

WRITING
THE STORIES OF
OUR NATION

37
plays

A PROJECT LED BY THE
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
AND OUR 12 PARTNER THEATRES
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Tips from writers, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



WRITE

A writing or discussion activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses research tasks

37 PLAYS

ABOUT 37 PLAYS

37 Plays is a new, nationwide playwriting project led by the RSC and their 12 theatre partners across the country. Its aim is to get the nation writing. The RSC is inviting children, young people and adults, including established, emerging and first-time writers, to write the comedies, tragedies, and untold histories of our time.

ABOUT THIS PACK

This second pack has been created to accompany the first, which concentrated on:

- **Finding a Story**
- writing **Character & Dialogue**
- exploring **Plot & Structure**

Both packs are designed to assist teachers in encouraging their students to explore playwriting, either for the first time or to further existing creative writing experience. It offers a three-week plan to help students take their next steps in completing the play they have started, from dealing with writer's block and reaching the finishing line to processing feedback and redrafting. There are additional extension activities to continue work beyond this three-week period, or you can pick and choose from the activities to develop individual aspects of playwriting.

Each section is packed full of tips and links to short films from existing playwrights, offering practical advice on where to start. These tips are backed up by activities to do both in the classroom, individually and in groups, or to take home and develop further in their own time. At the end of the three weeks students should be on their way to completing a first draft, have more familiarity, with the editing and redrafting process, and be in an excellent position to share a play of their own in a work-in-progress reading!

All the resources (extracts of plays etc) are at the end of the pack for ease of printing and using in class.

*** FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: Suitable activities and adaptations are highlighted in BLUE.**

WEEK 1.

FIRST DRAFT:

Writer's Block & Crossing the Finish Line

I'VE STARTED, SO HOW DO I FINISH?

The short answer is **KEEP GOING!**

There are many reasons why writers stop writing, you can get out of the habit, lack inspiration or lose sight of where you are. The important thing to remember is that you're not alone, all writers go through these things at some point, even quite regularly. It's not called 'WRITER'S BLOCK' for nothing!

Tips from our writers:

"Don't forget what you've got. Remember that initial joy and excitement of your idea."

"Get to the end before looking back. Give yourself a chance to complete the play!"

"Recognise the point where you can no longer do this by yourself."

In the last pack, we described playwriting as another form of storytelling. Like any book, screenplay or graphic novel, for example, a play has a beginning, a middle and an end. So, now you've made a **START** on your play, how do you keep going and reach that **FINISH LINE**?!

This first section (WEEK1) is designed to assist and inspire students to continue working on their story until they have completed a first draft, and is divided into 2 parts:

A) WRITER'S BLOCK: exploring the reasons we stop writing and how to tackle them.

B) CROSSING THE FINISH LINE: simply getting to that page where we can write 'The End' Or 'Curtain!'

A) WRITER'S BLOCK

“If you get stuck, get away from your desk. Take a walk, take a bath, go to sleep, make a pie, draw, listen to music, meditate, exercise; whatever you do, don't just stick there scowling at the problem. But don't make telephone calls or go to a party; if you do, other people's words will pour in where your lost words should be. Open a gap for them, create a space. Be patient.”

The late, great Hilary Mantel (author of *Wolf Hall* & *Bring Up the Bodies*, adapted for the RSC stage in 2014)

There are many reasons why a writer can suddenly find themselves stuck in the middle of their story. It can be a combination of things: from losing confidence in your subject matter or losing that first excitement of starting, to more specific problems such as a scene or character not turning out as they imagined.



Activity 1. **Headline News!**

The following writing and performance activity is designed to help students work together to rediscover the reasons they chose this story, what lies at the heart of it and why it matters! **[You will need: paper or notebooks & pens, examples of news articles from newspapers, online sources.]**

*** FOR YOUNGER WRITERS: choose a story or play which they have studied as a whole class.**

- Organise your students into pairs and hand out some examples of news articles for them to examine: newspaper front pages, Facebook news, twitter news sites. Give the pairs 3 minutes to study these and make notes about the things that grab their attention: *key words, order of information, images.*
- Discuss these findings as a whole group. *What do reporters and writers do to grab and keep our attention?*
- Now ask your pairs to choose ONE simple story they both know well from a fairy tale, book or film such as: *Pinocchio* or *My Neighbour Totoro*. Give them a few minutes to discuss: the beginning, middle and end of this story, who the main characters are and the most memorable bits.
- Challenge them to write down in ONE sentence what the story is about. Eg: *The Ugly Duckling* is about a lonely rejected duckling who grows up and finds their place in the world. / *The Lion King* is about a lion cub who runs away from death and betrayal but accepts his responsibilities and returns, grown up, to take back his homeland.
- Explain that they now have 5 minutes to prepare a live TV news report about the story as if they are live events, happening now. Ask the pairs to cast themselves as reporter and a key character or witness in the story.

- Remind them that they must introduce this story with a headline and tell us the key events and that their report must not last longer than 2 minutes!
- Invite the pairs to perform their interviews to the rest of the group as a live news story.
- When all the pairs have performed, discuss the results as a group. *When did the reporters and witnesses seem most engaged or excited by their story? Was this inspiring to see?*

WRITER'S BLOCK - OUR WRITERS' TIPS:

"Sit and write for twenty minutes. Write anything at all. Eg: a journal / free writing on a blank page. Call it YOUR WRITING TIME. It doesn't need to be about your play, it just keeps you in the habit."

