# The stage as a metaphor for developing students' academic reading practices

- Students struggle with the purpose of academic reading: "I've written my essay…I just need to find references to support it now."
- The term 'range' adds an extra puzzle to the struggle: "How many sources do we have to put in for references? Ten? Twenty?"
- Y2 sees increasing expectations in independence and criticality: "Is it some books, some journals and some websites?"

Using the stage as a metaphor to help students select a range of relevant sources...

… and explore the 'on stage' relationships between sources in reading / writing practices.

The Scenery

The Performance

The Players
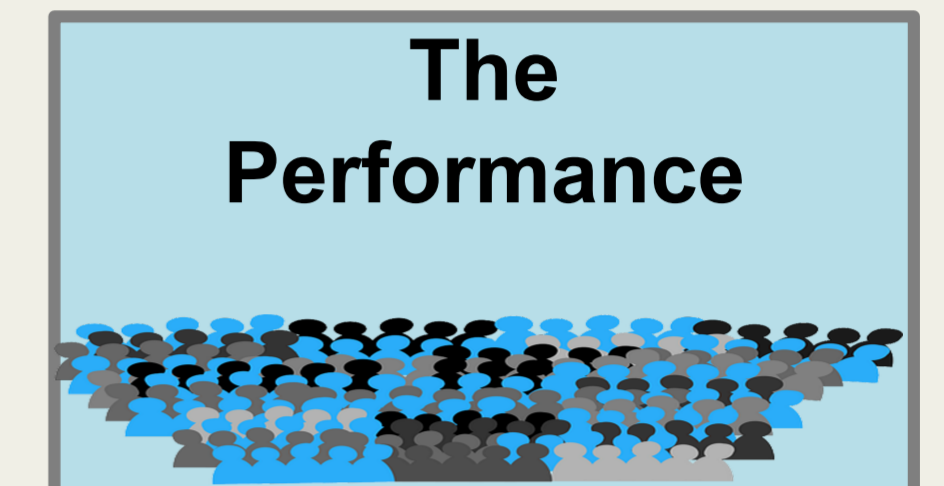
Background discourses:
➢ Disciplinary theories and concepts sitting behind the question.
➢ How question relates (or doesn't) to the 'big' ideas of the module.

Secondary sources:
➢ Bridge from general subject to specific question.
➢ Locate the question within the discourse landscape.

Pillars of the Argument:
➢ Key concepts identified through initial analysis of question.
➢ Sources that focus on specific aspects of the discussion.

Oscar Winners:
➢ Big names, without which, work appears uninformed.
➢ Well-established theories and concepts with wider range of publication dates.

Rising Stars:
➢ Contemporary authors, theories or concepts.
➢ Developments / alternatives / arguments.

Newcomers:
➢ Emerging authors, theories or concepts.
➢ Not yet well-established or evidenced.
➢ Most contemporary direction of current debate.

Expresses purpose of academic reading:
➢ Analysis of each and …
➢ …the meaning they come to in their *combined* interpretation to form an 'argument'.

Relationships *between* sources explored through performance metaphor.
➢ Actors do not stand on exact same spot on stage.
➢ Each actor takes a position on previous actors' performances and the scenery.

'Breaking of fourth wall' & 'asides to audience' - opportunities to explore critical reading & writing:
➢ is the actor 'concurring', 'recommending', 'arguing', 'demonstrating' etc.? Why?

The Reviews (Y2 UG students)

It was just helpful to see where i went wrong in writing too early before I finished my reading …

Before I used to spend ages wading through a journal (or several!) before realising they would not be useful. Now I read abstract and conclusion before deciding to read more. Such a time saver.

I now read the journals more thoroughly and no longer "cherry pick" in the same way. I also read less journals but in more depth.

The Dressing Room

Reflections: Has enabled students to articulate and reflect on academic practices (e.g." I think I'm only choosing people who stand on the bit of the stage I like")

Questions: Worked well in HUMSS… what potential for the Sciences? How far could this be used to illuminate reading lists in module guides? Best at end of Y1 or beginning of Y2?

Thanks: Academic colleagues for the freedom to play with metaphors and the support to embed them.

The Papers
Brewerton, G. (2014) *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 20:78–90
Hermida, J. (2009) *The International Journal of Research and Review*, 3:20-30
Saltmarsh, D. & Saltmarsh, S. (2008) *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13 (6): 621-632

The Playwright
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