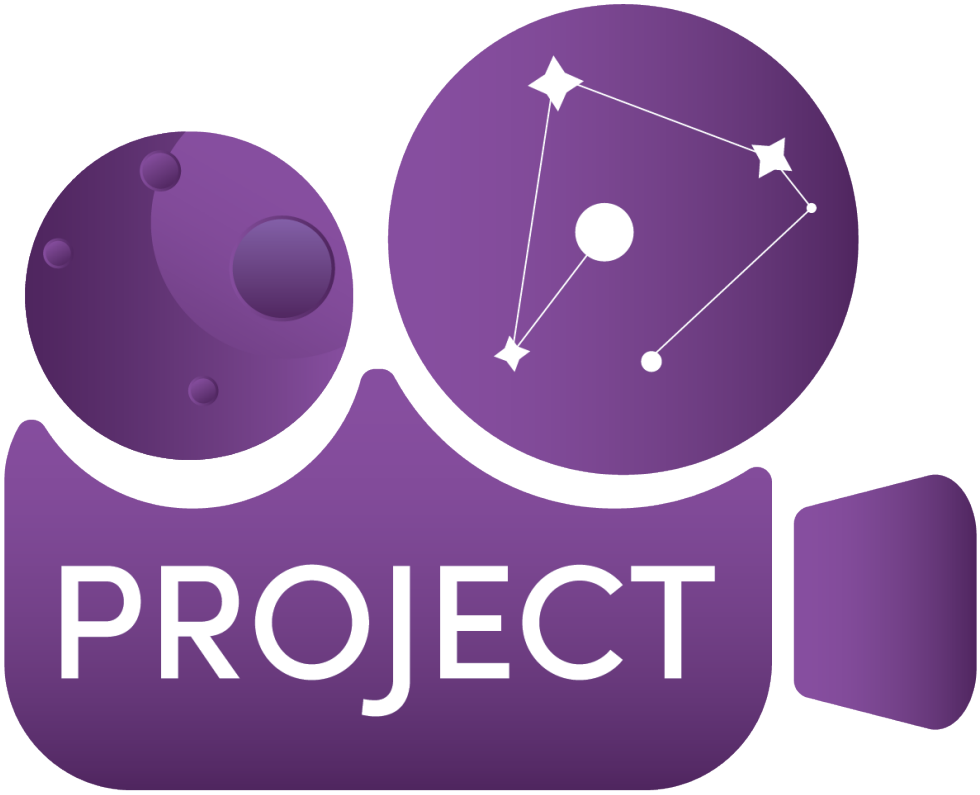
CONSTELLATION
STAGE + SCREEN

presents



CONSTELLATION

2023-2024

A SCREENWRITING COMPETITION
for Indiana High Schoolers

with a Comprehensive Unit Guide for Teachers

sponsored by

IU Credit Union

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ABOUT PROJECT CONSTELLATION

Bloomington, Indiana's innovative arts organization, Constellation Stage & Screen, invites you to participate in Project Constellation, a screenwriting competition open to high school students throughout the state of Indiana. Formerly known as Project Pigasus, Project Constellation is the only competition of its kind in Indiana that offers high schoolers the chance to stretch their creativity by writing an original, 10- to 12-page screenplay for a short film. This year's submissions invite students to write within the theme **Embracing Change**. In keeping with this Hoosier tradition now in its 7th year, Constellation staff will select one winning screenplay to be fully filmed and produced in the student-screenwriter's hometown. Moreover, students from area schools will be invited to work on the picture alongside filmmakers for an unparalleled learning experience. The finished film will be screened in Indiana theaters, submitted to film festivals across the country, and subsequently made available for online streaming.

Project Constellation presents a unique, real-world opportunity for high school students to express themselves while also building key writing and literacy skills needed for college and career readiness. As part of our commitment to education in the arts, Constellation Stage & Screen is dedicated to partnering with teachers who are interested in using screenwriting as an innovative way to meet standards in their curriculum by sharing a **comprehensive unit plan to use in the classroom**. In the unit plan that follows, teachers will find engaging lesson plans and resources that scaffold young writers through the screenwriting process, from prewriting and drafting to revision and submission. Throughout the project, students will learn about screenwriting conventions, theme, character development, understanding setting, and plot structure. These lessons align with Indiana Academic Standards to fit any high-school writing curriculum with flexible unit calendar suggestions spanning one to three weeks. The team at Constellation Stage & Screen looks forward to supporting teachers with planning and availability to lead screenwriting workshops in area schools.

"There are a lot of really skilled and talented people in Indiana. A large part of our work is simply connecting them and creating new opportunities. And we especially want to show young people that cool things are happening in Indiana, and that their stories are worthy of being told."
— John Armstrong, co-founder

Students should submit these three items:

- A screenplay that is 10 to 12 pages long
- A one-page description of the vision for your movie (themes, locations, general ideas, etc.)
- A brief video introduction about you

Submissions for 2023-2024 Project Constellation must also:

- Be formatted appropriately for a screenplay
- Be capable of filming in students' hometowns
- Fit within the theme **Embracing Change**
- Require no more than four actors to play all roles
- Be submitted to Constellation Stage & Screen by January 26, 2024 (submission information on page 26)

Note: Submissions cannot require visual effects and may not contain nudity, extreme violence, depictions of weapons, or otherwise explicit material.