"Turn your phone off!"

"What lies at the heart of your story? An injustice? A funny mistake? Unrequited love? Find images that represent this - from newspapers, from magazines, online - images that spur you on and keep them in sight to inspire you."

EXTENSION TO ACTIVITY 1:

This activity extension gives students a chance to use their OWN STORIES as source material for news reports, reminding them of what inspired them to start with and why it might excite and interest an audience.

- Give your students 5 minutes to each write down exactly why they chose their story for their play. They can write a paragraph or a series of statements that answer the following: *Where did the idea come from? Was it something they heard or read and if so, how were they affected by it? Was it something they made up? Why do they want others to experience it?*
- Now organise your students into pairs and explain that one is going to be the news reporter, desperate for a story and the other will share the story of their play as if they are real events that actually happened. Encourage your reporters to ask questions and take notes and give the pairs 3 minutes to share this story.
- When the time is up, explain that they now have 10 minutes to prepare this story as a live headline news on TV. Add that whoever's story this is will play the news reporter and the witness must fill in the details when interviewed from what they've learned about the story.
- Remind them that their report must not last longer than 2 minutes and to consider the following: *What headline will they give it? How will the events be introduced by the reporter to the public? How can they convince the audience that this story matters and they must listen? Will any specific events be highlighted?*
- Invite the pairs to perform their news report to the rest of the group and discuss the results, allowing the audience to ask the writer more questions about the story. Ask the audience what section of the news they would put this in? *Is it a political story? An environmental one? Local news? Social Media Interest? The funny, uplifting story at the end of the news? What details made them care about this story?*

- Now ask the writers pdf they felt the news report was a fair representation of their story? Was something important missed out? *If so, how did that make them feel? Which bits were they most excited to report? Did they agree with the audience about the things that stood out or mattered most? Does this match why YOU care about it? What things will they take away from this experience?*
- Ask the pairs to swap round and repeat this activity with their partner's story.

GET INSPIRED WITH OUR 37 PLAYS PODCAST!

It can be refreshing to hear other writers talk about their inspiration, their challenges and how they started and in some cases, **RESTARTED!** So here's the link to our 37 Plays Podcast where acclaimed writer, Mark Ravenhill, interviews established, emerging and first time writers such as: Chinonyerem Odimba, Winsome Pinnock, James Graham, Danusia Samal, Hannah Khalil and Lolita Chakrabarti...

<https://37plays.co.uk/resources>

Listen in and get inspired!



ACTIVITY 2: RELIGHT THE FIRE!

Writing can feel hard and at times, repetitive. This is why it's easy to lose sight of why we started, lose inspiration and just stop or get stuck. This writing activity in 3 parts is designed to encourage students to work together to find the heart of their plays so they can be sure of what stories they are telling and why and rekindle the passion that got them started.

a) This is the Scene Where...

This activity is designed to encourage students to work together to find the heart of their plays so they can be sure of what stories they are telling and why. **[You will need: pens & paper.]**

- Ask your students to read over the scenes they have so far and write down a heading for each, starting with the words: **This is the scene where...**
- Now ask them to get into pairs and take turns reading all these headings to their partner in order. When they've finished, invite them to ask their partners what kind of story the headings suggested. *What kind of story did they feel they were in? Where do they think this story is going?*
- Encourage the students to think about this response and if it matches the story they are telling. If it does, ask them to write a list of headings for the rest of their scenes until they reach the end of their story. *If not, can they rewrite their headings more accurately? What scenes are missing? What headings do they need to write to create the scenes and the story they need?*

b) Cast It!

“Always imagine you’re writing for actors who’ve also been offered a well paid Netflix series. Create an objective for their character that’s exciting to act with strong actions that are an invitation to play. Give them sleepless nights agonising which to choose.”

- Mark Ravenhill, playwright.

Many writers use the 'casting process' to excite them about writing their plays. This involves imagining which of their dream actors might play the characters they have written. The following collaborative writing activity uses the visualisation of casting their play to help bring your students' work 'off the page' and make it seem like a reality really worth finishing! **[You will need pens & paper.]**

- Discuss the word 'casting' with your students. Explain that this is usually a lengthy process where actors are asked to audition for roles in a production. Sometimes writers will have written a part with a specific actor in mind. Even Shakespeare wrote parts for famous and popular actors of his time, including tragic actor, Richard Burbage and comedian Will Kemp!

- Ask your students to write a list of no more than main characters that are in their play and give them 10 minutes to write a short descriptive paragraph of each of these character. Encourage them to consider the following:
 - Physicality: age / accent / specific mannerisms or is differently abled.
 - Behaviour: what your character wants / what motivates them.
 - Social status: at home, in the world and compared to the other characters.
 - Morality: their personality / values & beliefs / are they a goodie or a baddie?!
- Organise your students into groups of three and ask them to work together to think which actors might be a suitable fit for the roles in each other's plays. Add that there are no limits to this casting - this is their dream cast, think big! But don't forget to be realistic. Who would play the role BEST? Who would make this character really work in their play?
- When each student has their dream cast, move on to the activities below and incorporate this casting if they wish.

c) Play Posters.

