



## 3

*Voice and Diction*

As Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Dustin Hoffman must speak persuasively to Portia, played by Geraldine Jones, as well as project his voice in order to be heard from the last row of seats in the theater.



*peak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.*

—from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

# SETTING THE SCENE

## Focus Questions

What are the keys to a good speaking voice?

Why is breath control so important?

How can you develop a rich, strong, and interesting stage voice?

## Vocabulary

|           |            |         |           |               |
|-----------|------------|---------|-----------|---------------|
| quality   | pitch      | volume  | schwa     | pronunciation |
| resonance | inflection | rate    | voiceless |               |
| nasality  | monotone   | diction | voiced    |               |

An expressive voice and clear, correct speech are not only indispensable tools for the actor, they are also assets in almost everyone's life. Personnel directors list them among the qualities needed for any position that requires working with others.

This chapter will show you how to meet the speaking requirements that plays, roles, directors—and employers—demand. It presents fundamental principles that you must understand and apply, along with simple and practical exercises that are designed to improve and polish your speaking ability. If you understand these principles and practice the exercises regularly, you can dramatically improve the effectiveness of your voice.

## *Developing an Effective Voice*

There is nothing mysterious or complicated about developing an effective voice. It depends primarily on bodily relaxation, proper breathing, and good posture. Few people realize the close relationship between the voice, the emotions, and the body. The voice of a person who is ill, tired, worried, angry, nervous, hurried, or tense reflects those feelings. The voice becomes high-pitched, monotonous, or colorless. On the other hand, a person who is poised, self-confident, and healthy is more likely to have a pleasing voice. Consequently, your first efforts should be directed toward building both a vigorous, well-controlled body and a confident, healthy attitude.

Voice is produced by the air from the lungs passing over the vocal folds, which are thin curtains of muscles with delicate edges. These folds set up vibrations, or waves. The vibrations become sounds and are amplified when they strike the resonating chambers of the throat, head, nose, and mouth. Exactly what sounds are produced depends on the shape of these chambers, and this shape is determined by the position of the tongue, soft palate, lips, and lower jaw. For correct speech and voice production, it

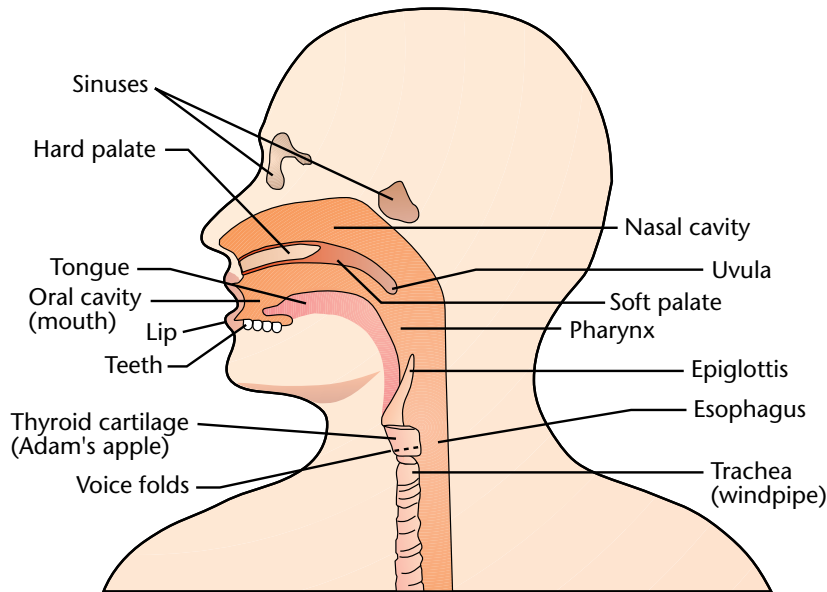


### **THE GREATS**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Orson Welles's rumbling, resonant voice communicated conviction and authority. Even in the medium of radio, his power and presence could be felt.

## THE VOCAL TRACT



Knowing where the resonating chambers of the mouth, nose, head, and throat are and knowing how to change the shape of those chambers to produce different sounds can be helpful as you are developing your voice.

is necessary for you to have an open, relaxed throat; a flexible tongue and lips; and a relaxed lower jaw. It is also necessary to practice deep central breathing.

For an actor, exercising the voice is as important as exercising and conditioning the body. Every student of the theater should begin a program of voice training as soon as possible. Poor vocal habits can be eliminated within an amazingly short period of time by regular exercise and deliberate concentration.

## RELAXATION

The degree of relaxation determines the carrying power of the vowel sounds. Proper vowel sounds are the key to a powerful and beautiful voice, and vowel sounds are made with an open, relaxed throat, a relaxed jaw, and flexible lips. Therefore, before attempting any voice exercises, you must relax, consciously doing so both mentally and physically. A tense or tight throat will cause hoarseness when you try to project your voice in practice or in performance.

With practice, you can learn to run through the following process when you are waiting to make a speech or standing in the wings before an entrance onto the stage. You will also find it an excellent cure for stage fright.

## CUE

You should spend about fifteen minutes a day doing the exercises in this chapter. It is best to choose a time when you are feeling fresh and relaxed.

1. Stretch your whole body as an animal does after a nap. (Incidentally, watching a cat relax and move is an excellent exercise in itself.) Feel the big muscles of your back, legs, and arms ease first.
2. Imagine that a warm, relaxing shower is falling over your head. Imagine it passing over your forehead and wiping out the frown lines. Imagine it releasing the tension of the little muscles around your eyes, nose, mouth, and especially your cheeks. Roll your head first to the left, then to the right, keeping the neck muscles relaxed.
3. Imagine the shower pouring over your whole body, relaxing your arms and fingertips, your chest, lungs, diaphragm, and even your toes. You should be yawning by this time, and that is one of the best voice exercises.

Before you begin vocal work, run through the posture exercises on page 30. (You may also want to do the breathing exercises on pages 68 and 69.) The importance of an erect, easily relaxed body should not be underestimated. The following exercises demand careful use of your vocal apparatus. Refer to the pronunciation key on page 85 for examples of the vowel sounds.

In order for your vocal apparatus to function powerfully and flexibly, it must be relaxed and not constricted by muscular tension.





