

S e c o n d E d i t i o n

Instructor's Manual

LITERATURE *Alive!*

*The Art
Of
Oral Interpretation*

Maryanne Lenning

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Introduction

Overview of Oral Interpretation

Oral interpretation is the presentation of literature for an audience, that is, bringing the printed page to life in performance. The performer has four resources to do this job: the literature itself, the analysis of the literature, the performer's body, and the performer's voice. The oral interpretation performance is more than reading the literature out loud; it is a performer's way of sharing what he or she has learned about that literature and now believes it to mean. It requires an analysis of literature and an understanding of the tools of performance, bridging the fields of literature study and performance art. The literary analysis provides a different angle from which one can look at literature. *Literature Alive's* focus on the performance tools of the body and voice will make each student a better communicator.

The Oral Interpretation Course

Teaching an oral interpretation course, just like any performance-based speech communication course, presents a number of inherent challenges for teacher and student. The first concerns the classroom setting. The classroom must be a secure and comfortable place where students will not feel threatened. That security should also include a degree of discipline so that all students will feel safe and continue to be willing to perform. How the teacher deals with the first exercises in the text will be very important as the students are discovering how much they are willing to share with the class. Keeping the environment open and non-judgmental will encourage students to take chances at sharing their inner emotions and experimenting even more.

A second challenge is the phenomenon of stagefright. Even the most talented performer can experience nervousness prior to a performance. Students must be assured that feeling nervous is natural. It may even help to work through relaxation exercises with the class. Keeping the classroom a safe and secure place will also help. But most helpful will be to assure students that stagefright is a natural bodily response. The body, when faced with the stress of performing, produces extra energy. Unchannelled energy can produce symptoms of stagefright. The students must recognize how their bodies react to such a situation and put the available energy to work in their performance.

Another challenge occurs when students are not familiar with the effort required in a performance course. Some may start the class with the feeling that the course will be easy because the work they are asked to do is different from what is required in other courses. Possible misconceptions about the work requirement should be removed as soon as the class begins. This may require a discussion of the differences between knowing a fact and making that knowledge clear to another through performance. It may also require a clear presentation of teacher expectations in terms of journals, practices, homework, and performance. The text suggests that the students may be

asked by their teacher to respond to the **Reflections** in a notebook. If the teacher intends to use such a journaling activity, the students should be made aware of that expectation at the start of the class.

Finally, the grading or evaluation of a student performance is always a bit subjective. Students sometimes sense that it is an arbitrary process. To assist in overcoming this problem, students should be made aware of what is expected in each of their performances and the criteria to be used in grading. Students should begin to develop their own evaluating skills by responding to the performances of others in the class in the form of peer evaluations.

Using the Student Text

The student text is written for students to read and use. The authors speak directly to the students with a supportive and challenging voice. The students are encouraged to use the various activities to find out what they can do. The activities can be done independently or in the classroom. However the **Getting Involved** activities are used, classroom discussions based on the text and student readings will be beneficial. A variety of activities are presented in the text. The teacher will not be able to use every activity. Some may not seem appropriate to the group. Some may not fit the time constraints. There are enough activities to fit any classroom, and the teacher needs to select those that will best fit the particular class. When selecting the activities to use, the teacher should always keep in focus the students' performance skill needs.

Activities ask students to take a risk in stretching themselves as performers. Students need a classroom which allows them a certain amount of creative freedom but also assures them of safety from ridicule. The teacher should consider this along with his or her own level of comfort when assigning such activities in class. As students are directed in the text to keep an open mind in doing the activities, teachers are directed to focus on the students' continuing learning process. The teacher is asked to help them build and improve by encouraging what is quality in their activities and performances.

Activities are frequently followed by **Reflections**. Whether students are required to respond to these questions in a journal or in a class discussion, it is important that the students do need time to reflect on the activities and what they have learned. Teacher-led discussion can direct student response and help the students synthesize the learning.

As the teacher determines which activities to use and how to work with them, note that the early activities will benefit from a total class participation so that the teacher can set the tone for expectations and a respectful response to others. Setting that tone at the start is essential to encourage all students to do their best. But later, if the amount of time available in class is limited because of the length of class periods or the number of students, the teacher may set up activity groups or performance groups for the sharing of the activities. These groups must be selected carefully to mix students of differing ability levels, but throughout the course, the group can become a useful practice area.

Throughout the text students are prompted to complete a **Performer's Journal**.

