

## DRAMATIC ETUDES

**AGES:** Middle School, High School, College, Adults

### DESCRIPTION

A character building/acting exercise using etudes from *Great Scenes for Young Actors - Volume II*.

### MATERIALS

A couple copies of the etudes from which your students can read

### FULL LESSON PLAN

I found these Etudes in *Great Scenes for Young Actors - Volume II* edited by Slight and Sharrar published by A Smith and Kraus Book.

According to Slight and Sharrar - "No matter the role, the actor must make certain decisions about the life of a character in order to play the real 'want'. Frequently what a character says isn't necessarily what the character wants - rather it is the vehicle through which the character attempts to get what they want. Furthermore, it is only one vehicle in the attempt to reach the ultimate objective."

I take these simple etude studies and I have the students read them out loud with no inflection in their voice. No pitch, rate, or volume change or any articulation is heard in their delivery. This way they simply hear the words out loud with no preconceived ideas. They are then given 15 seconds to decide who they think is saying these words and what that character wants in the scene. Perhaps a mother, or a best friend. The students make decisions about their character and their wants and then deliver the lines with that information. As partners it is interesting to see how the character and wants can develop the scene. After the 15 seconds the pair reads the etude together as the characters they just developed. These could be used with most age groups.

Below are two of the etudes from *Great Scenes for Young Actors - Volume II*:

Etude #5

A: We can't stay here.

B: Why not?

A: It's not safe.

B: You keep saying that.

A: Because it's true.

B: It seems quiet enough.

A: Don't kid yourself.

B: When do you think it will happen?

A: Could be any moment.

B: Or maybe never.

A: I doubt that.  
B: Are you afraid?  
A: Even more than yesterday.  
B: At least we're together.  
A: But for how long?  
B: Does anyone know we're here?  
A: I'm sure of it.  
B: Did you just hear something?

#### Etude #7

A: I hate you.  
B: You don't mean that.  
A: More than you'll ever know.  
B: Why are you telling me now.  
A: Because I think you need to know.  
B: That really hurts.  
A: You've changed so much.  
B: Not by choice.  
A: I can't understand you.  
B: I'm not asking you to.  
A: It's her fault, you know.  
B: Don't blame her.  
A: She changed you.  
B: Maybe.  
A: I thought you were stronger than that.  
B: So did I.  
A: I don't think we should see each other again.  
B: That sounds final.  
A: It's the only way.  
B: I feel lost.