



# Communication of Intention

**Roderick:**

(Word count 198)

**What role(s) are you playing?**

Roderick Usher. The performance is set in our decaying family home. Madeline is my twin sister; the narrator is a childhood friend.

**What is happening to your character(s) in the key extract?**

I am feeling unwell as I am decaying with the house. I have asked the narrator to visit. I am unwell physically and emotionally but trying to support Madeline.

**How does the key extract relate to the context of the whole play?**

We are becoming absorbed by the house, becoming as one in decay. The mysterious nature of this piece links to the gothic themes of the play with the arrival of Friend looking in on our lives and realising we are not well.

**What are your character's objectives/motivations/feelings?**

Roderick suffers from a great level of anxiety for himself and Madeline. I am feeling apprehensive inside but trying to hide this from the others. My main motivation is keeping Madeline alive – hence letting her drink my blood, for example.

**How are you interpreting this character(s) in performance? (i.e. vocal, physical, communication of intent)**

By using my voice to show an outer calm, contrasting to my inner anxiety and to show status and maturity, using a lower tone with clear, deliberate pronunciation. I use gesture and mime to indicate location/situation – the dinner, for example, and the journey to the tomb. My physicality is upright and centred, communicating an outer calm while, at times becoming house as well as Usher.



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**Madeline:**

(Word count 200)

**What role(s) are you playing?**

I am playing the role of Madeline, the twin sister of Roderick Usher.

**What is happening to your character(s) in the key extract?**

My character is in a catatonic state. I am withdrawn and unresponsive and I am trying to hide my illness from Roderick's friend who is visiting.

**How does the key extract relate to the context of the whole play?**

The curse of the Ushers is showing. If there is more than one child, they will go insane and suffer death, decaying with the house itself. My character suffers from seizures as the curse takes hold of her and Roderick

**What are your character's objectives/motivations/feelings?**

Madeline is denying that she is not well but she is slipping more and more into her seizures, becoming distant and withdrawn from Roderick and their visitor who she tries to connect with as a breath of life in the house.

**How are you interpreting this character(s) in performance? (i.e. vocal, physical, communication of intent)**

I use controlled arm and hand movements to show the serene exterior, contrasting to what is happening inside. I move to the rhythm of the piece, with music to support me in our total theatre style. I use my eyes to show where my focus is and to indicate fear when in the tomb, for example. I look directly out into the audience at times to connect to them. I mime the word 'help' when wakened in the tomb.



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## **Set designer**

(Word count 200)

### **What design role are you fulfilling?**

Set design.

### **What is your central design concept in the key extract?**

My main design concept is to merge the house with the characters. To show the 'haunted house' style yet keep it timeless. I am aiming to show a simple and bleak environment in black and white.

### **How does the key extract relate to the context of the whole play?**

It shows the gothic theme and style. We also see the melancholic place and time for the Usher's as their lives start to crumble.

### **How have you interpreted this key extract through your design?**

I have used black, white and grey colours in the set dressing, which matches the colours of the costumes, this helps with the idea of the faded, lost characters who are struggling to be fully separate from this place. I have used a similar fabric in the set to that used in the Madeline's costume, to show how the house will engulf and absorb her. I give height to the house and let the material flow from the white flats onto the metal frames.

### **What are you hoping to communicate to the audience?**

That the house is a place that can consume its inhabitants. Where mood and intentions are taken out of your control. I am communicating that the bleak walls are keeping in the curse and the secrets of the Ushers, and that these grey walls seal their fate, and for Madeline this is her tomb.