

Playwriting: The Essentials

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INTRODUCTION

Playwriting is a special kind of creativity. It involves the crafting of compelling story, developing characters and formatting the script for performance. Stage plays have a lot in common with novels, film, television and radio stories. They all involve story telling. But they have some important differences. Though every writer is different in his approach to storytelling, however the following broad tips may be helpful in developing your own writing process. So, in this article we shall discuss the following:

- i. The difference between Script for Stage, Screen and Radio
- ii. Drama Genre
- iii. Brain storming
- iv. Synopsis, Outlining and Stage Direction
- v. Formatting a Play Script
- vi. Different Forms of Play.
- vii. Plot Structure
- viii. Characters and Characterization
- ix. Language and Dialogue
- x. Finalizing Your Play
- xi. Conclusion

I Scriptwriting for Stage, Screen and Radio

Writing play for stage differs significantly from writing for film, television or radio. They all involve storytelling through action and dialogue, but theatre presents unique constraints and opportunities

i. Live Performance

Theatre offers a different kind of experience for an audience as it shows in real time and live. There is no camera movement. CGI or post production to consider. Instead everything must be conveyed through acting, dialogue, set design and lighting. Everything must unfold in one take unlike film and television where the cast and crew have multiple takes to get things right.

ii. Audience Proximity

With live performances comes an audience in very close proximity to the action. While movies and television shows are consumed passively in a dark theatre or in the comfort of our living rooms, in live theatre the audience is only a few feet from the stage. There is an increased level of intimacy and immediacy when watching a play that can't be found in a movie theatre. Playwrights use this to their advantage and to heighten the dramatic effect of their work

iii. Dialogue

On stage, it is the dialogue that must carry the emotional weight and narrative momentum, but film has the advantage of camera angles and shots, a simple glance or cutaway can communicate volumes. In plays, the art of saying a lot with a little. Like screenplays, play scripts are written in the present tense.

iv. **Limited Locations**

Playwrights must be creative in creating scenes that feel dynamic but a static space at times. When you are writing movie, you're limited only by your imagination. You can get as fantastical as you like. You can have buildings explode, helicopter chase, giant creatures, and pretty much anything else you can think of. There is no limit. While set changes are totally viable in a play, they typically take place in a limited number of settings. Since a play takes place on a stage with live actors, there's only so much you can do. While there are some elements of setting that can be accomplished on a stage, every fantastic element that goes into your play means a bigger budget for the production. This is the reason why most plays are character-driven stories. You generally won't see a play that takes place in more than two or three locations, and usually, these locations are fairly common, such as offices or home. So, it's advisable to keep these set changes to a minimum. This is usually due to budget and logistical constraints. So as you think about the idea for your play keep this in mind.

II. Drama Genre

Before you go into playwriting, it is important that you know that there are different types of drama, classified according to the mood, tone, and action depicted in the plot. Each type has its own unique style. Some of the most popular types include: Tragedy, Comedy, Tragi-comedy, Melodrama, Farce, Historical Drama, Fantasy, Opera, and Docudrama

i. Tragedy: Classical tragedy originated in ancient Greece. It is serious in nature and it explores serious issues like fate, death, disaster, human suffering, and betrayal, and vengeance, ethical and moral issues. It usually depicts the downfall of a noble character often due to a personal flaw (hamartia) or circumstances beyond his control. It has an unhappy ending and aims to evoke the feeling of pity and fear (catharsis) in the audience. According to Aristotle in his Poetic, tragedy involves the reversal of fortunes of a protagonist, a powerful person who falls from grace to grass, due to a flaw in his character (hamartia) He also wrote that a tragedy must create a sense of pity

and fear in the audience which can then lead to catharsis, Tragedy creates a strong mood of unhappy and sad feeling among the audience. However, modern dramatists such as Arthur Miller have argued that tragedy can also be written about common people. For the viewer may more easily relate to this type of tragedy and thus feel a greater sense of fear and pity