This activity uses visualisation to excite students about their idea and encourages them to stay honest about their themes. This activity leads straight into the creative extension activity (one each for older and younger students). **[You will need: pens, big pieces of blank paper, drawing materials or tablets, if appropriate.]**

*** FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: This is a good activity to clarify their thinking when linked with the extension on page 7.**

- Discuss some movie or story 'taglines', one phrase that is used in publicity to sell the essence of a story. Eg: *Alien* = 'Jaws in Space.' / *Chicken Run* = 'Escape of die frying.' / *Monsters Inc.* = 'We scare because we care.'
- Invite students to share film or play posters that they really like or remember. *Do they have any such posters on their walls at home? Are there any that have made them want to see a film or play and if so, what was it about the poster that caught their attention?* *** FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: you could prepare a selection of these to share.**
- Organise your students into pairs and ask them to come up with taglines to describe their plays. *Does their play have a title? If not, could they think of a Working Title - a title that will do until they think of a better one? What could go on the poster to make people buy a ticket?*
- Now ask them to think of an image that would go with their tagline on their poster. *What fonts & colour schemes would they use to suggest the mood and tone of the play?*
- Remind your students to stay honest to the subject matter of their play. Sometimes movie trailers advertise a very different film to the one you see just to get bums on seats! It makes for an angry audience.

- Now move on to either of the extensions below, depending on the age of your students and facilities to hand.

EXTENSION for older students:

[you will need tablets with internet connection & Adobe Spark Post to play this film

<https://youtu.be/Xi0b2Vi2yV4>]

This is an Adobe Creative Activity from the RSC Learning Zone. It is designed to help students create their own play poster using Adobe Spark Post. They can do this by following the simple step-by-step screen shared instructions. An in-depth knowledge of Adobe Spark Post is not required.

The poster created in the video is for Romeo & Juliet but students are free to design their own play poster to inspire them about their material. It is designed for home learning or can be done in the classroom if you have the facilities.

- As a group, remind yourselves of the power of a good poster. *What makes them eye-catching? What do people put on posters to attract attention and make people buy a ticket? How different might a theatre poster be from, say, a music poster or film poster?*
- Ask your students to write a list of all the most important things about their play. *Eg: It is set locally. / It's set in a different country. / It's a comedy or tragedy. / It's about a famous person or newsworthy event. / There's a dog in it.*
- Now ask them to draw a circle around the 2 most important things on their list. *Eg: Family & dog. / Comedy in space. / Trojan War!*
- Show your students this video: <https://youtu.be/Xi0b2Vi2yV4>, in which RSC actress, Evelyn Miller, explores design ideas for Shakespeare play, *Romeo and Juliet*, by creating a movie poster for the play using Adobe Spark Post.
- Give your students time to design their own posters using this programme and following the steps Evelyn takes. Encourage them to try and incorporate the important things from their list.
- Invite them to share the results, either in a class showing, joint webpage or by printing them out for display if you have the facilities and discuss the results. *Which posters stand out and why? What kind of plays do they suggest? Which are people excited to see and why? Are there any that really 'speak' to them individually?*

*** EXTENSION for younger students (or students without access to the Adobe Tech):**

This extension activity is designed to get younger students focused on the core subject of their idea and excited about completing it! **[You will need: A4 blank paper, art materials, A3 blank paper if you have it.]**

- As a group, remind yourselves of the power of a good poster. *What makes them eye-catching? What do people put on posters to attract attention and make people buy a ticket? How different might a theatre poster be from, say, a music poster or film poster?*

- Ask your students to write a list of all the most important things about their play. Eg: *It is set locally. / It's set in a different country. / It's a comedy or tragedy. / It's about a famous person or newsworthy event. / There's a dog in it.*
- Now ask them to draw a circle around the 2 most important things on their list. Eg: *Family & dog. / Comedy in space. / Trojan War!*
- Provide your students with an A4 paper and drawing materials and explain that they have 10 minutes to design a poster for their play that includes or represents these most important things. Encourage them to think about: *What colours to use? / An important image or photo. / What font and wording to use. / What will attract people's attention. / Why your story is important!*
- If they have time, they can draw or paint a big version of their poster on the A3 paper. Remind them they don't have to be the best artist and provide a finished, perfect poster, these are only designs and ideas to inspire them and others about their play.
- Share these designs as a group and discuss the results. *Which posters stand out and why? What kind of plays do they suggest? Which are people excited to see and why? Are there any that really 'speak' to them individually?*

WRITING THE END!

Even Shakespeare wasn't always sure about his endings. His play *All's Well That Ends Well* contains several references to the fact that it might not!

The most important things about the end of your play is to reach it. You can sort it out, make it better or change it completely in a later draft but at least you've finished a play!

Tips from our writers:

"Take your idea for a walk. Sitting and staring at a page is not helpful. Movement activates the mind. I often come back with a plot point solved or a new ending!"

"If it's not working, change it! Mistakes help you find what your idea is."

"Don't get trapped into re-reading it too much, just keep going to the end, then read it!"

B) Reaching the Finish Line.

AN ending is often very different to THE ending. AN ending is in Draft 1. THE ending may not happen until much later...

Once your students have a few scene or even acts of their plays written, they may need help finishing their story. Despite still feeling their idea is important and wanting to finish it, plenty of writers lose their way with their material, get lost in research or just get stuck. The following activities are aimed at helping students achieve their goal and continue writing until they have AN ending!



