



# PLAYWRITING

By KAREN LOFTUS

Students will explore the structural elements of a play: character, objective, obstacles, tactics, resolution, and raising the stakes. They will also learn how to write character-driven dialogue and stage directions.

The unit culminates in a group written original play which is performed in front of the class. Please refer to the Pacing Guide for more details and ways to supplement with other DTA materials.

## 1 - Structure

Students are introduced to the structural elements of a script.

## 2 - Dialogue

Students are introduced to the concept of stakes as an additional element of a script, and participate in a group playwriting activity that allows performers to test out lines of dialogue in performance.

## 3 - Stage Directions

Students learn the three types of stage directions, and apply what they've learned to their own scenes as well as open scenes (sample included).

## 4 - Character Dialogue and Development

Students learn the importance of dialogue and creating it for their characters.

## 5 - The Unities

Students are introduced to Aristotle's 3 Unities and participate in an improv exercise to apply these guidelines for playwriting.

## 6 - Writing: Part 1

Students apply what they have learned so far in the unit and participate in a group playwriting activity - the writing pass technique.

## 7 - Writing: Part 2

Students continue to work on their group playwriting activity and finalize their script with stage directions, as well as complete staged readings.

## 8 - Unit Project

Students complete their script, format it properly, then hand it in. Next, they will perform their scene and complete a final reflection. A rubric is included.

# Standards Connections

## National Core Arts Standards

### Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr4.1.7.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

### Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - Grade 8

TH:Cr1.1.8.c - Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

### Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - High School Accomplished

TH:Cr1.1.HSII.c - Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 6

TH:Cr2.1.6.b - Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 7

TH:Cr2.1.7.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade HS Accomplished

TH:Cr2.1.HSII.b - Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade HS Advanced

TH:Cr2.1.HSIII.b - Collaborate as a creative team to discover artistic solutions and make interpretive choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

## Common Core

### Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5 - Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

## California VAPA Standards (2019)

### 7.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr4.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

### 8.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

8.TH:Cr1.b - Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

### Acc.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Acc.TH:Cr1.b - Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

### 6.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

6.TH:Cr2.b - Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

7.TH:Cr2.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Acc.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Acc.TH:Cr2.b - Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

### Adv.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Adv.TH:Cr2.b - Collaborate as a creative team to discover artistic solutions and make interpretive choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

## Florida Sunshine State Standards

### Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.912.C.2.2 - Construct imaginative, complex scripts and revise them in collaboration with actors to convey story and meaning to an audience.

TH.912.C.2.6 - Assess a peer's artistic choices in a production as a foundation for one's own artistic growth.

### Skills, Techniques & Processes

TH.912.S.1.5 - Write monologues, scenes, and/or short plays using principles and elements of writing found in dramatic literature.

TH.912.S.2.8 - Strengthen acting skills by engaging in theatre games and improvisations.

## North Carolina Essential Standards

### **Beginning High School Standards - Communication**

B.C.1.3 - Understand how to read and write scripts that communicate conflict, plot, and character.

### **Proficient High School Standards - Communication**

P.C.1.3 - Create original works, such as monologues, scenes, or performance pieces.

### **Advanced High School Standards - Communication**

A.C.2.2 - Interpret scripts through formal and informal presentations.

### **Advanced High School Standards - Culture**

A.CU.2.2 - Integrate conventions and structures of theatre when creating formal or informal theatre productions.

## **Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts**

### **MS 117.211 LI - Creative Expression: performance**

C.2.F - create environments, characters, and actions.

### **MS 117.211 LI - Critical evaluation and response**

C.5.A - identify and apply audience etiquette at all performances.

### **MS 117.212 LII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding**

B.1.B - develop and apply theatre preparation and warm-up techniques.

B.1.E - demonstrate knowledge of theatrical vocabulary and terminology.

B.1.F - analyze and evaluate the structure and form of dramatic literature.

### **MS 117.212 LII - Creative Expression: performance**

B.2.B - define characters by what they do, what they say, and what others say about them.

B.2.D - create stories collaboratively and individually that have dramatic structure.

### **MS 117.212 LII - Critical evaluation and response**

B.5.A - understand and demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette at various types of performances.

### **MS 117.213 LIII - Critical evaluation and response**

B.5.A - understand and demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette at various types of live performances.

### **HS 117.315 LI - Creative Expression: performance**

C.2.F - create, write, and refine original monologues, improvisations, scenes, or vignettes that reflect dramatic structure to convey meaning to the audience through live performance or media forms.

### **HS 117.315 LI - Critical evaluation and response**

C.5.B - recognize theatre as an art form and evaluate self as a creative being.

### **HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: performance**

C.2.F - create, write, devise, and refine original monologues, improvisations, scenes, or vignettes to convey meaning to the audience through live performance or media forms.

### **HS 117.316 LII - Critical evaluation and response**

C.5.C - offer and receive constructive criticism of peer performances.

### **HS 117.317 LIII - Creative Expression: performance**

C.2.E - write dialogue that reveals character motivation, advances plot, provides exposition, and reveals theme.

