

PLAYWRITING

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Fantasy Festival XXIII!



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REHEARSAL!

WEEK ONE



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 1

The first step in the writing process is to ask your students to simply think about stuff (people, places, things... *whatever*).

Somewhere inside their heads is an idea that they will want to write about. Tell them to let their minds wander and to not ignore anything! Every thought they have (no matter how ridiculous) can lead to other thoughts that will eventually join (or transform) to become what their play is about.

ACTIVITY 1: **Think**

5 MINUTES (each time)

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ Have your students get quiet and... *think!* You will want to model this for them and/or do a few of the exercises together. Let them see how your thoughts might move in many directions, often without sense or order, but can eventually lead to bigger ideas. In the verbalization of your thinking, emphasize the narrative elements (character, setting, problem...) that will later be developed into a story.

◆ Think in a variety of *places*:

at their desks
on the floor
outside lying on the grass
in the dark...

◆ Think at a variety of *times*:

in the morning
after recess
following lunch
right before dismissal...

◆ Think with a variety of *approaches*:

with their eyes closed
looking at pictures from old calendars
listening to instrumental music
playing with toys...

No writing is required... just *think*!



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 2

Students will love this next step because it involves doing the one thing that most teachers are constantly telling them to stop doing... *talking*!

Explain that it can be beneficial to talk to others about their ideas, because it helps them to better understand the ideas themselves. And when another student asks questions or needs clarification about what has been told to them, it helps students to more fully develop their ideas. Sometimes a question or comment will lead to an even better idea!

ACTIVITY 2: **Talk**

20 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ Have the students get into groups of 3 and take turns talking about their ideas. They don't have to tell the entire story from beginning to end (it might just be an idea about a certain character and something that happens to them).

◆ Make sure students are given an opportunity to talk *without interruption* (set a timer for 1 minute for each student to speak).

◆ When they are finished, the others in the group may ask questions for clarification, or contribute their own ideas. (If students want to share more than one story idea, tell them that they may do it after everyone has had a turn).

No writing is required... just *talk*!



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 3

The third step can also help students to develop their ideas by allowing them to *see*, not just *hear*, what they are thinking. It can also help them to visualize how they want their stage setting to look. Students will not only write the words that the actors speak, but also need to decide on *where* the actors will say those words (the set design).

ACTIVITY 3: **Draw**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

- ◆ Give the students paper and pencils and crayons and markers.
- ◆ Have them make pictures of the ideas they were thinking and talking about (you might first want to give students an opportunity to share with the whole class or in small groups to bring those ideas back to mind). They can continue to review and discuss while they draw. Again, they don't need to illustrate an entire story, just parts of it (a character or a place). In the act of drawing things, students will further develop their ideas.

No writing is required... just *draw!*

CURTAIN UP!

WEEK TWO

ACTIVITY 4: Narrative Elements

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ Discuss the following narrative elements with your students. Have them think of each of these parts while writing their own pieces.

◆ You might first talk about stories they have read in class and point out each of the elements. Recognizing these elements in other works will help the students to identify them in their own writing.

*Use the nursery rhyme **Jack and Jill** as an example:*

1. CHARACTERS (who)

Jack
Jill

2. SETTING (when and where)

Summertime
Outside

3. PROBLEM (what)

They are thirsty and want to get some water

4. PLOT (the events that take place)

They grab a pail
They hike to the top of a hill
They get the water
They start for home

5. CLIMAX (the most important thing that happens)

Jack falls and hurts his head

6. RESOLUTION (the last thing that happens)

Jill tumbles after him

Stories and Plays should have a Beginning, Middle, and End. The Narrative Elements can be found in the following sections:

BEGINNING:	Characters Setting Problem
MIDDLE:	Plot
END:	Climax Resolution

◆ Have students get into small groups, then pass out a favorite book to each group. Have them work together to complete the following chart:

CHARACTERS (who)

SETTING (when & where)

PROBLEM (what)

PLOT (events)

CLIMAX (most important thing)

RESOLUTION (last thing)

ACTIVITY 5: **Dr. Frankenstein**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

This activity will help students to “build” a character.

◆ Have students write down any of the following information for each character in their play:

1. name, age, occupation, etc.
2. physical features, height, weight, hair and eye color, etc.
3. race, nationality, education, hobbies, etc.
4. favorites: color, food, TV show, movie star, song, sport, etc.
5. unique traits or talents that make your character special or different from others

Explain that most of this information will never be revealed to an audience (or even to other characters in the play). However, knowing someone in such a complete way will help students better understand each of their characters, and more easily write the things that their characters would *say* and *do*.