ACTIVITY 3: FAMOUS ENDINGS.

This performance activity is an investigation into the endings of three very different plays and is designed to inspire students about the type of ending they have planned and what their options are.

[You will need: pens and paper, copies of the 3 edited scenes in the Appendix, 'Ending from Much Ado About Nothing' and 'Ending from King Lear', 'Ending from Myth'].

- Organise your students into 3 groups and hand each group ONE of the 3 scenes. Ask them to read the scene out loud within their groups, including the summary at the beginning. Add that they do not need to worry about the meaning of individual lines etc, they are just getting a 'feel' for the type ending it is.
- Ask them to discuss what kind of an ending they feel this is. *What experience is the writer intending to give their audience? What feelings or questions do they want the audience to leave the theatre with?*
- Explain that they now have 15 minutes to put together their own version of this scene to perform to the other groups. Remind them to bear in mind the things they discussed and the things they can do to help the writer give the audience this experience with this ending.
- Encourage them to use as many different methods as they like: tableaux or still images, mime, improvisation, narration, speaking stage directions, any movement - including the dance or death march, and that every member of the group must be used.
- Invite each group to perform their scene and let the audience discuss their experience. *Do they have any feedback about how the endings could have been EVEN MORE effective? How would they feel leaving a theatre after seeing a play that ended like this?*

STAY INSPIRED WITH MODEL BOXES!!

A model box is a scaled down version of the set for your play, made by the designer. It is useful for many reasons:

- So the technical team know how the set will fit inside the theatre.
- So the technical team can plan how to light your play.
- So the director and actors know how to plan movement.
- To inspire everybody with how amazing it is going to look!



ACTIVITY 4: MAKING A MODEL BOX!

This is a creative activity to help inspire your students to visualise their play as it would look as a set inside the theatre. This can be done over a series of sessions or continued at home if done as an individual project. **[You will need: paper, pens, art materials, cardboard, scissors, glue, sellotape, computer with internet access.]**

- Show your group the image of a 'model box' in the appendix of this pack. Discuss what is meant by a theatre 'set'. *Can they remember any sets from plays they have seen? What made them memorable? How does a set vary depending on what type of theatre the play is in? Eg: Theatre in the round such as Manchester Royal Exchange? A proscenium arch theatre such as Shakespeare's Globe? A traverse stage...?*
- Give out pens and paper to your students and ask them to spend 5 minutes making a list of all the locations in their play and what type of set these might need. *Do they have any outdoor scenes? Are any scenes set in a particular room of a house? Have you written any specific stage directions into a scene that might need a feature in the set? Eg: stairs, running water, windows that open.*
- Ask your students to choose ONE scene from their play and ask them to spend 5 minutes planning how the set will look for this scene. Encourage them to make drawings, diagrams or just write a list of things they need and where they need to go.
- Organise your students into pairs and give each pair 5 minutes to explain their plans to each other. Then ask them to choose ONE of these sets to make into a model box. (If you have time and resources, they can make one each).
- Next, ask them to spend a few minutes deciding HOW they might create a model of this set. Encourage them to consider: *What type of theatre space they will design for. Where the audience will be? Will they have a painted backdrop? Do they need furniture or props?*

- Ask them to start by creating the box shape. How many sides or walls will their box need? Remind them that they will need to be able to reach inside to paint and attach different pieces and features so to keep their box open or add a removable 'wall'. Remind them to mark out the stage space on the floor so they know which will be the backstage area and which bits the audience will see, and to add the auditorium so they know where their audience will sit!
- Encourage the pairs to work together as they create their set, with one person making furniture and another painting so they manage their time well. Remind them to list the characters who are in the scene and will be using this set and to create 'to scale' figures so they can place them where they need to be.
- When the model boxes are finished, have a showing so the pairs can explain to the group how their set will be used. *Invite the playwrights to feedback on how they feel seeing their sets come to life. Has it inspired them to finish their plays?*



ACTIVITY 5: YOUR AUDIENCE.

This writing activity is designed to help students think about why they are writing their story and who they are writing it for. By considering their audience and what journey they want them to go on can help focus their ideas better. **[You will need: pens and paper. A computer with internet access to play website link: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/much-ado-about-nothing/trailer> (although it is not essential to watch this is you don't have the facilities)].**

*** For Younger Writers: A good prep for this activity is to start with Activity 8: A Play in 10 Scenes. As your students perform each scene, ask them to 'feeling track' the audience, summarising the author's intended impact on them in each section using one word, eg, curious, intrigued, surprised etc. Then move on to their own scenes in the Activity below...**

- Watch this film trailer to the 2022 RSC's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (<https://www.rsc.org.uk/much-ado-about-nothing/trailer>) in which the audience are interviewed about the production they have just seen.
- Discuss, as a group, your students' own experiences of going to the theatre. *Can they remember seeing a production that made an impact on them and why? Did any play make them feel like they had more questions at the end and if so, was this a good or bad thing?*
- Ask them to share any strong endings to a play they've seen - this could be a film or book that they remember the ending of. Eg: a surprise twist, death of a main character, a wedding. Some plays such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* are open-ended and leave you with more questions or a mystery still to be solved. Why do they think that is?
- Give your students 10 minutes to write a paragraph about what journey their audience is going to go on during their play? Encourage them to think about:
 - The opening of the play - what impact their first scene will have.

