monologue/play.

Character Analysis Questions

The actor must know the answer to every question, though the character in performance may be (probably is), ignorant of many.

Physical Qualities

1. Who am I?
2. Who am I named after? Do I like my name?
3. What is my gender? What do I think about sex?
4. How old am I? What do I think of my age?
5. How does my posture express my age, health, inner feeling?
6. How is my complexion? What do I think of it?
7. What is my height? What do I think of I?
8. What is my weight? What do I think of it?
9. What is the pitch, volume, tempo, resonance or quality of my voice? What do I think of it?
10. Is my articulation careless or precise? Is my articulation standard or colloquial? Do I have a dialect or accent?
11. What is my hair color and style? Do I like it?
12. Do I have any deformities? What do I think of them?
13. Do I have any mannerisms? What do I think of them?
14. Do I have any handicaps? What do I think of them?
15. How energetic or vital am I? Do I like it?
16. Do I suffer from any diseases past or present?
17. Are my gestures complete or incomplete, vigorous or weak, compulsive or controlled?
18. Do I like my walk?
19. How do I usually sit?
20. How do I usually stand?
21. Do I have any objects, hand props or accessories with me? Why? How do I handle them?
22. Are my basic rhythms smooth or jerky, even-tempered or volatile, impulsive or deliberate, ponderous or light, broken or continuous?
23. What do I like to wear? What do I have to wear? How do I wear my clothes? How do I handle them?

Social Qualities

1. What do I do when I wake up each morning?
2. What is my relationship to my environment? Do I like it?
3. What is my educational background? How much discipline was I subjected to? How intelligent am I?
4. What was my childhood like? What are my strongest memories?
5. How much money do I have? How much do I want?
6. What is my nationality? What do I think of it?
7. What is my occupation? Do I like it? What other jobs have I had? When and why did I choose this one?
8. What are my political attitudes?
9. Am I religious?
10. Whom would I choose to be if I could be anyone else?
11. Did I have childhood heroes? What did I like about them?
12. Do I like members of the opposite sex? What do I like about them?
13. Who were my parents? What do I like and/or dislike about them?
14. Do I like my family? What do I like? What do I dislike?
15. How has my mother influenced me? How has my father influenced me?
16. Do I have brothers and sisters? What do I think about them?
17. What was my favorite fairy tale? Why?
18. Who are my friends? Who are my enemies? How can I tell if someone is a friend or an enemy?
19. What ideas do I like? What ideas do I dislike?
20. What hobbies or interests do I have?

21. Do I have children? Do I like them? Why? Do they like me?
22. What advice do I have for my children?
23. Am I married? Why did I marry the person I did?
24. What do I think about my spouse? What do I dislike?
25. How do my physical traits affect each of the social traits?
26. How do the social traits affect the script and my objective?
27. How do the social traits affect my life needs and wants?

Psychological Qualities

1. What choices do I face?
2. What choices do I make?
3. What makes me angry? What relaxes me?
4. What are my driving ambitions, my goals?
5. Do I have ny instincts?
6. Do I do things impulsively?
7. What do I worry about?
8. What do I want? What do others think I want?
9. What do I like about myself? Dislike about myself?
10. What do I need?
11. What do I fear?
12. Why can't I get what I want?
13. Do other people like me? Why?
14. Are any of my psychological traits manifested physically?
15. Are any of my psychological traits manifested vocally?

Moral Qualities

1. Are the choices I will make based upon expediency of some ethical standard?
2. Who do I admire?
3. Will the pursuit of my needs lead to a moral choice?
4. What is my attitude toward the choice I make?
5. How do I express this attitude vocally and physically?

Play Qualities

1. Why am I included in the play? How do I contribute to the overall idea the playwright wises to express?
2. What similes, metaphors, or personifications are used to describe me?
3. How and why are these figures of speech related to my physical, social, psychological, and moral traits.
4. Why do I make each of my stage entrances? What do I want each time? What am I thinking about at each stage entrance?
5. Where have I been prior to each of my stage entrances? How does this affect my actions verbally and physically? What would I like to see or do when I enter?
6. How does the locale of the play make me feel?
7. How does the time of the play make me feel?
8. How does the period of the play affect my actions?

UTA HAGEN'S "NINE QUESTIONS"

Uta Hagen: Respect for Acting

1. **Who am I?** (character-search for character's life prior to play's/scene's beginning)

2. **Where am I?** (environment: location, conditions)

3. **What surrounds me?** (persons, objects, color and texture)

4. **What time is it?** (hour, minute, date, year, century, era)

5. **What are the given circumstances?** (those events, facts, and conditions occurring before or during the play/scene that affect the character and /or action)

6. **What is my relationship?** (to all of the above and to other characters-solid or shifting?)

7. **What do I want?** (Objectives or Intention –includes the overall character objectives as well as more immediate beat-to-beat intentions).