◆ Another approach would be to have students ask themselves the following question for each character:

“What does he/she/it **Look, Sound, Act, & Think** like?”

◆ Students may also draw a picture of each character. Be sure to give them time to share in small groups or with the class. This is further opportunity to *think, talk, and draw*.

ACTIVITY 6: **3 Bags**

45 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

- ◆ Find 3 bags (like lunch bags) and label them **Characters**, **Settings**, and **Problems**.
- ◆ Pass out several slips of paper to each student and have them brainstorm examples for each category (Characters can be people, animals, etc. Settings can be places or times. Problems should be stated in a short sentence or phrase).
- ◆ Have students write their suggestions down on the papers and put them in the appropriate bags. 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*).
- ◆ After the bags have been filled, ask each student to come to the front of the class and choose one slip from each bag.
- ◆ Next, have students write 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).

For example, a student might select the following:

CHARACTER: **one-eyed pirate**
SETTING: **grocery store**
PROBLEM: **can't find the car keys**

- ◆ Have students share their stories (or beginnings of stories) with the class (the stories can later be adapted to script format and performed).

The 3 bags can also be used throughout the school year for whenever students need story ideas.

Note: A management tip for this activity is to make the slips of paper different colors for each category. That way they will always get back into the correct bag when a student is finished with them.



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 4

Finally we reach the step where the pencil meets the paper (or the fingers meet the keyboard). Using the *ideas*, *conversations*, and *pictures* from the first 3 steps, students will now begin to put their ideas into written language on the page. Some students think this is the hard part, but it isn't (the revision step is more difficult).

ACTIVITY 7: **Write**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ Encourage your students to write *everything* down before they forget it. Don't let them cross anything out or begin to make judgments about what they have written. They can decide afterwards what is good or bad. Tell them to not worry about spelling or punctuation (that comes later in the editing step).

Just sit down and *write!*

Students will learn the script format later. Have them first write in story form (sentences and paragraphs).

INTERMISSION!

WEEK THREE

The two most important things in a play are *dialogue* and *action*. The following activities will give students opportunities to work with spoken language and to visualize movement. They will then be able to better incorporate these elements into their plays.

ACTIVITY 8: **Say It Again, Sam (part 1)**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

The following activity will give students a chance to develop their skills in listening to conversation.

Oral language is often quite different from written language. To demonstrate this, ask students to pay attention to how they talk to each other. For example, they might say, “Wanna come with?” as opposed to, “Do you want to come with us?”

Explain that different characters might have different speech patterns or ways of talking, and that during conversations, there are often interruptions where a person might not finish saying what they started to say.

◆ Share examples from literature to illustrate the differences in the way people talk.

◆ Have students choose one of the following situations and write a conversation between the two characters. Pay attention to what the characters say and the words they choose.

1. A **dentist** is about to pull the tooth of a **patient**.
2. A **teacher** catches a **student** cheating on a test.
3. A **policeman** is writing a speeding ticket for a **grandparent**.

◆ Students can share their writing by performing the scenes.

ACTIVITY 9: Say It Again, Sam (part 2)

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

The following activity will give students a chance to develop their skills in writing dialogue (what an actor says out loud).

In addition to considering WHAT is said, it is also important to think of HOW it is said.

◆ Have the students brainstorm a list of several adverbs, such as the ones listed below, and write them on the board (help them out by suggesting they think of an adjective and add -ly to the end, OR think of a noun and put the word “with” before it).

happily

hesitatingly

with fear

angrily

mysteriously

with confusion

◆ Next, ask the students to suggest a simple phrase, such as: “Who are you?”

◆ Have the students take turns coming to the front of the room to first select an adverb from the board, then to say the simple phrase according to the meaning of the adverb.

For example, one student might say, “Who are you?” as if they were happy to meet someone (happily), while another student would shout, “Who are you?” as if they were very upset at being bothered (angrily).

Explain the importance of a playwright being specific in writing down *how* they want their characters to speak.

ACTIVITY 10: Charades

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

This classic party game gives students an opportunity to see how action (what an actor physically does on stage) is important to their play.