- The ups and downs of the story - are there any shocking revelations? Big confrontations or jokes? What journey is this for your audience - tragic? Shocking? Surprising? A rollercoaster of laughs? Or is more of an unusual journey, one that doesn't follow rules?
- The VERY END of the play - what their audiences might expect and how you might surprise them. What will they be saying as they leave the theatre? Do you want them to leave with more questions than answers?
- Invite students to invent some audience quotes that people might say on their way out of the theatre after seeing their play. Encourage them to keep these close by as they work, even to stick them up on the desk or wall or in the classroom and to read them often as inspiration!

A WRITER'S PROCESS...

Here are some of our writers' tips to liven up a scene or a part of the play that needs a little help:

- A change of clothes can show that a character has made a big change. In the film *The Sound of Music*, Maria's journey is shown in her change of clothes from nun to bride to refugee.
- Have something happen every 10 lines. Even the smallest thing. You don't have to keep these things in your finished play but it's a good way to move things along!
- Change the location of your scene. What if you set an indoor scene outside? On a really hot day? At a football match?



ACTIVITY 6a: YOUR STORY IN 10 IMAGES.

This two part creative activity is designed to help students work together to visualise the whole of their play from start to finish and to fill any gaps, including the ending and take that final step by finishing their FIRST DRAFT! **[You will need: pencils, pens and big pieces of paper.]**

* A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers.

- Hand out a big piece of paper and some pens to each student and ask them to separate the page into 10 different boxes.
- Ask them to think of ONE simple fairytale they know well. Eg: *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *The Three Little Pigs* and to make a list of 10 important things that happen in that story from start to finish.
- If they find more than 10, ask them to choose the 10 most important things. If less, encourage them to think more about the action of the story, or the decisions that the characters make - there will be ten moments where something happens!

- Now ask them to draw an image in each box that represents these 10 major points. Explain that this does not have to be a detailed or complicated drawing, it can be a sketch of something simple, just as long as it represents that moment for them.
- When they have done this, hand out more paper and ask them to think of their own plays. Can they make a list of ten things that happen in their story from beginning to end? If they are still struggling to find that ending, encourage them to choose a few options.
- Now ask them to draw 10 boxes on a large piece of paper and make a drawing in each that represents these 10 things or moments. Tell them not to worry if they haven't written scenes for some of these moments, they can still draw an image to fill in the gap.
- If they are not happy with any of these boxes, allow them to rub the image out and start again, especially with box 10!
- Invite students to talk through their 10 images. *Are they happy with the feel of this story? Are there any gaps? Have they rethought the play's ending and maybe come up with a better one?*



ACTIVITY 6b: FILLING THE GAPS TO MAKE A 1ST DRAFT!

This continues directly on from the above activity. **[You will need: pens, paper.]**

- Ask your students to look at the scenes they have written compared to the drawings they have. Are there any gaps? Have they drawn images for scenes they have not written? *Eg: Brother & sister make up in box 10 and you haven't written box 9. Is box 9 a big row? Or a discovery of a letter or photo? In which case, what do they row about? Is there an ultimatum? What do they find out?*
- Encourage them to think about the previous activities they've already done to inspire their endings. What do they want their audiences to feel throughout these 10 images? How do they want them to feel after box 10? Remind them that they are in control of this story! *Maybe at this stage they change their ending and brother & sister don't make up, perhaps they move to different ends of the earth!* They can re-do any box at any time as long as the story works.
- Explain that they now have 20 minutes to write down what happens in the missing scenes next to the images they have. Encourage them to write in as much detail as they need, even lines of dialogue that might be helpful until they have a good idea of what needs to happen in this missing scene.
- Invite students to talk through their 10 boxes with the rest of the group and invite others to pitch ideas for anything they think might be missing. Encourage the students to jot this feedback and ideas next to the relevant box.
- Now they have identified the scenes they still need to write (this may or may not include the ending), ask them to write a short paragraph based on the box and the notes they've made,

describing what this scene is and what has to happen in order to get to the next scene or the ending you want.

- Give them some time to look over these paragraphs and add lines to them, then any stage directions they need, until they have a finished scene. Remind them that they can come back to these scenes at any time to finish them. That's what Weeks 2 & 3 are about!
- Once all their scenes, including the ending are written, explain that they have created a First Draft of their play. Congratulations! Now on to Draft 2...

Week 1. Summary:

At the end of this first week, students should have a number of tools to help them continue writing and to complete their story and will have made progress on the following:

- Rediscovering why they chose this story for their play.
- Visualising their play in a theatre and getting excited about it.
- Making important decisions about how the play will end.
- Identifying gaps and filling them so they have a First Draft of their play.

At this stage, they may like to continue experimenting with the scenes they need and the ending they'd prefer by repeating activities from Week 1 until they are happy with the shape of their play and have the main scenes written and at least a box version of the unwritten ones! This can be done in their own time so they are prepared for Week 2. Younger or less experienced writers who are struggling to finish a story could work together as a group with a teacher or TA or in mixed ability pairs to decide on the scenes they need and an ending they are happy with.

If any students have already finished the first draft of their play, encourage them to read over what they have and continue with their research in preparation for Week 2, seeking and taking feedback and the editing and redrafting process.

