The Task:

Below is a soliloquy: a piece of text for an actor to speak aloud. Monologues such as these are perfect for practicing both the speaking and interpreting of texts which may be given to actors.

Begin by speaking the words without considering any meaning or emotion the writer may mean to convey. Then, in turn, read the words as if they applied to, or stemmed from, the following situations:

1. Read the words as if you were remembering a most magical, wonderful day with someone you care deeply for. It may well have been the best day of your life.
2. Read the words as if you are responding to questions posed by the Police, who are hoping to solve a crime, and you are their only witness.
3. Read the words as if this outing to the zoo was the last time you saw someone you really loved, who died on the way home from the zoo.
4. Read the words as if you are a criminal, guilty of a crime, who is providing an alibi to the Police.

Ideally, you should record yourself reading the text in these different ways, or ask somebody to record them for you. Alternatively, if you are in a group situation, ask for feedback from fellow-actors. You might also want to add your own situations to your list.

The Text:

“What happened yesterday? We went to the zoo. It started to rain as soon as we got there, so we were soaked by the time we got to the monkey cages. We must have looked ridiculous, standing there in front of those monkeys, trying our hardest to shake ourselves dry. There were only a few other people there: a balding man in a brown overcoat, who didn't take his eyes from the monkeys for even a second; a red-haired woman, holding the hand of a pretty young girl – both looked as soaked through as we were. Then the sun came out. The woman led the young girl out into the sunshine, and then we left soon afterwards, headed straight to the aviary. I love birds, even though they're in cages. I don't like the fact that they're caged, but I love seeing the birds. The bald man stayed where he was. We didn't see him again.”