EXAMPLE: *King Oedipus*, by Sophocles. *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, *The Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka

ii. Comedy: Comedy is light in nature and creates a very funny and happy ambience. Comedy typically places ordinary characters in unusual or humorous situations and generally conclude with a happy or satisfactory resolution, such as a wedding or reconciliation. It portrays social institution and persons as corrupt, and ridicules them. It pokes fun at their vices. It exposes the foibles and follies of individuals and society by using comic elements. It always has a happy ending. The primary function of comedy is to amuse, entertain and to make the audience to relax. Comedy can also be sarcastic, poking fun at serious topics. There are also several sub-genres of comedy such as sentimental comedy, romantic comedy, comedy of manners, and dark comedy (plays in which characters take on tragedy with humours in bringing serious situation to a happy endings).

Example: *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, *The Miser* by Moliere, *The Trials* by Julie Okoh

iii. Tragi-Comedy: This hybrid genre blends elements of both tragedy and comedy. It may contain serious or dark themes but incorporates humorous elements or ends happily. The purpose is to reflect the dual nature of reality, where both joy and suffering can coexist

iv. Melodrama: Melo, the root part of melodrama comes from the Greek word, melos meaning song. Melodrama was originally a stage play that had an orchestral accompaniment and was interspersed with songs. Music is used to increase emotions or to signify characters. It is mainly judgmental drama where good always triumphs over the evils. Melodramas are an exaggerated form of drama that appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience. They often feature clear-cut, one-dimensional characters such as noble heroes, suffering heroines, and evil villains, and sensational plots where good eventually triumphs over evil. Everything from dialogue to costume is shown in a larger than life pattern.

Function: Melodrama is a genre of drama that exaggerates plot and characters with the intention of appealing to the emotions

EXAMPLE: *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, *Run* by Lynn Nottage

v. Farce: This is an extreme form of comedy. Funny and hilarious in nature, It relies heavily on physical humour, intentional overacting, absurd situations, and improbable plot twists to generate maximum laughter. It combines stereotyped characters and exaggeration to create humor. Characters intentionally overact and engage in slapstick or physical humour. It also contain improbable coincidences, and generally mock weakness of humans and society. It is a play that has only funny elements and no human values.

FUNCTION: Main objective is to create great laughter to entertain the audience.

EXAMPLE: *The importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett,

vi. Fantasy: This is a type of drama that portrays characters in a Medievalist setting and there are elements often associated with medieval legends such as king, queens, princesses, dragons, knights, unicorns, and so on. It has fairy tale type of characters. It shows how some magic or powers that have no scientific bases yet verified by repeatable evidence.

FUNCTION: It serve to fuel our imaginations, and satisfy our longing for adventure. Thus fantasy directly relates to our deepest desires and dreams. That is why they are important for increasing power of imagination in growing minds.

EXAMPLE: *Midsummer Dream Night Dream* by William Shakespeare

vii. Opera: A dramatic genre which involves the artful combination of theatre, dialogue, music, and dance to tell a grand story of tragedy or comedy. Since characters express their feelings and intention through song rather than dialogue, performers must be skilled actors and singers. A composition in which all parts are sung to this drama genre combines instrumental accompaniment, it includes arias, choruses and recitatives, and that sometimes includes ballet.

viii. Science Fiction drama: This incorporates elements of magic, mythic creatures, or futuristic science and technology into a dramatic structure

Political Drama Focuses on political issues, power struggles, and their impact on characters and society.

ix. Historical: Drama: Plays or films that focus on dramatic events in a specific historical period, often involving elaborate period costumes and settings

x. Docudrama: This is a relatively new genre. It involves the dramatic portrayal of historic events or non-fiction situation. More often presented in movies and television than in live theatre.

III. Brainstorm Ideas:

This means before you begin to write, you must ask yourself some questions. What do you want to write about? Have you a story you want to tell? Do you have something you passionately want to talk about?