If any students are feeling daunted by these next steps, remind them that they are not alone. It is an enormous achievement to complete a first draft of a play, many writers do not get to this stage and give up long before. These next 2 weeks are about perfecting what they have and making it **EVEN BETTER**. Again, this 3 week resource is about exploring the world of playwriting - very few playwrights complete a play in three weeks! This is merely a starting point and they can take it as far as they wish to go.

WEEK 2.

Getting & Using FEEDBACK

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Writing can be a solitary process unless you are in a writing group or partnership or collaborating with the activities in this pack. But at some point, a writer may turn to others to get feedback for their work so they can see if they are on the right track.

Our writers say:

“There’s a time when you can no longer do this by yourself.”

“Is there a point at which a play needs to be heard aloud?”

Now your students have finished Draft One of their play, it's time for them to reflect on where they are and what they've got. It can be difficult at this stage for some writers to share their work with other people but this can often lead to some interesting and important realisations. Other people can be full of ideas - helpful and unhelpful but remember - it is still your play and you get to decide which feedback to listen to!

Feedback is an important part of a writer's process so Week 2 is divided into 2 sections: Seeking Feedback is all about how to share your work and Taking Feedback concentrates on what to do with the responses you get.

A) SEEKING FEEDBACK

From their work on Pack 1 and the previous section of this pack, you students will already have experience in sharing their work with others. Every activity where they worked with other people and helped each other come up with story ideas, characters and dialogue was a form of giving and seeking feedback! These following activities are further steps in this direction.



ACTIVITY 7: Constructive Criticism.

Most people dislike criticism. We don't like to hear negative things about ourselves and our work, it can make us feel all sorts of things from feeling defensive and protective of what we've created to never wanting to write again!

However, positive feedback alone can be misleading. If every person who gave you feedback was your best friend or your mum and told you it was WONDERFUL, you'd never learn where you went wrong or could improve.

BUT there is such a thing as **constructive criticism** - a way of giving feedback, both good and bad in a constructive or useful way that inspires the the writer to improve their work and doesn't make them give up!

The following activity in 2 parts is designed to help students learn how to give their feedback constructively, in a way to help their fellow writers.

a) FEEDBACK LINES.

[You will need: pens & printed copies of the list in the appendix of FEEDBACK LINES.]

*** A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers. Feedback Lines can be adapted as needed.**

- Discuss the words 'feedback' and 'criticism' with your group and ask them to think about any time when they were given either. Invite students to share any examples: *Have they ever had any unfair criticism? How did it feel? Have they had positive feedback that inspired them to do better? If so, can they remember how this was done? Was it said in a certain tone of voice? Worded in a specific way? Did the person choose a specific time to say it?*
- Discuss ways in which they could turn negative feedback into constructive criticism. Such as the The Praise Sandwich! Where you sandwich any negative feedback between two positives. Eg:
 - "You swam so well in that race, **you need to sort out your dive** but that was the best I've seen you so far!"
 - "It's a beautiful sandwich, **you can be braver with your choice of fillings** but your presentation is always professional!"
- Organise your students into groups of 3 and hand out the list of Feedback Lines and pens. Explain that they are going to divide the list into GOOD or BAD by writing this after each line. Give them 10 minutes to do this.
- Discuss as a group, how easy this was. Were some lines that didn't fit into either category or fitted into both and why?
- Now ask your groups to look at the lines in the BAD list and see if they can turn this criticism into positive feedback. Encourage them to think about tone of voice, can they expand on the line by changing or adding words to make it more positive and useful?
- Invite your groups to share their improved feedback and say how and why they made these alterations.
- Write out the list of new improved feedback and display it on the wall as inspiration to your writers!

b) STEP INTO MY OFFICE!

[You will need: pens & paper.]

- Organise your students into groups of 4 or 5 and explain that they are going to create a short scene based on a simple situation: Two of the group are going to be the bosses of a big firm and the others are going to be the employees who have just completed a big task. Give them ONE MINUTE to quickly decide what the firm does and what the task was.
- Ask all the employees to gather round and tell them that the task they performed was excellent and they really tried their best. Ask them to decide amongst themselves who was responsible for what aspect of the task and discuss how hard they worked and what it felt like to succeed.
- Whilst they do this, gather all the bosses round and tell them PRIVATELY that they are to decide amongst their groups if their employees did the task well or not. Add that whatever they choose, they do not want to sack or lose their employees, just to give this feedback.
- Give the bosses a couple of minutes to think of the things they are going to say and how they are going to say it. Remind them to keep all this private!
- Now set up a desk and chairs in the space as an office and invite one group to play this scene. Explain that they are going to play the scene as if it was real, improvising the meeting by FIRST: asking how the employees felt the task went and why, and SECOND: giving their feedback. Add that they must then finish the meeting by finding some resolution.
- Ask the bosses to sit on one side of the desk and invite the employees to Step Into the Office!
- When a few groups have improvised this scene, discuss the results. *How did it feel to get the feedback? How did it feel to have to give it? Did any of the bosses change how they delivered the feedback depending on what the employees said or reacted?*

Discussion:

Discuss the impact of positive and negative criticism. Many businesses spend a LOT of money on employee morale - how a person feels and is encouraged and respected has a huge impact on how they do their work. A playwright can get feedback from a lot of sources:

- Friends and family
- Agents and literary managers
- Directors and producers
- Their peers
- The audience!

How important do your students feel feedback is?

When do they feel a playwright might be ready to ask for feedback?

