

Interrupting Lines

Part of the Shakespeare 101 Series

at 'Let Him Roar Again'

Step by Step Instructions:

1. Choose a section of dialogue that consists of short or single lines between two characters. An example of dialogue between Tybalt and Capulet in Act I, Scene v is included below.
2. Students read through the scene aiming to start speaking their line one or two words before the other character has finished speaking theirs. The aim is for there to be no pause between lines, quickening the pace of delivery and adding some urgency to the exchange of dialogue.
3. Students reflect on the impact of this exercise on the pacing of the scene. Did it feel right to continue the whole exchange or was there a moment where it felt too rushed and they wanted to take more time as actors?
4. Extension -
Students could then explore the opposite of the pace in this example by adding a five second pause between each line. Encourage them to consider what happens to fill this pause. For example, is there a physical action that fills the gap? Is it used as time for the character to ponder and consider their response? Does the character go to speak and then pause in order to gain control of their words before speaking?

Romeo and Juliet - Act I, Scene v

- TYBALT** This, by his voice, should be a Montague.
Fetch me my rapier, boy.
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin.
- CAPULET** Why, how now, kinsman! Wherefore storm you so?
- TYBALT** Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,
A villain that is hither come in spite,
To scorn at our solemnity this night.
- CAPULET** Young Romeo is it?
- TYBALT** 'Tis he, that villain Romeo.
- CAPULET** Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone;
I would not for the wealth of all the town
Here in my house do him disparagement:
Therefore be patient, take no note of him.
- TYBALT** It fits, when such a villain is a guest:
I'll not endure him.
- CAPULET** He shall be endured:
What, goodman boy! I say, he shall: go to;
Am I the master here, or you? go to.
You'll not endure him! God shall mend my soul!
You'll make a mutiny among my guests!
You will set cock-a-hoop! you'll be the man!
- TYBALT** Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.
- CAPULET** Go to, go to;
You are a saucy boy: is't so, indeed?
- TYBALT** I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall
Now seeming sweet convert to bitter gall.