

# Meisner Lesson Plan – Tackling the Text

Teacher: Hannah Zdroik	Date: 9-22-2023	Subject: Theatre (T)	Grade Level: 9-12 (H)
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## Common Core Theatre Standards: (Based on the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Theatre)

### TP.Cr.16.h: **Characterization**

Create vivid, complex and well-rounded characters that authentically represent the text with defined action.

### TP.Cr.20.h: **Collaboration**

Collaborate as a creative team with specified roles to make artistic, interpretive choices in a devised or scripted work.

### TP.P.16.h: **Oral Communication**

Create truthful, authentic vocal choices based on an internal, emotional interpretation of text.

## Common Core Content Standards:

**Standard 1 - CREATE:** Students will generate, develop, and refine artistic work.

**Standard 2 - PERFORM:** Students will analyze, develop, and convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

**OVERVIEW:** Students will examine a scene through exercises provided by Larry Silverberg’s Meisner Complete, specially in Part III: “Tackle the Text” section. Students will be guided through Silverberg’s exercises. The students will be required to read the text quietly and to acknowledge and ignore biases of delivery and rewrite their scene without grammar and punctuation. With a scene partner, the students will do a mechanical reading of their scene, and then do a working reading of their scene together. Lastly, the student pairings will perform their scene in front of the class and reflect on how the exercises dig deeper to create personal meaning and related human behavior.

## Materials Needed:

Teacher: Laptop, SmartBoard/Projector, *Meisner Complete* by Larry Silverberg, [script examples](#), [Google Slides](#).

Students: Journal, pencil, internet access, laptop, access to [Google Slides](#), access to [script examples](#) within the Google slides (slide 7).

Space: Classroom space, stage or small open space for enrichment activity for performances and presentations.

Student Friendly Lesson Objective (Purpose) I can...	Teacher Activities (Teacher Strategies)	Student Activities/Differentiated Instruction	Assignments
I can collaborate with a scene partner to create and discover personal meaning and underlying human behavior in a scene	<u>Anticipatory Set:</u> The instructor will read from <i>Meisner Complete</i> page 177, until the middle of the page (... <i>necessary</i> ).	<u>Guided Practice / Strategies:</u> The lesson will be presented in four parts and works alongside <i>Meisner Complete</i> by Larry Silverberg, specifically the	<u>Bell Ringer Class 1:</u> Students will write answers to these questions in their journals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What can the text tell</li> </ul>

