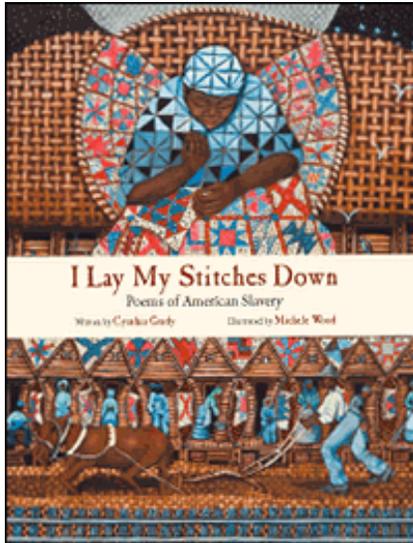


## Creating the Dramatic Monologue



**Monologue:** *in theater*, an extended speech by one character to another.

**Soliloquy:** *in theater*, a monologue spoken by one actor at a point in the play when the character believes s/he is alone. The technique reveals a character's thoughts, feelings, state of mind, motives, or intentions. The dramatic convention is that whatever is said in a soliloquy is true. Well known soliloquies by the title characters can be found in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, and *Othello*.

**Dramatic Monologue:** *a poem* in which the poetic speaker (viewpoint character) addresses the poem's reader or listener. It is similar to a soliloquy in theater, in that it often reveals or indicates the innermost thoughts and feelings of the speaker.

1. **Who am I?** What is my status/class? What is my occupation? What is my age right now? Does my name have any significance?

2. **Where am I?** What is the specific time and place where this "scene" is taking place? Is it a familiar place or unfamiliar? Large or small? Outdoors or in? Formal or informal?

3. **Am I talking to anyone?** (monologue) If so, to whom? Are they familiar to me? Do they have a higher or lower status than me? What is our relationship at this moment?

4a. **What do I want from this person specifically?** (monologue) What is the selfish need? What tactics will I use to get what I want? What can I actively do to the other person to get my need met (plead, threaten, cajole, demand, reason, bargain ...)

4b. Or, **What am I reflecting on?** (soliloquy or dramatic monologue) What am I thinking, feeling, or wishing?

**Example**

**Dramatic Monologue:** “Schoolhouse” from *I Lay My Stitches Down: Poems of American Slavery*

**Who am I?** I am one of two slaves in the scene. I am perhaps 10 or 11, but as a slave, I wouldn't know my age or my birthday. Together, we are responsible for walking the master's daughter to school before we do our other daily work.

**Where am I?** I live in a southern slave state. This is before the Civil War, before the emancipation of slaves. I am currently outside of a one-room schoolhouse under an oak tree, on a fall morning. We have been teaching ourselves to read by listening to the white teacher. It's risky, to linger here. We should go directly back to the slave quarters. We might get whipped, or worse. Once winter sets in, we don't stay—it's too cold to sit still. Until now, nobody knew we did this. Today, the teacher saw us.

**What am I reflecting on?** I am thinking aloud.... addressing the reader about my plight. In this moment, we do not know what will happen to us. I am afraid, but, I *would like to shout to the world that I can read!* I am teaching myself to read!! It would go so much faster if I didn't tremble in fear every day —if only I could go to school! Let me go to school!