**1. For Relaxed Jaw**

- Let your head fall forward onto your chest. Lift it up and back, letting your jaw remain loose. Drop it again and slowly roll your head over your right shoulder, back, over your left shoulder, and forward.
- Drop your head forward again. Place your hands lightly on your cheeks and lift your head with your hands, keeping the jaw relaxed and being careful to avoid using the jaw muscles. When your head is lifted, the jaw should hang open. Make your face as expressionless as possible.

**2. For Open Throat**

- Yawn freely, getting the feeling of an open, relaxed throat.
- Take in a deep breath, relax your jaw, and exhale slowly.
- Say, "I can talk as if I were going to yawn. Hear me talk as if I were going to yawn."

**3. For Flexible Lips**

- Say *ōō-ō-ō-ō-ä*, opening your lips from a small circle to a large one. Then reverse, saying *ä-ō-ō-ō-ōō*. These sounds may be sung, keeping to one note. Keep the tongue flat with the tip at the lower teeth. Keep your throat open and your jaw relaxed.
- Say *mē-mō-mē-mō-mē-mō-mē-mō*. Then sing these sounds.

**4. For Flexible Tongue**

- Say these sounds rapidly: *fūd-dūd-dūd-dūd-dāh-fūd-dūd-dūd-dūd-dāh-fūd-dūd-dūd-dūd-dāh-frīl*. Trill the *r* in *frīl*.
- Keeping your jaw relaxed, repeat the following sounds, watching with a hand mirror to see that your tongue is slowly arched as you go from one position to the next: *ä-ŭ-ŭr-ä-ä-ě-ä-ŷ-ē*.
- Babble like a baby, saying *dä-dä-dä-dä-lä-lä-lä-lä-lä* moving only the tip of the tongue.

**BREATH CONTROL**

Breath control determines the carrying power and loudness of your voice. It also enables you to rehearse and perform over long periods of time with less strain or damage to your voice.

No one needs to teach you how to breathe; you have been breathing successfully since birth. There is some difference, however, between regular breathing and breathing for speech. In regular breathing, the inhalation (breathing in) and exhalation (breathing out) periods are of equal length. Breathing for speech requires a very brief inhalation period and a slow, controlled exhalation period. This is true because, for all practical purposes, speech is produced only when the breath is exhaled. In breathing for speech, therefore, you should inhale through the mouth, since this allows

Shakespearean dialogue, because of its complex sentences full of interrelated images, demands carefully planned and practiced breath control. Here Kevin Kline delivers Hamlet's "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio" speech in the New York Shakespeare Festival.



for more rapid intake of breath than does inhalation through the nose. You should work for a prolonged and controlled exhalation so that the outgoing breath will match your needs for sustained vocal tone. Controlled breathing is more important to an actor than deep breathing.

The following exercises will focus the breathing process in the center of your body and strengthen and control the breath stream. Practice these exercises every night and morning until central breathing gradually becomes automatic.

## Exercises

### Breath Control

1. Place your hands on either side of the lower part of your rib cage. Now pant rapidly, laugh silently, and sniff in the air in tiny whiffs. Lie on your back and breathe deeply and regularly. Keep your hands in the same position.
2. With your hands in the same position as for Exercise 1, stand straight with an easy, well-balanced posture. Inhale slowly, making sure from the feeling under your hands that the whole rib cage is expanding. Hold your breath without straining for a count of six. Then exhale slowly and evenly while you mentally count, first to fifteen and then to twenty, twenty-five, and thirty. Be particularly careful to avoid muscular tension.
3. Repeat Exercise 2, gauging the evenness of your exhalation either by whistling or by making a soft sound as you breathe out, such as the sound of *s* or *ah*. If the sound is jerky or irregular or fades at the end, repeat the exercise until you can keep the sound smooth and regular.

(continued)

4. Breathe in, relaxing your throat and lower jaw. Count “one” as you exhale. Repeat and count “one, two.” Continue until you can count to twenty using just one breath. Be careful not to tighten up. It may take several weeks before you can reach twenty, but take time so that you can do it without straining. Any tension is bad.
5. Breathe in. Relax your throat and lower jaw. Say “Hear the tolling of the bells—iron bells” as you exhale, prolonging the vowels and the *ng* and *n* sounds.
6. Breathe in. Relax your throat and lower jaw. Say “Hong Kong” as you exhale, prolonging the vowel and *ng* sounds.
7. Breathe in. Relax your throat and lower jaw. Without straining, try to retain the position of your diaphragm as you exhale, saying slowly, “Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll.”



The exercises shown here are useful in developing the breath control necessary when breathing for speech.



# *Using Your Voice Effectively*

Four characteristics of the voice must be used correctly if you are to become an effective and expressive speaker. These characteristics are quality, pitch, volume, and rate. Developing and controlling them constitutes voice training.

## QUALITY

The individual sound of your particular voice is called its **quality**. The quality of your voice depends, for the most part, upon resonance and the correct formation of vowel sounds by the speech organs.

**Resonance** is the vibrant tone produced when sound waves strike the chambers of the throat, head, nose, and mouth. The best practice for resonance is humming with an open, relaxed throat. The cavities of the head will vibrate automatically if you hum while throwing the voice forward through the facial mask. In English, only *m*, *n*, and *ng* should be sounded through the nose. All other sounds should come from the mouth alone. If the nasal passages are closed by a cold or by a raised soft palate, the sound becomes dull and blocked. The much-criticized **nasality** of many American voices occurs when vowel sounds are diverted from the oral cavity into the nasal cavities, cutting down resonance and leaving the voice flat.

Emotions such as fear affect the quality of your voice. Frightened people, who tend to draw themselves inward physically, also draw in their voices. The voice of a frightened person usually sounds timid and hesitant.



The vowel sounds, so important in the quality of your tone, are all made with the lower jaw relaxed. The position of the lips and tongue determines the sound.

Voice quality may also be affected by emotion. The voice might quiver with fear, sweeten with sympathy, or harden with anger. In addition, the age of a character will affect the quality of the voice. With age, the vocal apparatus usually becomes less flexible, and the outlook on life has been affected for better or worse by life's experiences. These things must be made apparent in an actor's characterizations.

