

PLAYWRITING QUICK GUIDE

Unlock the wonder of playwriting with these simple activities:

Activity: “Narrative Elements”

Part 1: (10 mins)

Discuss the following narrative elements with your students. Talk about stories they have read in class and point out how each element is used. Recognizing these elements in other works will help your students use them in their own writing.

CHARACTERS (who)

SETTING (when & where)

PROBLEM (what)

RISING ACTION (events)

CLIMAX (high point)

RESOLUTION (problem solved)

Part 2: (15 mins)

Give each student 5 minutes to **think** of an idea for his or her play and what they want to write.

Then, let them **talk about their ideas** in small groups or as a class. Encourage them to **listen** to each other and ask questions if any part of the story seems unclear. You can also let them **draw** pictures or **write** diagrams or outlines to focus their ideas.

Activity: “Three Bags”

Part 1: (10 mins)

Find three brown lunch bags and label them Characters, Settings, and Problems.

Pass out slips of colored paper to each student. Have them **brainstorm** examples for each category and **write** them on the corresponding slips of colored paper (blue for Characters, Pink for Setting, etc.) Characters can be people, animals, etc. Settings can be places or times. Problems should be stated in a short sentence or phrase.

For example, they might write down Teacher, Monster, and Dog for the Character bag (they can also add adjectives such as *Angry Teacher*, *Hairy Monster*, or *Lost Dog*).

Part 2: (20 mins)

After the bags have been filled, ask each student to **choose** one slip from each bag and to **outline** a short story that incorporates each element. They will have to use their imagination to fit them all together (they may also add other characters, settings, and problems if they wish).

Have students **share** their stories with the class.

Part 3: (20 mins)

Activity: “Just Write!”

Give your students time to take their ideas from any of the above activities and use them to write their play. Make sure they **write using dialogue and stage directions** instead of paragraphs. Encourage them to **submit** their plays to the B Street Theatre!

The B Street Theatre School Tour performs the winning plays for over
60,000 Northern California students in over 100 schools
March through June every year!