<p>from a play.</p> <p>I can work off of my scene partner while making creative and intentional choices for my character.</p> <p>I can perform a scene while using preparation strategies based on Meisner's exercises in steps, including mechanical reading and working reading.</p> <p>I can use human behavior and instinct to create a character based on the text.</p>	<p>Students will answer discussion questions on Google Slides in their journals. Instructor will lead a class-wide discussion with these questions.</p> <p><u>Essential Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happens when theatre artists use the script/text to dive deeper into human behavior and motivation?</li> <li>• What happens when a theatre artist collaborates with a scene partner to enrich the acting and preparation experience?</li> </ul> <p><u>Input:</u> The instructor will introduce the vocabulary verbally, provided on slide 4.</p> <p>For Part 1, the instructor will read: "You will pick a partner to do these next few activities with. You and your partner will pick a scene from the next slide."</p> <p>The instructor will read from <i>Meisner Complete</i> page 179, at the bottom, after "to begin:" and read until the</p>	<p>"Tackle the Text" section. After completion of the in-class activities, partner pairings will perform their scenes for the class, which will be the enrichment activity.</p> <p><u>Independent Practice / Activities:</u> Students will pick a scene partner and pick a scene from one of the short scene segments provided (embedded in slide 7). Between the pairings, they will decide who will play which character.</p> <p>For Part 1, students will read the scene they picked by themselves, quietly. Based on Silverberg's instructions in <i>Meisner Complete</i>, students will be asked to acknowledge delivery biases of dialogue while reading.</p> <p>For Part 2, students will rewrite the script for both characters, without capital letters, punctuation, grammar, stage directions, etc. based on Silverberg's instructions.</p> <p>For Part 3, students will do a "mechanical reading" with their partner, syllable by syllable.</p> <p>For Part 4, students will complete a "working reading"</p>	<p>us about a character?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What doesn't the text tell us about a character?</li> <li>• How can we use the script to our benefit?</li> </ul> <p><u>Bell Ringer Class 2:</u> Students will have a verbal discussion in class as a whole group, with the instructor as the prompter. They will answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you made any new discoveries about your scene?</li> <li>• Silverberg says, "Words are the most superficial layer of what is communicated between human beings." (pg. 177, <i>Meisner Complete</i>). What does this mean?</li> </ul> <p><u>Remediation:</u> Students with physical disabilities are free to perform their scene sitting down, or whatever is most comfortable for their needs.</p> <p>For the enrichment activity, if a student has</p>
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	<p>end of the page.</p> <p>The instructor will continue to instructions for Part 2 right away so that the students have more time to work on both parts during class.</p> <p>The instructor will say, “Looking at Part 2, we will focus on rewriting the script. After you read your scene quietly to yourself, you will then re-write the scene in your journal.” The instructor will read from <i>Meisner Complete</i> page 189, second paragraph.</p> <p>The example slide (slide 11) of the lecture slides will have a written example of how the students will write out their scene.</p> <p>For Part 3, the instructor will read from <i>Meisner Complete</i>, page 201 from the top to the bottom of the page.</p> <p>The example slide (slide 17) of the lecture slides will have a written example of how the students will write out their scene.</p> <p>The instructor will continue</p>	<p>where they will actively speak and actively listen to their scene partner.</p> <p>For the last class, the student pairings will perform their scene for the class. An remediation to the performance is indicated under the remediation section.</p> <p>Throughout the three class periods, students will be asked to reflect on a series of questions either verbally as a discussion or in their journals through bell-ringer activities and closing remarks.</p>	<p>performance anxiety, they are welcome to do an alternative assignment: “Character Analysis.” The character analysis coincides with <i>Meisner Complete</i> ideology. The details about the alternative assignment are attached below this lesson plan.</p> <p>Those with hearing difficulties may need to use an assistive listening device (ALD). Instructor should be mindful of individual accommodations per students’ IEP or 504 plan.</p> <p><u>Enrichment:</u> In the third-class period, students will perform their scene with their partner in front of the class. Although highly encouraged, the scene does not have to be memorized, but students should be loosely reliant on their scripts and put effort into their performance.</p> <p><u>Daily Writing Assignment:</u> <u>Feedback &amp; Reflection:</u> For class #1, students will write in their journals for the bell-ringer activity, and for rewriting their scene for part 2.</p>
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	<p>to read directions for Part 4, in order to give the students enough time to work in class on both parts without interruptions. The instructor will read from <i>Meisner Complete</i>, starting on the top of page 205 until the second to last paragraph on page 206.</p> <p><i>All reading sections are indicated within the attached images below the lesson plan.</i></p> <p><u>Vocabulary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Script:</u> Written text of a play; provides dialogue, and stage directions.</li> <li>• <u>Dialogue:</u> Verbal conversation between characters in a play; written as text.</li> <li>• <u>Human Behavior:</u> the potential and expressed capacity for physical, mental, and social activity throughout human life.</li> <li>• <u>Mechanical Reading:</u> A slow and relaxed reading of the scene, syllable by syllable.</li> </ul>		<p>For class #2, students will be asked to write closing questions in their journals.</p> <p>For class #3, after performances and presentations, students will be asked to reflect on the exercises in class that completed while working towards their performance.</p> <p><u>Assessment / Evaluation:</u> Students will be assessed by their work in all three class periods, based on participation, writing (in their journals), comprehension, collaboration, and their final performance or presentation. The evaluation is in detail below this lesson plan.</p> <p><u>Homework:</u> N/A – However rehearsing scenes and preparing scene work prior to the performance class period is encouraged.</p>
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- Working Reading: A reading of a scene by working with a scene partner to “really talk” and “really listen.”

