



# PLAYWRITING QUICK GUIDE

Unlock the wonder of playwriting with these simple activities:

## Activity: “Narrative Elements”

Part 1: (10 mins)

Discuss the following narrative elements with your students. Talk about stories they have read in class and point out how each element is used. Recognizing these elements in other works will help your students use them in their own writing.

- CHARACTERS (who)
- SETTING (when & where)
- PROBLEM (what)
- CONFLICT (events)
- CRISIS (high point)
- RESOLUTION (problem solved)

Part 2: (15 mins)

Give each student 5 minutes to think of an idea for his or her play and what they want to write.

Give them time to talk about their ideas in small groups or as a class. Encourage them to listen to each other and ask questions if any part of the story seems unclear. You can also let them draw pictures or write diagrams or outlines to focus their ideas.

## Activity: “Three Bags”

Part 1: (10 mins)

Find three brown lunch bags and label them Characters, Settings, and Problems. Pass out slips of colored paper to each student. Have them brain storm examples

for each category and write them on the corresponding slips of colored paper (*blue for Characters, Pink for Setting, etc.*) Characters can be people, animals, etc. Settings can be places or times. Problems should be stated in a short sentence or phrase. For example, they might write down Teacher, Monster, and Dog for the Character bag (they can also add adjectives such as AngryTeacher, HairyMonster, or LostDog.)

Part 2: (20 mins)

After the bags have been filled, ask each student to choose one slip from each bag and to outline a short story that incorporates each element. They will have to use their imagination to fit them all together (they may also add other characters, settings, and problems if they wish). Have students share their stories with the class.

## Activity: “Just Write!” (20 mins)

Give your students time to take their ideas from any of the above activities and use them to write their play. Make sure they write using dialogue and stage directions instead of paragraphs. Encourage them to submit their plays to the B Street Theatre!

The B Street Theatre School Tour performs the winning plays for over 60,000 Northern California students in over 100 schools March through June every year!

[www.bstreettheatre.org/playwriting-contest](http://www.bstreettheatre.org/playwriting-contest)

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