

## **Poetry Interpretation- Mastering Page Turns**

In the events of Poetry and Prose, that little black binder serves as an extension of you. Although it is never to be used as a prop, if manipulated appropriately, that binder can be used as a tool to enhance your performance. One such way to subtly use your binder as an interpretative agent is to utilize page turns. Think about it. We create a cutting of Prose/Poetry and divide our piece into manageable paragraphs that can stand alone and place each chunk on a separate page. We then have to pause and turn the page to move along. That pause and turn can either be used to draw the audience in or remind them you have a binder in your hands. Paying attention to page turns and planning the choreography of them can also add a subliminal edge to your performance that may help lead to a higher rank. Presentation is vital when you hold a binder, and the following items below can help your performance.

Essentially there are two types of turns: the slow turn and the quick turn. As simple as this concept sounds, actually interpreting which speed of turn is the most effective for a specific page can make a difference in the visual story you tell. If you are going to put energy into facials, gestures, and other body movements then why wouldn't you plan out the movement of your binder/pages? Using a slow turn tells a tale of being somber, reflective, fearful, etc. A slow turn also allows for you to give a deliberate facial while either "reading" through to the next page or using silence as emphasis. A slow turn also works very well when you first open your binder and when you last close it. This slow turn lets you capture the audience and ease them in/out of

the story. Further, a slow turn allows time for you to make eye contact with your audience while not “reading”. This can be a great way to leave your audience feeling important and part of your presentation, thus drawing them further into your story.

A quick turn is wonderful to accentuate panic, desperation, anger, excitement, or any other pulse quickening emotion. A quick turn can be done and then followed with a pause to highlight a moment or it can be utilized with you reading from page to page swiftly. I would recommend using quick turns sparingly as they can be jarring. If used too much a quick turn loses its impact as well. Most often, having one or two quick turns captures the audience’s attention; not only from the speed and the ‘whoosh!’ sound that is created but from the emotional action. It’s a vocal, violent turn, and this simple turn gets the audience excited and engaged.

One thing to remember when contemplating the slow or quick turn is speed variation. Not all slow and quick turns are created equally. You will not want to turn too swiftly/slowly or risk losing your audience. The trick is to be dramatic/theatrical but not overly melodramatic. If you were to see a dramatic Prose with a performer taking forever to turn their page because they wanted to look at the audience with tears and a sad face for an eternity, you would either yawn or laugh. Either way, that turn failed.

Another thing to think about is what material composes your pages. Do you just have your cutting glued/taped onto black paper or do you have your pages placed in plastic covers? Different materials lend themselves to how easy/difficult it is to grab and turn a page. I always

found basic black construction paper to work best. The page was firm yet had a bend to it which I found easy to grip and turn. I could also easily jot notes directly onto my page with the only hassle being finding a pencil. In comparison, plastic covers irritated me. They were slippery, which made turning pages a game of can I grasp it? Plastic covers also meant I had to remove the page from the cover before I could write anything. Not a huge deal, but this ended up being a chore and aggravating when I had a thought that might float away.

If you do have issues grabbing a page, an easy solution is to place a tape tab on the edge of the page (a tape tab is made simply by taping one end of a tape strip to the front of the page while folding the other end over to the back of the page). Align tabs as you would divider tabs in any binder (top to bottom) and viola! You can now easily grab hold of every page in your binder—and in sequential order no less!

There are a few other presentational concerns to ponder which you can divine through the interpretation of your piece. Tempo of turns, gestures to make mid turn, facials to accompany the turn, etc. Remember to keep acting/presenting during the turn to keep hold of your audience and thus integrate the turn into your performance. It is up to you to make a turn noticeable or seamless, but it should never be boring or obviously a break from the piece. You also want to consider what and how much of the reading you place on each page so that the turns act as transitions to help pacing and flow, and not act as a necessity which takes away from the performance. Think about where breaks are important—usually with new information, a realization, change of topic, or anything that is novel. By breaking up your piece appropriately, you make the turns serve more as a natural

transition/pace regulator that you can utilize and capitalize on, rather than a mere awkward turn.

Thinking over turns and how to use them can be a nit-picky, detail-oriented task. Yet, as your performance improves and the season draws near an end, it is in the details where ranks are made. Plan them out and see your piece become extraordinary.