These journal writing assignments are important because they make the student identify precisely what he or she is attempting in each performance; they ask the student to identify why such choices are appropriate for the literature. Since the preparation of a performance is not tangible and cannot be graded as such, the student's own preparation will help the performer feel accountable and certain that he or she, as performer, has prepared the performance.

The textbook provides a variety of excerpts from literature for student work in activities or individual performance. As students move from the textbook itself to literature at large, they can benefit from specific direction in finding sources of selections and cuttings. School librarians can be very helpful in directing students. The teacher's own interests and experience can also be a help. A classroom collection of literature books may be used as a springboard to other sources. Specific suggestions are made later in this manual about finding sources for the different types of literary selections.

A last comment about the responsibility of a performer to a piece of literature is necessary. The dominant message to students in the text is that the literature itself is the focus of any interpretation. The integrity of the literary work, its meaning and intention, must be upheld by any performance. Cutting sections of the literature may be necessary for a performance to fit a time limit, but altering words to change the meaning of the literature destroys the author's intent. The performer must be aware of his or her own connection to the author as well as the author's created speaker within a selection.

Curriculum Planning

This text can be used in a variety of courses, from a year long oral interpretation class to a six week unit in an introductory speech class. It can even be used in a literature course to reinforce and emphasize literary concepts. When determining a timeline, the teacher will need to adjust the teaching to fit the abilities of the students and the size of the class. In a short course, such as a unit within a speech class, the chapters from the text must be selected to fit the needs of the students and the specific goals of the unit. Such a possibility would be presenting the first three chapters, to teach the basics of interpretation; then selecting a genre of literature: Descriptive Prose, Narrative Prose, Drama, or Poetry. Since each chapter builds on the previous one, some basics may be lost, but students will at least be exposed to oral interpretation.

The course which allows a quarter for oral interpretation, as in a speech class, would allow the class to cover the first seven chapters. This would not allow for a final performance of each literary type, but students could learn the techniques to interpret each.

A semester course in oral interpretation would allow for a more thorough use of the text. A week could be devoted to each of the first three chapters. Then, the course would devote two weeks to each literary type: Descriptive Prose, Narrative Prose, Drama, and Poetry. The last five weeks of the semester could be devoted to Children's Literature

(two weeks), World Literature (one week), and Documentary Literature (two weeks). This would allow time for students to discuss the chapter, work through some of the activities, then prepare and present a short performance.

The ideal situation for teaching from this text would be a year long oral interpretation course. This would allow for a thorough treatment of each chapter, practice performances, graded performances, public performances, and Ensemble Performances. The final exam for such a course would be the preparation and performance of a solo program.

Assessment

Teachers are given the major task of assessing how well the individual students have achieved the set goals for the course. First, each chapter indicates the learner outcomes. The teacher can ascertain the student success in meeting those outcomes. In some cases a quiz or exam may help. In other situations the student performance itself is the only method of measurement. The assessment of a performance can be a challenge to the teacher; therefore sample evaluation forms are provided at the end of this manual.

Suggestions for Evaluation

Evaluating student performance is a constant job for the instructor, and yet in a performance course, the evaluation process can defeat the purpose of instruction. As the exercises are only the first steps toward building to an interpretation, the students should not feel threatened with grades, especially as the course begins. It may be sufficient to determine whether or not the students completed the assignment. If the goal were met, the assignment could be graded as pass/fail or participation: yes or no.

Each activity includes **Reflections**, questions which ask the student to reflect on what he or she has learned from the activity. The **Reflections** for each activity should be completed. Students should be expected to keep their responses in a journal or class notebook. While these need not be graded after every exercise, the questions and the thinking process that this requires of the students is essential to helping them become better interpreters. The journals will require that the teacher spend a great deal of time reading, but the students need that reinforcement as they move through the challenges of performance. At an early point in the course, the teacher should let the students know the value of the process by collecting their work and commenting on their reflections.

Grades can be given for the various aspects of the class: in-class activities, journals, practice performances, review questions, quizzes and tests, and performances. Assigning a grade to in-class activities may be impossible. These could be graded in terms of participation points as suggested earlier. Journal grading must indicate the level of involvement and sharing that the writing reveals. Practice performances, worth less than the major performances for the unit, could be graded as participation. Critique or evaluation forms provided at the end of this manual can help focus the grading of a

performance to the skills being taught. These forms are intended to give the teacher direction in responding to student performance and to help the students understand what will be expected. It is appropriate to share with the students how they will be evaluated prior to the performance.

