

Character Breakdown

Anna (Professor) - Super sweet, but very uncomfortable teaching online; very evidently doesn't know what she is doing; tries to make jokes from her lack of technological knowledge, but is clearly just as frustrated and burnt out as her students

Frankie - Very smart; doesn't want to be online but also doesn't understand why everyone else can't just figure it out like he did; a bit of a narcissist

Laynie - Also a great student, but hates being online; she is making it work and trying to help everyone else make it work but is very tired

Brandi - Wants to be anywhere but in class and doesn't care who knows it

Katie - Really really trying to keep it all together but really struggling having to be back home

Camryn - Appears to be a bad student who doesn't care, but is really struggling with her home life and is just trying to balance it all

Sam - Very wealthy; seemingly has a perfect life and is doing well in their nice home, but just lost her dad to Covid

Erin - Brandi's best friend; doesn't appear to care any more than he does but really does want to do a good job; nerdy

Jason - Doesn't really understand the gravity of the pandemic but is following the rules because he doesn't really like in-person class anyways

Maddy - 100% liberal intersectional feminist; bisexual and doesn't care who knows it; very serious about Covid and making sure everyone is safe

*Filmed and Produced in the medium of a zoom screen
Starts on the Zoom Join Meeting screen - Spring Semester 2021
Professor enters call and so do 3-4 more students*

Anna (Professor) - *(camera off) Can you see me?*

(beat)

Frankie - *(already exhausted by being on zoom; camera off but clicks on) No. You have to press the little video button with the red slash through it (helpful but less than nice)*

Frankie clicks their camera back off and Laynie turns hers on, looking happy to be in class

Anna finally gets her camera back on (trying to laugh it off), but is now muted and trying to start class with no success

Frankie - *I can't hear you (rudely)*

Laynie - *(glares at Frankie) Anna, you're muted*

Anna - *Okay, let's try this again. Can you hear me now? (Laynie nods) Great. Sorry about that. Can everyone turn their video on, please?*

Frankie turns their video back on. So does Erin, one of the other students who has been on the call the whole time.

Laynie - *Sorry to interrupt, but Katie says she is in the waiting room*

Anna - *Ugh I thought I turned that off. I don't know how to let them in but I see four students in there. I was wondering where everyone was.*

Frankie - *Click on the waiting room button and admit the people who say waiting.*

Anna - Got it.

Katie, Jason, Maddy, and Sam enter the call (Katie and Sam turn their cameras on)

Anna - So sorry about that everyone. Let's reset here. If everyone could please turn their cameras on and we can get started on a warmup before your first mini-performance on the pieces you have been working on in response to the ongoing Covid pandemic. *(beat)* Let me pull the rubric up and attempt to share my screen.

Brandi enters the room, unmuted but camera off

Brandi - I just don't understand why you can't tell me how many combos I have left. Can't you just pull it up? /Here's my ID, use it to tell me..

Students with cameras on laughing/trying not to laugh at this

Anna - What? Do you need something?

Brandi - No, see click that button... *(finally mutes)*

Anna - *(looks pissed but laughs anyway)* Moving on. While I try to pull this up, does anyone want to share what they are currently reading or watching?

Laynie - I am reading *Atomic Habits* and watching *New Girl*.

Erin - I don't really read, but I am watching *Stranger Things*.

Frankie - Ya, I'm reading through scripts for a summer stock audition and that keeps me pretty busy so I don't do much else.

Katie - I am basically just reading textbooks for my stupid political science degree I don't even want, but I am watching *Gilmore Girls* for the millionth time.

Sam - I am in a constant loop of rewatching my three comfort shows - *Gilmore Girls*, *One Tree Hill*, and *Friends*.

Maddy - I am working my way through every book by Taylor Jenkins Reid right now! You all must read *7 Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*!

Anna - Great, thanks, everyone. I'll definitely add that to my list, Maddy. Can you see my screen?

Katie - No we can't

Spotlights on Anna

Anna - I wish I understood this technology. I really do. I'm young but I'm just not used to having to use my computer for everything. I try to have a technology-free classroom because it's just so distracting and it's nice to have some time away from screens, but now everyone has to stare at their screen just to come to class. It's embarrassing to have people not even ten years younger than me correcting me and trying to help me work my own stuff but I genuinely don't know what to do. I understand why this is necessary, but I miss seeing my kids in person and I just want to be back in the classroom. This is the new era of theatre but I really wish it wasn't.