Model:

Part 1 is straightforward, as the students will partner up, pick a scene, and read their scene quietly to themselves and ignore any biases of how they believe the script should be read.

Clarification questions will be answered as needed.

For Part 2, the instructor has an example slide (slide 11) that will model as the rewriting portion of the activity. The instructor will say, “Here is an example of a rewritten script without punctuation, capital letters, or stage directions. You will hand write the scene in your journals.”

The instructor will allow for questions if students need clarity.

For Part 3, the instructor will read from *Meisner Complete*. The instructor will go through the model slide (slide 17), and verbally model the nature of the

exercise using an example from the book.

The instructor will continue to read instructions for Part 4, so that the students have time to work on both parts together without interruptions. The instructor will read from *Meisner Complete*, starting on the top of page 205 until the second to last paragraph on page 206. The instructor will ask a volunteer to assist in displaying Part 4 based on the instructions given from the book.

Check for Understanding:

Part 1 is straightforward, as the students will partner up, pick a scene, and read their scene quietly to themselves and ignore any biases of how they believe the script should be read.

Clarification questions will be answered as needed after instructions have been given, in front of the whole class.

For Part 2, the instructor will allow for questions if students need clarity after modeling the example slide. Any questions can be answered as a large group in front of the whole class.

For Parts 3 & 4, the instructor will provide directions and examples on the slideshow.

After instructions for Part 4, and modeling with a volunteer student, the students will have an opportunity to ask questions as a whole group. Thereafter, as pairings work together during worktime, the instructor will be available for questions and circulate the room during student work time for assistance, if needed.

Closure:

For closing class #1, the instructor will lead a verbal discussion with the following questions (slide 12):  
Was it difficult to ignore biased delivery of the lines during your quiet reading?  
What does an actor gain from rewriting the scene?

The instructor will then read from page 190 of *Meisner Complete* to the class, in the middle of the page, to the end of the page.

For closing class #2, students will write in their

journals answers to the following questions (slide 20):

- Why does the mechanical reading make it “impossible to act?” What is its purpose?
- What is the importance of actively listening during the working reading?

Time permitting, the students will share their thoughts verbally with their scene partner or with a small group.

For closing class #3, the instructor will lead the class in a closing discussion (slide 22). Let’s Reflect:

- What did you learn from all these exercises?
- What is the importance of the text?
- What can words tell us, or not tell us?
- Did you relate to your character in any way?

The instructor will then conclude by reading aloud *Meisner Complete*, page



178, second paragraph to the end.

Time Duration:

Three class periods, 60 minutes each (may also depend on the number of students in class).

First class: Introduction, pick scene partners, pick scene, complete Part 1- Quiet Reading & Part 2, Rewriting the Scene.

Second Class: Part 3, the Mechanical Reading with a scene partner, and Part 4, the Working Reading will be completed during this period along with discussion.

Third Class: The partner pairings will perform their scene in front of the class, or if they are doing the remediation assignment, they will present their findings to the class.

## Alternative Assignment: Character Analysis

Instead of performing for the class, you and your partner will present a character analysis of your scene characters to the class.

Please include the following aspects within your analysis, provided by Larry Silverberg's *Meisner Complete*. Provide examples from your script that led you to that conclusion.

1. Explain your character's desire.
2. Explain your character's urgency.
3. Explain your character's high stakes.
4. Explain your character's conflict.

Answer the following questions:

1. What does your character want?
2. What is their activity?
3. What is their motive?
4. What is their relationship with your scene partner's character?

Please provide a short backstory of your character, based on the text and dialogue of your scene.