How to Use the Instructor's Manual

Each chapter of the student text is introduced in the Instructor's Manual with a short overview of the chapter including general teaching suggestions. This overview is followed by a list of specific goals or learner outcomes for the chapter. Comments on the major sections of the chapter follow, along with suggestions for teacher use. Since so much of the text involves the activities, the manual does give the teacher some helps with each activity in terms of specific goals, requirements, procedure, and follow-up methods. For some activities the Instructor's Manual also includes suggestions for supplementing the activity presented in the student text.

Following the chapter content comments are two sections for teacher use: **Vocabulary Development** and **Review Questions**. The **Vocabulary Development** section lists the terms presented and used in each chapter. The teacher may be able to use those lists when summarizing, reviewing, or evaluating the chapter. The **Review Questions** present objective information students should have learned after working through the chapter in the form of questions. Students could be assigned to define the vocabulary terms and answer the review questions.

Following the chapter commentary are sample teacher evaluation and peer evaluation forms for each performance assigned in the text. The forms can be copied for use in evaluating student performance.

From Classroom to Public Performance

Since oral interpretation involves an audience as well as the performer, a logical step after individual work and practice is the field of public performance. This sense of audience may be fulfilled through classroom performance as students who make up the audience are called upon to respond to performances. If the students want to go further, opportunities exist in public performances and competitions.

One type of public performance is the oral interpretation of literature by students for student audiences. This could take the form of an in-school performance that highlights the work of a semester or year. Such performances can use literature ranging from the classic writers to local students. However, in any public performance, the sponsor must be aware of copyright laws and the limitations they place on performance.

A second type of public performance extends from the classroom into interscholastic competition. Competition in forensics or on speech teams is sponsored on the local, state, and national level. State-sponsored speech and theatre associations or high school associations organize activities such as festivals and competitions for high school stu-

dents. The National Forensic League, with headquarters in Ripon, Wisconsin, has chapters in every state and territory in the United States. Contacting an NFL member school in your area will introduce you to colleagues and open up a source of assistance in the competitive field of interpretation.

Warming Up

The introduction in *Literature Alive!* is simple and written for the students, but it also presents basic information necessary to the starting of the class. The introduction presents the text organization and the author's attitude toward performance and interpretation.

Learner Outcomes

After reading the introduction the students will

- understand the meaning of oral interpretation
- set up their journals **Reflections** and **Performer's Journal** activities

Teaching the Introduction

Assign students the reading of the Introduction. Then in class, discuss with them the definition of oral interpretation. Before they can become interpreters, they must know what an interpreter is. As the class works to define oral interpretation, identify times they have used this, such as when reading stories to a child. Let them identify times they have been audiences to interpretation. Lead the class into a discussion of how oral interpretation differs from other types of performance, what makes a presentation enjoyable, and why one would choose to present literature through oral interpretation and not in other forms such as film.

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Chapter 1: Awakening and Contacting Your Body (page 2)

Chapter Overview

Students come to an interpretation class aware that they will read selections. They do not always have a clear understanding of how their bodies will help them present that literature to an audience. By beginning with the body as a communication tool, the text reinforces this importance for the students. The body can communicate different moods, attitudes, and feelings to an audience. But before the student can put these body tools to work, the student must be aware of the connection between the tools of his or her own body and the requirements of a piece of literature. A variety of activities are presented in this chapter to help students reflect on tools they possess and moods these tools can express.

The chapter ends with a number of literary selections and the assignment that students assess the degree of body tension, gesture, and movement required by each selection. The teacher may want to ask the students to select one cutting and perform it for the class, focusing on using the tools of the body in making the selection come alive for the class. These performances could be done in small groups where students respond to and critique the performances of their peers.

Learner Outcomes

After reading this chapter and completing the activities the students will

- define kinesics

- understand how the body communicates through kinesics

- define metaphor

- define empathy

- use gestures to communicate an emotion

- use posture to communicate an emotion

- use body tone to communicate an emotion

- understand how facial expressions can communicate a mood

- know how the body can be used as a tool for oral interpretation

- use various body tools to create an oral interpretation

Bringing Words Alive

The teacher can help students understand the differences between animate and inanimate organisms by discussing the differences between them. The discussion can build to performance and interpretation by considering why the animate ones might be more interesting to watch or might be better communicators.

Body Language and Literature Performance

Students may be able to understand kinesics by considering the differences in their comprehension of a message which is only heard, as on the radio, as opposed to one that is heard and seen, as on television. They may be able to relate to a song that is heard as opposed to the music video of that song. Give them an example using an audiotape and a videotape of the same commercial or music video. Since interpretation is dynamic, requiring the total body, students are given the opportunity to become aware of the various body tools they have at their command and how to use them.

