

# MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

## BREAKDOWN A SCENE

Practice the skill of interpreting a script – a part of the theatre production planning process – by breaking down a scene, using Melbourne Theatre Company's [Script Notes series](#).

## STRUCTURE

There are four parts to this activity:

- Part 1 – Watch a video.
- Part 2 – Annotate a piece of text.
- Part 3 – Write some short responses.
- Part 4 – Perform the text.

Depending on the length of text, this could take one 50-minute period.

## AIMS

- Learn how to document and annotate an interpretation of a script for VCE Theatre Studies [Unit 3 Area of Study 2, Interpreting a script](#).
- Develop knowledge and skills about the planning stage of theatre production processes.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A short excerpt of text from a play, to apply the learning in the video. The participants in the video are using three pages of script from Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. You can use any text in any language.
- Access to the internet and this webpage [Script Notes with Nikki Shiels and Anne-Louise Sarks](#). The [Education Hub](#) is free to join. Logged-in teachers can share links to pages, so individual students do not need to have an account.
- A space to perform if you'd like to rehearse the scene after you've broken it down.
- Pens and highlighters.

## ACTIVITY

### PART 1 – WATCH

- Watch Actor Nikki Shiels and Director Anne-Louise Sarks discuss Scene 1 of *A Streetcar Named Desire*: <https://www.mtc.com.au/education-hub/script-notes-with-nikki-shiels-and-anne-louise-sarks/>
- As you watch, take note of what Nikki Shiels and Anne-Louise Sarks discuss.

## PART 2 – ANNOTATE

- Select a text excerpt from any script. Make sure you can write on your copy.
- Do a first read of your text and write down any words that immediately spring to mind. For example, Anne-Louise Sarks mentions writing 'private' at 00:54.
- Highlight any stage directions. Anne-Louise Sarks discusses examples of stage directions at 1:10.
- Highlight any punctuation. Nikki Shiels discusses punctuation at 1:45 and 3:23.
- Write any blocking ideas for characters or props. As Director, Anne-Louise Sarks discusses a directorial choice about a character's blocking at 2:43.
- In a different coloured pen, note down some ideas about speed or pace. Anne-Louise Sarks discusses her ideas about Nikki Shiels (as Blanche) increasing her pace of delivery at 2:47.

## PART 3 – WRITE

Answer the following questions about your scene.

1. Describe the setting and the characters. Think about what's important to establish in this scene. As an example, Actor Nikki Shiels discusses what her character Blanche brings to the scene at 00:26 – 00:46.
2. Describe how your characters are feeling as they enter the scene? Director Anne-Louise Sarks discusses Blanche's emotions at 3:06.
3. What does the punctuation in your text indicate about how characters are feeling and how actors should perform their scenes?

## PART 4 – PERFORM

- Now you've looked more closely at your scene, you may like to perform it, taking on board your discoveries. Depending on the scene, you might need to cast your peers in roles.

## CONCLUSION

If you've worked your way through this activity, you will have:

- Experimented with various ways to interpret and perform scripted drama.
- Practiced an important part of the theatre production planning process by interpreting a script.

To extend this activity, you could breakdown the same scene again, making different choices about stage directions, character intentions or delivery of dialogue. Or you could also breakdown other sections of your chosen text.

## LEARN MORE

To learn more about Melbourne Theatre Company's 2024 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, directed by Anne-Louise Sarks, click [here](https://www.mtc.com.au/education-hub/).

*A Streetcar Named Desire*: 9 Jul – 17 Aug 2024 at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse.

Explore our ever-expanding library of digital resources about theatre making on our Education Hub. It's free to sign up: <https://www.mtc.com.au/education-hub/>