8. **What's in my way?** (Obstacle)

9. **What do I do to get what I want?** (ACTION – VERBS; physical, verbal, psychological)

SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN

"How to Prepare or Coach a Short Scene for Lab/Studio/Class/Audition Performance" Jerry Crawford

- DO EACH STEP A MINIMUM OF 60 MINUTES
- KEEP A LOG OF ALL REHEARSALS/PERFORMANCES
- COMPLETE A SHORT-FORM ROLE ANALYSIS DOCUMENT
- DO NOT FORCE LINE MEMORIZATION. LET THE LINES BE ASSIMILATED INTO MEMORY OVER THE REHEARSAL PERIOD.
- USE NO EARLY, SET BLOCKING.
- USE COSTUME AND PROP ITEMS FROM THE BEGINNING (AT LEAST USE FACSIMILES—NO PANOMIMIC WORK.)

THE SEVEN STEPS

1. Information read-through (no effort of any kind; do not work for characterization or emotion; just gather textual facts.)

2. Communion read-through (maximum eye contact, touching when comfortable and natural; pauses and paraphrasing used as necessary)

3. Improvisation (talk and walk-through; focus on covering the information learned via your own words; focus on covering all "subject" or "issue" beats in the scene.

4. Exploration (script in hand; "organic combing and search").
   - weather/climate work
   - eating/drinking work
   - opposite value work
   - entrance/exit work
   - opposite style work
   - role reversal work
   - single intention work
   - correlative art forms work
   - music work
   - special problem work (dialects, limps & handicaps, love scenes, fights, nudity, violence, etc.)
   - metaphor work
   - special object/hand prop work, etc.

5. Set the movement patterns and set all "scoring of business". Make final character and emotion decisions (choices and discarding).

6. Rhythm run-through with all performance "tech" items involved. (Full character and emotion work.)

7. Polish run-throughs (ideally with someone observing, taking and giving notes). "Preview" in front of a few persons, if possible.

Performance. (Followed by self-evaluation in writing via the completion of your log. Complete any revisions of the short-form role analysis document.)

ACTORS, DIRECTORS, COACHES CAN APPLY THE SEVEN STEPS TO FULL SCENE REHEARSALS AS WELL AS TO ENTIRE PLAY REHEARSALS.

Character Biography
(if additional space is needed use a separate sheet) ***taken from the video "Building a Character"***

Play Title: **Character Name:**

PHYSICAL

Age: **Center of Gravity:**
Posture: **Cleanliness:**
Dialect: **Hearing:**
Eyesight: **I.Q.:**
Tempo/Gestures/Movement/Speech

PERSONALITY

Secret:
Religion:
Prejudices:
Curiosity:
Imagination:
Ambition:
Education:
Ability to Reason:
Alertness/Daydreamer:
Self-Image/Ego:
Giving:
Reliability:
Jealousy/Fear/Pride/Inferiority:
Thoughts About Other Characters:

Other Characters' Thoughts About Him/Her:

ENVIRONMENT

Parents/Status: **Siblings/Status:**
Other Relatives/Status: **Husband/Wife Status:**
Residence/Status: **Job/Salary/Social Class**
Previous Action/Off-Stage Action: **Childhood:**

Superobjective:

Secondary Objectives:

Obstacles:

Passion(s):

Short-Form Role Analysis

This form was developed by Jerry Crawford, University of Nevada-Las Vegas and was distributed at a regional American College Theatre Festival workshop.

Each actor/actress is asked to complete this form and return it. Whenever possible, all answers or comments are to be based strictly on information about your character supplied in the actual text! When this is not possible, you may create answers or comments provided they are logically related to information in the text. Note: This is an opportunity for fresh, original actor creativity, provided in an organic framework for directing and acting which permits and encourages artistic individuality as well as artistic collaboration.

Name of actor/actress _____

Name of character _____

Age of character _____ Precise birthdate of character _____

Astrological sign _____ What significance, if any, to this sign?

Generally, how "physically active" is your character?

Name an animal (not a bird) which in appearance, movement, or manner seems analogous to your role.

What is it about this animal that most specifically relates to your role?

Can you name a person close to you, family or friend, who seems to be a good deal like your character? If so, name him or her. (relationship)

Can you name a famous person who seems to be a good deal like your character? If so, name him or her.

Vocally, is your character generally quiet and demure or loud and flamboyant?

If neither, how would you describe your character's vocal nature?

Basically, how would you describe the way your character likes to dress (casual, tailored, sloppy, neat, colorful, etc.)?

How would you describe the way your character likes to wear or comb his/her hair?

Select the three or four major emotions your character seems to encounter the most (fear, love, hate, anger, etc.).

Give an example from the text in which each of the examples you listed are revealed (use back of page if necessary).

What is the MF or motivational force (spine) of your character? (e.g., in Death of a Salesman, "Willy wants Biff to love him again.") State the MF of your character by beginning with the name of your character and the word, "wants. . ." If possible, the spine or "want" should relate to another character or characters in the play.

What is the major beat or action (or key moment of activity and/or decision/choice) in the play for your character (the most important moment in the play for your character)?

Describe in short phrases the major activities your character engaged in during the day of action of the play (from rising, up to the first entrance on stage).

Describe in short phrases the major activity your character engages in during all offstage time after every exit made during the action of the play.

Create a list of 5-8 major character "idiosyncrasies, likes and dislikes" for your character. (e.g. likes cheeseburgers and french fries, suffers from insomnia, reads mystery novels, likes Dustin Hoffman movies, hates John Wayne movies, etc.)

Add any other pertinent notes or comments about your character.