The Conductor

Review this section with the class as an extension of the discussions of their **Reflections**. The concept of the literature as the “conductor” or controller of a performance is essential to form the basis of comprehending interpretation. It may be necessary to reinforce this idea later on by reviewing it as students prepare performances.

Physicalizing Metaphors

Discuss with the class the meaning of a metaphor. Before the students can present the metaphors in the activity, discuss what the metaphors mean and why they have come into common usage.

Gestures, Facial Expressions, and Body Tone

Define gestures and discuss them as they can be used to communicate to others. Have students identify specific gestures that reflect specific meanings for them, such as open arms or hands on hips. How do they “read” people who don’t gesture or who gesture continuously? Once they are aware of how they interpret the gestures of others, they can consider how such gestures might be used in the interpretation of literature. As they consider the specific aspects of body language an interpreter can use, they should be aware that effective gestures focus the audience on the literature, not the performer.

Discuss what facial expressions are and how they communicate by focusing on the faces students see each day. How much can they learn by looking at a parent’s face

before a word is spoken? Discuss the definition of body tone by relating to the emotions they portrayed in the **Body Walks** activity. Have them describe how their body looks and feels when they are angry. Consider how the body works as a unit to express a single emotion, rather than parts working independently. **The Texture Movement** activity reinforces this connection.

You, Your Selection, and Your Audience

As the activities begin to move back to literature, a discussion of the goal or purpose of interpretation may help to focus the final assignment for this chapter. Through discussion, relate the work of the body to the goal of interpretation, making the words come alive for an audience.

Selections for Body Work

The goal of this activity is to help students learn to stretch, relax, and use the different body parts that they can move individually and combined. The teacher will need to provide music with an obvious, steady beat to be played in the background during this activity. For the procedure, follow the text. Call out the specific body part for focus, moving from fingers, up to the elbow, to the shoulder, and then to the neck and face. Take your time, letting the students respond completely to one part before moving on. Next move down from the waist, to the knees, legs, ankles, and toes. The second part of the activity involves a repetition of the first part, but working on the body parts as a connection to the others. The third part requires the leader to clap periodically to “freeze” the machine, then shout “go” to start it up again. As a follow-up, have students complete the **Reflections** following the activity in their journals and be prepared to discuss their responses in class.

Refining Body Awareness: A

The goal of this activity is to move from simple physical body movements to using the body to respond to sounds. The teacher should prepare a range of sounds such as a scream, cry, giggle, shout, and laugh. The teacher can present these live or prepare them on tape. The activity requires a wide range of sounds. To do the activity, present a sound and have students react physically. Give the students time to respond before moving on to another sound. As the activity continues, call on a student to lead by giving different vocal impulses. For a follow-up, have students respond to the **Reflections** at the end of the activity in their journals and be prepared to discuss their responses.

Refining Body Awareness: B

Here the goal is to continue using the body as a tool of communication, now connecting to others to simulate the motion of a machine. The students should read the activity

ahead of time. The teacher will need to divide the class into groups of at least four. Larger groups with numbers up to eight can work. Give the group some time to consider their action, then let them go. The machine should start slowly and build gradually. It can also be effective to allow a small group to begin and then ask individuals to find a place to add themselves to the motion already begun. As a follow-up, have students respond to the **Reflections** following the activity in their journals and be prepared to discuss their responses.

The Body Talks

This activity focuses more specifically on creating emotions through the use of the body tools. The teacher will need to prepare the two envelopes with the specific emotions and body parts as explained in the text. More may be added to the list. Have individual students select one slip from each envelope and then express that emotion with the selected body part. They should return the slips to the envelope to create a large number of possible combinations. It may be helpful to divide the class into groups so that every student has the chance to perform more than once. Have students respond to the **Reflections** following the activity in their journals and discuss their responses with the class.

Body Metaphors

This activity is designed to continue practice at using the body tools, focusing on sharing a meaning through body language. The teacher should make the assignment to the class, having the students perform individually. Let the members of the audience discover the metaphor being presented. As a follow-up, do the **Reflections** questions through a class discussion.

The Body Walks

The purpose of this activity is to focus on communicating an emotion through the use of one specific movement. The teacher should prepare slips of paper with the different emotions named in the text. Call on students, one at a time. Have each student select a slip, then walk across the front of the room using his or her body to reflect that emotion. Let the audience guess the emotion. Afterwards, discuss what aspect of the different movements reflected the emotion. Have students respond to their own walk by answering the **Reflections** in their journals. Discuss the different student responses.