End spotlight

Anna - *(breaks her own spotlight)* Whatever. I'll just read you the rubric. *(beat)* This is the first showcase of the original pieces you have all been working on this semester, today is just focused on your immediate responses to how Covid has affected you and your families... *(to show a lack of student attention, the screen goes blurry and the words are inaudible for a few seconds - **Brandi leaves at some point in here**)* A little reminder to only share what you are comfortable with and the project can be character-based and not based on you at all. I want to hear around 60 seconds! *Any questions?*

Camryn - *(Camera off)* Umm ya so my camera is broken

Cut to spotlight on Camryn (everyone else disappears)

Camryn - My camera's not actually broken. It's just I share a room with all three of my brothers and there is stuff everywhere and it's embarrassing. I had to stay home this semester because we can't afford to pay for a dorm when I can stay home with classes being online and all, but I can't do a performance in a room with three other people trying to do their own work. There's not even enough room for me to move around. Not to mention, my youngest brother is only six and I am constantly trying to get him to do his own work. My oldest brother is always playing video games, so loudly that I can't even hear my class, let alone participate or do my entire monologue today. I am actually really proud of what I wrote, but I just can't do it today, it's too much.

Anna - *(breaks the spotlight)* Umm okay. Can you just like send me a video by the end of the day?

Camryn - Uh ya I guess.

Anna - Great. Any other questions?

Erin - Uh ya hi. I have been working with Brandi but she left the meeting so...

Anna - Can you text them?

Erin - Ya I guess I can.

Jason - She's like never here. Probably off at some party but ya know I'd like to be doing that right now but here I am.

Maddy - Umm still in a pandemic here people...

Jason - Partying stops for no virus!

Maddy - What the hell Jason? It's noon on a Tuesday!

Anna - Okay enough. Please try and solve it. She's like your best friend, isn't she? Tell them to come back to class or they are going to get a zero *(getting frustrated)*

Erin - Okay, I'll tell her.

Cut to spotlight on Erin (everyone else disappears)

Erin - I mean of course I could text her. She is my best friend after all or at least that's what they say. It's just she obviously doesn't want to be here and they think I don't want to be here either, and if I text them to come back, she will know I do want to be here. I really really want to be here. I don't even know why Brandi's in this class or why I am even friends with them. She doesn't care about anything, but I don't have a lot of friends and with Brandi, it's like, I actually have friends and people see me for more than the kid who does theatre. The problem is I actually want to be an actor - I have always wanted to be an actor and I am so lucky that I get to be here and be in school and I don't want to waste it but I just don't know if I can go back to being looked at the way I was before Brandi.

Anna - *(breaks the spotlight; Erin appears to be texting Brandi on his phone)* Okay... who wants to go first?

Laynie - I can go!

Anna - Okay great! You can go ahead and slate your piece and then get started!

Laynie - Ya. Hi everyone. I'm Laynie Blossom, I'm a sophomore BFA MT major and I am doing a monologue about how Covid has made my life really lonely.

(beat)

Laynie - I have plenty of friends. I mean in theory. I know a lot of people, but I live alone and when classes are online I literally see no one. I talk to my friends sometimes, but it is hard to keep relationships when you don't ever see someone in person. And it's just so overwhelming having to do all this online that I have kinda stopped reaching out to my friends and it sucks but it is what it is. You gotta do what you gotta do I guess. I just wish I could really get to know people again and be with people and I would be a lot less lonely.

Anna - Laynie, that was great! I am really happy you shared all of that. It can be so lonely having to be stuck in our homes all the time. *(beat)* Does anyone have any feedback?

Frankie - Ya, umm it was good, but something was missing. It's just like you've been better.

Anna - Thank you Frankie, but that's not exactly helpful. Is there something more specific you can constructively help Laynie with?

Brandi has now rejoined the call, but is eating something very obnoxiously and is very clearly not paying any attention

Frankie - I personally feel like that was very helpful, but I guess the problem was you just really didn't connect with the camera. Have you filmed any professional self-tapes because when I was filming for the Into the Woods Revival...

