“Just Lather, That’s All”

After Reading Questions:
1. Make a chart of the reasons the barber gives himself for killing and not killing Captain Torres when he has the chance. What would you and your partner have done if you were in the situation?

2. Write a well-constructed paragraph where you explain three ways the story builds suspense for the reader.

3. Write a brief character description for either the barber or the captain using details from the text. (A character description is a written sketch of character qualities that uses nouns and adjectives, and phrases, to name the character’s qualities, and examples and quotations from the stories as evidence of those qualities. A character description does not typically describe the character’s physical appearance unless it reveals some aspect of his or her personality.)

4. Explain how the last paragraph of the story makes the reader reconsider his or her interpretation of the story.

5. Make a list of the evidence in the story that shows the author knew or researched enough information about barbering to establish the credibility of the barber. How does this add to the story?
“Just Lather, That’s All”

One objective of our course is for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of a piece of literature by adapting it to another literary form.

In this case, “Just Lather, That's All” offers us the opportunity to adapt a short story into either an internal monologue or a dialogue – the choice, naturally, is yours!

Here are the details on the 2 choices you have......
Option 1: In the role of Captain Torres, write a monologue explaining your involvement in suppressing your country's revolution. How do you feel about those who oppose your actions, and about those who agree with them?

OR

Option 2: Write a dialogue where Captain Torres relates his experience in the barber shop to one of his subordinates. What is your assessment of the situation and what have you learned? What do you and your subordinate(s) intend to do now that you've visited the barber?

See below for tips on how to write either a monologue or a dialogue. Use 1 computer for your group to write. Work together!

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How to Write a Monologue: Tips and Essentials of Writing Strong Monologues

Keep Your Character’s Voice Distinct and Consistent
Since a monologue involves a single character speaking for an extended period of time, you need to make certain that your character’s voice is distinct to his or her personality, and that it remains consistent, not only throughout the monologue itself, but also from before the monologue, and continuing through the remainder of the play. This is not to say that your character’s monologue cannot reflect a change in attitude. Your character, for example, may be incredibly kind to her boyfriend’s ex-girlfriend to her face and then turn around and perform a monologue about how much she hates her. What the audience needs to know is that this shift is intentional. If your intentions as the playwright are not clear, your writing will come across as inconsistent and your audience will quickly lose interest.

Pay Attention to the Rhythm and Shape of Your Monologue
Even though a monologue may be only a short part of a much longer play, it needs to have a shape and rhythm of its own. A monologue in any form is a story, so like any story, it should have (generally) a beginning, middle, and end. When writing your monologue, consider where its high point, or climax, is, and always make sure that every line is helping the audience get to and from that point effectively. Without shape, your monologue will probably make it seem as though your character is either ranting or rambling. Use concise language and selective editing to keep your monologue from becoming dull or seemingly pointless – losing your audience’s emotional investment, even for five minutes, could keep them at a distance for the remainder of the play.

Know Your Audience, Know Your Audience, Know Your Audience!
This is by far the most important element of writing any monologue, and cannot be reiterated enough times. As you are writing (and later revising) your monologues, make certain that you know who your audience is. The word “audience” in this case is not referring to the group of people who will sit and watch a production of your play. Rather, the “audience” of your monologue is the person (or people) to whom your character is speaking when they deliver each specific monologue.
Knowing who your character is speaking to will shape your monologue significantly. It will give your character a distinct voice (imagine, for example, how differently you would address your mother and your best friend), a
distinct attitude, and will help your audiences in production to understand what your characters’ intentions are. Imagining that your character is speaking to “the world” or “to society” is not good enough – next time you are working on a monologue, try to revise your work with a specific audience in mind for your character, even if it’s just an experiment, and note how much stronger the piece becomes.

WRITING DIALOGUE
One way of dramatizing narrative action is through dialogue. Writers use it to directly reveal the characters of a story, without the narrator's intruding commentary. Dialogues are not mere recordings of conversation, but pointed representations of conversation. Through dialogue, readers gain insight into the personalities and motives of the characters.

In dialogue, writers use attribution to identify which person is speaking and give credit to him/her for the quoted passage. While attribution in formal essays usually gives an expert's credentials and qualifications, the attribution for dialogue acts more as a guide to show readers who is speaking (i.e. "he said," "she said").

BASIC RULES:
(1) When writing a conversation between two or more people, remember to indent (5 spaces) each time a new person speaks or new ideas are introduced.
Example: The Caterpillar was the first to speak.
"What size do you want to be?" it asked.
"Oh, I'm not particular as to size," Alice hastily replied; "only one doesn't like changing so often, you know."
"I don't know," said the Caterpillar.
Alice said nothing: she had never been so much contradicted in all her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper.
"Are you content now?" said the Caterpillar.

(2) Use commas to set off the name of a person directly addressed by a speaker, words such as yes and no, and mild interjections (i.e. "Oh!" "Ouch!")
Example: "Chad, you're just too cute."
"Boy, did we underestimate her."