Texture Movement

This activity is designed to have the students sense the body's ability to respond totally to external influences. Have the students physically respond as they would when walking

through space, taffy, a slick floor, foam rubber. Or ask the students to just think about their reactions to the different substances and then describe the different ways they would feel in these places. Have students identify how their bodies would respond.

Move to the Music

The goal of this activity is to give students an opportunity to determine their body's reaction to various musical selections. The teacher will need to prepare a tape with a variety of musical selections ranging from classical to rock, heavy metal, and rap. With students working individually, play a selection and have them physically respond. With students working in groups, have them determine a group move or response. Have the students answer the **Reflections** in their journals for each selection. Discuss the answers, focusing on what they did with their bodies and why. Lead the discussion to the similarities between music and literature for a performer.

Literary Tune-In: A

This activity moves to the students' physical response to a piece of literature or being an audience to that response. The teacher will need to prepare to read the selection "The Hat Act" in the text. As the activity begins, divide the class in half. Have one group mime the movements suggested in the piece while the other group responds as the audience indicated in the selection. The mime group should respond to the **Reflections** following the activity. Discuss their movements and changes throughout the story. Let those who watched respond to what they saw. Ask whether any specific reactions seemed more believable than others.

Literary Tune-In: B

The goal of this activity is to help students focus their physical reaction to a specific feeling of pain. The teacher will need to read through the selection ahead of time. Then, read the activity aloud to the class as they respond physically. Have students complete the **Reflections** and discuss their responses.

Literary Tune-In: C

This activity builds on the previous ones, increasing the students' experiences with the physical cues in literature. Divide the class into small groups and have one individual read the selection from "Flight" to the students in the group. The student reading should interpret what is being read, focusing on the bodily creation of the scene being described. Afterwards, have the students answer the **Reflections** and share their responses in a discussion with the class.

Eye-Openers

In this activity, students should come to realize what tools they can use in creating a physical response to literature. The students will need their textbooks for the last part of this exercise. The teacher should lead the students through the first three parts of the activity by reading through the directions and having them do as directed. Then let them do #4, having a student read the selection from Poe's "The Premature Burial" aloud. They should answer the questions in **Reflections**. The teacher should lead the discussion of their responses to the **Reflections**, finding the various ways the story could be presented.

The Body and Performance

The goal of this activity is to help students identify the body tools they can use to interpret specific pieces of literature. Have students read the selections, assessing the degree of body tension, gestures, and movement required. For follow-up, choose a specific selection for each student's response in answering the **Reflections** at the end of the activity.

A Performance

Another way to use these selections would be to assign a performance and give students an opportunity to put to use what they have learned. Have each student select one excerpt to prepare and present to the class. If time is limited, have the students perform for a group in class. The groups could be divided in order to get a variety of selections in each group. In such a performance, the **Reflections** should be completed as the first assignment for their **Performer's Journal**. The group members would act as an audience for the performance, responding to the literature and the performance and evaluating the student's success by using an evaluation tool such as the peer-evaluation form found at the end of this manual. The performer can evaluate his or her own performance using the questions from the peer evaluation form, but responding to the questions in their **Performer's Journal**.

Vocabulary Development

The following words are defined in the text:

kinesics
empathy

metaphor
posture
gestures

body tone
facial expressions

Review Questions

1. Define kinesics.
Kinesics is body language or visible body behavior.
2. List the subcategories of kinesics.
posture and stance
muscle tension
gesture
facial expressions
eye contact
3. What different ways can posture be used in interpretation?
Posture can reveal emotional or physical state of being. Confidence and contentment are revealed through a straight and secure stance. Discouragement is shown through a slumped posture.
4. How can stance be used to create a character?
The stance of the body reflects the character's attitude toward the world. How the character stands shows the audience a specific character's attitude.
5. In what different ways can gestures be used for a performance?
Gestures can enhance a performer's effectiveness by stating or presenting the subtle emotions with a simple movement. They can indicate every emotion on the scale from love to jealousy or comfort to nervousness.
6. How can gestures be overused?
If a performer calls attention to himself or herself by overusing gestures, and the audience concentrates on the gestures and not the literature, the effect is lost.
7. What can facial expressions bring to a performance?
Facial expressions can help the performer reflect the emotions behind the experiences or feelings in the literary work.
8. What is body tone?
Body tone is the performer's overall degree of body tension or relaxation.
9. How is body tone used in interpretation?
The performer's degree of relaxation or tension reveals the unspoken feelings revealed in a work of literature.
10. What is empathy?
Empathy is one's ability to feel with another the emotion being presented.