Anna - I don't think that's relevant but thank you.

Spotlight Laynie

Laynie - No I haven't filmed for a Broadway revival. I'm 19 years old. What do they want from me? And I didn't connect enough to the camera? That's because I'm talking about how lonely my life has been while in my little shoe-box, one-bedroom apartment on a zoom screen. I've never done this before, none of us have ever done this before. This has been the hardest thing I have ever done. I haven't seen

my friends in weeks. I started college during this stupid pandemic and I am finally getting to study what I love and work toward my dreams, but it's isolating and I am just so tired.

Anna - Anyways, great job again Laynie. Who's next?

Camryn's mic is not muted and you can hear someone in the background asking about math homework

Camryn - I can't help you with your math homework! I'm literally in class!

Anna - Please mute yourselves, everyone!

Frankie - I'll go.

Anna - Go ahead.

Frankie - Hi. I'm Frankie for those of you who don't know my name by now, but you should. I am a junior, BFA acting major, MT and theatrical design minor. This is my piece about how Covid has affected my career.

Covid has been really hard for me. You know, I am on my way to Broadway and with Broadway being shut down, I lost a lot of inspiration. And virtual auditions are the worst! I am just so much more captivating in person. And having all my classes be online is pretty bad too; again *so much more captivating in person* plus I am literally only here to further my career and the random general credits I have to take are a huge waste of my time and online too - a huge bore.

Ya, that's what I have so far but like along those lines ya know - struggling actor, etc.

Anna - *Begins to speak but is muted*

Frankie - Still can't hear you

Anna - Ughh, sorry, okay. Good job Frankie. Maybe for the future of this project, you can focus less on yourself and more on the work. It just kinda feels like you are explaining to me why you are a good actor and not showing me your good acting. We all know you can act. You wouldn't be here if you couldn't, but there's no need to force it; please work on it, okay?

Frankie - (*embarrassed*) Umm ya okay, thanks.

Anna - Any other feedback for Frankie?

Laynie - Umm ya in Frankie's words, there was something missing.

Anna - (*trying not to laugh*) Okay, who's next?

Erin - Brandi and I can go.

Anna - Brandi are you still here?

Brandi is not paying any attention at all - camera is on but still eating something

Anna - Brandi! Hello, you know I can see you right?

Erin - Umm we don't have to go I guess. Brandi?

Brandi - What bro? You talking to me?

Anna - Ya hi. Welcome to Acting 300, I'm Anna. Are you ready to go Brandi?

Brandi - Am I ready to do what?

Erin - The piece we were working on the other night, remember. You were like almost helping.

Brandi - Oh ya bro. I do remember that! Ya, let me find that doc real quick.

Anna - This portion should be memorized remember? We talked about this last week and like all semester.

Brandi - Right, right.

Brandi still typing, very obviously has no idea what's going on

Erin - Are we ready to go?

Brandi - Ya sure whatever man

Erin - Hi, I'm Erin. I am a first-year BFA acting major and Brandi and I are going to be relaying a conversation I had with some of my friends at the very start of the pandemic.

Brandi - Yo. I'm Brandi, I've been in school like forever and I guess I am studying acting too but like it seemed easy so that's why I'm here.

Erin - Oh my gosh guys! Have you heard about the crazy Corona Virus thing? Do you think we will be locked down?

Brandi is silent when it is very obviously her line

Erin - *(bypasses the line and keeps going)* I kinda think it might get here. I don't want to miss graduation and the last few weeks of drama club! That would suck!

Brandi still oblivious

Erin - Okay, I'm so sorry, but Brandi you're missing your lines!

Brandi - I have lines? I thought I was just like a silent part of this team.

Erin - Who the hell do you think is playing the other part?

Brandi - I just thought you were playing both parts since I kinda helped write it.

Erin - You didn't help do anything. Can you at least pretend to be interested in this and read the other freaking part?

Anna - It's fine, we can come back to you.

Erin - No look, it's not fine! I wrote this whole thing, I am going to perform it by myself, and Brandi can get a zero or write her own thing, see what I care.

Brandi - Excuse me?

