

***Character arc*** is an aspect of performance which I haven't addressed at all. And I very probably won't, except for this piece of paper you're holding. That's not because character arc is unimportant—character arc is essential for a fully-developed performance. Rather, I haven't yet figured out how to transform character arc into an interesting exercise, so it's probably easier for me to let you read this page than to babble the information at you in class.

The *character arc* is a statement of how your character changes, psychologically, by the end of the play. **Your character arc supports the theme** in the same way that your superobjective supports the superevent. Character arc can usually be described by

1. A one-sentence statement of how you change during the play.
2. A one-sentence statement of your condition before the play begins.
3. A one-sentence statement of your condition at the play's conclusion.
4. One sentence for each beat, describing how that beat pushes you further along the arc.

Here's an example of a simple character arc, where the theme is "You can rely on friendship."

Character arc: I learn that it's okay to trust my friends.

Pre-show: I don't trust anyone.

Beat 1: I accuse my friends of lying to me.

Beat 2: I discover that they were telling the truth all along.

Beat 3: I am ashamed of my vicious behavior.

Beat 4: They forgive me.

At curtain: I know my friends are trustworthy.

**Every character has an arc.** If you think your character does not change during the show, then either the author has a deliberate purpose for making your character static (which you should be able to articulate)—or you should look again. It's rare for a character not to have an arc. In fact, it's usually most critical for the actor to find the arc when nothing *seems* to change.

The greater the contrast between your initial and final states, the more effective your performance can be. In the example above, you could have started with "I am suspicious" instead of "I don't trust anyone"—but then you wouldn't have had as far to travel to reach your final destination. Each beat would have been a much smaller step.

I'd encourage you to examine your part for its character arc (multiple characters will have multiple arcs) and to know what that arc is. You don't really have to give it any more thought than writing one sentence per beat; and once you do, I hope you'll see how it can guide your emotional state from beginning to end.