

Drama—Theatre Arts 11

April 14-April 17

Time Allotment: 20 minutes per day

For use during at-home instruction, Spring 2020 only

Student Name: _____

Teacher Name: Mr. Andrew Ward

Packet Overview

Date	Objective(s)	Page Number
<i>Monday, April 13</i>	<i>Spring Break—No packet work</i>	
Tuesday, April 14	1. Writing process overview, preparation exercises, “stream of consciousness” exercises	2
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Additional Notes: We are starting our playwrighting project, which will last us until the end of the year; this will replace your production project grade requirement. For probably all of you, this is the first time that you have undertaken this kind of project. Please keep the following in mind:

1. The goal of this project is NOT to create a perfect piece of literature or to write a masterpiece. The purpose of this project is just to complete a process. You will have a rough draft by the end of this process, not a polished piece ready for production. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by self-imposed expectations of impossible standards of perfection.
2. Do not judge your progress by the progress of others in the course, or by the polished pieces of other plays you have seen or read. Treat this project as an adventure into the unknown, and allow yourself to discover everything for the first time without the weight of having to meet some kind of lofty expectation. You are not the last hope for western civilization when it comes to writing plays. You are allowed to be messy, to be less than great, to be new at something. Let all the apprehensions and stigmas that you have attached to the idea of “writing a play” go away and never come back. You are not Shakespeare, and when Shakespeare started writing plays and experimenting with the medium at your age, he wasn’t either.
3. Find what is fun about this project and focus on that. If you approach this play focusing on all the difficult aspects and carry an attitude of defeat and pessimism, you will create for yourself memories which are only compounded frustrations during the current epidemic that you are living through. Allow this writing to be therapeutic. Consider that you may escape the boredom of quarantine and shelter-in-place with playwrighting. Let this be a special project that you work on in this time, and you might create memories for yourself in the future which will soften the uncertainties of these times.

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Academic Honesty

I certify that I completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Student signature:

I certify that my student completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Parent signature:

Tuesday, April 14

Drama Unit: Playwriting

Lesson 1: Writing process overview, preparation exercises, “stream of consciousness” exercises

Unit Overview: Writing a Play

For the rest of this year, you will be exploring the various methods and exercises required for writing the first draft of a short play. We will be using a text called *The 90-Day Play* by Linda Walsh Jenkins, which is a text that I used when I first learned about playwriting at your age, but we will be completing our drafts in about 45-days. This will be fine, as *The 90-Day* play was writing for folks looking to write a full length 120-page play. You will be writing a much shorter play, a One Act, which will be 15-30 pages when complete. 45 days will be sufficient for this end.

You will need to write every day for 45 days, for 20 minutes per day (this is not in addition to the packet, the packet is designed to structure your 20 minutes of writing per day). You can finish a draft if you are disciplined and meet deadlines. The most important thing is to relax, free your imagination, and enjoy the process with the goal of learning, not perfection.

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Understand the writing process, be able to do preparation exercises, be able to do a “stream of consciousness” exercise.

Introduction to Lesson 1

Before you begin writing day by day, prepare for the process.

1. Decide at what time of day every day you are going to set aside to work on your play. Make it a top priority, and always write at that time if possible. Schedule it out of the rest of your day.
2. Hold your ideas for the play loosely at this point. You might find it easiest to carry a main character through a dramatic experience in a simple setting without a large cast, using a tight time frame. But if that won’t work for your idea, let your imagination be your guide.

3. Avoid talking about your play to others. Let the story grow and change within you. Responses by others might lead you astray or give you doubts while ideas incubate.
4. Don't write what you think will be popular, don't worry about whether or not it would be a success.
5. Consider what characters learn or don't learn in a story, what we discover while reading or watching, what the challenges of production might be.
6. If you are fearful or insecure about the outset of this process, relax and focus on the fun and creative part of world-building. This first draft is for you and me only, *it can't be "wrong" or "not good enough" because simply by completing this process you will succeed.*

Generating Ideas

If you don't have an idea for a play, these suggestions might help:

Familiar situations and conflicts—Consider a situation such as people dealing with a death, weddings, reunions, holidays, and so forth. Ground a story in conflicts familiar to you such as jealousy, betrayal, old wounds, misunderstandings, family crises.

Existing stories—You don't have to imagine an original story. That wasn't a problem for Sophocles or Shakespeare, you could just play imaginatively with an existing story.

News—Often police, legal and medical procedurals start with something that actually happened. They change names and details and “open up” the story for the sake of drama and efficiency.

History—Adaptation from a published source, like a biography of George Washington, usually requires legal permission. However, if you do your own research with multiple sources and do not plagiarize, you might not violate an author's legal protections. You can't use another author's words verbatim, but you can use George Washington's.

Adaptations of familiar stories and myths—No one needs permission to write their own version of “Sleeping Beauty” or “Jack in the Beanstalk” or “The Twelve Tasks of Hercules”.

Stream of Consciousness Practice Exercises

Practice letting your writing flow with “stream of consciousness” as you collect and invent for your play. Let your thoughts flow like water. If a river bumps up against a mountain, it turns to flow around it. If dammed, the river rises and flows over the water doesn't stop moving as it adjusts to circumstances. For the process of collecting and writing exercises, let your mind flow with the first words and ideas that come to you. Relax your censoring mind and discover the abundance of your imagination. You can write in sentence fragments or single words, whatever comes to your mind as it occurs to you without censorship, like a runaway train. This is not about creating pretty prose or linear coherence. The more you practice writing in stream of consciousness using your own true “voice”, the easier ideas will emerge. As you become adept at this process you can achieve more in creative writing.