## Exercises

### Voice Quality

1. To locate your larynx and feel the vibration of the vocal folds, place your fingers lightly on your thyroid cartilage, or Adam's apple. Pronounce the consonant sounds *bŭh* and *pŭh*, and notice which pronunciation makes the vocal folds vibrate. Repeat the test with the consonant-sound pairs *dŭh* and *tŭh*, then *vŭh* and *fŭh*, and then *zŭh* and *sŭh*.
2. To feel the effect of obstructing the resonators, sing the word *hum* and then repeat it while you pinch your nose closed. Say "good morning," opening your mouth and your throat. Say it as if you were on the verge of tears and were swallowing them. Say it holding your nose closed. Say it with your teeth tightly set. Say it while drawing back your tongue in your mouth.
3. Repeat a single word—*no*, *yes*, *dear*, *really*—conveying the following emotions: surprise, scorn, irritation, sarcasm, boredom, suspicion, eagerness, love, doubt, weariness, determination, horror, pain, despair, and joy. Notice how the quality of your voice changes with different emotions.
4. Assume the character of a happy child, a cross adult, a dictatorial employer, a discouraged job-seeker, a political candidate, a distinguished actor, a plotting criminal, and a hysterical survivor of an earthquake. Speak the following sentences as each of these characters would.
  - Now is the time to make your choice.
  - Yes, I see the light!
  - Whatever will be will be.
  - Stop! Think it over before you do anything you might regret!
5. Say the following words, recalling personal experiences to give them "color," the special tone quality resulting from feeling and imagination:
 

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| <i>home</i>   | <i>icy</i>         |
| <i>ocean</i>  | <i>roar</i>        |
| <i>sunset</i> | <i>welcome</i>     |
| <i>jingle</i> | <i>magnificent</i> |
| <i>dog</i>    | <i>star</i>        |

## Application ACTIVITIES

Read aloud the following selections, concentrating mainly on the vowel sounds. Try to make each vowel in an accented syllable as full and rich as possible. Sound these vowels alone many times and then put them back into the words.

### CUE

Before reading any excerpt or passage, read the complete work, if possible. This will help you understand fully the mood and meaning of the selection.

#### 1. from *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

JULIET The clock struck nine when I did  
send the Nurse;  
In half an hour she promised to return.  
Perchance she cannot meet him: that's not so.  
O, she is lame! love's heralds should be thoughts,  
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's  
beams,  
Driving back shadows over louring hills: . . .

#### 2. from "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door—  
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—  
Only this and nothing more."

## PITCH

The relative highness or lowness of the voice at any given time is called **pitch**. Each person's voice has a characteristic pitch level from which it moves up and down. Women's voices are pitched on a higher level than men's, and children's voices are higher still. Pitch is determined by the rapidity with which the vocal folds vibrate.

Most persons use only four or five notes in ordinary speaking, but a good speaker can use two octaves or more. Many girls and women pitch their voices at too high a level, not realizing that a low voice is far more musical and easily heard. As a rule, therefore, girls and women should do their vocal exercises on the lower pitch levels.

The pitch of the voice gives meaning to speech. When speakers are excited, interested, and enthusiastic in conversation, they unconsciously lift the pitch on important words to emphasize them and lower the pitch on unimportant words to subordinate them. In the exchange of lines in a play or in a long speech by a single character, the pitch rises as conflict increases, excitement stirs, or comedy builds. This rise in pitch adds to the interest of a scene. However, the actor's voice cannot continue to rise until it squeaks or cracks. Knowing how and when to bring the voice down is one of the skills an actor must develop.

Variety in pitch, called **inflection**, makes the voice musical and interesting. Speaking in a **monotone** results from speaking continuously on one level. Monotony is a flaw in speaking. Without variety in pitch, speakers are unable to hold the attention of their audiences. Public speakers, teachers, and lawyers sometimes fall unconsciously into pitch patterns and speak in monotones. Monotony in pitch can usually be overcome by practice and conscious attention. It is due largely to lack of vitality and enthusiasm in thought and feeling or in vocal and bodily response.

As a student of dramatics, you must learn to control the number, length, and direction of pitch changes. Try to notice your own and other people's changes in pitch in normal conversation and how these changes affect the communication of thoughts and feelings. Notice what anger, exhaustion, irritation, worry, joy, and excitement do to the pitch of people's voices. You will find that the pitch is usually higher when a person is angry, that dominant people use falling inflections for the most part, and that timid people use brief, rising inflections. Sneering and sarcasm are often shown by rising-falling inflections, which convey subtle meanings.

If you play a lively character who delivers an angry speech, the pitch of your voice will probably rise. When characters who are more subdued become angry, they often lower their tone of voice and become immersed in a mood of sullen brooding.





1. Find your range and optimum (ideal) pitch by matching tones with a piano. Begin by reading a selection in your normal voice. As a friend plays up the scale, match each note. Record the highest note you can reach without strain. Then go down the scale and record the lowest note you can reach comfortably. This is your range. Now find the middle of your range. This is your optimum pitch. Your optimum pitch will often be two or three notes lower than your normal speaking voice.
2. Count from one to ten, beginning as low as you can and going as high as you can without strain. Then reverse the count and come down. Be sure that it is pitch and not loudness that makes the difference in each count.
3. Count slowly from one to ten, giving the vowel in each number a long falling inflection. Repeat with a long rising inflection on each. Then alternate the two exercises.
4. Select a nursery rhyme and recite it as a comforting parent, a Shakespearean actor, a bored teenager, and a frightened child.
5. Read the following sentences aloud with the widest possible range. Put emphasis on the important words and syllables by raising the pitch. Drop the pitch noticeably on unimportant words.
  - What a great idea!
  - To speak effectively, you must raise your voice on the important words.
  - In direct conversation, we constantly change the pitch of the voice.
  - Did you hear what I said? Then go!
  - No, I will not go!
6. Stand out of sight of your listeners, and give the following lines. Have someone note your variations in pitch.
  - No, never. Well, hardly ever.
  - To be, or not to be: that is the question.
  - Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
  - Give me liberty or give me death!



Once you find your range, you can do vocal exercises to help you increase it. A greater vocal range gives you more emotional range as an actor.



## Application ACTIVITIES

Analyze the following selections and decide what inflections will bring out the predominant mood and inner meaning of each. Read each selection aloud. If possible, use a tape recorder to study the pitch of your voice. Reread each selection aloud, concentrating on improving your inflection and voice quality.

1. from *The Taming of the Shrew*  
by William Shakespeare

PETRUCHIO Good morrow, Kate, for that's your name, I hear.

KATHERINE Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:  
They call me Katherine that do talk of me.

