

COLLEGE GUILD
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 5 of 6

Drama

The challenge of writing a play is that the entire story is told in dialog. With the help of some scenery, costumes and props, the movements and words of the actors have to convey everything about the plot and characters. This is a different kind of writing because it is being seen and heard vs. read. Your audience is sitting in a theater and you want to make them believe that your characters are real people telling a compelling story, even though everyone knows they are just actors standing on a stage.

When you imagine a story that can be told on a stage, you have to consider the limitations. For example, it would be difficult to have a car chase scene like we see in the movies. There can be different sets that move on and off the stage, although some plays have only one set or no scenery at all. Play-going audiences are willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. For example, there was a play, K-2, that took place on top of a Himalayan mountain!

So imagine you are a dramatist and your play is finished and ready for an audience.

1) Where and when does the action take place? *Examples:*

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Chicago, 1956, Mr. Aker's office</i> | <i>A tropical island in the South Pacific, sunset</i> |
| <i>A passenger train car, 1881</i> | <i>A snowy, cold mountain top, 2001</i> |
| <i>A luxury condominium bedroom</i> | <i>A street corner in New Orleans</i> |

2) What is the plot or story line? Is it a comedy, a drama, is it uplifting, sad, scary, based on a true story?

The producer and director have to know who to hire to tell your story. Plays require a short description of the cast. *Examples:*

Jill: 38, clerk at Walmart's, lives at home
Martha: 61, mother of Jill, domineering
Mr. Webb: 45, manager, balding and overweight
Sophie: Earl's secretary, Jill's friend
Manuel:
Xeno:
Al:

3) Fill in possible descriptions for Manuel, Xeno and Al.

Now tell us about the characters who will be acting out your drama.

4) List the cast: names, descriptions and relationship to other characters.

5) What does the audience see when the curtain goes up? Example:

Jill and Sophie are standing by a shelf in Walmart's, Jill moving small boxes from a cart to the shelf.

The opening dialog should reveal something about the characters and hint at the plot or their relationships.

The goal is to pull the audience into the story so they want to see what happens next. Example:

Jill: I am so sick of Mr. Webb looking over my shoulder all the time. I swear he thinks I'm shoplifting.

Sophie: I think it's his clumsy way of flirting with you.

Jill: No way! Except I think I'd go out with him just to get away from my mother.

Sophie: Yeah, I know you have your eye on Manuel.

Jill: I do not!

Sophie: Yes you do and why not? He's a hunk. Me, I'd rather go out with Al. Oops, here comes Webb, gotta get back to work. (Sophie exits.)

(Mr. Webb and Manuel enter.)

Mr. Webb (to Manuel):

Jill:

Manuel:

Mr. Webb:

6) Write the next three lines of dialog for Jill, Manuel and Mr. Webb.

7) Write the dialog and actions for Scene 1 of your own play.

8) What happens to the characters at the end?

9) Write the final two lines of dialog.

Play-goers have to know about your play and want to come see it. How do you convince them it's worth shelling out the cash to buy a ticket? There are posters outside the theater, and ads in newspapers, radio and TV, but producers (and playwrights) count on a great opening night review by theater critics.

10) Write a review of your play in a prestigious newspaper.

For the final Creative Language unit, your fellow CL students have come up with some challenging assignments. For now, after all your hard work, take a break and look at some pictures.



- 11) Select one picture and write a diary entry about a typical day in the picture's life.
 12) Pick another and describe it from the perspective of a visitor from another galaxy.

A third drawing above is the artwork for the front cover of a book.

- 13) What is the book's title and what is it about?
 14) Write the opening paragraph of the book.
 15) For two of the remaining pictures, combine the images to write a poem.
 16) For the final two pictures, write an 8 line conversation between them.
 17) Sadly, one of the pictures has died, (your choice). Write a eulogy, telling of its accomplishments, who or what they left behind and how it will be missed.

Now it's your turn –

- 18) Write an assignment about any or all of the pictures above.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes