

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Bookwriters – Finding the Voice of the Character

*If you are enrolled as a bookwriter, please do this assignment only.*

*If you are enrolled as a bookwriter/lyricist, Please do this assignment separately from the lyric assignment as they do not relate to one another..*

*If you are enrolled as a bookwriter/composer, please do both the bookwriter assignment and the composer assignment.*

Rewrite this scene. Let HE be a young machinist in Paducah. He is good at his job, using computers to design and create small parts for a manufacturer of custom aircraft interiors. He has ambitions to be a full-fledged mechanical engineer someday, but he had to interrupt his education after two years at a local community college in order to go to work and help out the family when his father died. He likes jazz and action-adventure movies. And he really likes HER. Let SHE be a native of Paducah also. She and he grew up in the same neighborhood. They've known each other since they were infants. She is still in school, planning to open a day care center and take care of the children of working parents. She enjoys working with children and hopes to have several of her own one day. She likes him, but is afraid that his sense of responsibility to his family will put off any possibility of a serious relationship for a long time...and she's ready now.

Rewrite the scene with much more information about who the characters are and what they want from each other. Remember, the key to dialogue is subtext. Let us learn what the characters really think and feel through what they say, but don't let them talk about what they really think and feel.

One mentor of mine said it this way: "The words are not the life of the play. The life of the play produces the words!" Often what characters say is 180 degrees the opposite of what they really mean.

A tip: The key to this assignment is not necessarily to make the scene *longer*, but to revise the dialogue to contain more information about the characters through their speech patterns. We've given you the basic background of the couple – now you are asked to put that information to use in their dialogue.

**HE**

There's going to be a dance at the church hall Saturday night.

**SHE**

I know. Why are you telling me? I bet you want me to go with you.

**HE**

I didn't say that.

**SHE**

I bet Mary Jones turned you down and now you want to ask me to go to the dance with you.

**HE**

I never even asked Mary Jones.

**SHE**

I bet you did and she turned you down. And I'm your second choice.

**HE**

No, you're not. Why would I ask Mary Jones? I hardly know her.

**SHE**

You better get to know her, because I have no intention of going to the dance with you.

**HE**

That's good, because I didn't ask you to go with me.

**SHE**

Good. And even if you did ask me, I won't get in that old car you drive. It's falling apart.

**HE**

Don't worry about that. Whoever goes with me will travel in comfort. I rented a car.

**SHE**

What kind of a car?

**HE**

What do you care? You're not going with me.

**SHE**

I bet you didn't rent any car. You're just saying that to make me want to go to the dance with you.

**HE**

I am not just saying that. I rented a new convertible.

**SHE**

And you didn't ask Mary Jones to go with you?

**HE**

No. Maybe I'll ask her tonight. Do you think she'll say yes?

**Composers – Musical Diction**

*If you are enrolled as a composer, please do this assignment only.*

*If you are enrolled as a composer/lyricist, develop the music to work with the lyric assignment below.*

Here is a stanza of a lyric. Create a melody that serves the rhyme scheme. Then develop that melody into a 32-bar A-A-B-A song.

I just hum a little here  
Tap a little there  
Put it altogether with my usual flair  
It's easy for me to write a song.

Notice there is only one rhyme in the A section. In the B section you create, make it clear where the rhymes ought to be placed. Highlight the notes under which the rhyming syllables would be set.

### **Lyricists – Voice of the Character in Music**

*If you are enrolled as a lyricist please do this assignment only.*

*If you are enrolled as a composer/lyricist, see the composer assignment above.*

*If you are enrolled as a bookwriter/lyricist, see the bookwriter assignment above*

Use the A section set out for the composers above. Write a second A section, a B section and a final A section to complete the chorus. You may, if you like, create a slight coda, or extension of the form in the final A section in order to rhyme the last line which probably ends in the word “song.”

Honor the character who is singing this song: A brash young man, maybe 15 or 16 years old in 1944 (during World War II) who is certain he is the next Irving Berlin. He lives in a small town in Pennsylvania, has never traveled anywhere, but dreams of living in places like New York and Hollywood. He has the naif's fantasy of fame, where he can do no wrong, everybody loves everything he writes or does, and nothing ever goes wrong. He can act, he can sing, he can dance. He does these things almost exclusively, often getting into some trouble with his parents and teachers because of it, even as they recognize his talent and ambition. He has a girlfriend, and he intends to take her with him on the rollercoaster of fame and fortune. She can sing and act and dance too!

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<sup>1</sup> Class notes from Manuscript Evaluation with Michael Gordon, UCLA 1975