PETRUCHIO You lie, in faith, for you are called plain Kate,  
and bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst;  
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom.

2. from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*  
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand  
No bigger than the Moon.

## VOLUME

The relative strength, force, or intensity with which sound is made is called **volume**. You must not confuse volume with mere loudness. You can utter a stage whisper with great intensity, or you can call across a room with little intensity. Volume depends upon the pressure with which the air from the lungs strikes the vocal folds. While a certain amount of tension is required to retain the increased breath pressure, this tension should be minimal. If your throat is as relaxed as possible, you will not become hoarse when speaking with increased volume or even when shouting, and your words will be resonant and forceful.

There are two types of force: explosive and expulsive. A sudden, sharp breath pressure creates explosive force, which is useful in commands, shouts, loud laughter, and screams. When the

### CUE

To be heard in a large auditorium without forcing the words from your throat, you must breathe deeply and centrally. Imagine that you are talking to a person in the last row of the theater.

breath pressure is held steady and the breath is released gradually, the force is said to be expulsive. This type of force is necessary in reading long passages without loss of breath and in building to a dramatic climax.

Like the other voice characteristics, volume is closely related to the expression of ideas and emotions. Fear, excitement, anger, hatred, defiance, and other strong emotions are usually accompanied by an explosive intensity. On the other hand, quiet, calm thoughts call for a minimal amount of force.

## CUE

When using a microphone, remember that increasing your volume beyond that used in ordinary conversation is not necessary, no matter how large the auditorium.

Volume is used in combination with other voice characteristics to suggest various feelings. For example, a quiet voice accompanied by a flat quality suggests dullness, indifference, or weariness. A quiet voice with a full tonal quality may express disappointment, shock, despair, bewilderment, and sometimes even great joy.

When you are onstage, it is important to remember that you must use more energy to convey impressions of all kinds than is necessary offstage. Thus, if you are merely chatting comfortably at home with a friend, your voice will have relatively little intensity. Put that identical scene on the stage, try to make it equally informal, and you will have to increase your vocal intensity considerably; otherwise, the scene will fall flat. You will find that if you think about where your voice is to go and keep your throat relaxed, your projection will improve without vocal strain.

Using greater force to emphasize the important words in a sentence is the most common means of clarifying a thought. You can change the meaning of a sentence by shifting the force from one word to another, thus expressing innocence, surprise, anger, or other emotions. In acting, the entire thought of a line can be clarified or obscured by emphasizing a word or phrase. Key words brought out forcibly can make a character's personality understandable to the audience.

**Patti LuPone and Robert Gutman as Juan and Eva Perón in the rock opera *Evita* must use precise enunciation to portray the Argentinean president and his wife. The voice and diction demands are especially great in *Evita* because all the dialogue is sung rather than spoken.**



Whether speaking or singing, an actor must eventually rehearse at the energy level needed for the performance. It takes considerable practice to learn to control vocal intensity. Here an actor rehearsing for *Evita* judges how much volume is needed to fill the room.



## Exercises

### Volume

1. Pant like a dog. While you do so, feel the movement of your diaphragm with your hands. Then say "ha-ha" as you pant.
2. Take a full breath and call out "one" as if you were throwing a ball against a wall at some distance. Exhale, relax, inhale, and call out "one, two" in the same manner. Count up to ten in this way, but be careful to relax between each effort. Get your power from a quick "kick" of the rib cage rather than from tightening the throat. In the same way, use the words *no*, *bell*, *on*, *never*, and *yes*.
3. Say the letters of the alphabet, increasing your energy whenever you come to a vowel. Keep all the sounds on the same pitch.
4. Say the sentence "I am going home" as though you were saying it to the following people:
  - A friend sitting next to you
  - A person ten feet away
  - Someone across the room
  - Someone in the back row of an auditorium
5. Change the meaning of the following sentences in as many ways as you can by using force to emphasize different words. Explain your exact meaning.
  - I didn't say that to her.
  - You don't think I ate the cake, do you?
  - Nothing is too good for you.
  - You gave the money to him.

## Application ACTIVITIES

Read these passages aloud, making the mood and meaning clear by the amount of force you use and the words you emphasize. Do this while standing, keeping your weight balanced and your chin lifted slightly. Speak “through your eyes.”

### 1. “The Rebel”

by Mari Evans

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| When I        | coming to see  |
| die           | if I           |
| I’m sure      | am really      |
| I will have a | Dead           |
| Big Funeral   | or just        |
| Curiosity     | trying to make |
| seekers . . . | Trouble        |

### 2. “The Rhinoceros”

by Ogden Nash

The rhino is a homely beast,  
For human eyes he’s not a feast,  
But you and I will never know  
Why nature chose to make him so,  
Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,  
I’ll stare at something less prepoceros!

### 3. from *Macbeth*

by William Shakespeare

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.



Even low-key speeches, such as the one shown here from Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, must be projected from the inner energy an actor builds through the internalization of a role.

## PAUSE AND RATE

Practically all our sentences in both speaking and reading aloud are divided into groups of words separated by pauses of varying lengths. The breathing pause is a necessity because we must have breath in order to speak. One of the worst faults a beginner can have is breaking the thought of a sentence by gasping for breath. You must train yourself to get your breath between thought groups. You undoubtedly manage it properly in normal conversation, unconsciously putting words that belong together into groups before you catch your breath. You will find it harder to do this on the stage. The number of words in a group necessarily varies with the thought. A single word may be important enough to stand alone, or there may be twelve or more words in a group; ordinarily there are four or five. Too many breath groups tend to create choppy speech. Punctuation can be of great assistance, for it often clarifies meaning as well as grammatical relationships.

The secret of interpretative power is the ability to realize an idea—to visualize, emotionalize, and vitalize it for yourself—and then give the audience an opportunity to do the same thing. Logical and dramatic pauses demand thought and feeling on your part, or you will not have your audience thinking and feeling with you. Therefore, work out your thought groups carefully. After the pattern is set, approach each group as if for the first time every time you speak or read aloud. The “**illusion of the first time**” is one of the secrets of giving a sense of spontaneity and freshness to every performance.

The speed at which words are spoken is called **rate**. Each person has a characteristic rate of speech, which is usually more rapid in informal conversation than in public speaking or in dramatics. Like quality, pitch, and volume, rate is an important means of suggesting ideas and emotional states. A steadily increasing speed creates a feeling of tension and excitement, while the slow, deliberate delivery of important passages impresses the hearer with their significance. Light, comic, happy, and lyric passages are usually spoken rapidly. Calm, serene, reverent, tragic, and awesome passages are delivered more slowly.