Movement can convey as much meaning as language. Tapping on a tabletop with your fingers means something very different from slapping a tabletop with your hand. Experience in movement will help students to visualize how they want their characters to move and what they want them to do when they are talking or listening to other characters in their play.

◆ Following you will find several situations for 1 or 2 actors. Copy each onto 3X5 index cards (or students may make their own Charades cards).

◆ Invite students to come to the front of the room and select a card. Give them a short time (no more than 15 seconds) to think about how to communicate the information on the card without speaking. Don't give them time to "plan out" exactly what they will do (improvisation is an important element in acting, and often leads to a more successful performance).

◆ After each Charade, be sure to discuss which actions were especially helpful in communicating the situation to the audience. Then encourage the students to think about how the characters in their plays will communicate through action.

Remind the students that actions are called "stage directions," and are written inside parentheses before, after, or within the dialogue.

SITUATIONS FOR CHARADES:

Individual (for 1 actor)

You are making a peanut butter & jelly sandwich.

You are changing a flat tire.

You are lost inside a haunted house.

You are playing a game at the State Fair.

You are directing actors in a play.

Partners (for 2 actors)

You are buying a watch at the store (clerk and customer).

You are ordering lunch at a restaurant (customer and waiter).

You are in trouble for breaking a lamp (child and parent).

You are fighting over the last piece of pizza (friend and friend).

You are writing a play about monsters (student and teacher).



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 5

Think of this step as **Listening** to the writing.

It is helpful to actually read the story aloud, so students can hear the rhythm of the language, and visualize the order of events.

ACTIVITY 11: **Revise**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

In revision, students can do any of the following:

- ◆ **Add** In listening to their play, students may realize that there is something they forgot to say or do. Students may add dialogue and action to make their play better.
- ◆ **Delete** There might be something in their play that doesn't make sense or interrupts the flow of the story. Students may delete anything that is not important.
- ◆ **Rewrite** A character's line may sound "wrong" or may not fit the speech of the character. Students may rewrite dialogue or action to make things more clear.
- ◆ **Reorder** The order of a story is important to understanding. Students may want to move events around or change the order of what is said or done.

Use the following examples to have students practice Revision. You can do it as a class on the board or overhead, or make copies for students to do at their seats in small groups.

ADD

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill.

Jack fell down,
And Jill came tumbling after.

DELETE

Jack and his little sister Jill who had auburn hair and blue eyes,
Went up the hill,
To fetch a pail of water to enjoy with a picnic lunch they had made
of ham and cheese sandwiches, potato salad, and apple pie.

Jack fell down
And broke his crown, scraped his knee, bruised his elbow, and
almost knocked out a tooth,
And Jill came tumbling, stumbling, bumbling after.

REWRITE

Jack and Jill
Went up the mountain,
To gather a bucket of water.

Jack fell over
And broke his head,
And Jill came tumbling on top of him.

REORDER

Jack and Jill
Went To fetch a pail of water,
Up the hill,

Jack broke his crown
And fell down,
And Jill came tumbling after.

ENTR'ACTE!

WEEK FOUR



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 6

Think of this step as **Looking** at the writing.

This is the boring part for students, but still important. Tell them they need to check the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation to make sure everything is correct.

ACTIVITY 12: **Edit**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

Give the following examples:

◆ **SPELLING:** Misspelled words can cause confusion.

Write “ghoti” on the board and ask students what it says.

Tell them that it spells the word **FISH!**

gh = the “f” sound	in the word <i>rough</i>
o = the short “i” sound	in the word <i>women</i>
ti = the “sh” sound	in the word <i>nation</i>

◆ **CAPITALIZATION:** Show the students with the following example how mistakes in Capitalization can make things difficult to read:

mISTakeS iN cAPItaliZTIon cAn mAke thINGs dIfFicUlt tO ReAD

◆ **PUNCTUATION:** Show how a simple comma can completely change meaning.

Don't stop! (means to *keep* doing something)

Don't, stop! (means to *quit* doing something)

Use the following example to have students practice Editing. You can do it as a class on the board or overhead, or make copies for students to do at their seats in small groups.

CAPITALIZATION, SPELLING, AND PUNCTUATION

once upon a time their was a boy naMed jack and a girl named jill? together they took a Pail and began to walk, up a hill. at the top of the hill was a whale. they went! to gather sum water.

on their way back down the hill jack tripped over a stone and bruised his Head. in her effort to help him up, jill stumbled. and spilleD the wutter.

CURTAIN CALL!