- i. Playwriting starts with determining the subject matter. Dramatic writing explains our opinion on a subject matter such as love, politics, religion, power
- ii. Try to sum up the idea in a sentence or two.
- iii. Think about the message you want to convey to your audience.
- iv. Identify the type of main character that would best interpret your message. Stage story are largely character driven story. Research the main character's world: his goals, traits and backstory, to create a believable and authentic story.

- v. Give your main character an urgent reason to resolve the central conflict of your play. Then think of the obstacles he might encounter.
- vi. Who is your audience: Although you don't want to pigeon hole yourself into writing for one group, its good idea to think about who you want your play to address and what their experience may be. Is the play for children, youths or adults? Is it for the general public or for special group of people?
- vii. Choose a genre. You need to determine the right genre for the subject matter of your play. Is is tragedy, comedy, romantic drama, murder mystery, science fiction
- viii. Determine the setting. The overall setting of a dramatic work is the general locale, historical time and social circumstance in which its action occurs. The setting of a single episode or scene within the play is the particular physical location in which the action takes place. It could be an office building, a home, a hotel, battlefield, a bus, a living room, etc. Whichever setting you choose, it needs to support the mood and themes of your story.
- ix. Briefly describe the time. This includes whether it is day or night and whether it takes place in the present day, the past or the future. Whether it is raining season or dry season.
- x. Consider how all these can be represented on stage, keeping in mind the limitations and possibilities of live performance.
- xi. Brain storm some endings for your play script.
- xii. Brainstorm on the theme of the play. This is the general message you want to communicate to the audience. Themes are not explicitly stated, but are woven into the fabric of the narrative. They can be identified by examining the story's central conflicts, character arcs, and recurring motifs or symbols.

IV. Synopsis/Outlining/Stage Direction

i. Synopsis

After brainstorming, write a brief synopsis. Synopsis otherwise known as the logline, is a brief summary of a story. A synopsis should summarise your story in full but shouldn't be longer than a page. A good logline should:

- 1. Introduce the protagonist
- 2. Establish the central conflict or problem
- 3. Highlight the stakes or consequences
- 4. Pique the reader's interest

Loglines are commonly used in film, television, and literature to concisely convey the essence of a story and entice others to read or produce it.

ii. Develop Your Story by Outlining Your Ideas.

Write out the outline. Outlining your play by separating it into acts and scenes. Write down the beginning middle and end, including major story beats, and plot points surrounding your main conflict. Separate your plot points into their respective acts, following the pattern of rising action, leading to the climax, and falling action leading to the resolution keep your act break compelling to retain the interest of the audience, making them anxious to know what's going to happen next. Include a subplot or two to help develop your characters

Once you've written the outline, you are ready to write the dialogue. Compose the play script from beginning to the end, keeping the narrative arc in mind,.

iii. Stage Direction

Stage directions in play entail everything from setting to movements of actors and their body language. But since plays are a group effort and each actor will bring their own unique touches to their characters, you don't need to go overboard with stage directions. If you were writing a novel or a short story, you would describe important things in fairly vivid detail. But when writing a play, you need not go into great detail. Instead, a few words here and there will do for stage direction. But if something is really important to the story, like a prop or a location and you want to emphasize it, it is accepted to go into more detail.

V. Formatting a Play Script

Formatting a play script is crucial not just for clarity, but for professionalism. However, it is important to note that there is no one right play script format. As you're reading plays, you'll probably see several different formats used across different plays. Really, you can choose one. Just remember to be consistent with your play format throughout the entire play.

Play script format is similar in many ways to screenplay format, but there are some key difference to be aware of. A standard play script format include:

- i. Title Page (title, writer's name, contact details and a brief synopsis)
- ii. Cast List (a brief description of each character including age, roles and defining traits)
- iii. Setting and Time (a note about where and when the action takes place)

In writing the body of the script itself:

- i. Character Names (all in capitals, centered or left aligned)
- ii. Dialogue (underneath the character name, single-spaced or the character name, colon then dialogue.
- iii. Stage directions (in italics or parentheses often indented if it involves several lines)

The Title Page

The title of your play should be in the middle of your title page. Underlined and in all capital letter. Below, write your name. Like this:

THE PLAY TITLE

By

Playwright's Name

In the bottom left corner, print your address, phone number, and email address.

The Dramatis Personae (Cast of Characters)

On this page, list each of your characters along with a very brief description of them. This can include age, sex, and notable physical attributes.

Next, start with Act I and scene 1. All act and scene setting should be centered

All character names should be in all caps. And those about dialogue should be centered. Character names in the stage directions won't be centered. But the stage directions themselves should be indented once and italicized.

VI. Different Forms of Play:

Most conventional plays are divided into acts and scenes. Acts are the major structural divisions in the story, while scenes mark changes in time and location. Most stage plays follow one of these three primary conventional framework: One-Act, Two-Act, and Three-Act. Each with multiple scenes that move the story forward. It is important to know the difference and their general characteristics to enable you make a choice when writing your play.

i. One-Act Plays:

- a) One-act plays can be anywhere between ten to forty-five minutes long. Most one-act plays are presented as part of a series. For example a theatre company might put up a performance of four or five One-act plays written around a common theme (human rights, friendship, drug abuse, or child abuse etc), the combined length of all the plays being between 90 to 120 minutes. As a result, they are less complex than the longer plays. A fifteen – page script is about a fifteen minutes play. It is roughly one page per minute.
- b) Introduce your characters and the problem they face as quickly as possible in the first few lines of your play. A good one-act play features only a handful of characters, consisting about 2 to 7 characters.
- c) One-act play is propelled by a sense of urgency. So, to create a sense of urgency, give your main character an urgent reason to resolve the conflict swiftly or face the consequence. Choose a central conflict and move swiftly from action to action with a beginning middle and end that holds the audience attention throughout the play.
- d) One-act play is generally limited to a single location. Hence there are no set changes, costumes, or scenes change, and it moves to a swift resolution.
- e) Due to time constrain, one-act play is based on a simple storyline without complexity. They have few or no subplot, no intermission but with a punchy ending. It doesn't have to be a happy ending but it should be something dramatic and memorable.
- f) One-act plays are shorter than the two or three-act plays. They show the same common plot structure and follow the same rules as the two-act play or three act, but in a more compact form and are faster.

ii. Two-Act Plays:

- a) Two-Act Plays follow the same pattern as one-act play.
- b) They are longer than the one-act plays, they range from an hour to two hours. Hence they may feature an intermission.
- c) They often integrate multiple set pieces or locations.
- d) They may have a large cast of characters, and more character development

iii. Three-Act Plays:

- a) These are the longest type of drama, sometimes ranging up to three hours or more.
- b) In the past they could have two or more intermissions, but these days, most Three-Act Plays often have only one intermission. Moreover, they often have large cast, multiple storylines, and many set changes.
- c) Some contemporary stage drama are written in DRAMA, PHASES or in PARTS depending on the intention of the playwright

One-Act Play is ideal for Festival with a running time of around 10 to 45 minutes.

It is important to choose your structure base on your story's needs. For example if you wish to convey a single powerful moment, this may be better suited as a one-act play, while an epic family

drama may demand a full-length play. It is also important to note that these ‘acts’ are not really the same thing as the acts in plot structure.

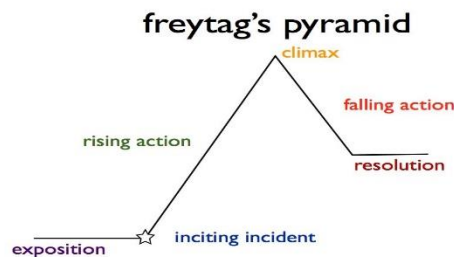
VII. Plot Structure

Every play, no matter the length, has a beginning, middle and end. This idea has its roots in Aristotle’s Poetics, where he describes this form as one of the elements of tragedy. Although it is more than two thousand years old, it laid a foundation for today’s storytelling Aristotle emphasized that any story is composed of beats that follow each other consecutively and that events occur in a sequence connected by cause and effect chain of action.. Nothing happens haphazardly. Everything is the direct result of what occurs before, leading to conclusion. So, understanding the basic elements of plot can help you keep your reader engaged within your story from beginning to end.

What are the five basic elements of a plot?

The basic elements of plot come from Freytag’s Pyramid, named after the 19th century German novelist and playwright Gustav Freytag. Freytag’s Pyramid is a visual representation of the structure of a literary work such as a play, short story or novel. It helps author and readers understand the fundamental structure of a narrative and how it progresses from beginning to end. The triangular diagram outlines the key components of a conventional plot structure and is divided into five parts:

- i. Exposition
- ii. Rising action
- iii. Climax
- iv. Falling action
- v. Denouement or Resolution



i. Exposition: This is the beginning part of a story. It is where crucial background information is introduced before any major events or conflicts unfold. It provides the audience with essential details about the setting, characters, backstory, and initial situation and context. It also foreshadows future events. Exposition serves as a starting point or baseline, setting the stage for the upcoming

developments in the narrative arc. Exposition is crucial, as it provides the reader with the necessary context to understand the characters, their world, their relationships, and the conflicts they faced as the story unfolds. It serves as the foundation upon which the rest of the plot is built.

ii. **Rising action:** This is the next important part of plot. It is where the narrative takes off from its initial setting. After character introductions it launches straight into conflict, tension, and character development. This phase builds the momentum that propels the story forward. The key elements of rising action are inciting incident, character development, complications, escalating obstacles, building tension and setting the tone.

Briefly, the rising action is the bridge that connects the introductory elements of the story to the heightened conflicts, revealing the characters' strength and weaknesses as they embark on their journey toward resolution. The end of the rising action can keep audience anxiously anticipating the resolution of the story's central conflict

iii. **Climax:** This is the dramatic high point of a story, the moment of greatest tension, where the central conflict reaches its peak. This is where the story's major questions are answered, and the main character faces their ultimate challenge. It is also the turning point of the story.

Some key points of the climax include: a) Highest point of tension, b) Central conflict resolution, c) Character transformation, d) Revelations and decisions, e) Resolution, f) Turning point, g) Reader engagement, and h) Conflict showdown.

In action driven stories, the climax frequently features a confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist.

Briefly, the climax is a critical element of plot structure. For, it provides the narrative's emotional peak, leaving a lasting impact on the reader or viewer and setting the stage for the story's resolution. It is where everything comes together and the story's central conflicts are addressed

iv. **Falling action:** This segment of the story comes after the climax and leads to the story's resolution. It is where the intense conflicts of the climax are winding down and the story is moving towards closure. During this series of events, the central conflict begins to find its resolution, and loose ends are tied up.

The major traits of falling action include: a) Conflict resolution, b) Falling action, c) Final revelations, d) Character development, e) Wrapping up, d) Emotional impact, e) Setting the Stage for the end

The falling action functions as a narrative cool place after the intensity of the climax, guiding the story towards its ultimate conclusion. It ensures that all necessary questions are answered, and the reader gets a satisfying sense of closure.

v. **Denouement or Resolution:** This is the end of the story. It follows the falling action. During this phase, the story's central conflicts are ultimately resolved and the reader gains a sense of closure. The resolution provides answers to any lingering questions, ties the loose ends and offers insight into the characters' futures. The denouement generally includes: a) Conflict resolution,

b). Closure, c) Closing the subplots, d) Narrative epilogue, e) Lasting impact, f) Final emotional tone.

