

Stream of Consciousness

Preparing for playwriting

What: Narrative style in which the emphasis is on the inner monologue of the character; his or her thoughts are recorded as they would appear. The language can be verbose and fluid, with more importance placed on emotions and reactions to surroundings than on grammar and punctuation.

Example: "Jewel and I come up from the field, following the path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching us from the cottonhouse can see Jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own.

The path runs straight as a plumb-line, worn smooth by feet and baked brick-hard by July, between the green rows of laidby cotton, to the cottonhouse in the center of the field, where it turns and circles the cottonhouse at four soft right angles and goes on across the field again, worn so by feet in fading precision.

The cottonhouse is of rough logs, from between which the chinking has long fallen. Square, with a broken roof set at a single pitch, it leans in empty and shimmering dilapidation in the sunlight, a single broad window in two opposite walls giving onto the approaches of the path. When we reach it I turn and follow the path which circles the house. Jewel, fifteen feet behind me, looking straight ahead, steps in a single stride through the window. Still staring straight ahead, his pale eyes like wood set into his wooden face, he crosses the floor in four strides with the rigid gravity of a cigar store Indian dressed in patched overalls and endued with life from the hips down, and steps in a single stride through the opposite window and into the path again just as I come around the corner. In single file and five feet apart and Jewel now in front, we go on up the path toward the foot of the bluff" —*As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner

Why: To explore the emotions, thoughts, and ideas within each of you; to mine your mind for playwriting material.

Your task: Complete two one-hour long writing sessions, collecting your thoughts and the thoughts of characters you create as stream of consciousness narration. The end product should be 10 pages double-spaced.

The process:

1. After warming up (as we did in class), seek solitude and begin to let the words spill onto paper (or screen). Do not critique your thoughts, just let them out. Write in the present tense. Do not fix spelling or punctuation. The point is to write continuously. Write in this manner until you have filled two pages.
2. At the beginning of the third page, begin to describe a place. Any place at all. Do this for as long as you can. See where this leads you.
3. At some point:
 - a. Write as someone younger than yourself.
 - b. Spitball some ideas for a one-act. Just write them down as they come to you.
 - c. Explore different emotions. Let your mood change as different thoughts come to you.
 - d. Write what you sense, instead of what you think.

Note: It is important that you ignore the urge to check your phone, Facebook, Twitter, email, etc. while you are writing. It's difficult, I know, but the process of writing works best when we let ourselves fall into the pattern of language.