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Wednesday, April 15

Drama Unit: Playwrighting

Lesson 2: Inventing the dramatic world and placing the action

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Place the action of the play inside the dramatic world.

Introduction to Lesson 2

As you reflect on the idea you have for a play, you might find your mind flooded with images and small fragments of dialogue or action. You fear you don't know how to organize them. For now you do not need to impose order. Appreciate the wildness of imagination and simply collect those ideas and fragments as they come to you. You are creating something real out of the substance of your imagination, memories, and observations.

Let your characters inhabit their dramatic world as fully as possible so that audiences can enjoy the adventures there. Even if the setting for your play is a living room, there is a house beyond those walls and a neighborhood beyond that. Some people influence your characters that never appear onstage. Now is the time for you to envision the larger context in which eventually you will craft a very specific drama.

Instead of thinking in terms of "scene one" or "end of play", give titles that refer to what happens in possible future scenes which refers to what happens in them: "Larry begs Eric to forgive him," "Sue discovers the lie," and so forth. This allows freedom to move the order around.

Writing Exercises

Commit to writing in this section for 5 minutes.

1. Spill out in stream of consciousness style all the current ideas you have for the play with no censoring or editing. You can write in sentence fragments, single words, bullet points, and out of paragraph form.

Placing the Action

Concentrate on where you set your action—not the scenery, but the fictional place where the drama will occur. Envision all the possible places for your drama now without feeling pressure to make decisions. The setting you choose for the action affects audiences and characters. Investigate what those effects might be.

4. What about this event is different from the familiar and unpredictable?

5. What does this event mean to each character?

Inhabiting Your Characters

When you invent the details of the world you are discovering characters. Before deciding what shape you'll give to your character's actions, inhabit them—discover their inner tensions, contradictions, and imbalances. What kinds of characters are you creating and why? Are they like familiar people are they unique and extreme? Are they based on people you know and read about?

Everyone onstage is a character. Perhaps a world has shaped your character's inner lives—a small town, an urban subculture, a work environment, a school. You will begin see and hear characters all around you—in the news, in conversations, in your relationships and observed relationships, in your readings, and in music you listen to. The process of writing a play can help you pay better attention to your environment, and in turn your present reality can assist you in creating the dramatic world that will constitute your play.

Writing Exercises

Commit to writing on the following questions for at least 5 minutes.

1. What from the past haunts a character in your play? Put it in the character's own words.

2. Is there a tension or an unusual contrast between the character's inner life and work life? Have the character talk about it in their own words.

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Friday, April 16

Drama Unit: Playwrighting

Lesson 3: Dissonance, Your audience and your stage

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Identify major conflicts and how those conflicts resonate with the audience and are amplified by being put on the stage

Introduction to Lesson 3

Dissonance is a harsh, discordant combination of sounds; a state of disagreement or conflict. Dissonance within, between, and among characters constitutes the action of the play. This is true regardless of your play's setting or time. Dissonance between characters often is rooted in struggles characters experience within themselves.

Each person is like an instrument, a violin for example. It doesn't take much to put it out of tune. Consider an orchestra tuning up. What if each instrument is horribly out of tune? Or, perhaps they begin in tune and then something goes horribly awry with the strings and they don't stop to fix it. So it is for drama and human experience. We want the characters in our lives to be in tune, including ourselves, but we find that hard to accomplish. And all it takes is for one person to create havoc for everyone else. This principle of dissonance and tuning applies whether a play is serious or comic. Some plays end with dissonance unresolved; audience recognition is the dissonance.

Avoid stereotypes or clichés about behavior based on gender, race, sexual inclination, class, and so forth. Each character has a rich inner life and struggles with being “in tune”.

Writing Exercises

Commit to writing on the following questions for at least 5 minutes.

1. Pick a character. Why do you think that this is an important character?

2. What makes this character go out of tune? Why?

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3. Will this character change during the course of the play? What actions of other characters might help this character get in or out of tune?

4. What is this character's most important relationship with another character?

Your Audience and Your Stage

When you envision characters and scenes in your mind, you see a stage. Make that as concrete as possible for yourself now. You are writing for what an audience will see every bit as much as for what they will hear. Focus on the stage and the play's relationship with your audience.

Visualize a bare theatrical stage so your characters will be grounded and you'll avoid impractical choices. Be open to letting that stage shape change as you write. Does the stage thrust into the audience or is it contained in a proscenium? Does the audience surround the action?

Be aware of the relationship your characters/actors might have with your audience, and why. You might start with a conventional fourth wall illusion, but in developing your ideas you could realize something more flexible works better. Consider the alternatives.

Writing Exercises

Commit to writing on the following questions for at least 10 minutes.

1. Imagine one or more of your characters entering the stage and walking across it. Imagine what the actor thinks about it, and write briefly their reaction to your stage in their own words.

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2. Describe, with a drawing if you'd like, the theatre and stage you have in mind for your play and write about why you are making this choice.