## CUE

On the stage a half-second pause is significant; a full-second pause is emphatic; a two-second pause is dramatic; and, a three-second pause is usually catastrophic!



## Application ACTIVITIES

1. The internal punctuation has been removed from the following passages. Read each passage aloud, experimenting with pauses and rate to see how many different meanings you can convey. Read one version to the class.

### CUE

Some punctuation marks in written material do not signal a pause, while others indicate a definite break in the flow of ideas. Don't rely entirely on punctuation for your pauses.

from *Macbeth*

by William Shakespeare

The queen my lord is dead.

from *Romeo and Juliet*

by William Shakespeare

What's in a name that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet  
So Romeo would were he not Romeo call'd  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title.

2. Go back over the passages you have read aloud in this chapter and decide where the thought groups divide. Then read the passages aloud again, watching your pauses and rate. Hold the important words longer than others, and slip rapidly over the unimportant ones. Let the idea speed you up or slow you down, and take time to feel the emotions and moods.

## COMBINING TECHNIQUES IN INTERPRETATION

Emphasis and subordination are the light and shadow of interpretation in acting. The key words of every passage must be highlighted to be heard and understood by everyone in the audience. To emphasize such words, you must first feel their emotional context to give them color.

Words can be emphasized in the following ways: by delivering them with greater force; by holding them for a longer period of time; by lifting or lowering them in pitch; and by giving the vowels a rich resonant quality and the consonants a strong, crisp attack and finish.

Emphasis (also called stress) involves tone placement and projection. There are two rather different but not conflicting ideas regarding the placement of tone. One is that tone should be placed in the mask of the face, the area of the face where you feel vibrations when you hum. This is done by forming sounds with the lips, lower jaw, and tongue. The second is that the



*for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, by Ntozake Shange, is classified as a choreopoem. In this contemporary verse play, the audience feels the emotional intensity of the poetry because the performers are masterful vocal interpreters. In this scene, their jobs are the harder because the performers are seated. When you sit, kneel, or lie down, your rib cage is constricted, making it harder to get enough breath to project your voice throughout the theater.

voice should be thrown as far as the size of the auditorium requires. This is accomplished by breathing deeply, opening the mouth, and forming the sounds accurately, while consciously focusing on the people farthest away. The throat should remain relaxed and open. The term *swallowing words* refers to what happens when the throat is closed by tension or by carelessness in controlling the breath. As a result, an insufficient amount of air passes over the vocal folds, and the sound never reaches the resonating chambers of the head.

An actor must also have a good sense of timing and rate in order to interpret a passage effectively. (A climactic passage must, of course, be well written by the author before it can be effectively spoken by the speaker.) In such a passage, the emotional intensity of the lines increases to a high point of feeling at the end. Naturally, to reach a high point, it is necessary to start at a relatively low one. In a strong emotional passage, begin with a relatively slow rate, deliberate utterance, low pitch, and little or medium vocal energy. Gradually raise the pitch and increase the energy, rate, and emphasis as you reach the highest point of interest or feeling.

## CUE

A timely pause is often more effective in conveying meaning than the words it separates.

1. Say “oh” to suggest keen interest, sudden pain, deep sympathy, delight, irritation, anger, sarcasm, hesitation, embarrassment, good-natured banter, polite indifference, horror, and surprise.
2. Address the following sentences first to someone five feet away and then to someone twenty-five, one hundred, and three hundred feet away. Keep an open throat; control your breath from the diaphragm. Focus on the vowel sounds.
  - Run for your life!
  - Fire! Help!
  - Are you all right?
  - Come here at once!
  - Can you hear me?

## Application ACTIVITIES

1. Study the following passages. Decide what type of person is speaking, what exactly is being said, what mood that person is in, and why that person is saying these lines. Read them aloud, trying to convey the exact meaning and mood.

from the play *The Diary of Anne Frank*

by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett

ANNE'S VOICE I expect I should be describing what it feels like to go into hiding. But I really don't know yet myself. I only know it's funny never to be able to go outdoors . . . never to breathe fresh air . . . never to run and shout and jump. It's the silence in the nights that frightens me most. Every time I hear a creak in the house, or a step on the street outside, I'm sure they're coming for us.

from *Julius Caesar*

by William Shakespeare

JULIUS CAESAR Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.

from “Sea Fever”

by John Masefield

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

## Application

### ACTIVITIES (continued)

2. Read the following passages aloud. First, carefully analyze their meanings. Then determine the mood, the situation, and the emotion portrayed. Finally, decide what quality, energy, change of pitch, and rate will best suit your interpretation.

from *The Pirates of Penzance*

by W. S. Gilbert

I am the very model of a modern Major-General,  
I've information vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical,  
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical;  
I'm very well acquainted too with matters mathematical,  
I understand equations, both the simple and quadratical,  
About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot o' news—  
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse.

from "The Fall of the House of Usher"

by Edgar Allan Poe

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.

from *The Merchant of Venice*

by William Shakespeare

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO [reading]

All that glitters is not gold,  
Often have you heard that told;  
Many a man his life has sold  
But my outside to behold.  
Gilded tombs do worms infold.  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in judgment old,  
Your answer had not been inscroll'd.  
Fare you well, your suit is cold.

## *Improving Your Diction*

There are various definitions of **diction**, but for all practical purposes, diction refers to the selection and pronunciation of words and their combination in speech. If your speech is to be an asset in your daily usage, you must choose your words carefully and utter them distinctly. Your aim should be clear, correct, pleasing speech that carries well. Practice reading aloud every day, using your own best speaking techniques, and then relax and speak naturally. You will find your vocal habits improving.

Ear training is almost as important as speech training. Recording and analyzing your speech and the speech of others in a variety of situations can be extremely helpful.

### **Application** **ACTIVITIES**

1. Record an informal speaking situation such as a class discussion or a casual conversation. As you replay the recording, listen for the strong and weak points of pronunciation and word choice.
2. Record yourself reading some of the selections in this book. At the end of the term, record a new reading of the same selections and note your improvement.
3. Obtain a recording of a poem, play, or prose piece done by a professional. Try to find one that includes the use of dialect, such as the poems of Robert Burns or the musical *My Fair Lady*. Study the diction of these professionals.
4. Listen to the speech of public speakers or news commentators on television. Note the use of what is called General American Dialect by speakers in mass media.