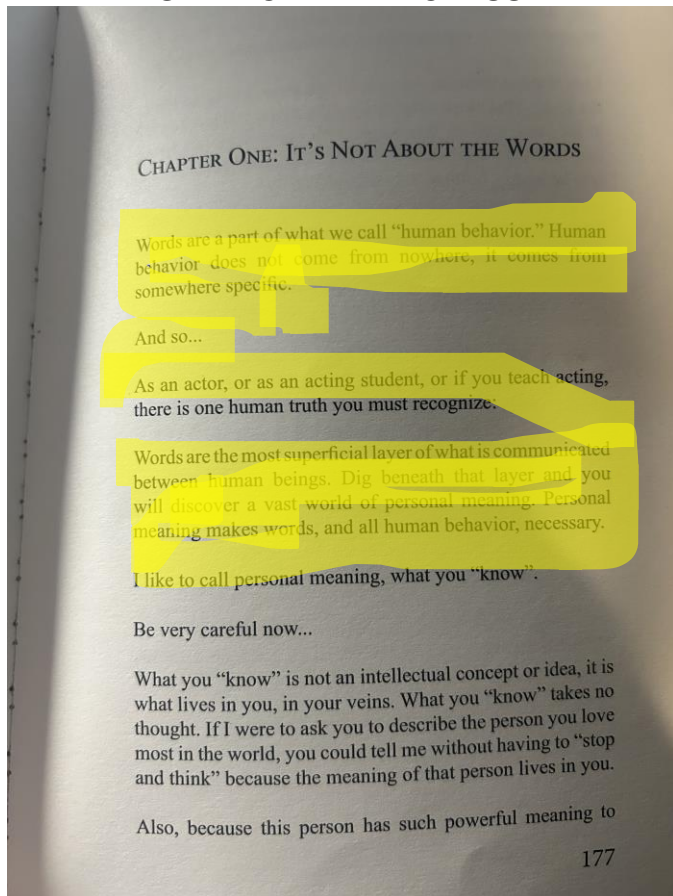
### Assessment – Tackling the Text with Meisner

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

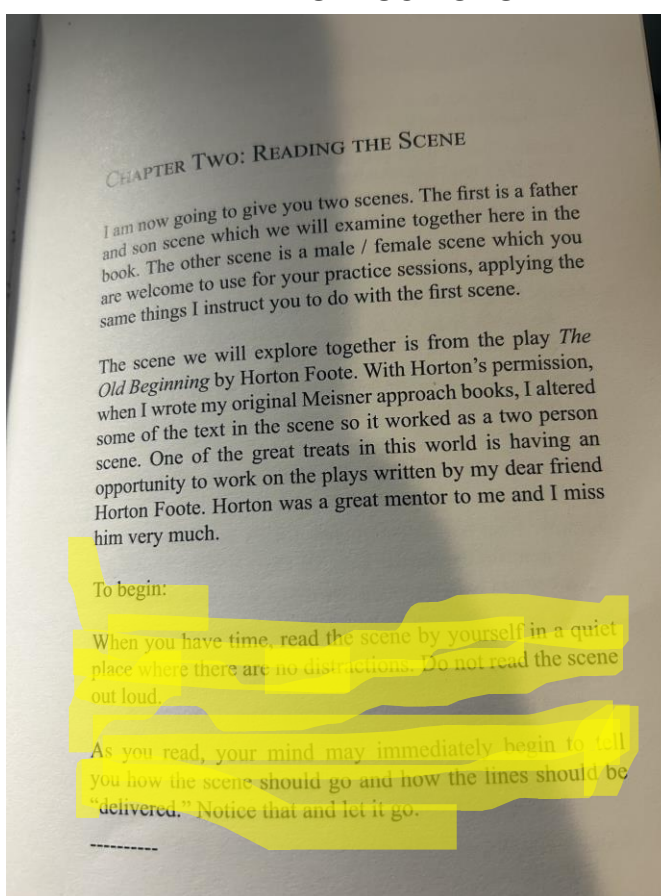
Writing Assignments	Did the student complete all writing assignments, including bell-ringer activities, rewriting the script, closing questions?	/10 points
Participation	Did the student actively participate and engage in class activities and discussions?	/10 points
Comprehension	Did the student make meaningful connections in all activities throughout the three class periods?	/10 points
Collaboration	Did the student collaborate with their scene partner to make meaningful connections with their characters?	/10 points
Performance/Presentation	Did the student complete an effortful performance/presentation and display understanding of the importance of exercises?	/20 points

