



Introduction and overview for a two week project to

## WRITE A ONE ACT PLAY

### I. PREWRITE

- A. What is a play? \_\_\_\_\_
- B. What are basic elements of a play script?
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. What kind of character does your group wish to write about? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- D. As a result of reading/seeing your play, what do you want the audience to
1. Think? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Feel? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Know? \_\_\_\_\_
- E. What are three or four scenes you NEED to write to tell your story?
1. To introduce main characters and conflict: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  2. To develop characters and heighten/complicate the conflict? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  3. To bring the conflict to a climax? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  4. To resolve the conflict in a believable way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **II. WRITE THE PLAY**

- A. Establish characters and introduce conflict through dialogue.
- B. Use dialogue between characters to advance plot (no narrator for this project.)
- C. Add a minimum of stage directions. Let dialogue demand certain movements and gestures.
- D. Suggest minimum stage settings, props, and lighting.

## **III. READ THROUGH DRAFT OF PLAY**

- A. Listen for the natural flow of language.
- B. Listen for the development of characters' personalities.
  - 1. Can you tell what each one wants from what s/he says?
  - 2. Could any other character say another character's lines? (If so, you don't need them both.)
- C. Listen for clues to conflict. Does each character complicate the storyline.
- D. Listen for clues to movement and gestures.
- E. Does your play have elements that cause the audience to think, feel, and what you stated in Part I, Section D?

## **IV. WALK THROUGH THE PLAY to answer the following questions.**

- A. Can the action in the play suggested be accomplished in your classroom or theater?
- B. What minimum props are NECESSARY to aid in understanding the characters or action in the play?
- C. What minimum costume items are NECESSARY to help establish the characters or setting of your play?
- D. What minimum lights is NEEDED to create the mood or setting of your play?
- E. How long does it take to perform your play? (10-15 minutes?)

## ASSIGNMENT ONE: Creating Characters

- I. In groups of 3-4 students, brainstorm about the kind of story you wish to dramatize.
  - A. Consider literature you've already studied this school year or a social situation about which your group would like to make a statement.
  - B. Decide on 3-4 characters you will need to tell your story. Each member of your group will assume the responsibility for developing a biographical sketch for one of these characters.

### Write a BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH for your assigned character.

- C. In the first paragraph, describe **physical appearance and way of speaking**. Consider:

1. Age
2. Height and weight
3. Color of hair, eyes, complexion
4. Posture
5. General appearance over/underweight, untidy/neat, unattractive/attractive
6. Clothing and hairstyle
7. Defects
8. Way of speaking: tone of voice, rhythm, vocabulary

- D. In the second paragraph, describe the character's **social and family history**. Consider:

1. Economic level or status
2. Occupation
3. Education
4. Home life (now and when growing up)
5. Religion
6. Race and/or nationality
7. Amusements or hobbies
8. Likes and dislikes

- E. In the third paragraph, describe your character's **inner life**. Consider:

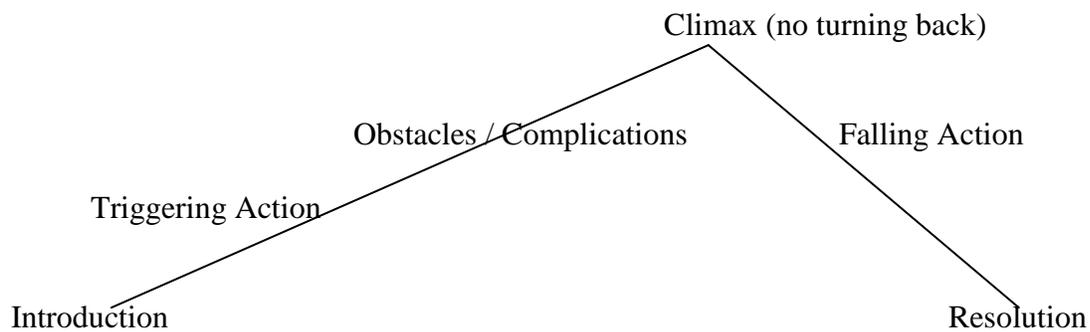
1. Moral standards (how s/he decides what is right or wrong, proper/improper behavior)
2. Ambition, goals
3. Fears, chief disappointments
4. Temperament: easy going, pessimistic, charitable
5. Attitude towards life: chip on shoulder, sunny, moody
6. Qualities: imagination, poise, judgment

7. Habits
8. Good and bad traits

II. Write a 1-2 page monologue for your character in which s/he tells the audience (or another character) about an important event in his/her life.