The resolution is a critical component of storytelling as it provides a sense of fulfillment to the reader and ensures that the story is brought to a satisfying and meaningful conclusion. It allows the reader to reflect on the characters' journeys and the broader themes of the narratives, leaving a lasting impression.

vi. **Other salient elements of plot structure:** These include conflict, foreshadow, flashback, suspense and surprise. They all serve to propel the movement of the dramatic action

Conflict: Conflict is the driving force that propels a story forward, creating tension and intrigue. Aristotle refers to it as the soul of plot structure. For, it is a fundamental element in storytelling that introduces obstacles, challenges, and problems for the characters to overcome. Without conflict, a narrative would lack depth and struggles, making it uninteresting and flat. However, conflicts are resolved by the end of a story.

There are two main types of conflict that can be present in a story. These are Internal Conflict and External Conflict. Internal conflict occurs within a characters' mind as they grapple with their emotions, doubts, or decisions. It often involves personal struggles, moral dilemmas, or inner turmoil. But External Conflict involves a character's struggle against an external force. This type of conflict includes: a) character versus character, b) character versus society, c) character versus nature, d) character versus technology, e) character versus fate or destiny.

VIII. Character and Characterization

Characters and characterization constitute key elements of playwriting. Characters are individuals who participate in the action of a play. Although Aristotle in his Poetics says that plot is the soul of drama, characters play crucial role in drama. Every play revolves around its characters. And, it is the actions and reactions of characters that propel the dramatic movement in a play. Similar to their film and TV counterparts, characters in plays are the lens through which the audience experiences the narrative.

What is Characterization? This is the process of creating and developing characters in a play, revealing their personalities, motivation, and desires through dialogue, action, and interaction with other characters.

To create fully fleshed out characters, you need to understand the physical, psychological, and emotional dimensions of each major character. This includes defining their physical appearance, quirks, and mannerisms, but more importantly, it means understanding their psychological make-up.

Furthermore, the interactions and relationships between characters play a significant role in the story's development. The dynamics between characters can create tension, provide comic relief, or evoke emotional responses. These relationships are influenced by the characters' unique personalities and backgrounds. Here are the types of characters commonly found in narratives

i. **Types of Characters:** These include Dynamic, Static, Stock, Prototype, Archetype

- a) **Dynamic:** Round characters. They undergo significant development and change throughout the story, displaying depth and complexity. The action of the play circulates around them. They are subject for Tragedy.
- b) **Static:** They are flat characters. They remain unchanged throughout the story in terms of their personality and beliefs
- c) **Stock:** They are stereotyped characters. They embody stereotypical traits that are readily recognizable in various stories. They are laughable characters and are mostly subjects for comedy
- d) **Prototypes:** First of its kind in literary work, representing a group of people. Eg, Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll House* represents assertive women, William Lorman in Arthur Miller's *Death of the Salesman*, represents the common man in tragedy..
- e) **Archetypes:** Universal symbols and characters, that recur across culture and stories. They represent universal human experience and emotions. Eg: The sacrificial lamb, The wicked step mother and The Trickster

ii. **Functions of Characters:** Characters play different roles in drama. These include: Protagonist, Antagonist, Villain, Foil, Adjuvants, Mentor, and Confidant.

- a) **Protagonist:** The main character. He is often the hero or the central figure who drives the plot forward. The protagonist faces challenges, embarks on a journey, and he undergoes significant development throughout the play.
- b) **Antagonist:** The character or force that opposes the protagonist, creating conflict and tension in the story. He is not a completely bad person. His opposition may be for the good of the protagonist.
- c) **Villain:** This is a completely bad person. He is evil, skirmish and egocentric. His opposition is for his self-interest. Classical example is Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Casca in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.
- d) **Foil:** A character whose qualities or attributes contrast with those of the protagonist. This is to highlight an important trait and characteristic in the protagonist. He/She serves either as an analogy or antithesis to the protagonist. Classical examples: Ismene/ Antigone in Sophocle's *Antigone*, Shylock/Antonio, Portia/Jessica, Bassanio/ Shylock in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*
- e) **Adjuvants:** These are characters who, in one way or the other, help the protagonist to achieve his ambition.
- f) **Mentor:** Usually an older person who advises and helps the protagonist in his growth and achievements.
- g) **Confidant:** The bosom friend of the protagonist, in whom he confides his secret thoughts and worries. Classical examples: Horatio in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, The ramenesin Jean Racine's *Phaedra*
- h) **Secondary:** Supporting characters who contribute to the plot but are not the main focus

iii. Characterization Techniques:

- a) **Dialogue:** Characters' words and speech patterns reveal their personalities, background and motivations
- b) **Action and Behaviour:** Characters' action and behaviour demonstrate their traits and characteristics.
- c) **Comment by Others:** Comment by other people are sources of character revelation
- d) **Description and Stage Directions:** Physical appearance, posture, and movement encoded in the stage directions can convey character traits.
- e) **Interaction with other Characters:** Relationships and interaction with others reveals character's personalities and dynamics
- f) **Thought:** Personal thoughts such as soliloquies and Asides help to reveal character traits

iv. Crafting Your Characters

You create complex, relatable characters by giving them distinct voices, clear motivations and backstories. By having distinct voices, we mean that the characters should have a unique way of speaking, reflecting their background, education and personality. Also focus on character development, Keep your character active, you also achieve character development by letting your characters drive the plot, and ensuring that each scene reveals something new about them. Invent a central conflict that underscore what you want to say. Craft a compelling antagonist to bring conflict to the main character. Character motivations inform their actions and decision. Create narrative arc in the story. Above all, create characters that are unique, relatable, believable, three dimensional, with flaws and strengths that make them human.

These techniques help to make characters memorable and engaging.

ix. Language and Dialogue

Drama depends heavily on spoken dialogue to keep the audience informed about the character's feelings, personalities, motivations, and plans. Dialogue is the key to a play, carrying the majority of the emotion and meaning behind the story. It reveals character, advances the plot, and conveys subtext. Since audience sees characters in drama living out their experience without any explanatory comments from the author, playwrights often create dramatic tension by having their characters deliver strong dialogues, purposeful, layered and authentic to each character's voice. Craft authentic, concise dialogue that reveals character traits and advances the plot. Dialogue should be conversational. The dialogue between characters should tell the bulk of the story. Always aspire to write realistic dialogue, but manipulate subtext, soliloquies, and asides to give profundity to meanings. Subtext in playwriting is very important. The audience should be able to read between the lines. Subtlety and nuances are required here in composing dialogues for drama.

x. Finalizing Your Play: Rewrite

Editing and rewriting are vital parts of any creative endeavor. Many professionals suggest getting your first draft down, and then put it aside for a week or a month before you pick it up again with fresh eyes. When editing, try to see the play from the audience's perspective, think about your ideal audience member and what you want them to get of it. Then use this to rewrite and edit ruthlessly until you have a play that is as good as you can possibly make it. Read through the play several times trying to remain objective. Reading the script aloud will enable you to identify areas for improvement. It can also reveal awkward phrasing and pacing issues. Collaborate with actors or peers to refine your script and make it production ready. Keep in mind technical limitations, because writing a scene with explosions or complex effects may not be suitable or practical for smaller venues. Join a local playwriting group or theatre workshop to receive feedback from actors and directors. Hearing your play performed even informally brings it to life in a whole new way.

Conclusion

Every story, no matter its length, should have a beginning middle, and end. It should have a clear conflict, rising action, and a climax that facilitates a conclusion. Create conflict and tension in your play. Use conflict to propel the story forward and keep the audience engaged. Whether you are writing for stage, screen or radio, make each scene important. Each scene in the play needs to have a purpose. Write a strong first draft. Focus on getting the story down, without worrying too much about formatting or perfection. Then revise and edit. Refine your script through multiple drafts, cutting out unnecessary scenes and lines. When editing the draft, if a scene does not seem to add value to the play, you expunge it. The best preparation you can do before writing a play is to read and watch as many plays as you can. This will not only hone your instincts but you'll be more attuned to structure, emotional resonance, character arcs and scene transitions. Study the experts and most importantly keep writing.

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