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_/60 points

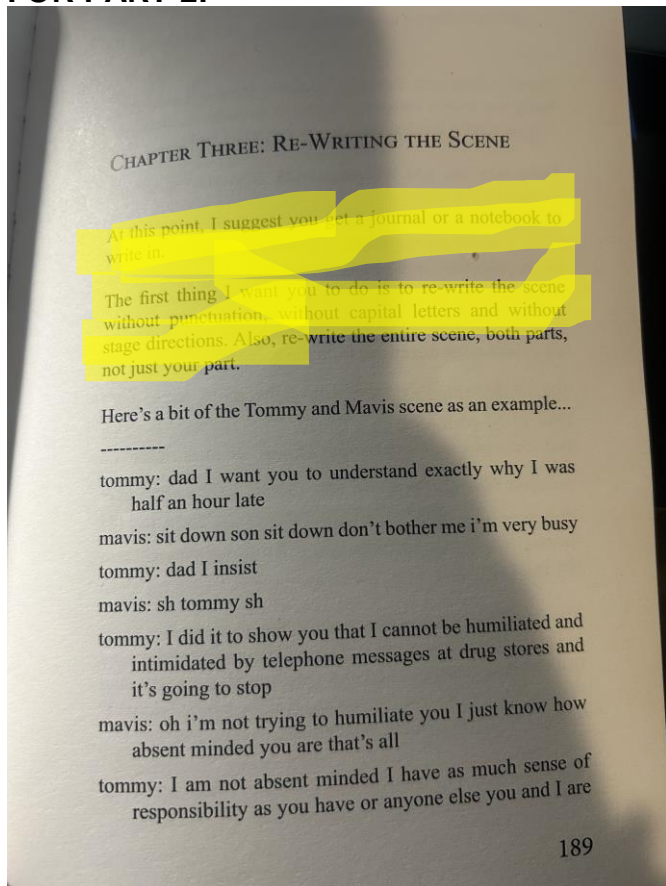
## BELL-RINGER ACTIVITY – CLASS 1:



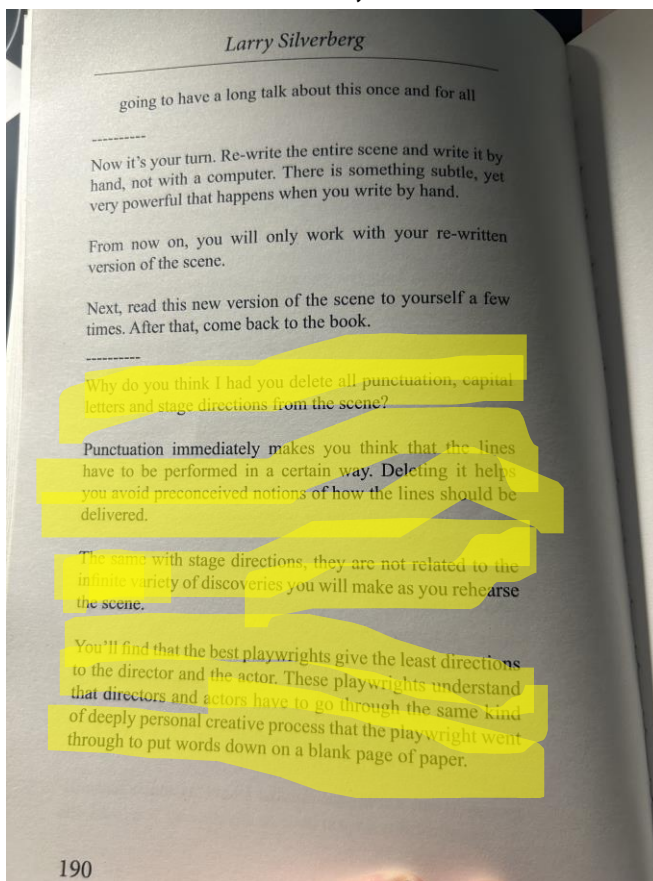
## PART 1 INSTRUCTIONS:



