

Sample High School Fundamentals / Learning Plan

Big Idea/ Topic

The Role of the Playwright

Connecting Theme/Enduring Understanding:

Exploring the connection between the theatre arts including performance with language arts and literature.

Essential Questions:

What is the difference between dramatic and traditional literary writing?

What are the steps of the playwriting process?

How does formatting for a theatrical script differ from traditional literary writing?

What are the technical concerns of a script?

Standard Alignment

CREATING

TAHSFT.CR.1 Organize, design, and refine theatrical work.

- a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse.
- b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation.

TAHSFT.CR.2 Develop scripts through theatrical techniques.

- a. Differentiate between dramatic and traditional literary writing and utilize common steps of the playwriting process.
- b. Assess the need for script analysis, concept development, and directorial and technical concerns of a theatrical script.
- c. Construct and critique elements of dramatic structure, character, and dialogue.
- d. Create and perform scenes for audiences.

RESPONDING

TAHSFT.RE.2 Critique various aspects of theatre and other media using appropriate supporting evidence.

- a. Generate and use terminology for critiquing theatre presentations.

CONNECTING:

TAHSFT.CN.1 Explore how theatre connects to life experiences, careers, and other content.

- d. Explore various careers in the theatre arts (e.g. performance, design, production, administrative, education, promotion)

TAHSFT.CN.2 Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.

- a. Identify and analyze plays and dramas from a variety of historical periods and cultures.
- b. Explore the works of milestone playwrights and plays, and the relevance of historical theatre.
- c. Recognize historical events that have influenced the role of theatre and how theatrical events have impacted cultural development.

Instructional Design

***This lesson has a flexible timeline but can be accomplished in 1-2 days.**

This lesson is intended to reach students in a virtual setting, whether plugged or unplugged. See the bottom of the lesson for a list of unplugged supplies.

FOUNDATIONAL INFORMATION:

Comprehension of the what defines theatre, Aristotelian elements of drama, review of plot structure from language arts classes.

CONCEPTS:

- The role of the playwright
- Strengthening plot structure
- Capturing unique character voice
- Dynamic Dialogue
- Writing a play
- The process of the playwright
- Establishing characters, conflict, and the path to conflict resolution.

VOCABULARY:

Relationship, character, importance, beats, objectives, tactics, conflict, moment before, plot, character, theme, lexicon, music, spectacle, plot structure, Freytag Pyramid, Exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement, dramatic dialogue, dramatic characters, dramatic structure, genres, scripts.

LINKS:

[The Role of the Playwright Video](#)

[Theatrical Script Formatting Video](#)

[Plays and Playwrights and Genre's PowerPoint](#)

Part 1:

Student Journal Prompt:

Writing for the Stage

Theatrical literature written for the stage has key structural and formatting elements that make it different from traditional literature. These include but are not limited to the formatting of the text on the page, dramatic structure, dramatic character, theatrical genres, and dramatic dialogue. Likewise, the process for the playwright varies from the process of the traditional author because the playwright has the extra burden of considering some of the ramifications of the staging of the play. For this reason, it is a good idea for the playwright to have an understanding of the major ways in which an audience experiences the play.

Journal for five minutes about the following topic before engaging in the lesson:

What are some of the considerations a playwright might need to think about that the author of a novel may not?

Part 2:

Presentation



In a live or recorded session present the information from the example lesson video, and the PowerPoint, on a synchronous digital platform such as Google Meet ([How it Works: Google Meet](#)), or create an asynchronous video of your own.

Sample Videos:

[The Role of the Playwright Video](#)

[Theatrical Script Formatting Video](#)

[Theatre & Film: Fundamentals I: Unit 4: Lesson Plan 1: Playwrights and Plot Structure.docx](#)

[Theatre & Film: Fundamentals I: Unit 4: Playwrights and Genres PowerPoint](#)

Unplugged Variation: Have the student read the information about the Role of the Playwright and the Theatrical Script Formatting along with the slides provided in the unplugged packet.

Part 3:

Student Assignment:

Using the information from the presentations convert a traditional literary text with dialogue into a theatrical Format. Take the short story text from the student handouts, and format it as though it were a theatrical script. Create a title page, Dramatis Personae, and Theatrical Script Dialogue. Follow the proper format including proper use of act and scene notation, character names and placement, large stage movement stage directions and small parenthetical stage directions, dialogue placement, and margins.

Some creativity is allowed for stage directions and parenthetical directions.

Students should post in a classroom forum and consider the similarities and differences in the posts of others. Students should comment on the effectiveness of the creative use of formatting on at least two other posts. This could also be shared and discussed on asynchronous video platform.

Unplugged Option: As a low-tech option, students can simply mail their theatrical adaptation of the text to the teacher.

Evidence of Student Success

Diagnostic: Journal Entries

Formative: Teacher Observation and Discussion during and after the presentation.