For more information or support with this unit plan, please contact project manager Jordan Nel at **nel@seeconstellation.org**.

UNIT SCOPE & SEQUENCE

The scope of this unit plan is designed to be flexible for teachers to integrate into their class's pre-existing writing curriculum. Please feel free to adapt the calendars and lessons that follow to suit your teaching style and unique classroom needs.

How to Use the Lesson Plans

The Project Constellation unit calendars and lesson plans have been grouped into the stages of the screenwriting process: prewriting, drafting, revision, and publishing & reflection. Each stage of the process has been color-coded for ease of planning. For example, suggested lessons for the prewriting stage have a light green folio box at the bottom of the page to correspond with the unit calendar; drafting lessons have a purple folio box, and so on. Click on text in purple to visit the hyperlinked website resource. Feel free to use each lesson sequentially in their entirety or pick and choose which lessons will best meet your class's schedule, skill levels, and needs. Schools on a block schedule might combine two calendar days into one longer day of lessons.

Suggested Unit Calendars

One-Week Unit

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
WEEK 1	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revision	Publishing & Reflection

Two-Week Unit

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
WEEK 1	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting
	DAY 6	DAY 27	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
WEEK 2	Drafting	Drafting	Revision	Revision	Publishing & Reflection

Three-Week Unit

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
WEEK 1	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting
	DAY 6	DAY 27	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
WEEK 2	Drafting	Drafting	Drafting	Drafting	Revision
	DAY 6	DAY 27	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
WEEK 3	Revision	Revision	Revision	Publishing & Reflection	Publishing & Reflection

Indiana Academic Standards: Writing, Reading, and Literacy Objectives

Grades 9-10: RL.2.1, RL.2.3, RL.3.1, RL.3.2, W.1, W.3.3, W.4, W.6.2, SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.3

- RL.2.1 - Analyze what a text says both explicitly and implicitly as well as inferences and interpretations through citing strong and thorough textual evidence.
- RL.2.3 - Analyze how dynamic characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- RL.3.1 - Analyze and evaluate how an author's choices concerning how to structure a work of literature, order events within it (e.g., parallel episodes) and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) contribute to the overall meaning and effect of a work.
- RL.3.2 - Analyze how the author creates such effects as suspense or humor through differences in the perspective of the characters and the reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony).
- W.1 - Write routinely over a variety of time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences; apply reading standards to support analysis, reflection, and research by drawing evidence from literature and nonfiction texts.
- W.3.3 - Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that
    - Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters.
    - Create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
    - Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plotlines to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
    - Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
    - Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
    - Provide an ending that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- W.4 - Apply the writing process to all formal writing including but not limited to argumentative, informative, and narrative
    - Plan and develop; draft; revise using appropriate reference materials; rewrite; try a new approach,focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience; and edit to produce and strengthen writing that is clear and coherent.
    - Use technology to generate, produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically (e.g., use of publishing programs, integration of multimedia)
    - Utilize a standard style guide framework for in-text documentation, formatting, and works cited in order to properly credit sources in all writing types, utilizing multiple sources when appropriate.
- W.6.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- SL.2.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly and persuasively.
- SL.2.2 - Examine, analyze, and reflect on ideas under discussion, by providing textual evidence in order to support or refute those ideas.
- SL.2.3 - Work with peers to establish norms for collegial discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

Grades 11-12: RL.2.1, RL.2.3, RL.3.1, RL.3.2, W.1, W.3.3, W.4, W.6.2, SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.3

- RL.2.1 - Analyze what a text says both explicitly and implicitly as well as inferences and interpretations drawn from the text through citing textual evidence determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- RL.2.3 - RL.2.3 - Analyze how the author's choices impact character development over the course of a text (e.g. how the characters are introduced and developed).
- RL.3.1 - Analyze and evaluate how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a work of literature (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall meaning and effect of a work.
- RL.3.2 - Analyze a work of literature in which the reader must distinguish between what is directly stated and what is intended (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) in order to understand the perspectives.
- W.1 - Write routinely over a variety of time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences; apply reading standards to support analysis, reflection, and research by drawing evidence from literature and nonfiction texts.
- W.3.3 - Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that
    - Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters.
    - Create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
    - Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plotlines to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
    - Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
    - Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
    - Provide an ending that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- W.4 - Apply the writing process to all formal writing including but not limited to argumentative, informative, and narrative
    - Plan and develop; draft; revise using appropriate reference materials; rewrite; try a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience; and edit to produce and strengthen writing that is clear and coherent.
    - Use technology to generate, produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
    - Utilize a standard style guide framework for in-text documentation, formatting, and works cited in order to properly credit sources in all writing types, utilizing multiple sources when appropriate.
- W.6.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- SL.2.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly and persuasively.
- SL.2.2 - Engage in a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas by referring to specific evidence.
- SL.2.3 - Work with peers to establish norms for collegial discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

PROJECT CONSTELLATION ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Out of all of the forms of media developed over the past hundred years, films have perhaps seen the most profound growth in popularity and technological advancement. Streaming platforms such as Netflix have more than 200 million subscribers, all tuning in to watch stories come to life on the screen. But regardless of the medium in which they reach viewers, all films are stories and all films begin in the same place: the mind of the writer.

In this unit project, you will take on the role of a screenwriter by crafting an original, 10- to 12-page screenplay for a short film. Films offer writers a unique way to tell a story, with visual and spoken elements coming together to create believable characters and a compelling message for audiences to take away. As a screenwriter, your job is to write out the dialogue and visual elements that come together to make a script that might be filmed and produced for the screen.

The exciting part of this project is that your screenplay has the opportunity to be actually filmed and produced here in our town. At the end of the unit, you will have the chance to submit your screenplay to a writing competition hosted by Constellation Stage & Screen, an innovative theatrical and film organization based in Bloomington, Indiana. Constellation is accepting submissions from high-school students across the state of Indiana through January 26, 2024. They will then fully produce the winning screenplay by bringing a professional film crew to the winner's hometown. The finished film will be screened in Indiana theaters, submitted to film festivals across the country, and subsequently made available for online streaming.

If writing a screenplay for a short film sounds daunting, don't fret. We will work through each stage of the writing process during class, from prewriting and drafting to revision and submission.

Final Deliverables:

- A completed, 10- to 12-page screen play with…
    - A title
    - A list of no more than 4 characters and descriptions
    - Scene descriptions
    - Concise visual directions
    - Dialogue grouped into scenes
    - An exposition (beginning), inciting event, rising action, conflict, turning point, falling action, and denouement (ending)
    - A plot that fits within the competition's theme: **Embracing Change**
    - A one-page description of the vision for your movie (theme, locations, etc.)
    - Students who choose to submit their screenplays to Constellation must also make a short video introduction of themselves to submit to the filmmakers

Important Project Due Dates:

Total Points:

PREWRITING LESSONS

Mentor Text Activity: What is a Screenplay, Anyway?

Students likely will be familiar with movies, but the format of a film script might be new to high-school writers. After introducing Project Constellation to students by going over the assignment sheet, acclimate them to the attributes of a screenplay by analyzing a mentor text such as the script for Toy Story.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify the attributes of a screenplay such as setting descriptions, visual/camera descriptions, lines of dialogue, etc.
- Understand the purpose of the attributes of a script for a film.

Step 1: As a warm up, ask students what they know about scripts. Promote continued discussion by asking them what they imagine a script for a film might need. Then, write their answers on the board as a full-class activity or ask students to share their responses in small groups.

Step 2: Share the first few pages of the screenplay for Disney and Pixar's Toy Story with students (screenplays for more Pixar films can be found in Bulletproof Screenwriting's Pixar Scripts Collection). Project the screenplay excerpts on the board and show students how to annotate or mark up the text with what they notice. Alternatively, provide printed copies of the excerpts to students in small groups and ask them to circle attributes, draw arrows, and make comments about what they notice in the margins. Students might identify the following:

- The title of the film in quotation marks on the title page
- Original story bylines separate from the screenplay bylines
- The year of publication
- Camera directions such as "FADE IN"
- Setting descriptions such as "INT. ANDY'S BEDROOM"
- Visual descriptions in paragraph form aligned to the left of the page
- Characters' names written in all caps
- Dialogue centered on the page
- Page numbers

Step 3: Ask students to share what they noticed. Prompt them to make connections between the format of a screenplay and its function: Why does it need the elements it contains? What makes this script similar to or different from the script for a play?

Step 4: Play the opening scene from Toy Story and ask students to follow along in the screenplay. How does the produced film follow the script?

Step 5: Next, ask students to complete the activity in reverse. Show an opening clip from a different movie of your choice and ask them to write out what they think the screenplay would look like.

Exploring Past Screenplay Submissions

Students may benefit from reading and analyzing screenplays written by past Project Constellation (formerly Project Pigasus) competition participants. Help them gain confidence in their ability to write their own screenplay by reviewing mentor texts written by peers, not just professionals.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify the attributes of a short screenplay (plot structure, characters, theme, etc.).
- Analyze what makes these screenplays a success.

Step 1: Provide students with printed or digital copies of past Project Constellation screenplays. Please note that the scripts are for personal classroom use only.

Step 2: Assign roles and ask students to read the script aloud in small groups.

Step 3: When students have finished reading the plays, ask them to discuss what they noticed about the screenplays. Example questions for discussion:

- Did they find themselves drawn to certain characters?
- How did the screenwriter build engagement with the audience?
- Did the screenplay have a clear protagonist (main character) and antagonist (opposing character or force)? How did their relationship develop and provide urgency for the plotline?
- What was the play's conflict and how did it resolve?
- How did the screenplay reveal an overarching theme?

Step 4: Conclude the lesson by creating a KWL chart (Know, Want to Know, Learned) as a class. Fill in the first two columns together by asking students what they now know about scripts and screenwriting and what they still wonder about or need to know in order to write their own screenplays. Save the final column as a reflection activity after students have completed the project and can articulate what they learned throughout the writing process. Alternatively, use the final column to ask students what they learned specifically from reading and analyzing the Project Constellation scripts.

Getting Started: Activities for Generating Ideas

All writers come up with ideas in different ways, but rarely do ideas come to a person as a lightning bolt of inspiration or a switch of a light bulb. Use the following activity suggestions as prewriting lessons to help your students come up with an idea for their screenplay. Set up the activities as rotating stations or as individual lessons to meet specific needs.

Lesson Objectives:

- Generate one or more ideas for characters, conflict, etc. for a short film.
- Understand the relationships between character and plot development, conflict, dialogue, etc.

Activity 1: Want Versus Need

What a character wants is often in conflict with what the character needs; this is one way a screenwriter develops characters. As a warm up, play a clip from a movie and ask students to identify what the character wants versus what the character needs. Pixar Shorts found on YouTube such as "Partly Cloudy" are great for this activity. Next, ask students to come up with their own ideas for characters by responding to the prompts on this "Crafting Characters" handout from New Voices Playwriting and PBS Learning Media. Explain to them that the principles of playwriting from the handout (and other handouts from New Voices Playwriting in this unit plan) apply to screenwriting, as well.

Activity 2: Creating a Strong Central Character

As explained in this article from Bulletproof Screenwriting, script consultant Michael Hauge expands upon the pull that characters feel between what they want and what they need. To develop complex characters, he encourages screenwriters to ask themselves four questions:

- What is your hero's wound?
    - What source of pain from the character's past have they perhaps suppressed or never dealt with?
- What is your hero's belief?
    - The hero's usually mistaken beliefs stem from their wound.
- What is your hero's identity?
    - The hero's identity is their "false self" that they present to the world to protect themselves from their wounds.
- What is your hero's essence?
    - This is what lies beneath the identity the hero presents to the world.

Ask students to take an idea for a character they have and respond to the questions above in a free write.

Activity 3: Lines of Dialogue

Help students learn how dialogue connects to character and plot development by writing lines of dialogue from existing screenplays on strips of paper (Bulletproof Screenwriting has a Screenplay Library with many full-length screenplays available online for educational use). Place the strips of paper in a box and ask students to choose at least two lines. Next, ask students to write a description for a character who might say the line of dialogue. Alternatively, ask students to describe a conflict or plot that explains the reason why the character has said the line of dialogue within the larger story.

Activity 4: Generating Conflict with the Ticking Clock
Explain to students that the plotline of a film can't move forward unless there is a conflict with urgency. A film's urgency is the reason the problem needs to be resolved—and, for the purpose of a 10- to 12-page screenplay, resolved fairly quickly. After going over the key terms at the top of this "Identify the Conflict and the Ticking Clock" handout, ask students to complete the scaffolded prompts. Remind students that their screenplay must fit the theme **Embracing Change** by discussing the ways that change can be a catalyst for both character and plot development. By the end of the activity, students will have generated at least three "ticking clocks" that they can turn into a full plot structure.

Activity 5: Creating Dynamic Conflict
Encourage students to push their ideas further by explaining that a character's objective (or what they want) is typically met with an obstacle (a conflict) and that a character must employ a tactic to get around that obstacle. Furthermore, there are typically positive and negative consequences if the obstacle isn't resolved within a certain timeframe (the urgency). Share this "Creating Dynamic Conflict" handout with students and ask them to complete the scaffolded prompts.

Screenwriting 101: How to Use a Beat Sheet as an Outline

High schoolers will likely be familiar with the elements of a standard plot diagram: exposition, inciting event, rising action, turning point, falling action, and denouement (conclusion). This lesson teaches students about a more in-depth plot outlining tool that screenwriters use called a beat sheet.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify and understand the idea-generating stage of the writing process.
- Practicing outlining techniques as a form of prewriting.
- Understand the visual and pacing elements of a screenplay by learning how to use a beat sheet.

Step 1: As a warm up, ask students to review the ideas they've generated so far for their screenplays by doing a brief pair-share with a partner.

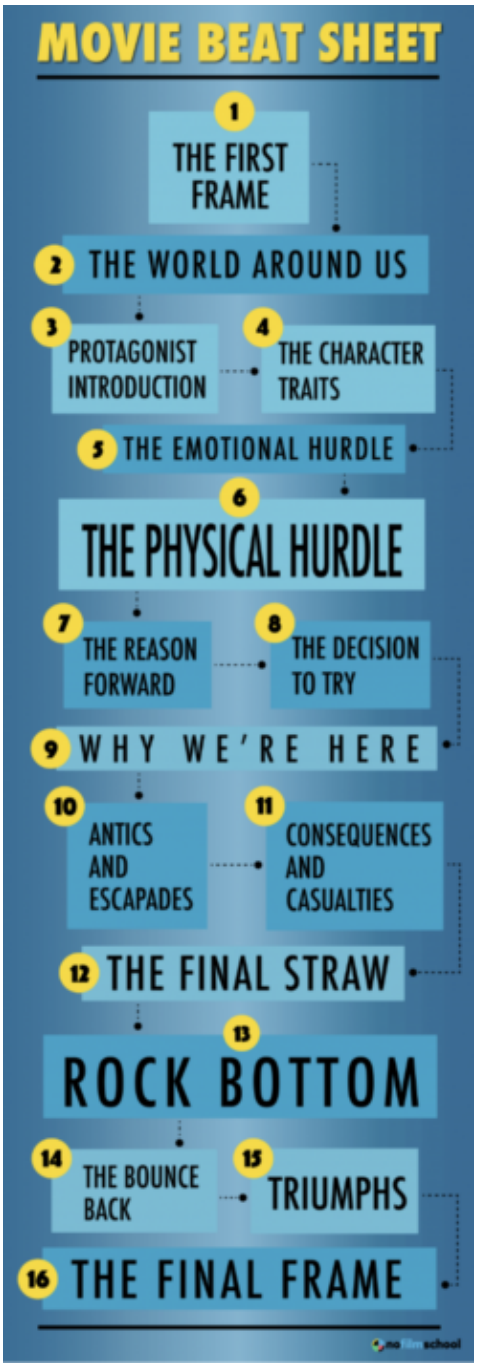
Step 2: Provide students with a copy of this plot structure handout and ask students to convert their ideas about character, setting, and conflict to the six elements of plot: exposition, inciting event, rising action, turning point, falling action, and denouement (conclusion). Give students time to complete the handout.

Step 3: Next, explain to students that a movie, even more so than a play or a narrative in a book, relies on a series of visual moments and plot events called "beats." A beat sheet is a specific type of outlining that is reflective of storytelling for the screen. Introduce students to this concept in more detail by reading this excellent article with a step-by-step guide for writing your own beat sheet: "How to Write an Awesome Beat Sheet for Your Screenplay" by Industrial Scripts.

Step 4: Now that students know what a beat sheet is, show them a model beat sheet for a real film they've likely already seen: Beat Sheet for Encanto by Cory Milles. Ask students to articulate what they notice about this beat sheet and answer any questions they might have.

Step 5: Ask students to return to their plot diagrams and begin fleshing out the essential "beats" needed for their own short films. Explain that many different beat sheet models exist, but that, for the purpose of their script, it might be helpful to use the model in the infographic to the right. This article from No Film School discusses each of the elements in the infographic in more detail.

Step 6: Ask students to complete their beat sheets for homework in preparation for the first drafting day.



DRAFTING LESSONS

The Screenwriter's Workshop: Getting Words on the Page

Now that students have ideas and beat sheet outlines for their screenplays, give them confidence to begin writing by introducing them to a free, online screenwriting program and appropriate screenplay formatting. Drafting in the correct formatting from the start will help students make sure they are including all of the necessary elements of a screenplay.

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand and use online programs for screenwriting.
- Understand and apply proper screenwriting format.

Step 1: If students use computers or devices, ask them to create a free account at www.writerduet.com. Students will need to provide an email address and create a password for their accounts, however they do not need to purchase a subscription to use the free program. The free version of WriterDuet allows students to create three free projects and even invite collaborators.

Step 2: Model how to use WriterDuet by projecting your computer screen on the board and walking students through the introductory video and tools embedded in the site. Some tools to highlight:

- The toolbar at the top of the page with descriptions of how to write dialogue, transitions, etc.
- The comment function on the left side bar

Step 3: Next, offer this webpage from Bulletproof Screenwriting (complete with videos) as a resource for students to use as they draft: "Screenplay Format Demystified: How to Format a Screenplay."

Step 4: Allow students time to begin drafting as you walk around the room offering initial support.

Screenwriting Workshop Days: Mini Lessons for Starting and Ending Drafting Days

One of the most important aspects of the drafting process is perhaps the simplest: time to write. High-school writers especially benefit from structured time to write in class with the support of their teacher and peers. Use these lessons as short activities to start and end drafting days to break up the writing time and offer students' targeted guidance on various drafting topics. As students write, walk around the room and ask to read excerpts of students' drafts so you can offer guidance and feedback on the topics you addressed during that day's mini lesson.

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand how writers' choices impact plot, pacing, and theme.
- Continue to make progress drafting the screenplays.
- Practice metacognition about the writing process.

Mini Lesson 1: "Enter Late/Exit Early"

Ask students to look at their drafts or prewriting materials and determine where it would be beneficial for a character to "enter late" or "exit early." These are terms in screenwriting that refer to cutting straight to the action or the emotion of the scene, skipping lengthy introductions (PAUL: Hi, I'm Paul), knocks on the doors, hellos, goodbyes, etc. Ask students to set a goal to work on a scene that cuts straight to the action or emotion during today's drafting workshop.

Mini Lesson 2: Writing Within a Theme

Remind students that the theme for Project Constellation is **Embracing Change**. Pass out a notecard to each
student and ask them to jot down a short response to one of the following prompts:

- What does your play's central character learn over the course of the story?
- List some big ideas in your screenplay that relate to Embracing Change.
- What is the audience supposed to learn from the play's story? How will they know that's what they are supposed to learn?
- How can audiences apply the lesson of your play's story to their own lives?

Ask students to do a pair-share with their responses or collect the notecards as an exit slip to determine which students might need support developing the theme within their screenplay.

Mini Lesson 3: How to Write a Scene Using Casablanca as a Model

Show students the ten-minute video, "How to Write a Scene: Casablanca," at the bottom of this article from Bulletproof Screenwriting. Ask students to take notes as they watch and follow up with a discussion about how they might apply principles from the video to their own screenplays.

Mini Lesson 4: Tips from Constellation Stage & Screen

Go over the following tips that Constellation recommends based on their real-world work as a film company:

- Be practical: Use locations that are easily accessible and easy to secure. Keep the number of different locations low; the more time a film crew spends moving around, the less time they have to spend filming.
- Avoid the unpredictable: Elements like rain, fire, animals, young kids, etc. are hard to control and dangerous.
- Think budget: Project Constellation's production budget will be modest, so keep that in mind. Also, avoid copyrighted material such as songs, excerpts from books, etc.

Mini Lesson 5: Writer Reflection Journals

At the end of each drafting workshop day or at the end of the entire drafting stage of the unit, ask students to reflect on their writing experiences. Explain to students that many professional writers keep a writing journal to record their thoughts on the writing process. Students might respond to the following prompts:

- How do you feel about your draft so far?
- Were there days that you felt in the "flow" of writing? What helped you write? What did you find challenging?
- What is your next step for either drafting or revision?

And Then I See: Activities for Getting "Unstuck"

Invariably, all writers get "stuck" at some point during the drafting process. For young writers in particular, getting stuck can feel like failure or cause frustration. Help your students through these periods of feeling "stuck" by keeping these activities and handouts at-the-ready.

Lesson Objectives:

- Employ strategies for working through writer's block.
- Reflect on the writing process and continue to make progress drafting screenplays.

Activity 1: "And Then I See..."
The visual component of a film is perhaps the most important aspect to keep in mind while writing a screenplay. Ask students to think about a moment from a movie that is conveyed purely through the images shown on the screen. If students feel stuck writing dialogue and directions for their screenplay, ask them to pause and just write what they see happening next in the story. Students can finish the prompt "And then I see…" verbally while you scribe their thoughts during a one-on-one conversation or they can write down their ideas themselves. When finished, encourage students to imagine what the characters would say in order to make the action happen.

Activity 2: The One-Minute Play
Sometimes it's helpful to keep dialogue-writing flowing by crafting a short back-and-forth script for two characters that could be read in one minute. Give students this "One Minute Play" handout and ask them to fill in the lines for two of their characters. Remind students that this one-minute play does not need to be perfect; the goal is to just keep writing.

REVISION LESSONS

Read-and-Pass: Initial Peer Review

Read-and-pass is a great activity for students to practice offering positive feedback on each other's screenplays before moving on to more in-depth self review.

Lesson Objectives:

- Gain initial feedback on drafts.
- Practice reading and offering feedback to peers.
- Identify main components of a screenplay.

Step 1: Ask students to bring a printed copy of their screenplays to class. Alternatively, if students use computers or tablets, ask students to open a copy of their drafts on WriterDuet. Next, group students into tables of 3-4.

Step 2: Model peer review for students by projecting an example screenplay on the board and showing them how you would like them to mark the component parts for each round of read-and-pass. Create your own key or ask students to use the following annotation method:

- Underline particularly compelling dialogue
- Highlight or underline the Emotional or Physical Hurdle "beat" in yellow
- Highlight or underline the Reason Forward "beat" in orange
- Highlight or underline the Final Frame "beat" in blue
- At the end of the draft, write two, one-sentence comments for your classmate that respond to the following questions:
    - What is the most compelling aspect of the screenplay?
    - What is an area for improvement you can identify for the writer?

Step 3: After you have gone through an example draft as a class, set a timer for 10 minutes and instruct students to pass their drafts to the person on their right. Tell students they have 10 minutes to read, annotate, and comment on the draft just like you did for the example draft. For round one, students should underline compelling dialogue and respond to the two prompting questions at the end of the draft.

Step 4: When 10 minutes have passed, ask students to finish their comments and then pass the draft in front of them again to the right. All students should now have a new draft to read. Ask students to repeat the process until they have read all of the plays in their group. For round two, students should underline or highlight the Emotional or Physical Hurdle "beat" in yellow and respond to the questions at the end of the draft. For round three, students should underline or highlight the Reason Forward "beat" in orange and respond to the prompts at the end of the draft. For round four (if needed), students should underline or highlight the Final Frame "beat" in blue and respond to the prompts at the end of the draft.

Step 5: Ask students to return the draft in front of them to its writer and give students a few moments to read their feedback. Did their peers mark the parts of a play where the writer intended those moments to occur? Were there any parts that students were unable to find? How might they go about answering any questions that their peers had about their screenplay in their revisions?

Pair-Share: In-Depth Peer Review

Asking students to complete a self-assessment of their screenplays using the rubric is a great way for students to understand where their drafts could be improved.

Lesson Objectives:

- Use a rubric to complete a self-assessment.
- Identify areas for improvement in their drafts.

Step 1: Go over the rubric for assessment with students (located on page 25). Give students a copy of the rubric and give them time to reread their screenplays and critically give themselves ratings on the indicators for ideas & creativity, organization & pacing, style, and presentation.

Step 2: Ask students to complete a "plan of action" for revision based on how they assessed their drafts on the rubric. What will they revise first? What will they need in order to successfully revise their drafts? Ask students to write their ideas in a reflection journal or on an exit slip that they turn in to you at the end of class.

Revision Workshop Tables & Writing Conferences

It can be challenging to find time to conference one-on-one with all of your students during the writing process; however, meeting individually with students on their drafts during class helps them develop agency over their projects and receive valuable feedback from you. One way to structure time for individual writing conferences is to plan Revision Workshop Tables, an activity where students choose a table with a topic they would like to review for the day and work in small groups while you meet with students individually at a writing conference table elsewhere in the room.

Lesson Objectives:

- Self-identify areas for improvement and continue the revision process.
- Meet individually to talk about the writing process/draft.

Step 1: If you had students complete a reflection journal or exit slip following the previous self-assessment activity, use the areas for improvement they identified to create 4-5 topics for Revision Workshop Tables. Some topics might include:

- Pacing: How do I spend enough time on each part of the screenplay while moving the plot forward?
- Getting to the Final Frame: How do I conclude my screenplay?
- Too Many Ideas: How do I pare down my ideas so they make sense in a 10 to 12 page script?
- The Opening: How do I better introduce my characters and/or their world?

Step 2: Ask students to sign up for the workshop table they would like to work at for the day. That way, when they get to the tables, they are already grouped with peers who would like to work on similar topics in their own screenplays. Offer students resources that will help them with their topics so they can work independently at their tables. Alternatively, instruct students to do a read-and-pass peer review at their tables where they pass their drafts to the right and ask for specific feedback from their peers on their revision topic under discussion.

Step 3: As the rest of the class works at the Revision Workshop Tables, pull students one-by-one to the conference table to talk with them about their drafts.

- Start the writing conference by asking the student to identify a specific area of their screenplay on which they would like your feedback. Take notes as the student shares their thoughts and needs with you.
- Take a few minutes to read the student's screenplay, or the portion of the draft on which they requested specific feedback.
- Share your feedback with the student. Ask questions to elicit the student's own ideas and responses and help them record next steps. Asking questions rather than simply telling students what to "fix" helps students maintain ownership of their writing.

Step 4: Repeat the Revision Workshop Table days as needed so that you have time to meet with students individually.

Staging Table Reads

One of the first steps in production for a film is to schedule a table read where the actors sit around a table and read the screenplay aloud. Completing a table read can be helpful for students to identify lines that might be awkward or confusing.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify areas of the drafts that might need revision at the sentence level.

Step 1: Ask students to bring 3-4 copies of their screenplays to class. Next, put students in groups of 4-5. Alternatively, if students use computers or tablets and have been using WriterDuet, help them share their drafts with each other digitally so that each student has a copy of each play on their device. Explain to them that they will be assigning roles and reading their screenplays aloud in their small groups to help the writers identify lines that might be awkwardly written or confusing at the sentence level.

Step 2: Ask students to choose a screenplay in their group to read first. Students should divide the character roles amongst the group members (ideally, the writers should not read a role so they can listen and take notes). Ask students to begin reading the first play. At the end of ten minutes or so, ask students to take 2-3 minutes to help identify which lines might need to be revised. Students might ask themselves: were there any lines that readers stumbled over? Did everyone understand the script's plot?

Step 3: Repeat the read-aloud process until all of the plays in the small groups have been read. Walk around the room to listen and assist students through the activity.

PUBLISHING & REFLECTION

Preparing the Final Draft

Use the following activity suggestions to help your students prepare their final drafts for submission and assessment.

Lesson Objectives:

- Prepare your screenplay for submission to your teacher and the Project Constellation competition.
- Identify your play's theme, message, or main idea by giving your play a title.
- Understand and execute conventions of formatting a screenplay.

Activity 1: Giving Your Film a Title
Give students time in class to make sure they have chosen a compelling title for their film. Allow them to use this "Giving Your Play a Title" handout to learn more about the different types of titles and brainstorm titles of their own. Although the handout is for a play, the principles are similar for a screenplay.

Activity 2: Review Formatting
Help students make sure their screenplays have been formatted appropriately before submitting by revisiting the tips at the bottom of this article, "Screenplay Format Demystified: "How to Format a Screenplay."

Activity 3: Crafting the One-Page Vision Statement
Now that students have completed their screenplays, ask them to complete a one-page vision statement that explains how they envision their screenplay coming to life on film. Here are some questions they might consider answering:

- What kinds of locations would be needed to film your screenplay?
- What is the film's overarching theme?
- Do you have any other aspects in mind as the screenwriter?

MiniPlays Celebrations & Reflections

It can be easy to overlook submission and assessment as part of the writing process; however, modeling these stages as such can help students feel more invested in their final product. Feel free to use the following activities as resources to wrap up the screenwriting process for your class.

Lesson Objectives:

- Celebrate and take ownership of your role as a screenwriter.
- Practice metacognition by reflecting on the screenwriting process.

Activity 1: Publish Your Class's Screenplays
Compile the final drafts of your students' screenplays in a printed "book" to keep on display in the classroom or in a digital portfolio housed on your school's learning management system. Consider sharing the published screenplays with parents and administrators.

Activity 2: Organize a Class-Led Screenplay Festival
Put on a screenplay festival by asking students to cast and direct their own staged readings of their screenplays in class. Roles can be cast from other members of the class and a few performances can take place on a special day of the week, like every Friday afternoon.

Activity 3: Writer Reflection Journals
Ask students to reflect on the writing process by completing a journal entry that answers the following questions:

- What did you like most about the screenwriting process? What did you find to be the most challenging?
- How do you feel this project changed your thoughts about writing?

Activity 4: Revisit the KWL Chart
If you completed the first two columns of a KWL chart as a prewriting activity, revisit the chart(s) as a class and fill out the "Learned" column by asking students what they learned throughout the screenwriting process.

RUBRIC FOR ASSESSMENT

	Ideas & Creativity	Organization & Pacing	Style
5 - Exceptional. The writer exceeded expectations and could reach this level again without further instruction.	The writer crafted an interesting, original setting and plot line for a short film and supplied impressive detail and visual direction in order to develop believable characters and situations that show genuine insight into the theme. Visual directions enhance the overall portrayal of the story.	The writer uses the elements of plot (inciting incident, turning point, conclusion, etc.) and scene transitions to successfully guide the audience to believe the characters, story, and the overarching theme. Dialogue and pacing is seamless, logical, and interesting.	The writer controls a variety of sentence types and impressive word choice throughout the screenplay to maintain consistent and appropriate character voices. There are no significant errors in grammar or conventions.
4 - Effective. The writer met expectations with some issues that could be easily corrected with some further practice.	The writer crafted an interesting setting and plot line for a short film and supplied effective details and visual direction in order to develop characters and situations that show complete understanding of the theme. Visual directions add to the overall portrayal of the story.	The writer uses the elements of plot (inciting incident, turning point, conclusion, etc.) and scene transitions to guide the reader audience through the plotline and overarching theme. Dialogue and pacing is clear and interesting.	The writer controls sentence structure and word choice throughout the screenplay to maintain appropriate character voices. There are some errors in grammar or conventions that could be easily corrected.
3 - Developed. The writer worked to meet expectations and had some success but would benefit from additional time or support.	The writer crafted an appropriate setting and plot line for a short film and supplied details with some visual direction in order to develop characters and situations that show understanding of the theme or narrative point.	The writer uses the elements of plot (inciting incident, turning point, conclusion, etc.) and scene transitions. Dialogue is appropriate and all elements support a theme. However, the pacing may be choppy or formulaic.	The writer controls sentence structure and word choice, but the overall effect may be choppy or lack variety in places. Conventions and grammar are usually correct but there are several noticeable errors.

2 - Emerging. The writer demonstrated awareness of expectations but requires additional time or support in order to succeed.	The writer crafted a setting and plot line for a short film and included details that develop characters and situations; however, the screenplay may lack focus, visual interest, or fail to show understanding of the theme.	The writer includes the elements of plot (inciting incident, turning point, conclusion, etc.). However, the structure or pacing of the play may make it difficult to follow the plotline or grasp the theme.	The writer's language use is functional but may not have variety. Word choice and sentence fluency may be repetitive. There are consistent errors in conventions or grammar.	
1 - Undeveloped. The writer did not demonstrate awareness of expectations and requires either additional support or additional effort in order to succeed.	The writer may have selected a setting or plot line outside of the assignment expectations, failed to supply detail or show critical gaps in understanding of the theme.	The writer did not include one or more critical organizational elements of a screenplay: beginning, inciting incident, rising action, turning point, falling action, or conclusion. Overall, organization and pacing makes it difficult or impossible to follow the plotline.	The writer's sentences may ramble and word choice is inappropriate for the project's expected voice. Many errors in grammar and conventions make the screenplay difficult to read.	
Presentation	**5-** The draft is formatted appropriately for a screenplay with a title, list of characters and descriptions, setting/scene descriptions, dialogue with the characters' names in all caps, etc.	**4-** The draft is formatted mostly appropriately for a screenplay with a title, list of characters and descriptions, setting/scene descriptions, dialogue with the characters' names in all caps, etc.	**3-** The draft is formatted for a screenplay, but may not have a title, list of characters and descriptions, setting/scene descriptions, dialogue with the character's name in all caps, etc.	**2-** The draft has some dialogue formatting but is missing the main presentation elements required for a screenplay.	**1-** The draft does not follow appropriate formatting for a screenplay.

Grade Computation

Ideas x 2: Organization x 1.5: Style x 1: Presentation x 0.5: Final Score:	25: 100 24: 98 23: 95 22: 92 21: 90 20: 88 19: 86 18: 84 17: 82 16: 80 15: 78	14: 76 13: 74 12: 72 11: 70 10: 68 9: 66 8: 64 7: 62 6: 60 5: 58

SUBMITTING TO PROJECT CONSTELLATION

Teachers and students may submit Project Constellation screenplays to Constellation Stage & Screen for consideration through January 26, 2024.

Submissions for the 2023-2024 Project Constellation competition must:

- Include the student's name, age, school, teacher, grade level, and email or phone number on the first page
- Be 10 to 12 pages long
- Fit within the theme **Embracing Change**
- Require no more than four actors to play all roles

Students should submit these three items:

- A screenplay that is 10 to 12 pages long
- A one-page description of the vision for your movie (themes, locations, general ideas, etc.)
- A brief video introduction about you

Screenplays and supporting materials may be emailed to **nel@seeconstellation.org** at any time through January 26, 2024. Please submit either a .pdf or .docx (Microsoft Word) file.

Printed or handwritten screenplays may be sent by mail or dropped off in person by January 26, 2024 at the Waldron Arts Center. Please make in-person drop offs during box office hours: Wednesdays-Fridays between 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. (address below).

Constellation Stage & Screen
Waldron Arts Center
122 S. Walnut Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47404

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