How important is it to give positive criticism?

It what ways might they do this themselves?

A WRITER'S PROCESS...

Here are some tips from famous names on giving & receiving feedback:

"We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve" - Bill Gates

I think it's very important to have a feedback loop, where you're constantly thinking about what you've done and how you could be doing it better." - Elon Musk

"In one dancing saloon I saw the only rational method of art criticism I have ever come across. Over the piano was printed a notice: 'Please do not shoot the pianist. He is doing his best.'" - Oscar Wilde



ACTIVITY 8: A PLAY IN 10 SCENES.

This writing and performance activity is designed to help students take the first steps in sharing their play by collaborating with others to create a mini-version of the whole thing! **[You will need: pens and paper, copies of the extract 'Matilda in 10 scenes in the appendix.]**

* A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers.

- Hand out copies of the extract and explain that this is a short version of the RSC's *Matilda the Musical*, divided into 10 plot points (similar to the 10 boxes they created in Week 1).
- Ask your students to read these scenes out loud as a group, a line each, including the narrator and discuss ways they could bring the scenes to life if they were to perform them right now, in order.
- Now ask your students to look at the ten boxes they completed in Week 1. Explain that they are going to turn each box into a mini-scene just like the *Matilda* scenes. (This may take 2 sessions to complete or be set for homework).
- Encourage them to start each scene with a line of narration, exactly like the *Matilda* scenes, which explains what the next step of the story is, then to choose 3 or 4 quotes from their play to help tell that part of the story.
- Once they have their completed 10 scenes, invite one student to volunteer their mini-play for performance. Remind them that at this stage, they are just sharing a short version of their play, not the whole thing.
- Organise your students into groups of 4 or 5 and divide the scenes between them so each group gets 2 (or maybe 3) scenes to work on.
- Give your students 15 minutes to think of a way to bring their mini-scenes to life, including all the lines and the narration, including every member of the group. Will they narrate together as a chorus? What if they have more roles than actors? Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible to perform their scene. *Eg: using mime, tableaux or frozen images, adding lines or improvising, playing the furniture!*

- When the time is up, invite your groups to perform their scenes in order 1-10. Encourage feedback from the audience: *What did they like about each scene? What stood out in particular? What kind of play do they think this is? What did the writer feel about seeing their mini-play? How did it feel to hear the feedback (even though some of it was about the performances!) What feedback do they think might help them to improve the long, real version of their play?*
- Depending on what time you have, repeat this activity with other volunteer's work.

EXTENSION:

- Give your writers some time following this activity to make notes of the things people said after seeing the mini version of their play and to underline the things they felt were important.
- Encourage them to take note of anything the audience didn't understand. Explain that the audience may have missed something obvious but it could be a sign they have noticed something you haven't explained or shown clearly enough. If so, give them time to look at those bits and see if they can add any dialogue or action to make it clearer.
- Encourage them to think about how some of their characters were performed. *Did they see anything that they might add to their characters? A particular characteristic or way of speaking? Were there any improvised lines they thought were good that they might steal?*
- Remind your students that Shakespeare stole many of his ideas from other sources! Plenty of writers use actors to give them ideas like this so if they see something they like, pinch it!

FEEDBACK TIPS:

"I'd rather people love me or hate me than have no opinion of me. Indifference is scary."

- Lady Gaga



ACTIVITY 9: Be Your OWN Critic!

“When you have a strong sense of what you want to achieve with a play, feedback can be useful. If you don’t have that sense, feedback will blow you off course.”

- Mark Ravenhill, playwright,

The following writing activity is designed to inspire students to judge their own work first. Are they being true to their original idea? **[You will need: pens & paper].**

- Give your students 10 minutes to write ONE paragraph describing the play they set out to write. The play they WANTED to write when they first thought of their story. This could be anything, *Eg: A play that will change how people think about the environment... / A play about me and my family... / A play about a gang of murderers who get things wrong...*
- Now ask them to read what they have written. (At this stage, you may wish to organise them into small groups and have other people read their plays to them. Remind them that the important thing about this exercise is to listen to what they have created as if they are the audience hearing it for the first time.)
- When they have read or heard their play, ask them to write another paragraph describing the play they actually HAVE written. *Eg: It's a love story about two environmentalists.... / It's a play about mothers and daughters.... / It's a play about guilt...*
- Invite your writers to share these two paragraphs by reading them out to the rest of the group. Discuss the differences in the two paragraphs as a group. *What are the main differences in the two observations? Has the focus changed and become more specific? Or more personal, perhaps about one person more than a whole subject? Has the focus of the play become bigger and more global?*
- Allow your writer to make notes on this feedback and decide if they are happy with the direction their play is going in. If not, discuss as a group what they might change in order to make Paragraph 2 more like Paragraph 1?

Extension Discussion:

It can be very emotional to hear your play for the first time and it may help to discuss the following as a group:

- How does it feel to hear your words spoken out loud by someone else? What can we do to protect the writer in these situations? What can we do as writers to prepare ourselves for this?
- If a writer hears something that is very different to what they mean or intended, how does this feel? Is this the responsibility of the actors or the writer?

- Can a reading make a writer change your mind about what they've written? And if so, is this necessarily a bad thing? Can actors suggest better scenes?! How can a writer gain confidence from a reading of their work?
- Some writers might like their reading recorded so they can listen back to it in private. This is possible for them to do at home, even by themselves or in small groups if they feel too daunted by the whole class taking part.

