



MINIPLAYS

2023-2024

A PLAYWRITING COMPETITION
for 4th - 6th graders

with a Comprehensive Unit Guide for Teachers

sponsored by

IU Credit Union

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ABOUT MINIPLAYS

Constellation Stage & Screen invites you to participate in the 2023-2024 MiniPlays Showcase, a play-writing competition open to 4th, 5th, and 6th graders in Bloomington and surrounding areas. Founded by Bloomington Playwrights Project in the 1980s, MiniPlays is a long-standing community tradition that offers area youth the chance to unlock their creativity by writing an original, 5- to 10-page play. This year's submissions invite students to write within the theme **Embracing Change**. Constellation staff will select several winning entries to be given a staged reading with professional actors on **April 15, 2024** at the Ted Jones Playhouse in Bloomington (please note this date has changed from April 8).

As the only local playwriting competition of its kind, MiniPlays presents a unique, real-world opportunity for elementary students to express their imaginations while also building key writing and literacy skills. Constellation is dedicated to partnering with teachers who are interested in using playwriting 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 playwriting process, from prewriting and drafting to revision and submission. Throughout the project, students will learn about play structure, theme, character development, understanding setting, and plot structure. These lessons align with Indiana Academic Standards to fit any elementary 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 playwriting workshops in area schools.

Submissions for the 2023-2024 MiniPlays Showcase must:

- Include the student's name, age, school, teacher, grade level, and email or phone number on the first page
- Be 5 to 10 pages long
- 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 instructions on page 26)

For more information, support with this unit plan, or to schedule an in-class writing workshop at your school, 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 MiniPlays unit calendars and lesson plans have been grouped into the stages of the playwriting 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.

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

WEEK 1	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting
WEEK 2	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
	Drafting	Drafting	Revision	Revision	Publishing & Reflection

Three-Week Unit

WEEK 1	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting	Prewriting
WEEK 2	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
	Drafting	Drafting	Drafting	Drafting	Revision
WEEK 3	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
	Revision	Revision	Revision	Publishing & Reflection	Publishing & Reflection

Indiana Academic Standards: Writing, Reading, and Literacy Objectives

Grade 4: 4.W.1, 4.W.3.3, 4.W.4, 4.RL.2.3, 4.RL.4.1

- 4.W.1 - Write routinely over a variety of time frames and for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences; apply reading standards to support reflection and response to literature and nonfiction texts.
- 4.W.3.3 - Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that
 - Establish an introduction, with a context to allow the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience.
 - Organize events that unfold naturally, using meaningful paragraphing and transitional words and phrases.
 - Use dialogue and descriptive details to develop events and reveal characters' personalities, feelings, and responses to situations.
 - Employ vocabulary with sufficient sensory (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) details to give clear pictures of ideas and events.
 - Provide an ending that follows the narrated experiences or events.
- 4.W.4 - Apply the writing process to
 - Generate a draft by developing, selecting and organizing ideas relevant to topic, purpose, and genre; revise to improve writing, using appropriate reference materials (e.g., quality of ideas, organization, sentence fluency, word choice); edit writing for format and conventions (e.g., spelling, capitalization, usage, punctuation).
 - Use technology to interact and collaborate with others to publish legible documents
- 4.RL.2.3 - Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or play, drawing on specific details in the text, and how that impacts the plot.
- 4.RL.4.1 Describe how visual and multimedia presentations and representations can enhance the meaning of a text.
- 4.W.2.1 - Write legibly in print or cursive, forming letters and words that can be read by others.
- 4.W.6.1 - Demonstrate command of English grammar and usage.

Grade 5: 5.W.1, 5.W.3.3, 5.W.4, 5.RL.2.3, 5.RL.4.1

- 5.W.1 - Write routinely over a variety of time frames and for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences; apply reading standards to support reflection and response to literature and nonfiction texts.
- 5.W.3.3 - Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that –
 - Develop the exposition (e.g., describe the setting, establish the situation, introduce the narrator and/or characters).
 - Develop an event sequence (e.g., conflict, climax, resolution) that unfolds naturally, connecting ideas and events using transitions.
 - Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
 - Use precise and expressive vocabulary and figurative language for effect.
 - Provide an ending that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- 5.W.4 Apply the writing process to –
 - Generate a draft by developing, selecting and organizing ideas relevant to topic, purpose, and genre; revise to improve writing, using appropriate reference materials (e.g., quality of ideas, organization, sentence fluency, word choice); and edit writing for format and standard English conventions.
- 5.RL.2.3 Describe two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or play, drawing on specific details in the text, and how they impact the plot.
- 5.RL.4.1 Analyze how visual and multimedia presentations and representations can enhance the meaning of a text.

Grade 6: 6.W.1, 6.W.3.3, 6.W.4, 6.RL.4.1

- 6.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
- 6.W.3.3 - Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that –
 - Engage and orient the reader by developing an exposition (e.g., describe the setting, establish the situation, and introduce the narrator and/or characters).
 - Organize an event sequence (e.g., conflict, climax, resolution) that unfolds naturally and logically, using a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
 - Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
 - Provide an ending that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- 6.W.4 - Apply the writing process to –
 - Plan and develop; draft; revise using appropriate reference materials; rewrite; try a new approach; and edit to produce and strengthen writing that is clear and coherent, with some guidance and support from peers and adults.
- 6.RL.4.1 - Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, play, or poem with listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text with what they perceive when they listen or watch.
- 6.W.6.1e - Usage – Writing simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences; recognizing sentence fragments and run-ons.
- 6.W.6.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

MINIPLAYS ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Stories exist all around us—offering us a chance to explore new worlds and ideas, to glimpse what others think and feel, and to reflect on our own lives and friendships. Sometimes we read stories in books; other times we watch performers tell stories in movies or plays. Regardless, most stories begin in the same place: the mind of the writer.

In this unit project, you will take on the special role of the **playwright** (a person who writes plays) by crafting an original, 5- to 10-page MiniPlay. Plays are a unique form of storytelling, where the **plot**, or story, unfolds through **dialogue** and **action** between various **characters** on a **stage**. As a playwright, your job is to write out the dialogue and action of an original story you want to tell. We will work together as a class through each stage of the writing process to write our plays.

The exciting part? At the end of the unit, we will submit our plays to a real-life writing competition hosted by local arts organization Constellation Stage & Screen. Constellation is accepting submissions from students in Bloomington and surrounding areas and will select several winning plays to be given a staged reading by professional actors in spring 2023.

For this project, your play will need the following:

- A title
- A list of 3-4 characters and descriptions
- A description of the setting(s)
- Stage directions
- Dialogue grouped into scenes to be performed by 3-4 people
- An exposition (beginning), inciting event, rising action, conflict, turning point, falling action, and denouement (ending)
- A plot that fits within the theme **Embracing Change**
- 5 to 10 pages

Important Project Due Dates

- Prewriting:
- First Draft:
- Revised Draft:
- Draft for Publishing & Assessment:

Total Points:

PREWRITING LESSONS

Mentor Text Activity: What is a Script?

Many students will be familiar with theater and plays, but the format of a script might be new to young writers. After introducing the MiniPlays project to students, acclimate them to the attributes of a script for a play by analyzing a mentor text such as *Alice in Wonderland*.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify the attributes of a script for a play such as scene headings, setting descriptions, stage directions, etc.
- Understand the purpose of the attributes of a script for performance.

Step 1: As a warm up, ask students what they know about plays. 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 a script with students and ask them to note what they notice. Use the excerpts on the following pages from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and Alice Gerstenberg or use a play of your choice. Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) has digital copies of many plays in the public domain. Project the play 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:

- Dedication to the memory of Lewis Carroll
- Production history and original cast
- Title page
- List of setting, acts, and scenes
- Formatting (character names in all caps, stage directions in brackets and italics)
- Dialogue
- White space on the page

Step 3: End the lesson with a class discussion about why scripts for a play look different than other pieces of writing like books.

TO THE MEMORY OF LEWIS CARROLL

This dramatic rendering of *Alice in Wonderland*, by Alice Gerstenberg of Chicago, was produced by The Players Producing Company of Chicago (Aline Barnsdall and Arthur Bissell), at the Fine Arts Theater, Chicago, February 11, 1915. After a successful run it opened at the Booth Theater, New York, March 23, 1915.

The scenery and the costumes were designed by William Penhallow Henderson of Chicago.

The music was written by Eric De Lamar of Chicago.

The advertising posters and cards were designed by Jerome Blum of Chicago.

The illustrations of the characters of the play in this book were drawn by J. Allen St. John from photographs by Victor Georg of Chicago.

W. H. Gilmore staged the play with the following cast:

LEWIS CARROLL	Frank Stirling
ALICE	Vivian Tobin
RED QUEEN	Florence LeClercq
WHITE QUEEN	Mary Servoss
WHITE RABBIT	Donald Gallaher
HUMPTY DUMPTY	Alfred Donohoe
GRYPHON	Fred W. Permain

MOCK TURTLE	Geoffrey Stein
MAD HATTER	Geoffrey Stein
MARCH HARE	Fred W. Permain
DORMOUSE	J. Gunnis Davis
FROG FOOTMAN	Walter Kingsford
DUCHESS	Kenyon Bishop
CHESHIRE CAT	Alfred Donohoe
KING OF HEARTS	Frederick Annerly
QUEEN OF HEARTS	Winifred Hanley
KNAVE OF HEARTS	Foxhall Daingerfield
CATERPILLAR	Walter Kingsford
TWO OF SPADES	Rule Pyott
FIVE OF SPADES	France Bendtsen
SEVEN OF SPADES	John A. Rice

Alice in Wonderland

THE SCENES

ACT I

- Scene I—Alice's Home.
Scene II—The Room in the Looking Glass.
Scene III—The Hall with Doors.
Scene IV—The Sea Shore.

ACT II

- Scene—The March Hare's Garden.

ACT III

- Scene I—The Garden of Flowers.
Scene II—The Court of Hearts.
Scene III—Alice's Home.

Miss Gerstenberg's manuscript called for costumes after the illustrations of John Tenniel, and scenery of

the simple imaginative type, the “new art” in the theater.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Alice in Wonderland

ACT I

SCENE ONE

ALICE'S home. LEWIS CARROLL is discovered, playing chess. Golden-haired ALICE, in a little blue dress, a black kitten in her arms, stands watching him.

ALICE

That's a funny game, uncle. What did you do then?

CARROLL

A red pawn took a white pawn; this way. You see, Alice, the chessboard is divided into sixty-four squares, red and white, and the white army tries to win and the red army tries to win. It's like a battle!

ALICE

With soldiers?

CARROLL

Yes, here are the Kings and Queens they are fighting for. That's the Red Queen and here's the White Queen.

ALICE

How funny they look!

CARROLL

See the crowns on their heads, and look at their big feet.

ALICE

It's a foot apiece, that's what it is! Do they hump along like this?

CARROLL

Here! You're spoiling the game. I must keep them all in their right squares.

ALICE

I want to be a queen!

CARROLL

Here you are [*he points to a small white pawn*] here you are in your little stiff skirt!

ALICE

How do you do, Alice!

CARROLL

All the World's a Stage: Exploring Past MiniPlay Submissions

Help students gain confidence in their ability to write their own play by reading and analyzing scripts written by past MiniPlays competition participants.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify the attributes of a short play (plot structure, characters, theme, etc.).
- Analyze what makes these plays competition winners.

Step 1: Provide students with printed or digital copies of [past MiniPlays scripts](#). 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 and liked about each play. Example questions for discussion:

- Did they find themselves drawn to certain characters?
- How did the playwright (the writer of the play) build the setting?
- Did the play have a clear protagonist (main character) and antagonist (opposing character)?
- What was the play's conflict and how did it resolve?
- Did the play teach a lesson (theme)?

Step 4: Conclude the lesson by creating a KWL chart (Know, Wonder, Learned) as a class. Fill in the first two columns together by asking students what they now know about scripts and playwriting and what they still wonder about or need to know in order to write their own plays. 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 MiniPlays scripts.

Playwriting 101: How to Write a Play

Introduce students to the prewriting or idea-generating stage of the writing process by exploring a published playwright's experience and providing some concrete steps for getting started.

Lesson Objectives:

- Identify and understand the idea-generating stage of the writing process.
- Identify tips from real-world playwrights on how to write a play.
- Understand the basic attributes of coming up with an idea, a conflict, characters, setting, and dialogue.

Step 1: As a warm up, play this short [video interview](#) from PBS Learning Media with award-winning playwright Marsha Norman about her experience as a writer. Before students watch, ask them to listen for her tips for writing a play and what “unlocked the door” to new ideas for her.

Step 2: Record the tips for playwriting mentioned in the video on the board or ask students to write the tips themselves in small groups on large pieces of paper they can hang around the room for reference as they write their own plays. Students might notice these tips:

- You can't have a passive central character
- You can't have more than one central character
- The play must have the same central character all the way through
- Write about some sort of “human situation”
- The simpler the situation of the story the better
- The more complex the situation becomes, the harder it is to write a good play about it
- Go back and think about a time you were really scared and write about that

Step 3: Ask students to take Norman's advice and complete a free write about a time when they experienced an intense emotion. Students could write about a time they were scared, happy, sad, joyful, frustrated, angry, jealous, etc. Explain to students that a “free write” means that their writing does not have to follow a certain structure (and it does not have to be in play format!). Set a timer for 10 minutes and ask students to write without stopping in response to the prompt.

Step 4: Ask students to share about what they've written in small groups and offer feedback to each other by using this sentence starter: Based on your writing, I think you could write a play about...

Step 5: For homework or to conclude the lesson, ask students to read this short article called [“How to Write a Play.”](#) Ask students to highlight sentences that reveal what each part of a play does. For example, “Dialogue should move the story forward and reveal the characters' relationships to each other.”

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 MiniPlay. 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 play.
- 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 writer develops characters. As a warm up, play a clip from a play or 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.

Activity 2: Lines of Dialogue

Help students learn how dialogue connects to character and plot development by writing lines of dialogue from existing plays on strips of paper. 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 3: Generating Conflict with the Ticking Clock

Explain to students that the story or plotline of a play can’t move forward unless there is a conflict with urgency. A play’s urgency is the reason the problem needs to be resolved—and, for the purpose of a 5- to 10-page MiniPlay, resolved 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 MiniPlay must fit the theme **Embracing Change** by discussing the ways change can affect the lives of characters or the course of events. By the end of the activity, students will have generated at least three “ticking clocks” that they can turn into a full plot diagram.

Activity 4: The Plot Diagram

Once students have generated ideas for conflict and characters, ask them to push themselves toward the drafting stage of the writing process by completing a plot structure diagram. As a warm up, reacclimate students to the terms on the diagram with this [glossary](#) handout. Students can then make their own diagram or follow the one on this “[Play Structure](#)” handout. This handout helps students understand which stages of the plot should roughly correspond to pages in their written play.

DRAFTING LESSONS

I am a Playwright: Getting Words on the Page

Most students will have different ways of approaching the drafting stage of the writing process. At this point, some might feel ready to dive into writing dialogue and others might feel a bit unsure about how to turn their ideas into a draft of a real play to be read and performed. This lesson offers suggestions to help your student-playwrights feel confident to just start writing.

Lesson Objectives:

- Practice metacognition about the writing process.
- Begin turning ideas generated during prewriting into a draft of a play.

Step 1: As a warm up, ask students to do a pair-share about their ideas for their MiniPlays. Here are some questions students might consider answering:

- How do you feel about your ideas?
- Are you ready to begin drafting scene descriptions, character descriptions, dialogue, etc.?
- Would you like feedback or help with the ideas you generated during prewriting?

Step 2: Now that students have reflected on their ideas and readiness to begin writing, allow them to choose how they would like to begin: quietly writing by themselves, working in pairs (on their own drafts, but with a sounding board for feedback), or by easing their way into writing with a final brainstorming activity ("[This is a Play About](#)" handout). Ask students to group themselves in the classroom according to their choice.

Step 3: After giving students time to write, end the lesson with an exit slip that asks students to articulate their next step for drafting or topics relating to playwriting that they feel unsure about. Use their responses to craft mini lessons for the next drafting days (see next lesson for ideas).

Playwright 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. Young 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 MiniPlays.
- 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 playwriting 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 this year's MiniPlays Showcase 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 play's story that relate to Embracing Change.
- What is the audience supposed to learn from the play's story?
- 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 play.

Mini Lesson 3: Said is Dead, But How Did They Say It?

Encourage your students to write more engaging stage directions for their characters with a mini lesson on verbs and adverbs, or how the character says a certain line. Write the following adverbs and phrases on the board in columns or ask students in small groups to write them on a piece of paper: Normally, as a question, as an answer, happily, loudly, full of worry, angrily, bossily, sadly, quietly, and silently. Next, ask students to brainstorm verbs that fit the adverb. For example, students might write "begs" under "as a question" or "grunts" under "angrily." Encourage students to use some of these words as they write stage directions during today's drafting sessions.

Mini Lesson 4: 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 play 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 What Happens?: 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 the MiniPlays.

Activity 1: “And Then I See...”

While largely dialogue driven, plays have an important visual aspect, too. If students feel stuck writing dialogue for their MiniPlay, 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 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 scripts before moving on to more in-depth peer review.

Lesson Objectives:

- Gain initial feedback on drafts.
- Practice reading and offering feedback to peers.
- Identify main components of a play: inciting event, conflict, turning point, conclusion, etc.

Step 1: Ask students to bring a printed copy of their plays to class. Alternatively, if students use computers or tablets, ask students to open a copy of their drafts in a program such as Microsoft Word or Microsoft OneNote. Next, group students into tables of 3-4.

Step 2: Model peer review for students by projecting [an example MiniPlay](#) 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 descriptive language
- Highlight or underline the inciting event in yellow
- Highlight or underline the conflict in orange
- Highlight or underline the turning point in blue
- At the end of the draft, write two, one-sentence comments for your classmate that complete the following prompts:
 - The most engaging part of the play is when...
 - A question I have about the play is...

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 descriptive language and respond to the prompts 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 inciting event in yellow and respond to the prompts at the end of the draft. For round three, students should underline or highlight the conflict in orange and respond to the prompts at the end of the draft. For round four (if needed), students should underline or highlight the turning point 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 play in their revisions?

Pair-Share: In-Depth Peer Review

For more in-depth peer review, asking students to read each other's plays and complete a guided peer review sheet is an effective way to scaffold the feedback process.

Lesson Objectives:

- Offer feedback to peers on their MiniPlays.
- Identify main components of a play: inciting event, conflict, turning point, conclusion, etc.
- Think critically about how peers can improve their drafts.

Step 1: Ask students to bring a printed copy of their play to class. Alternatively, if students use computers or tablets, ask students to open a copy of their drafts in a program such as Microsoft Word or Microsoft OneNote. Partner students or ask them to group themselves into pairs. Give each student a copy of this "[Peer Review Sheet](#)" handout.

Step 2: Show students an example of how you would fill out the peer review sheet for a sample draft. Answer any questions students might have about the prompts.

Step 3: Give students time to read their partner's play and fill out the peer review sheet. At the end of the lesson, allow students to return the drafts and review sheets and read through their feedback. Encourage them to ask any questions they might have about their feedback.

Let's Do a Reading!: Staging Read Alouds

Because plays are ultimately written to be performed, reading scripts aloud 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 plays to class. Next, put students in groups of 4-5. Alternatively, if students use computers or tablets, 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 plays 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 play in their group to read first. Students should divide the 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 play'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.

Meeting One-on-One: Writing Conferences

Meeting one-on-one with students on their drafts is perhaps one of the most effective feedback tools. As your class schedule allows, pull students one-by-one as they work on various drafting and revision activities to conference with them on their plays. It can be helpful to set up a specific “writing conference” table somewhere in the classroom so you have a dedicated space to meet with students.

Lesson Objectives:

- Receive concrete feedback on MiniPlay drafts and come up with a plan for final revisions.

Step 1: Start the writing conference by asking the student to identify a specific area of their play on which they would like your feedback. Take notes as the student shares their thoughts and needs with you.

Step 2: Take a few minutes to read the student’s MiniPlay, or the portion of the play on which they requested specific feedback. Consider filling out this [rubric](#) handout as you read.

Step 3: Share your feedback with the student by going through the indicators on the rubric. Ask questions to elicit the student’s own ideas and responses and help them record next steps at the bottom of the rubric page in the “conference record” box. Asking questions rather than simply telling students what to “fix” helps students maintain ownership of their writing.

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

Activity 1: Giving Your Play a Title

Give students time in class to make sure they have chosen a compelling title for their MiniPlay. 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.

Activity 2: Mini Lesson on Formatting a Play

Help students make sure their plays have been formatted appropriately by reviewing the tips at the bottom of this article, ["How to Write a Play."](#)

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 playwriting process for your class.

Lesson Objectives:

- Celebrate and take ownership of your role as a playwright!
- Practice metacognition by reflecting on the playwriting process.

Activity 1: Publish Your Class's Plays

Compile the final drafts of your students' MiniPlays 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 plays with parents and administrators.

Activity 2: Organize a Class-Led MiniPlay Showcase

Put on a MiniPlay Showcase of your own by asking students to cast and direct their own staged readings of their plays 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 playwriting 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 playwriting 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 and supplied impressive detail in order to develop believable characters and situations that show genuine insight into the theme.	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 play 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 and supplied effective details in order to develop characters and situations that show complete understanding of the theme.	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 play 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 and supplied details 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 and included details that develop characters and situations; however, the script may lack focus 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 understand the theme.		The writer's language is readable, 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 play: 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 play difficult to read.	
Presentation	5- The draft is formatted appropriately for a play 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 play 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 play, 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 play.	1- The draft does not follow appropriate formatting for a play.		

Grade Computation

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

SUBMITTING TO THE MINIPLAYS COMPETITION

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

Submissions for the 2023-2024 MiniPlays Showcase must:

- Include the student's name, age, school, teacher, grade level, and email or phone number on the first page
- Be 5 to 10 pages long
- Fit within the theme **Embracing Change**
- Require no more than four actors to play all roles

MiniPlays 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 MiniPlays 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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<https://indiana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/d257f21f-a32e-4ee0-9225-d1319e287d16/playwriting-marsha-norman/>

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<https://indiana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/atl-theater-5/writing-a-play-drama-arts-toolkit/>