Summative: Theatrical Script Formatting Rubric

Distance Learning Supports

Ideas for Differentiation:

Our goal is for all students to be actively engaged using the body, the voice, speaking, reflecting, and writing. Below are changes to the lesson to help achieve that goal for students who need additional support. or increased rigor. Note: Be careful using these lessons for all students.

- Consider allowing students to record their thoughts in a variety of ways: using the talk to text/dictate feature, making an audio recording of their responses, drawing pictures, circling and/or labeling on their diagram or PowerPoint printouts, etc.
- Students requiring a simplification will use a smaller section of a text, or even an alternate simplified dialogue from traditional literature for adaptation of literature into a theatrical format.

Georgia Department of Education

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- For low-tech and unplugged adaptation students can work one-on-one with teachers on the phone with focusing on a smaller selection of text.
- In addition to adapting the literary text into a theatrical format, students needing an extra technical challenge use the information in the lesson to draft and an original scene in the proper format for a theatrical script.

Unplugged Supplies: Lesson checklist, Journal, printed PowerPoint slides, and/or copy of lecture notes, assignment handout, copy of literary text for adaptation, copy of assignment rubric.

Engaging Families

Materials included to support unplugged learners: Lesson checklist, Journal, printed PowerPoint slides, copy of lecture notes, assignment handout, copy of literary text for adaptation, copy of assignment rubric

Optional materials to support learning:

[Plays and Playwrights and Genre's PowerPoint](#)

[School Theatre: Acting Resources](#)

[Theatre & Film: Fundamentals I: Unit 4: Lesson Plan 1: Playwrights and Plot Structure.docx](#)

[Theatre & Film: Fundamentals I: Unit 4: Playwrights and Genres PowerPoint](#)



Lesson Checklist

Part 1:

- 1. Complete Part I Journal Prompt

Part 2:

- 2. Read, watch, or listen to the information about The Role of the Playwright, and Theatrical Script Formatting

Part 3:

- 3. Read the literary text provided for theatrical adaptation.
- 4. Plan how you will convert the text using characters and or narrators to convey information that is not directly in the dialogue as written
- 5. Create a Title Page
- 6. Create a Dramatis Personae
- 7. Create a properly formatted theatrical dialogue version of the text
- 8. Submit the new theatrical script to discussion boards and comment on others.



Example PowerPoint for The Role of the Playwright and Theatrical Script Formatting:
 The Role of the Playwright:

Playwrights and Playwriting



Playwright?™

A play is "wrought" -- not written
 The playwright as craftsperson
 But: "playwriting!"



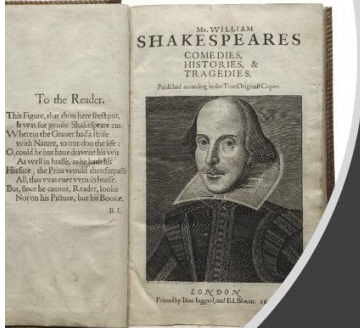
What a Playwright Does

- Select subject
- Determine focus and emphasis
- Establish purpose
- Establish point of view
 - Genre
- Develop dramatic structure
- Create dramatic characters
- Shape dramatic language



Dramatic Plot Structure

Beginning	Middle	End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Point of Normalcy • The interruption of the Normalcy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict/Main Character's Want • Rising Action (series of events created by the decisions of the want) • Think in terms of "... But then _____ happens and there for _____ happens" • Climax (Point of no return) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling action • Resolution • Final Moment (Related to the point of Normalcy)



Theatrical Script Formatting

Plays and Playwriting

Formatting

Playwriting format for theatre is not as crucial to having people read the script as it is in a screenplay

General Rules:

- Act and Scene headings are centered.
- Character's names are centered and capitalized.
- Stage directions are indented one tab and italicized.
- Character's names in stage directions are capitalized.
- Parenthetical stage directions are used for small actions.

Margins

- Top Margin: 1 inch
- Left Margin: 1.5 inches
- Right Margin: 1 inch
- Bottom Margin: 1 inch

Page Numbering

- Title page and Dramatis Personae pages are not numbered.
- The first page of the play is the page on which the first scene begins.



ACT AND SCENE

- New Act and Scenes are underscored, typed in all caps, and indented 4 inches from the left edge of the page.



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Title Page Example

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Dramatis Personae Example



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Theatrical Script Dialogue Example



Presentation Notes: The Role of the Playwright

Playwrights and Playwriting

The person who crafts the play is called a playwright. This is because a play is “Wrought” - more than written. The playwright is a craftsman. The process of crafting the play, though, is called playwriting. In brief, playwrights do the playwriting.

Write the Play You Want to See!

What a playwright does:

1. **Select subject:**

The playwright is the only theatrical artist that does not need to first read the script. There are other artists that create original content, but in that context, they are also considered the playwright of a sort. Every other artist associated with scripted theatre has the job of interpreting text rather than starting from scratch. As with non-theatrical literature, it is crucial to engage in the same research processes to mine personal experience, imagination, and facts to avoid cliché and to develop nuanced and engaging original scripts. In order to do this, the playwright must select a subject that is personally interesting and engaging. Just as a director cannot effectively direct a script that they don't find interesting and an actor cannot engage creatively with a role where there is no connection, the playwright likewise will not be able to fully commit to the process of writing a play they don't find interesting. A good rule of thumb for beginning playwrights is to write the play you want to see.