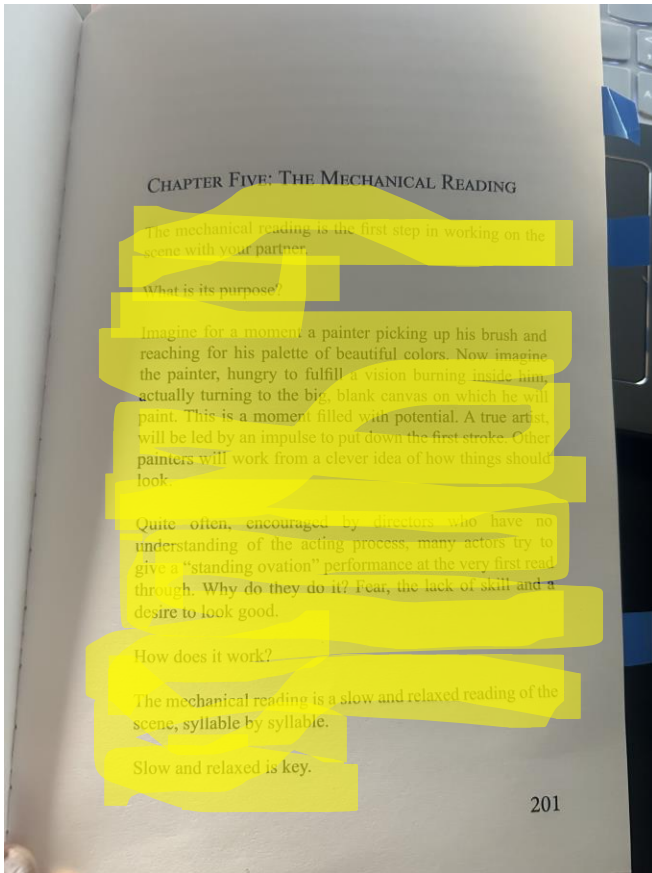
## FOR PART 2:



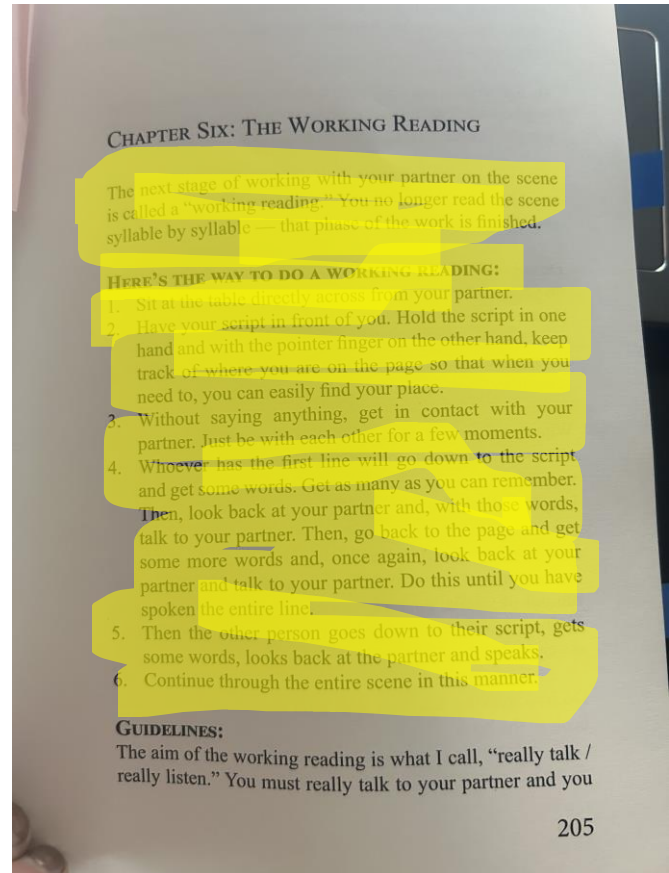
## CLOSING CLASS #1, AFTER PART 2:



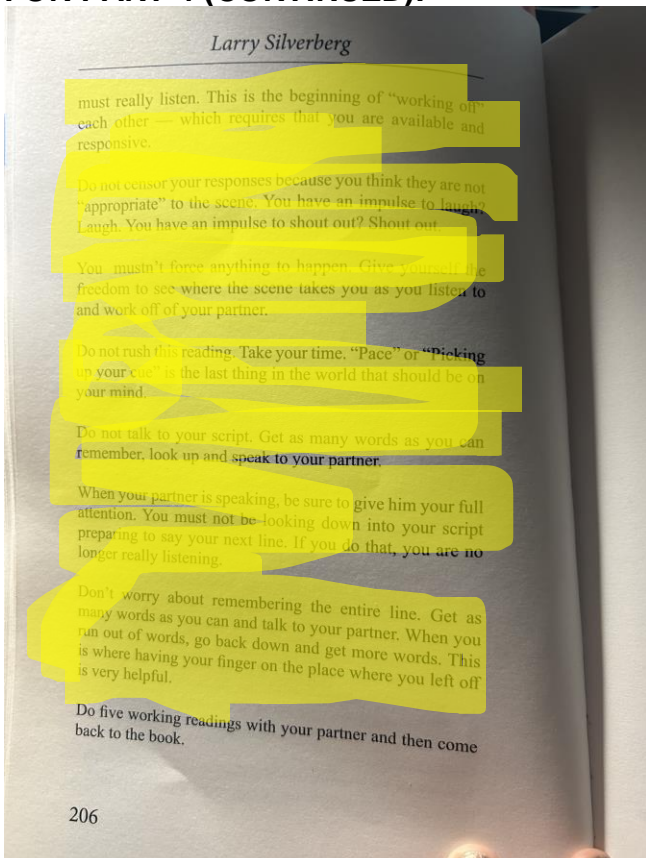
### FOR PART 3:



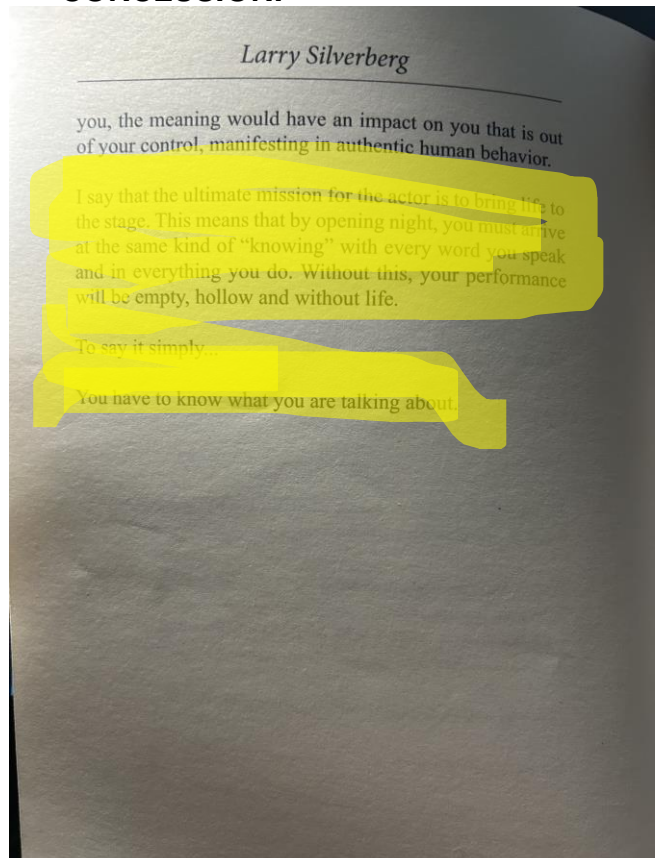
### FOR PART 4:



### FOR PART 4 (CONTINUED):



### CONCLUSION:



Teacher Resources:

Bornstein, Marc, et al. "Human Behavior." *Brittanica*,  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-behavior>. Accessed 14 September 2023.

Silverberg, Larry. *Meisner Complete*. Smith and Kraus, 2019.