

ETA 2019 Webinar

Extension 2 – Scripts

Advice for students

- Do make sure that you write down (either in script form or by summarising) what happens in each scene. This will help you to develop the shape of your play.
- Don't make the scenes too short - this will make your play seem disjointed.
- Don't have two characters simply talking for too long. Unless you are an extremely talented playwright, lengthy pages of dialogue are extremely difficult to write.
- Do experiment with different *explorative strategies*. Remember - you want to create an exciting piece of theatre that holds the audience's attention.
- Do ensure that the audience knows what is happening by the end of the play.
- Do have scenes that contrast each other. Too many emotional scenes that follow in quick succession become boring and lose their impact.
- Do think carefully about the sequence of events and whether they will work in the final performance.
- Don't be afraid to reject a scene if it's not working in rehearsal/ read-through.
- Don't forget - successful editing is often the key to successful devised work.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/drama_wjec/devisedperformance/taskone10.shtml

<https://screencraft.org/2016/01/05/the-screenwriters-guide-to-formatting-television-scripts/>

<http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/television-script-format.html>

<http://www.scriptmag.com/features/meet-reader-narrative-structure-building-better-drama>

<https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scripts/screenplaytv.pdf>

Shaping of the Story (Adapted from HSC Extension 2 Script Writing by Timothy Daly)

Classic story shape

Generic Story Shape

1. The beginning
2. Disturbance
3. 1st major action/problem/dilemma begun
4. Complication occurs involving surprises and twists
5. Reversal
6. New action/new decision/new reactions (change of direction)
7. Turning point (for good or ill)
8. Narrative climax
9. Emotional climax, climax of meaning
10. Ending

Elements can be fluid

1. Beginning – introduce a world and the humans who populate it

Eg a backyard in suburbia, a city, a family grouping for some social ritual (Christmas etc). As this is in the theatre space it is more unreal, more concentrated and allegorical

Could be something audience has never seen before – an exotic place, someone who is ‘not one of us’, a country that never existed.

Try not to be too ordinary.

Also need the set of relationship, power systems (who is in charge), what the atmosphere, emotions, tensions, beliefs and values of the characters who inhabit this world.

Disturbances

List of useful disturbances :

- A new world is visited often unwillingly (A Comedy of Errors/The Tempest)
- A relationship that seemed reasonably ordinary turns out to be odd, even dangerous (Ionesco’s The Lesson)
- A visitor from the past returns (Ibsen – A Doll’s House)
- A newcomer arrives in town
- A relationship is in trouble or appears very unstable (Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf)
- A political threat must be dealt with
- A ghost has been seen (Hamlet)
-

First major action/problem/dilemma

Plot

- What a character does
- What a character wants to do
- What a character wants to happen
- What a character wants not to happen
- What a character fears will happen
- What a character is working to make happen) all these may
- What a character is working to avoid happening constitute the first
- What a character chooses to do major action of the
- What a character chooses not to do story
- What a character spends time planning

These are all quite active traits. Usually a central agent (hero, protagonist, central character) gets out of his chair, uses effort and makes things happen.

COMPLICATIONS OCCUR

- An action may be difficult to carry out
- An action may have to be delayed

Change of Direction

THERE MUST BE A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

- Can be large or small-
change mind/fortunes
change/morality
change/relationships
change
- Change of direction means that the plot has developed

Surprises and Twists

Every major character needs to have a surprise built into his/her particular journey- it can be **information**/a discovery about him/herself/something learned about others

It can be one of **deduction**- killer is best friend

Surprise happens to a character- controlled by others/events/things outside character's control – can **destabilise the character**

Twist – know there's a killer but turns out to be your lover that's a twist

Turning point, reversal and the emotional climax

In a play there are usually several major turning points and lots of minor ones.

'the climax of every scene is a turning-point so that the climax of a scene always results in the reversal of whatever was being striven for or fought for during that scene.' If 2 characters A and B are fighting over something and A is quite dominant, then the climax is the moment where B wins.

A good scene climax often reverses the whole momentum of a scene.

Narrative climax and catastrophe

The narrative climax is that scene or moment in the play when the forces which have been in conflict for most of the play have their decisive moment. After this moment, one of them has lost and that's the end of the story.

Climax usually involves , catastrophe. Catastrophe is that moment when the worst consequences, whether for the central character or antagonists.

Catastrophe almost always involves destruction eg physical elimination of the hero or villain , removal of someone. It always involves the death of someone or something. It can be death of hopes, illusions etc.

Emotional resolution and the climax of meaning

The action filled climax is often followed by two other climaxes .

Emotional – resolve where the major relationships of the story are and 'climax of meaning'- has all this effort served any purpose eg John Proctor in "the Crucible" has his honour.

Ending

The ending is usually a confirmation of the 3 climaxes.

SCRIPT WRITING

<http://www-formal.stanford.edu/leora/strev.pdf>

<https://www.screentakes.com/an-evolutionary-study-of-the-three-act-structure-model-in-drama/>

<https://www.writersstore.com/plot-reversals-shown-in-scene/>

http://homepage.smc.edu/adair-lynch_terrin/ta%205/elements.htm

<http://www.thestickingplace.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Lawson-Theory-and-Technique-of-Playwriting-and-Screenwriting-book.pdf>

<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/stage-management/glossary-directing/>

<http://www.screenwritingtricks.com/2014/05/act-climaxes-turning-points-plot-points.html>

<https://leeallenhoward.com/2011/07/04/scene-structure-understanding-turning-points/>

FILM SCRIPT Ten Basic stylistic aspects/techniques

1. One image per scene

Eg Int. Jack's Bedroom. Day

A bright-red, round, metal ALARM CLOCK rings on a bedside table. A HAND reaches blindly for it- but only succeeds in knocking the clock off the table.

Scene Thread Technique

2. The action of one scene follows naturally into the next

3 'Go fast' Plotting – and then jump forward

Jump ahead in the plotting. Think of the next plot point and go one or two points beyond that.

Eg leap from accident to funeral

4 Juxtapose locations and characters .A new location brings new plot/new characters

5. Use Multi-plotting

6. Juxtapose day/night timeframes

7 The power of voice-over

Useful when you want to tell the story from someone's unique pov. Also useful for getting the audience to align with the narrator/character

8. Imagistic Screen Directions

Create a very vivid, rich image

- Write in colour
- Build movement into the image
- Bring nature into it
- Write for the senses

9. Wild imagination. Do not let reality get in the way of a good story

10 Types of film stories

- a) Where the action is concentrated on a single character
- b) Where the action is concentrated around a single relationship
- c) Where the action is concentrated on a CENTRAL GROUP