### **VOWEL SOUNDS**

All vowel sounds pass unobstructed through the mouth, but the position of the lips, tongue, jaw, and soft palate differ for each vowel sound. Vowel sounds are classified as front vowels, middle vowels, or back vowels, according to the position of the tongue as the vowel is formed. When studying vowels, it is important to remember the distinction between



sounds and letters. There are just six vowel letters in English—*a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *y*. However, there are many vowel sounds. As a result, the same vowel letter can represent more than one vowel sound. For example, the letter *a* is pronounced differently in *father*, *cat*, and *came*. The vowel sound in an unstressed syllable is often pronounced as a soft “uh.” This vowel sound, called **schwa** (ə), might be spelled by any vowel letter or combination of letters. Thus, spelling is not a reliable guide to pronunciation.

Speech sounds are represented by special phonetic alphabets. You see them most often in the pronunciations provided by dictionaries. Because the languages of the world do not share a common way to spell each sound, an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was created to represent the sounds found in all languages. Knowing the IPA can be a great help to actors working with dialects. The chart below lists the vowel sounds of English and their phonetic respellings.

| PRONUNCIATION KEY     |            |  |
|-----------------------|------------|--|
| Dictionary Respelling | IPA Symbol | Examples                               |
| ă                     | [æ]        | pat, plaid                             |
| ā                     | [eɪ]       | pay, paid                              |
| âr                    | [ɛə]       | care, pear                             |
| ă                     | [ɑ]        | father                                 |
| ě                     | [ɛ]        | pet, head                              |
| ē                     | [i]        | be, sea                                |
| ĭ                     | [ɪ]        | pit                                    |
| ī                     | [aɪ]       | pie, line                              |
| îr                    | [ɪə]       | pier                                   |
| ŏ                     | [ɒ]        | pot                                    |
| ō                     | [oʊ]       | toe, blow                              |
| ô                     | [ɔ]        | paw                                    |
| oi                    | [ɔɪ]       | boy, boil                              |
| ou                    | [aʊ]       | out, cow                               |
| ŏŏ                    | [ʊ]        | took, put                              |
| ōō                    | [u]        | boot, blue                             |
| ŭ                     | [ʌ]        | cut                                    |
| ûr                    | [ʊə]       | urge                                   |
| ə                     | [ə]        | about, item<br>mobile, lemon<br>circus |

Because of their many variations, certain vowels present a challenge. The problem often is the result of substituting one vowel sound for another vowel sound.

### VOWEL SOUNDS THAT ARE OFTEN CONFUSED

1. The ô sound in words like *audience*, *daughter*, *because*, *automobile*, and *thought* is sometimes confused with the ö sound heard in *hot* and *mop*.
2. The ö sound in words like *hot*, *stop*, *John*, and *cot* is sometimes confused with the ä sound heard in *father*.
3. The ē sound in words like *sleek*, *creek*, *sheep*, and *peek* is sometimes confused with the ĭ sound heard in *print* and *pin*.
4. The ä sound in words like *have*, *man*, *began*, *shall*, *and*, *than*, and *glad* is sometimes confused with the ä sound heard in *father*.
5. The ûr sound in words like *perfect*, *purple*, *world*, *girl*, *learn*, and *nerve* is sometimes confused with the ü sound heard in *must* or the oi sound heard in *boil*.
6. The ě sound in words like *men*, *engine*, and *get* is sometimes confused with the ĭ sound heard in *pin* and *fit*.

## Exercises

### Vowel Sounds

Read the words in the following lists. Practice distinguishing among the vowel sounds in each group.

- |         |         |        |         |
|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 1. feel | 2. teen | 3. eat | 4. peak |
| fell    | ten     | at     | peck    |
| fail    | ton     | ate    | puck    |
| foil    | tune    | it     | park    |
| fill    | tin     | ought  | pork    |
| fall    | tan     |        | pike    |
| file    | turn    |        | pick    |
| foul    | torn    |        | pack    |
|         | town    |        | perk    |
|         |         |        | pock    |
|         |         |        | poke    |

## Application ACTIVITIES

Read the following lines aloud clearly, pronouncing the vowel sounds carefully.

1. from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink.  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

2. "How to Eat a Poem"

by Eve Merriam

Don't be polite.  
Bite in.  
Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice that may run down  
your chin.  
It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.  
You do not need a knife or fork or spoon  
or plate or napkin or tablecloth.  
For there is no core  
or stem  
or rind  
or pit  
or seed  
or skin  
to throw away.

3. from "The Windhover"

by Gerard Manley Hopkins

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his  
riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and  
gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

# CONSONANT SOUNDS

The consonant sounds are made by deliberately blocking the air passage at some point with the tongue, soft palate, or lips. If there is no vibration of the vocal folds, the consonant is **voiceless**. If there is a vibration of the vocal folds, the consonant sound is **voiced**. You can tell whether a consonant sound is voiced or voiceless by placing your finger lightly on your throat and feeling whether there is any vibration. Practice by alternately pronouncing these word pairs: *sue-zoo*, *fail-vail*, *thin-then*.

The following chart lists three types of consonants. When pronouncing plosive consonants, air is stopped and suddenly released. With the fricative consonants, the air passage is narrowed at some point and a slight friction results. When pronouncing the nasal consonants, the mouth is completely closed at some point and the soft palate is lowered. As a result, the air is forced to pass through the nose.

| Plosive Consonants            |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| VOICELESS                     | VOICED  | AIR STOPPED BY   |
| <i>p</i> as in <i>pop</i>     | <i>b</i> as in <i>bob</i>                     | Lip against lip  |
| <i>t</i> as in <i>tame</i>    | <i>d</i> as in <i>dame</i>                    | Tip of tongue against upper gum ridge                                  |
| <i>k</i> as in <i>kick</i>    | <i>g</i> as in <i>game</i>                    | Back of tongue against soft palate                                     |
| Fricative Consonants          |   |  |
| VOICELESS                     | VOICED  | AIR PASSAGE NARROWED BY  |
| <i>f</i> as in <i>fan</i>     | <i>v</i> as in <i>van</i>                     | Upper teeth on lower lip   |
| <i>s</i> as in <i>bus</i>     | <i>z</i> as in <i>buzz</i>                    | Front of tongue against upper and lower teeth, which are almost closed |
| <i>sh</i> as in <i>sure</i>   | <i>zh</i> as in <i>azure</i>                  | Tip of tongue turned toward hard palate; teeth almost closed           |
| <i>th</i> as in <i>breath</i> | <i>th</i> as in <i>breathe</i>                | Tip of tongue against upper teeth                                      |
| Nasal Consonants              |   |  |
| <i>m</i> as in <i>mommy</i>   | Mouth closed by lip on lip                    |  |
| <i>ng</i> as in <i>sing</i>   | Mouth closed by back of tongue on soft palate |  |
| <i>n</i> as in <i>nine</i>    | Mouth closed by tip of tongue on upper gum    |  |



How you form your consonants will tell the audience much about the character you are portraying. Strong, crisp consonants usually indicate an intelligent character.