WEEK FIVE



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 7

Use the following examples to illustrate the format for playwriting, and how it differs from poetry and prose:

ACTIVITY 13: **Publish**

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ **Poetry** (broken lines, rhyming words, rhythm)

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill,
To fetch a pail of water.

Jack fell down
And broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

◆ **Prose** (indented paragraphs, complete sentences)

Once upon a time there was a boy named Jack and a girl named Jill. Together they took a pail and began to walk up a hill. At the top of the hill was a well. They went to gather some water.

On their way back down the hill, Jack tripped over a stone, and bruised his head. In her effort to help him up, Jill stumbled and spilled the water.

◆ **Play** (character name, dialogue, action)

There are different ways to put the words on the page, but following is one of the most common script formats:

◆ Write the character name at the left, followed by a colon.

JACK:

◆ Then write the words that they are speaking.

JACK: **Boy, am I thirsty!**

◆ Any action that a character makes, or description of *how* they say something, is written inside parentheses.

JACK: Boy, am I thirsty! (***licks his lips***)

When an actor reads a script, they *never* say aloud what is *inside* the parentheses.

EXAMPLE:

(Jack and Jill enter)

JACK: Boy, am I thirsty! (*licks his lips*)

JILL: Me too. (*picks up a pail*) Let's walk to the top of the hill and get a pail of water from the well.

JACK: (*smiles*) Great idea!

(They walk up the hill and dip the bucket into the well)

JILL: Let's go home now and enjoy this cool, fresh water.

JACK: (*nods head*) Great idea!

(They start to walk down the hill)

JACK: (*trips on a rock*) Aaaahh! (*falls down and hits his head*)
Ouch! (*rubbing his forehead*) You and your great ideas!

JILL: Jack! (*pointing*) Your head is bleeding!

(Jill tries to help him up, but stumbles and drops the pail, spilling the water)

APPLAUSE!

WEEK SIX



PLAYWRITING PROCESS: STEP 8

This last step is often the most fun, because it is the time when your students get to see their ideas and words come to life!

ACTIVITY 14: *Perform*

30 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

◆ Choose a few of the student's plays at a time. Have the other students volunteer to be in each performance group (enough kids to play each of the parts in the script).

◆ Give students some time to rehearse before performing the play. Simple set pieces and costumes can be made or brought from home. Just clear a space at the front of the room for the "stage" area and you are ready to "raise the curtain!"

NOTE: *If time is an issue, have students only perform the first 1 or 2 pages of each play. Be sure to make the plays available for the class to read afterwards (so they can find out how they end).*

◆ ACTING 101:

Remind the students of where the "audience" is and that they need to face and speak in that direction (unless otherwise noted in the script). Also remind the students of the following 3 elements of speaking:

VOLUME

Speak loud enough so people in the back can hear you.

ENUNCIATION

Speak clearly enough so people can understand you.

EXPRESSION

Speak with enough expression so people can identify the emotions of the character you are portraying.

Performing can also help during the *revision* step. Students will want the language to sound “real” when it comes out of a character’s mouth, and movements to make sense when acted out. An informal performance can help a student make positive changes to their script.

Explain that playwrights often write several drafts of a play before it is ready to be performed. After the first run-through, a playwright often goes back to Step 5 (Revision).

ACTIVITY 15: **Set Design**

45 MINUTES

STANDARDS:

ASSESSMENT:

The live stage is not like movies, where you can actually go to a certain place and film the actors there. On stage you have to be able to create your scene using only a few props and set pieces. The following game will help students to design their sets (where the dialogue and action occur).

◆ First have students *draw* a picture of what they think the setting looks like. Have them think of all the things that would be in the place. For example, a classroom would not only have desks and chairs, but perhaps a bookshelf, a flag, a globe, etc.

◆ Next have students *study* their pictures and decide on the 5 most important things in their scene. The things that would make people imagine that is where the actors are. A set might not be able to have everything, so a few pieces should be able to “set the scene” for the audience to “believe.”

◆ Once they have selected the 5 items, give them an opportunity to go to the chalkboard and *draw* the things one at a time, stopping between each drawing to ask the class, “Where am I?” Students should be able to identify the scene by (or before) the fifth item is drawn. This will show students what is important (or not important) in their set design.

NOTE: *Instead of drawing, students can cut pictures out of magazines.*

Some students might want to write another play after learning and practicing the skills these past 6 weeks.