Anna - Look okay, Brandi if you don't want to be here, you don't have to be. No one is forcing you. **Brandi leaves** Whatever. I am honestly sick of people not taking this class seriously. You are all adults, if you don't want to be here, don't show up. Stop wasting everyone's time. Erin, we will figure something out, but let's just move on because you don't have to play both parts.

Erin nods and then turns camera off

Anna - Does someone else want to go?

Maddy - Umm ya I'll go. I'm Maddy - a junior studying theatre - BA not BFA. My piece about the intersectionality of Covid and how this pandemic has really highlighted so many of the underlying issues in this country.

Covid has affected everyone. You can't escape the effects it has had on people. Even if you don't feel like it's affecting you, it is. There has been a lot more to this year than just Covid. Obviously, Covid has been the highlight of the news, and rightfully so because of how dangerous it is to our immunocompromised community and even perfectly healthy people for that matter. But there's so much more. We spent the summer fighting for Black Lives even though that shouldn't be something we have to fight for. And the second we're back in person, we see mass shootings in our schools because guns have more rights than

people it seems. And I just don't even want to see what's next! It's just exhausting to see our world falling apart and there's nothing I can do about it. I am doing everything I possibly can - getting vaccinated, voting, and standing up for what I believe in but what more can I do? If everyone just did their part, we wouldn't have these problems.

Anna - Great. I really like your take on it. Thank you for sharing. Anyone have any feedback?

Sam - Ya I really liked that Maddy! I didn't really think about all the extra implications and how messed up some of this really is! Thanks Maddy!

Jason - It just seems a little bleeding heart liberal doesn't it. Like at this point you are just forcing your cause on people - like we get it you are queer, a feminist, and care way too much about everything.

Maddy - Excuse me?! You have no right to talk to me like that.

Anna - Jason, Maddy is right; you can't talk to someone like that.

Jason Sorry, it just feels fake.

Spotlight on Maddy

Maddy - This is the farthest thing from fake. I am the farthest thing from fake. This is what I care about. I care about people, I care about everything, and it's hard. Do these people think it's easy to just want to help everyone all of the time because it's all I think about? But still, I don't understand why everyone can't just be a little more compassionate and we would get a lot farther. And look, I don't like being online any more than anyone does, but I am not willing to make this pandemic any worse for people. I am not afraid that I will die if I get Covid because guess what, I am lucky. I am a healthy 20-year-old, and I'll

survive, but I have no idea who I could be exposing if I get sick who isn't so fortunate. I quarantined, I got vaccinated as soon as I could and I just wish others would see how much harm they are doing. Actually, no, I think people know exactly how much harm they're doing. They know, it just hasn't happened to them so they don't care. And it's selfish. It's just not fair that people can be so selfish and I am trying to advocate for everyone and it's hard and I'm exhausted, so it is not fake. I can't be fake, but I can be me, and I'm going to keep being me, and I won't stop advocating for people because Jason thinks I am some fake bisexual liberal snowflake or some crap.

Anna - Anyways, we are going to move on. Who wants to go next?

Beat where no one says or does anything

Anna - Let's take a few minutes to break and y'all can talk amongst yourselves or go get a drink, etc.

Laynie - Katie, are you auditioning for the second stage show?

Katie - I want to! I don't know if I have time and it's probably gonna be online anyways.

Frankie - I am!

No one acknowledges their comment

Camryn - I'm thinking about it but time and space are an issue for me.

Sam - I might.

Laynie - Ya, I'm still deciding. I'm just sick of virtual auditions and I don't want to do another online show.

Anna - Okay, let's regroup. Katie, why don't you go next?

Katie - *(looks really taken off guard)* Umm, okay, ya, I can go.

My name is Katie... Ummm I am a junior political science major with a minor in theatre performance. My piece is about trying to become a lawyer in this crazy time.

Begins speaking and is very clearly reading her script off her laptop and struggling to keep up with her words and gets lost pausing for several seconds

Katie - I've been on the path to being a lawyer for so long, but I don't even know if that's what I want to do anymore. Covid has really shown me how fragile this world is and I want to do something that would make me happy. **Starts getting lost.** I mean it's just with all that's going on in the world, I'm putting a lot into a career that I don't / even know if it would be the best move for me.

Anna - Is everything okay? You seem to be lost in your script and reading from your screen.

Katie - Ya, ya. I was just not ready. Can I start again?

