

Year 9 Knowledge Organiser: Konstantin Stanislavski

WHO

Konstantin Stanislavski was born in Russia in 1863 to a very rich family. He was exposed to theatre and the Arts from an early age, but was not impressed by the over dramatic style of acting at the time (known as melodrama).

As a result, he decided to create a new type of acting which had greater **verisimilitude** (truth to life).

WHERE AND WHEN

He formed the Moscow Art Theatre and is most commonly known for his 'system' for actors.

The 'System' was Stanislavski's acting method, developed as he tried to find ways to increase realism in acting. It is a set of rules and exercises which created a foundation for actors to work from.

The principle objective of his system was to help the actor in creating an illusion of actuality on stage and in convincing the audience that he (the actor) was portraying a real person, convincing his audience that his feelings and thoughts were exactly those of the character he embodied.

WHAT

Stanislavski is commonly referred to as the 'Father of Modern Theatre'

He taught that an actor must prepare his role in great detail, with a large amount of attention to the psychology, the motivation and the lifestyle of the character.

Key conventions:

**Given circumstances** - The given circumstances are the information about the character that you start off with after reading the play/scene. These include: How old is the character? What's their situation in the play and in relation to the other characters? Are there any notes provided about the play and its characters? Such notes and stage directions may not tell you everything you need to build a character but they are the starting point from which you'll work to examine the other questions.

**Subtext** - The script of a play could be called the text. The subtext is the actual meaning and motivation behind the lines that are spoken and the actions taken. For example, the heroine might say to the hero, "I love you" and we might assume that it is the happy ending fairy tale moment. But the delivery would be very different if she was worried that he was about to walk out on her.

**If** - Stanislavski said that the character should answer the question, 'What would I do if I was in this situation?' Also known as the 'magic if', this technique means that the actor puts themselves into the character's situation. This then stimulates the motivation to enable the actor to play the role.

**Objective & Super-objective** - An objective is the reason for our actions. What are we trying to achieve? Life, people and circumstances constantly put up barriers in our way. Each of these barriers presents us with the objective of getting through them. You shouldn't try to express the meaning of your objective in terms of a noun, always use a verb, e.g. 'I wish to...' The super-objective is an over-reaching objective, probably linked to the overall outcome in the play. We use the word super-objective to characterise the essential idea, the core, which provided the impetus for the writing of the play. A character's objectives are likely to be stages in the journey towards the super-objective. If that journey is perceived as a clear path to the super objective, then you have your through line.