Give them opportunities throughout the school year to write in script format by adapting some reading and writing assignments:

- ◆ Turn a **poem** into a Reader's Theatre piece.
- ◆ Write a **summary** or **biography** as a monologue.
- ◆ Make your **response to literature** a script of a conversation between yourself and the characters in the story.

The possibilities are endless! And all of the pieces can be performed (which will give students more practice in reading and listening and speaking)!

Reader's Theatre Examples:

Roses Are Red (for 3 voices)

SIMPLE

1: Roses are red!
2: Violets are blue!
3: Sugar is sweet!
ALL: And so are you!

MORE COMPLEX

1: Roses are...
2: Red! Violets are...
3: Blue! Sugar is...
1: Sweet! And...
2: So...
3: Are...
ALL: You!

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

*Several standards are addressed in the 5 classroom activities.
For example:*

- 2.1 participate in cooperative script writing or improvisations...
(grade 3)
- 2.2 create for classmates simple scripts... (grade 3)
- 2.1 demonstrate the emotional traits of a character... (grade 4)
- 2.3 design or create costumes... (grade 4)
- 2.1 participate in improvisational activities... (grade 5)
- 2.3 collaborate as an actor... (grade 5)
- 2.1 participate in improvisational activities... (grade 6)
- 2.2 use effective vocal expression... (grade 6)
- 2.3 write and perform scenes... (grade 6)
- 2.3 create characters... (grade 7)
- 2.2 perform character-based improvisations... (grade 8)

WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING

1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES

*The following sub-strands are addressed during the Think, Talk, Draw,
Write, and Revise steps of the Writing Process:*

Organization and Focus

Evaluation and Revision

1.0 WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

The following sub-strands are addressed during the Edit step of the Writing Process:

Sentence Structure

Grammar

Punctuation

Capitalization

Spelling

1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

The following sub-strand and standards are addressed during the performance activities:

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

For example:

1.9 read... aloud with fluency, rhythm, and pace... (grade 3)

1.9 use volume... and gestures... (grade 4)

1.6 engage the audience with... facial expressions... (grade 5)

1.6 use speaking techniques... for effective presentations (grade 7)

1.7 use audience feedback... (grade 8)

1.0 SPEAKING APPLICATIONS

Several standards are addressed during the student play performances.

For example:

2.2 plan and present dramatic... plays... (grade 3)

2.4 recite... dramatic dialogues... (grade 4)

2.1.b show, rather than tell... (grade 5)

2.1.c use... dialogue... and naming of specific narrative action...
(grade 7)

2.5 recite... dramatic soliloquies... (grade 8)



FanTasy **F**estival XXIII!

COVER SHEET

Attached is my play for consideration in the B Street School Tour's 23rd Annual Playwriting Festival! I understand that I will be contacted at the end of February 2009 if my play is selected as one of the 5 winners.

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____

Mail your script to the following address:

B STREET THEATRE
2711 B STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816

TEACHER'S GUIDE EVALUATION

Dear Teacher:

Please take a few minutes to respond to this questionnaire, then copy and paste it in an e-mail to fantasy@bstreettheatre.org (or mail it to B Street Theatre at 2711 B Street, Sacramento, CA 95816). Your feedback is important in helping to make our educational materials the best they can be. Thank you for your time!

Darrell Scheidegger Jr.
B Street School Tour Administrator

I used the following activities with my students:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think | <input type="checkbox"/> Say It Again, Sam (2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk | <input type="checkbox"/> Charades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draw | <input type="checkbox"/> Revise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative Elements | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Frankenstein | <input type="checkbox"/> Publish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Bags | <input type="checkbox"/> Perform |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write | <input type="checkbox"/> Set Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say It Again, Sam (1) | |

What I liked best:

What I liked least:

I wish there had been...

Further suggestions and comments:

FanTasy Festival XXIII!

GUIDELINES

- ◆ Open to students in 3rd-8th grades (7–14 years of age)
- ◆ Play must be no longer than 10 pages
- ◆ Play may contain up to 8 characters
- ◆ No more than 2 students may collaborate on a script
- ◆ Deadline: January 30, 2009 (include name, phone #, and school)

THE B STREET SCHOOL TOUR

would love to come to your school and perform

FanTasy Festival XXIII!

It runs from Monday, March 30th - Friday, June 12th, 2009.

Call (916) 442-5635 for more information or to book a show!