Anna - Yes. Go again.

Katie - Okay, thanks. *Clearly embarrassed*

Starts speaking again but continues to get lost and doesn't know what she wrote

Katie - I've been on the path to being a lawyer for so long, but I don't even know if that's what I want to do anymore. Covid has really shown me how fragile this world is **gets lost** and I want to do something that would make me happy.

Anna - Katie, you clearly don't have this prepared for today. I will come back to you but you need to figure this out because you know this should be memorized by now.

Spotlight on Katie

Katie - I wanted to have my piece memorized. I really did and I tried. It's just so hard for me to be back home. My parents are really hard to be around. There's nothing wrong with them or anything it's just they aren't very supportive. I want to be an actress, but they basically forced me into being a lawyer and I am going to have this degree I don't even want when I really just want to move to New York and follow my dreams. Having to live with my parents again has been so hard. It's hard for me to rehearse when they don't want me to pursue theatre so I tried to memorize it but if my parents see me doing anything other than studying for the LSAT, they'll yell at me. I just want to move back to school.

Anna - Who wants to go next?

Sam - I can go.

Anna - Great, go for it!

Sam - Hi, I'm Sam. I'm a senior BFA actor. *(beat)* Covid has been pretty easy for me. I mean I'm one of the lucky ones, I have a nice home to quarantine in and we have been able to get everything we need from the store - we have been really lucky.

Spotlight on Sam

Sam - Wait... that's not true. I mean I do have a very nice place to stay and we have everything we could need except we weren't lucky. My dad was a perfectly healthy guy and he got Covid. I don't even know where he got it, we were so careful but he got sick and then he got really sick and he just never got better. So Covid hasn't been easy. I mean it hasn't been easy for anyone but my life looks pretty ideal from the outside, but its really freaking hard to see people getting back to their normal lives but my life is changed forever in the worst way because of this pandemic.

Break Spotlight

Sam - So ya, I mean, it's been okay.

Anna - Thank you for sharing Sam. Next time I would encourage you to dig a little deeper in a large scale on how this pandemic is affecting people.

Beat

Anna - Did everyone go who had something prepared?

Variety of nods from those with cameras on

Maddy - What about Jason?

Jason - I got Covid so..

Maddy - Ya that tracks, you better freaking quarantine.

Jason - Hey! I'll do what I want.

Maddy - Jason I swear!

Jason - I mean this whole Covid thing is just like the flu right? We live every year with the flu and it doesn't really seem to affect people's lives that much so why can't I see my friends? I mean I'd rather not attend classes in person anyways, so thats like whatever, but I really miss going to parties and hooking up with chicks. I mean I'm just gonna do my thing, who's to stop me? I mean, getting Covid kinda stopped me, but it's fine.

Anna - Anyways... does anyone have anything else to say.

Laynie - You don't have to share this, but how are you doing with being online and everything?

Anna - Oh gosh, loaded question. I mean being online is hard as you all know, but keeping everyone safe is most important and I know y'all know that. Honestly, it sucks

that I can barely work zoom, and takes me ten times longer to get things done in this format but we're making it work. I miss seeing y'all in person! Seriously! But how are you all doing?

Laynie - I mean it's exhausting, but we gotta make the best out of it ya know.

Camryn - Ya I mean my house is so crazy so it's really hard for me to get stuff done, but I promise I have been listening even without my camera.

Frankie - Ya I mean it's really hard, for a bunch of reasons.

Katie - For sure! I feel you on the crazy home life! I can't wait to come back to East Lansing!

Sam - Covids been pretty hard on my family too. We've been through a lot this year.

beat

Anna - Thank you all so much for sharing. This really goes to show how much we are all in this together. I hope y'all have a great week, and as long as nobody has anything else, y'all can go for the day.

Spotlight on Anna

Anna - I can really see that my students are struggling being online. It's so hard to form that connection through a zoom screen for me to even help them. But I am so glad I got to have that conversation with them. I mean a lot of it is out of my control, and how am I supposed to fix someone's home life or come up with a safe way for people to form connections when it's not yet safe for us to do live theatre? I just wish there was something more I could do to help. But all I can do is try my best to foster that environment in my virtual class and keep doing the best I can and hope they do the same.

The host ended the meeting for all