## **Alberta, Canada**

### **Improvisation Drama 10**

11 - apply the essential elements of a story: character, setting, conflict, climax and plot in planned and unplanned scenes

8 - tell a story spontaneously

### **Theatre Studies Drama 30 (Early or Middle or Late drama)**

4 - recognize dramatic structure of a play

### **Playwriting - Drama 20**

1 - demonstrate understanding of the basic structure of a play

10 - define conflict

11 - construct a conflict between two characters (protagonist and antagonist)

12 - construct a scene with two contrasting characters

13 - give and accept constructive criticism

2 - define and identify plot, character, thought and diction

3 - demonstrate understanding of script format

4 - generate and collect ideas that have dramatic possibilities

5 - write a scenario

6 - identify character types and their functions and attributes

7 - demonstrate understanding if and write exposition

8 - use effective diction

9 - define character objectives

### **Improvisation/Acting Level III - Advanced**

26 - pick up cues effectively

### **Junior Goal II Objectives**

become familiar with disciplines that enhance dramatic process

become familiar with dramatic terminology and script format

### **Junior Goal III Objectives**

develop awareness of various conventions of theatre

### **Junior Orientation**

demonstrate a willingness to take calculated and reasonable risks

focus concentration on one task at a time

generate imaginative and creative solutions to problems

listen effectively

offer and accept constructive criticism, given specific guidelines, with a desire to improve

recognize the purposes of and participate in warmup activities

share ideas confidently with others

show awareness of story sequence

support positivity the work of others

work cooperatively and productively with all members of the class in pairs, small groups and large groups

### **Improvisation/Acting Level I - Beginning**

6 - understand and apply the essential elements of a story: character, setting, conflict, climax and plot

7 - use stage vocabulary: stage areas, body positions and crosses

8 - demonstrate appropriate rehearsal behaviours and routines

9 - communicate a clear beginning, middle and end in spontaneous and planned scenes

### **Junior Goal I Objectives**

- develop a positive self-image
- develop a sense of responsibility and commitment
- develop self-confidence
- develop self-discipline
- develop the ability to offer and accept constructive criticism
- develop the willingness to make a decision, act upon it and accept the results
- extend the ability to think imaginatively and creatively
- strengthen powers of concentration

### **Theatre Studies Level III - Advanced (The script)**

- 11 - demonstrate understanding of plot structure
- 9 - read a script aloud

### **Senior Goal I Objectives**

- develop a positive and realistic self-image
- extend the ability to concentrate
- increase self-confidence
- increase self-discipline

### **Orientation Drama 10**

- concentrate on the task at hand
- demonstrate behaviour appropriate to given circumstances
- demonstrate effective use and management of time
- demonstrate self-discipline, self-direction and a sense of responsibility
- listen to self and others
- offer and accept constructive criticism with a desire to progress
- positively support the work of others
- share ideas confidently
- work cooperatively and productively

## **British Columbia (2018)**

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Intentionally select and apply materials, movements, technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and principles in art making

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts
- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Intentionally select and apply materials, movements, technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and principles in art making

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting**

- Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts

- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

- Intentionally select and apply materials, movements, technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and principles in art making

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting**

- Develop, refine ideas, and critically appraise ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts

- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Exploring and creating**

- Create dramatic works both collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and purposeful play

- Select and combine dramatic elements and principles to intentionally create a particular mood, effect, and meaning

- Take creative risks to experience and express thoughts, emotions, and meaning

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Reasoning and reflecting**

- Receive, offer, and apply constructive feedback

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Communicating and documenting**

- Compose, interpret, and expand ideas using symbolism, imagery, and elements

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Connecting and expanding**

- Collaborate through reciprocal relationships during creative processes

- Demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the audience

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

- Develop a repertoire of dramatic skills and techniques through presentation or performance

- Develop performance skills in a variety of contexts

- Improvise and take creative risks to express meaning

- Intentionally select and combine drama conventions

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

- Apply feedback to develop and refine ideas

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

- Demonstrate respect for self, others, and the audience

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

- Develop a repertoire of dramatic skills and techniques through presentation or performance

- Develop and refine performance skills in a variety of contexts

- Improvise and take creative risks using imagination, exploration, and inquiry

- Purposefully select and combine dramatic elements and conventions

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

- Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

Receive and apply constructive feedback to develop and refine ideas

#### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

#### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Create, rehearse, and refine dramatic works through collaborative and individual presentation or performance

Develop a repertoire of dramatic skills, vocabulary, and techniques through presentation or performance

Develop and refine performance skills in a variety of contexts

Improvise and take creative risks using imagination, exploration, and inquiry

Intentionally select and combine dramatic elements and conventions

#### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

Receive, provide, and apply constructive feedback to refine dramatic works

#### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and audience

## **Ontario, Canada**

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices**

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to accept criticism and build consensus)

C.3.3 - demonstrate an understanding of theatre and audience etiquette, in both classroom and formal performance contexts (e.g., as a performer: show willingness to take direction and behave appropriately towards other actors; as a viewer: demonstrate respect for performers and other audience members by paying attention, not interrupting or talking, and applauding when appropriate)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Concepts and Terminology**

C.1.2 - demonstrate an understanding of and use correct terminology to refer to the forms, elements, conventions, and techniques of drama, with a focus on ensemble drama works (e.g., chorus, protagonist, ingénue, supporting role, act, scene, climax, resolution, improvisation, mask, freeze-frame image)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom**

B.3.1 - identify and describe skills, attitudes, and strategies they used in collaborative drama activities (e.g., brainstorming, active listening, and cooperative problem-solving skills; strategies for sharing responsibility through collaborative team roles)

B.3.3 - identify connections between their learning in drama and possible employment opportunities in the broader educational and arts sectors (e.g., production and/or performance roles in community theatre, television/radio broadcasting, filmmaking)