Playwriting as Simplification

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Before We Get Started

Remember to register your attendance and complete session evaluations.

Session numbers are in your program.

Attendance

Online Handouts

Session Evaluations

So, you want to write a play…

- Plot
- Subplots
- Characters
- Settings
- Themes
- Structure

- Music
- Research
- Title
- Formatting
- Actually writing…
- Is it even any good?

TOO COMPLICATED!

Let's Simplify

- First, we're going to start small.
  - Less than 10-pages.
- 2-3 characters.
- 1 setting.

- Learn the rules, then learn to break them.

- Everything we want for a shorter play will ultimately apply to longer plays as well.

Objective/Conflict Statements

▶ Pick a character.

▶ What do they want?

▶ What's stopping them from getting what they want?

▶ Write it like this: <u>Character</u> wants <u>Objective</u> but <u>Obstacle</u>.

Objective/Conflict Statements

▶ Make sure what the character wants is actionable.

▶ For example, they can't want to "do nothing", they can't want to "ignore" someone, etc.

▶ Try simple objectives for now (I want to buy sleeping pills), learn how to branch out later (I want to defeat my childhood nightmares).

Examples

- Angelina wants to capture the new species of lizard she has just discovered, but she doesn't have a lizard-catching net.

- A Firefighter wants to quit her job, but she promised her daughter a trip to Disneyland.

- Nellie the Tortoise wants to climb the coconut tree, but turtles can't climb trees.

- Romeo wants to marry Juliet, but their families hate each other.

Let's Practice

- <u>Character</u> wants <u>Objective</u> but <u>Obstacle</u>.

- Be creative and have fun—anything goes!

- Try making 3 or 4.
  - Maybe a couple of these characters are in the same story…

Loglines

▶ Now, we're looking at the whole scene/play.

▶ Which character is the main character?

▶ Given their objective statement, what happens at the end of the story?

▶ Then, we write a **logline:**

▶ This is a story about <u>Character</u>, who wants <u>Objective</u>, and eventually <u>Outcome of Objective</u>.

Loglines

- Make sure the outcome is related to the main character's objective.
  - This is a story about <u>Dan the Martian</u>, who <u>wants to become an astronaut and take a spaceship to Earth</u>, and <u>eventually grows carrots in his garden.</u>

- Loglines give us an overall picture of the play: where we start, and where we end.

- Everything we write will eventually relate back to the logline.

Examples

- This is a story about <u>Angelina</u>, who wants <u>to capture the new species of lizard she has just discovered</u>, and eventually <u>succeeds, but not before breaking her leg.</u>

- This is a story about <u>a Firefighter</u>, who wants <u>to quit her job</u>, and eventually <u>keeps her job and gets promoted</u>.

- This is a story about <u>Nellie the Tortoise</u>, who wants <u>to climb the coconut tree</u>, and eventually <u>chops the coconut tree down.</u>

- This is a story about <u>Romeo</u>, who wants <u>to marry Juliet</u>, and eventually <u>kills himself because he thinks Juliet is dead</u>.

Let's Practice

▶ This is a story about <u>Character</u>, who wants <u>Objective</u>, and eventually <u>Outcome of Objective</u>.

▶ Be creative and have fun—anything goes!

▶ Try making 2 or 3.

  ▶ Maybe try making two different ones for two characters in the same story…

Another Way to Practice

▶ Let's take a look at a monologue/scene…

▶ What is Genius's objective/conflict statement?

▶ What is the scene's logline?

You Have Your Building Blocks!

▶ Create an objective/conflict statement per character, per scene.

▶ Choose a setting for each scene that makes it possible for at least one character to achieve their objective (even if they will fail).

▶ Every playwright has a different process.

   ▶ You can plan more, begin writing and then plan more later…

Extra Tips

▶ Think about the decisions that your character must make to achieve their objective. How will they solve the conflict?

▶ Audiences love it when a character has to make a decision!

▶ Try ending the play early or starting the play late.

▶ Cut the first and/or last section!

▶ Avoid trying to explain the plot and characters to the audience.

▶ Let the characters live the story.

Time to Write!

▶ Use the character statements and loglines you've already written, or write new ones.

▶ For a creative challenge, exchange character statements and loglines with someone else!

▶ Write a 1- or 2-page scene/short play.

Thank You Everyone!