(3) Use a comma to set off a question added to the end of a spoken sentence.
Example: "That's not very fair, is it?"

(4) Question marks come before the ending quotation mark if it belongs to the dialogue. If it belongs to the speaker, however, the quotation mark comes after the ending quotation mark.
Example: before: "What do you want, Alice?" he asked.
        after: What did he mean when he said, "I'll see you around"?

(5) When two characters are taking turns speaking, not all entries must be attributed to someone. Make sure it is obvious to the reader who is speaking before omitting attribution.
Example: Paul said, "I don't like it."
"Why not?" asked Mary.
"I just don't."
Mary sighed. "Paul, just calm down, OK?"

(6) If attribution is placed in the middle of a sentence, then a comma should be placed before the second opening quotation mark. The word beginning the second set of quotation marks stays in lowercase because the sentence has not yet been completed.
Example: "You know," said Jan, "we shouldn't take our lives for granted."

(7) If attribution is placed between two separate complete sentences of dialogue, then a period belongs before the second opening quotation mark. In this case, the word beginning the second set of quotation marks must be capitalized.
Example: "I thought I saw something," said Ashley. "The shadows are moving."

(8) When combining an attribution with an additional clause, a comma should be placed between the attribution and the rest of the sentence.
Example: "What can I do for you?" she asked, for she was moved by his tears.

(9) If attribution is placed between two combined independent clauses, then a semicolon belongs between the attribute and the rest of the dialogue.
Example: "I would have forgotten if you hadn't called," he said; "so you saved me."
If a writer summarizes what a character says, then those words are not placed within quotation marks.
Example: Russell told her that he would rather not go to the party.

Sometimes a character's speech will require more than one paragraph. If this occurs, then the ending quotation mark will be placed only at the end of the entire quote. Each paragraph, however, will still require opening quotation marks so the reader knows that the character is still speaking.
Example: “I grew up in a small house, in a small town, and developed a small mind.
Back then, everything seemed so black and white. People were either good or bad. That's when I met Winston.
“He lived a few houses down from my grandparents' house. I used to see him feed bread to the redbirds that lounged in his fig tree. Back then, I would smile at him because I didn't know about his past.”

When a character is thinking something, instead of speaking it, those words can go in italics.
Example: Don't look under the bed...Don't look under the bed, I said to myself.

**WRITING SAMPLES:**

Richard Wright uses dialogue to show what happened when a white man confronted a black delivery boy. Notice that the dialogue does not have the free give and take of conversation. Instead, it is a series of questions which get evasive answers: "he said"..."I lied"..."he asked me"..."I lied." The dialogue is tense, revealing the extent of the boy's fear and defensiveness.

I was hungry and he knew it; but he was a white man and I felt that if I told him I was hungry I would have been revealing something shameful.
"Boy, I can see hunger in your face and eyes," he said.
"I get enough to eat," I lied.
"Then why do you keep so thin?" he asked me.
"Well, I suppose I'm just that way, naturally," I lied.
"You're just scared, boy," he said.
"Oh, no, sir," I lied again.
I could not look at him. I wanted to leave the counter, yet he was a white man and I had learned not to walk abruptly away from a white man when he was talking to me. I stood, my eyes looking away.
He ran his hand into his pocket and pulled out a dollar bill.
"Here, take this dollar and buy yourself some food," he said.
"No, sir," I said.
"Don't be a fool," he said. "You're ashamed to take it. God, boy, don't let a thing like that stop you from taking a dollar and eating." -Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

Wright does not try to communicate everything through dialogue. He intersperses information which supports the dialogue—description, reports of the boy's thoughts and feelings, as well as some movement—in order to help readers understand the unfolding drama.

Dialogue can also be used to reveal a person's character and show the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Notice the way Lillian Hellman uses dialogue to write about a longtime friend, Arthur W. A. Cowan:

...Cowan said, "What's the matter with you? You haven't said a word for an hour." I said nothing was the matter, not wishing to hear his lecture about what was. After an hour of nagging, by the repetition of "Spit it out," "Spit it out," I told him about a German who had fought in the international Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, been badly wounded, and was now very ill in Paris without any money and that I had sent some, but not enough.
Arthur screamed, "Since when do you have enough money to send anybody [anything]?
Hereafter, I handle all your money and you send nobody anything. And a man who fought in Spain has to be a [loser] and should take his punishment."
I said, "Oh shut up, Arthur."
And he did, but that night as he paid the dinner check, he wrote out another check and handed it to me." It was for a thousand dollars. -Lillian Hellman, *Pentimento*

This dialogue is quite realistic. It shows the way people talk to one another, the rhythms of interactive speech and its silences. It also does something more: it gives readers real insight into the way Hellman and Cowan were with each other, their conflicts and their shared understanding. Such dialogue allows readers to listen in on private conversations.