Like vowels, certain consonants present a challenge to speakers and actors. Three common problems are outlined below.

### DIFFICULT CONSONANTS

1. The *r* before a vowel as in *red*, *grumble*, *three*, and *breeze* or in such expressions as *bread and butter* and *as far as you go* (The tip of the tongue should be held at the base of the lower teeth and not permitted to turn back to form what is called the rolled *r*.)
2. The *l* in words like *elm* and *fool* (The tip of the tongue is pressed against the upper gum with air passing over the side of the body of the tongue. Do not turn the tip of the tongue back in the mouth or follow the *l* with a *u* or put an *e* before the *l*.)
3. Combinations of words such as "Didn't you?", "Wouldn't you?", and "Did you?" (The words should be separated to avoid saying "Didncha?", "Wouldnja?", and "Didja?")

## Exercises

### Consonant Sounds

Practice distinguishing among the consonant sounds as you pronounce the words in these lists.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. smack, span, scan, trap, dram, prank,<br>bran, frank, crab, grab, thrash, shrapnel  | 4. pen, Ben, ten, den, ken, fen, when, wen   |
| 2. have, cat, gap, quack, land, nag, tap,<br>dash, rat, map, pat, bat, fat, vat, thank | 5. strap, sprat, scrap, splash, swam, twang,<br>wag, yap                               |
| 3. than, sad, sham, chap, jam, plaid, black,<br>flat, slack, clan, glad, snack, stand  | 6. hood, could, good, look, nook, put, book,<br>foot, soot, should, brook, crook, wood |



## Application ACTIVITIES

Read the following selections aloud, carefully pronouncing the consonant sounds.

### 1. "Thumbprint"

by Eve Merriam

On the pad of my thumb  
are whorls, whirls, wheels  
in a unique design:  
mine alone.  
What a treasure to own!  
My own flesh, my own feelings.  
  
No other, however grand or base,  
can ever contain the same.  
My signature,  
thumbing the pages of my time.  
My universe key,  
my singularity.  
Impress, implant,  
I am myself,  
of all my atom parts I am the sum.  
And out of my blood and my brain  
I make my own interior weather,  
my own sun and rain.  
Imprint my mark upon the world,  
whatever I shall become.

### 2. from "The Highwayman"

by Alfred Noyes

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark innyard  
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;  
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
    Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
Plaiting a dark red love knot into her long black hair.  
.....  
"Then look for me by moonlight,  
    Watch for me by moonlight,  
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."

## PRONUNCIATION

Good **pronunciation** requires using the correct vowel and consonant sounds in words. Some words might be mispronounced because they contain letters that should not be pronounced.

corps heir subtlety indictment debt

The pronunciation of words also depends on which syllable is accented. Some words have pronunciations that vary with the placement of the accent.

|                |                  |            |              |
|----------------|------------------|------------|--------------|
| mis' chie vous | (mis chie' vous) | ad dress'  | (ad' dress)  |
| in' flu ence   | (in flu' ence)   | in quir' y | (in' quir y) |
| the' a ter     | (the a' ter)     | en tire'   | (en' tire)   |
| a dult'        | (a' dult)        |            |              |

Avoid these common habits of sloppy speech:

- Mumbling, muttering, or dropping words at the end of sentences and letters at the ends of words
- Using the vocal apparatus, especially the tongue, in a lazy manner, resulting in indistinctness
- Being too meticulous, artificial, or theatrical

## Exercises

## Pronunciation

1. Very carefully read these sentences aloud.

- The speech of the children over the radio was scarcely intelligible and entirely lacking in spirit and enthusiasm.
- Some sparks from the largest of the rockets burned holes in her scarlet jacket.
- The President of the United States of America delivered the dedicatory address.
- Her thought that remaining in the automobile would allow them to see over the audience placed them in an awkward position.
- They quarreled as to whether or not to take the spotted dog onto the yacht.
- Aunt Blanche answered the demand by advancing with her passport.
- We hope next year to hear that she has started her career as an engineer rather than as a cashier.

2. Read the following aloud as rapidly as you can, keeping the sounds clear.

- The perfectly purple bird unfurled its curled wings and whirled over the world.
- Amidst the mists and coldest frosts  
With stoutest wrists and sternest boasts,  
He thrusts his fists against the posts  
And still insists he sees the ghosts.
- The weary wanderer wondered wistfully whether winsome Winifred would weep.
- When and where will you go and why?
- They know not whence, nor whither, where, nor why.
- Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged.
- The clumsy kitchen clock click-clacked.
- The very merry Mary crossed the ferry in a furry coat.

## *Voice and Diction in Acting*

A play comes to life by means of the voices and words of the actors. It is their ability to arouse emotion through the playwright's lines that creates the illusion of reality for the audience. Actors must make the meaning of every passage clear to all listeners by the proper projection of the words. It is their responsibility to avoid spoiling lines by blurring pronunciation, muffling enunciation, or speaking with a nervous rhythm. The inner soul of the characters they are creating must be expressed through clear patterns of voice quality, pitch, and tempo.

Conscientious actors should be guided by these five principles:

1. Vowels are the sounds actors can work with in interpretation. Vowels can be lengthened, shortened, and inflected.
2. Verbs are the strongest words in the language. Except for forms of *be*, verbs should be stressed.
3. Look for "color words"—those that are vividly descriptive. Look especially for those words whose sounds suggest their meaning (onomatopoeia), such as *crash*, *stab*, *grunt*, *splash*.
4. Rarely stress negatives, pronouns, and articles.
5. When a word or phrase is repeated, stress each repetition more than the preceding repetition.