## ASSIGNMENT TWO: Establish a storyline

- I. Meet with your group to determine a story line that will contain the following:
  - A. Introduction of characters and situation (setting and conflict)
  - B. Triggering action, where main character has decided that s/he wants something and goes after it. The main conflict should be clear from this point on.
  - C. Obstacles the main character must overcome to reach goal. Three complications that lead to a crisis from which there is no turning back.
  - D. Climax where the main character succeeds or fails.
  - E. Falling action or denouement (French word meaning “unraveling”)
  - F. Resolution – problem is solved. Play ends.



- II. Complete for homework: Writing the first draft.
  - A. Write the first draft of your drama, concentrating on dialogue that
    1. Reveals character (refer to your character sketch and group discussions)
    2. Advances plot - moves action along through what characters says and do while speaking.
    - 3.
  - B. Playwriting is REWRITING, so approach your first draft with a sense of exploration and fun. See what you learn from your characters. They may tell you what to have them do next.

### **ASSIGNMENT THREE: Melding the group versions**

- I. CLASS WORK:
  - A. Meet with your group and each of you read aloud your own first draft.
  - B. Listen for clear personalities revealed through dialogue
  - C. Note the most effective portions of each of the drafts.
  - D. Try to take the best elements from each of your drafts and come up with the COMBINATION OF YOUR BEST ELEMENTS.
  
- II. HOME WORK:
  - A. Revise your rough draft by incorporating the best of each individual contribution. Remember, this is a writing team and each is expected to utilize what is best from each team members. This is what professional writing teams do.
  - B. Today, concentrate on adding an activity or two that will help create visual interest to your play. What actions seem natural with the dialogue? If possible, bring three legible copies of your revised play for a group reading during the next class meeting.

### **ASSIGNMENT FOUR: Finalizing your one act play.**

- I. Meet with your group and each group member taking a part to read, read aloud each of your revised plays.
  - A. Which one seems to do the best job of integrating the best of your team's dramatic elements?
  - B. Can the best elements be melded into one unified dramatization of your story?
  - C. Do you need to add additional characters? If so, do so sparingly.
  
- II. Select a member of the team who will be responsible for word-processing a final draft of your group script. If that person needs to use school equipment, be sure to get passes or permission slips from your teacher.
  
- III. Other members of the group, divide up the responsibility for writing in lists for props and costumes, and also specifying lighting directions. These members will be responsible for bringing in simple props the day before your group presents your play to the class.

### **ASSIGNMENT FIVE: Presenting your play to the class.**

- I. Bring enough copies of your play for each reader and one for the teacher.
- II. Using very simple props and costume items, present a dramatic reading of your play.
- III. The class will evaluate the plays based on the following criteria.

Rubric for evaluating one-act plays

*Circle the appropriate number (1 – 5, low to high)*

**Content:**

- 1 2 3 4 5 Plot is focused on a single problem to be solved within brief period of time
- 1 2 3 4 5 Personality of characters is revealed primarily in dialogue; secondarily in action
- 1 2 3 4 5 Dialogue introduces conflict early in the play
- 1 2 3 4 5 Dialogue sounds like real conversation – brief, overlapping speeches and some fragments
- 1 2 3 4 5 Play has an identifiable beginning, middle and end.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Action includes three increasingly more challenging obstacles in solving the problem
- 1 2 3 4 5 Climax is realistic, but not given away too soon
- 1 2 3 4 5 Resolution makes sense based on the personality of characters
- 1 2 3 4 5 Avoids use of narrator – lets characters reveal themselves
- 1 2 3 4 5 Minor characters serve as foils or help reveal personalities of major characters
- 1 2 3 4 5 Suggests lighting, sets, and props, but lets dialogue guide the director in his/her choices

**Delivery:**

- 1 2 3 4 5 The group members give a dramatic interpretation of their script.
- 1 2 3 4 5 The group members speak so that words are clearly understood..
- 1 2 3 4 5 The group members' actions seem appropriate for the characters.
- 1 2 3 4 5 The group members use props effectively.

Some ideas for WRITING A PLAY are derived from workshops presented by the [California Playwrights Project](#).