2. **Determine focus and emphasis:**

Specificity is crucial to avoiding generic, cliché choices in all aspects of theatre. In many ways, closing doors to what you are not focusing on allows for more freedom to explore the areas you have defined, in more depth. Similar to the process of zeroing in on a research topic for the multi-genre research project, the playwright must select a specific focus or emphasis for the subject matter.

3. **Establish purpose:**

This aspect speaks to what the playwright wants to achieve through the performances of the play. How does the playwright want the audience to experience the play? Part of establishing purpose is selecting a genre, or a category of artistic/literary composition characterized by a particular style. Some common theatrical genres will be discussed later in this module.

4. **Establish point of view**

Whose story is this? Theatrical literature and screenplays tend to have a narrow set of perspectives through which the story is told. Even when plays feature multiple characters with important arcs, traditionally, there is a dominant story with threads of lesser storylines mixed in. This is a reflection of the dramatic plot structure which we will explore later in the module. The choices around point of view may depend heavily on the playwright's established purpose. Certain perspectives may fit the intended genre or goals better than others.



Presentation Notes: Theatrical Script Writing

Theatrical Script Formatting

Playwriting format for theatre is not as crucial to having people read the script as it is in a screenplay. There is no correct way to format a theatrical script. Some playwrights use the script formatting to make statements about characters and moments within the play. Many playwriting competitions have unique formatting submission rules that change. That being said there are some generally accepted norms that exist for the formatting of an unpublished script. New scripts do not typically look like the formatting found in published examples.

General Expectations:

- Act and scene headings are centered.
- Characters' names are centered and capitalized.
- Stage directions are indented one tab and italicized.
- Characters' names in stage directions are capitalized.
- Parenthetical stage directions are used for small actions.

Margins:

- Top Margin: 1 inch
- Left Margin: 1.5 inches
- Right Margin: 1 inch
- Bottom Margin: 1 inch

Suggested Text for theatrical adaptation:

"She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest, in the holm-oak tree, the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here, at last, is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire, but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers—what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch



the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her"; and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept. "Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air. "Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam. "Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice. "He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale. "For a red rose?" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright. But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love. Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden. In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray. "Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song." But the Tree shook its head. "My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. -Oscar Wilde, The Nightingale and the Rose

Suggested Rubric For Part III:

Categor ies	Exceeds 20pts	Masters 17pts	Progressing 15pts	Needs Improvement 13 pts	No Evidence Opts
Act and Scene Notation and Setting TAHSFT.C R.2 (a) TAHSFT.C N.1(d)	Act and Scene Settings are all centered for each page. Location settings are also clearly labeled and centered.	Act and Scene Settings are mostly centered on each page. Location settings are centered.	Act and Scene Settings are present on each page. Location settings are present.	Act and Scene Settings are present, but not on every page. Location settings either not present or hard to find.	Act and Scene Settings are not present. Location settings are not present.
Character Name and Dialogue Placement TAHSFT.C R.1(a,b) TAHSFT.C R.2 (a, b,c) TAHSFT.C R.2 (a) TAHSFT.C N.1(d)	Character names are Centered and Capitalized Dialogue is placed below the character's name. Dialogue spoken by the character is immediately below and left-aligned on-	There are few deviations from the dialogue and character name format.	There are some errors in the dialogue and character name format, and inconsistencies throughout the script.	The dialogue and character name formatting are riddled with errors, but there is some use of the proper formatting occasionally.	There is no consistency. The dialogue and character name formatting are riddled with errors throughout the script.



	page. A “deadline” of space exists between each character speaking.				
Margins TAHSFT.C R.2 (a) TAHSFT.C N.1(d)	Margins are all set correctly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top Margin: 1 inch • Left Margin: 1.5 inches • Right Margin: 1 inch • Bottom Margin: 1 inch 	There are few deviations from the proper margin formatting.	There are some errors in the use of margins, and inconsistencies throughout the script.	The margin formatting is riddled with errors, but there is some use of the proper margins occasionally.	There is no consistency. The margin formatting is riddled with errors throughout the script.
Grammar and Spelling TAHSFT.C R.2 (a) TAHSFT.C N.1(d)	No errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.	There are a few errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.	There are some errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.	There are many errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.	The script is riddled with errors. No proofreading evident.
Stage Directions TAHSFT.C R.2 (a) TAHSFT.C N.1(d)	Stage directions are indented one tab and italicized. Parenthetical stage directions are used for small actions.	There are a few errors in the stage directions.	There are some errors in the stage direction formatting.	The stage direction formatting is riddled with errors, but there is some use of the proper formatting occasionally.	There is no evidence of proper formatting for stage directions.