### Exercise

#### Warm-up

These tongue twisters are often used by actors for practice or warm-ups before a performance. Recite each one slowly, articulating each word clearly. Then repeat it several times, gradually increasing your rate until you can say it quite rapidly.

- Rubber baby buggy bumpers
- To make the bitter batter better, Betty bought better butter, beating the better butter into the batter to make the batter better.
- The dedicated doctor diagnosed the dreaded disease as December dithers.
- Fickle fortune framed a fine finale for a fancy finish.
- Could creeping cat keep crafty claws clear of kitchen curtains?
- Many mortals miss mighty moments more from meager minds than major mistakes.
- Some people say I lisp when I say *soup*, *soft soap*, or something similar, but I don't perceive it myself.
- Round and round the ragged rock the rugged rascal ran.
- Which is the witch that wished the wicked wishes?

## Application ACTIVITIES

Read the following poem aloud rapidly, carefully articulating the consonants and conveying the sound of the water with the vowels.

from "The Cataract of Lodore"

by Robert Southey

The Cataract strong  
Then plunges along,  
Striking and raging,  
As if a war raging  
Its caverns and rocks among;  
Rising and leaping,  
Sinking and creeping,  
Swelling and sweeping,  
Showering and springing,  
Flying and flinging,  
Writhing and ringing,  
Eddying and whisking,  
Spouting and frisking,  
Turning and twisting,  
Around and around,  
With endless rebound!  
Smiting and fighting,  
A sight to delight in;  
Confounding, astounding,  
Dizzying and deafening the ear  
with its sound.

Collecting, projecting,  
Receding and speeding,  
And shocking and rocking,  
And darting and parting,  
And threading and spreading,  
And whizzing and hissing,  
And dripping and skipping,  
And hitting and splitting,  
And shining and twining,  
And rattling and battling,  
And shaking and quaking,

And pouring and roaring,  
And waving and raving,  
And tossing and crossing,  
And flowing and going,  
And running and stunning,  
And foaming and roaming,  
And dinning and spinning,  
And dropping and hopping,  
And working and jerking,  
And guggling and struggling,  
And heaving and cleaving,  
And moaning and groaning; . . .

And glittering and frittering,  
And gathering and feathering,  
And whitening and brightening,  
And quivering and shivering,  
And hurrying and skurrying,  
And thundering and floundering;  
Dividing and gliding and sliding,  
And falling and brawling and  
sprawling,  
And driving and riving and striving,  
And sprinkling and twinkling  
and wrinkling,  
And sounding and bounding and  
rounding,  
And bubbling and troubling and  
doubling,  
And grumbling and rumbling  
and tumbling,  
And clattering and battering and  
shattering.



## CHAPTER

# 3

## REVIEW

### Summary and Key Ideas

Summarize the chapter by answering the following questions.

1. What three things form the keys to a good speaking voice?
2. What is resonance? Tell several ways it can be practiced.
3. Explain how nasality occurs.
4. Name and describe four characteristics of the voice that an effective speaker must use correctly.
5. What is the most valuable asset an actor or speaker can have? Why?
6. What is diction? What habits must be avoided for good diction?
7. Why are vowels so important to a good voice and diction?

### Discussing Ideas

1. Discuss the importance of improving diction. What benefits can improved diction bring to you both on and off the stage?
2. Discuss the differences between the voice and diction of ordinary conversation and the voice and diction required onstage.
3. Think about your own speaking quality. Discuss the individual improvement exercises that would be of most help to you.

### FOCUS ON

#### Radio

**To hear voices of quality and versatility, turn on your radio.** Radio announcers and performers have strong, clear, flexible voices.

**Acting on the Radio** In the 1930s and 1940s, Americans listened to comedies and dramas and followed tales of horror and suspense presented on the radio. To learn more about radio and its history, do research in books and on the Internet about the most celebrated broadcast in radio history, the Mercury Theatre's 1938 "War of the Worlds" broadcast. If you have access to RealAudio, also listen to the broadcast on the Internet with your teacher's permission. Then write a short report summarizing your research.

Include your responses to these questions: Which conventions, or practices, of radio seem to be similar to the conventions of theater? Which seem different? From what you've learned, how would you describe radio's importance to American society at the time of the broadcast? How would you describe radio's importance today?

**Exploring Careers** Do some research on the training, skills, and discipline needed to build a career as a radio announcer or performer. You may want to investigate whether there are opportunities to learn more by volunteering at your local public-service station. Share your findings with the class.



# REVIEW WORKSHOP

## VOICE AND DICTION

### INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

**Projecting Your Voice** Imagine that you are a climbing instructor at the bottom of a thirty-foot rock wall. One of your beginning pupils is frozen midway up the rock face, unable to find a satisfactory ledge to get a hand- or foothold. You have a better perspective from the bottom and can see several alternative paths. Create a scene in

which you give detailed instructions, moral support, and encouragement to your nervous student so that he or she does not miss a word.

**Communicating** Imagine that you are trying to explain how to check a book out of a library. Explain it first to a young child, then to a person with a hearing impairment, and finally to someone who speaks little English.



### Cooperative Learning Activity

#### Choral Reading

Working with a group of five or six classmates, select a narrative poem, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride," John Stone's "Double Header," Anne Sexton's "Cinderella," or one you choose. Analyze the mood, theme, imagery, rhyme scheme, and tonal qualities (including alliteration and onomatopoeia) of the poem. Aim for an understanding of the relationship between form and meaning. Decide which lines will be read by a single person and which will be read by the group. Mark a copy of the poem to indicate rate, emphasis, inflection, modulation, and volume. Practice reading the poem in unison. Present your choral reading to the class.

### Across the CURRICULUM Activity

**History** Choose a historical drama, such as William Shakespeare's *Julius*

*Caesar*, Robert Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, or Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*. Select a monologue or extended speech from the play and modernize it, transporting the character to a contemporary setting and situation. Read your revised speech for the class, expressing the emotions of your character through your voice quality, pitch, and tempo. Then read the original aloud, asking your classmates to compare and contrast the two versions. You might ask them to respond to questions like these: Which version did you prefer and why? Which one was more effective in terms of voice and diction? In which version was there a better blend of content and delivery?