FEEDBACK - SOME TIPS FROM OUR WRITERS:

"It's alright for the 1st draft to be rubbish. The 1st draft is for you, the 7th is for the audience."

"Feedback is only an opinion. Opinions can be wrong!"

"Have your critics written a play? No? Then what do they know?!"

"Listen to your audience. After all, that's who it's for."

B) TAKING FEEDBACK

Now your students have started to learn what feedback is and how it feels to get it, it's time to explore what it feedback means and when it matters!




ACTIVITY 10: First Responses.

This creative activity is designed to introduce students to feedback in a gradual and more abstract way by allowing them to share their work in their own way and see how it can prompt many different responses. **[You will need: pens and paper, art materials & copies of your writers' scenes.]**

*** A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers: some short scenes to share could be scanned and shared with the whole class for collective feedback.**

- Ask for volunteers to have their work read out for feedback. At this stage it doesn't have to be a whole play but one scene or a collection of scenes. Organise your students into groups large enough to read the scene(s) - with big casts, you can double up. Some plays may not have dialogue and you might just need one reader. Make sure the writers are in the group reading out their own work.
- Explain that each group is going to read the scenes(s) out loud and the rest of the group are going to sit around them and listen, then give their feedback.
- Make sure you have enough copies for the readers involved and give them 10 minutes to practise reading the scene(s) until they are familiar with them.

 After 10 minutes, create a reading space in one area of the room and invite one group to sit or stand in this space while the others sit and listen. Place some pieces of paper and art materials in another area of the room and explain that this is the feedback space where the audience will be allowed to draw or paint their feedback after they listen.

- Invite one group to share their reading. When they have finished, ask the audience to spend 10 minutes in the feedback space, drawing or sketching their response. Encourage them to use colour or add words to their drawings. Add that they don't have to draw anything specific, it can be a block of colour or a series of jagged lines - whatever they feel is their personal response to the work they have just heard.
- After each feedback session, display the feedback art in one area of the floor and continue with the other readings.
- When you have a number of areas, invite the writers to visit their feedback art and discuss the results as a group. *What are their first impressions of this response? It is unexpected? Do they have any questions about what they see? Is there anything useful they can take with them as they continue to work on their play?*

ACTIVITY 11: Mood Room.

'Learn to watch and listens to audiences at a reading or previews. When they lean forward, when they're confused, laugh, hold their breath. These are your real notes.'

- Mark Ravenhill, playwright.

The following activity is designed to help students investigate how the scenes of play are coming across and to feel confident about what 'emotional tone' their play is hitting by watching their audience's live response to their work. **[You will need: pens & paper, printed copies of your writers' scenes.]**

*** A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers: to avoid large groups crowding around the same labels, use short scenes in pairs with A reading and B listening and leading A to the appropriate tone label**

- Discuss the word 'tone' with your students. It is a term that many playwrights use to describe their scenes and their plays. Like music, writing has different tones - light and dark, sad and happy as well as much more complicated tones such as tense, eerie or satirical.
- As a group, write some 'tone' words on different pieces of paper. These may describe specific emotions such as: happy, sad, angry - or be more abstract such as: otherworldly, suspenseful or absurd.
- Choose up to 20 of these tone words and place them on the walls in different areas of the room. Try to create 'areas' of the room to make them easy to identify, for example create a happy corner where the words are related more to comedy.

- Ask one of your writers to volunteer a scene of their play to be read out loud. Cast the scene within the group and ask them to stand in the centre of the room. Remind them to have someone to read the stage directions as they are just as important as the dialogue.
- Explain that the rest of the group is now the audience and their job is to listen to the scene as it is read out and move to the area of the room they feel most suits how they feel as they listen. Add that they can move as often as they want and don't all have to move to the same place if they don't want to.
- Ensure that your writer is in a place to watch the audience as they move and has pen and paper to write down the result. Where do the audience go and at which lines or points in the scene do they move?!
- When the scenes has been read, discuss the results with the writer. *Were there any surprises? Did their audience move at unexpected times and to words they did not expect? If so, are they satisfied with this result or would they like to look at the scene again and make any changes to the characters and dialogue?*
- Repeat the exercise with a new volunteer and scene and discuss the results. Do some audiences move in opposite ways in some scenes? What can this tell us? Some writers love to create different reactions in their audiences! After all, when did your students last love a play someone else HATED?!

Extension:

- If you have more time, you can choose a number of key scenes or even a whole act to be read out loud in this way - even a whole play!
- Every so often, review the tone words and discuss them with the writer and the group. Are there any specific words they would like to change / add?
- If you have writers who would like to do this in their own time, suggest that they create their own 'mood room' at home and read their play out loud to themselves or in pairs or groups - moving to a different area of the room as they read. Don't forget to take notes or even to video the results so they can really see what line or action people move places on!



ACTIVITY 12: Feedback & Beyond.

The following performance activity, in 2 parts, is designed to help students understand where feedback is coming from and how to process it and, when necessary, to use it to inspire them to make their work better. **[You will need: pens, notes from Activity 2a, copies of volunteers' scenes].**

a) Draft 1

- As a group, discuss moments where your students have felt very strongly about a play or a performance they've seen. Have any of them ever given feedback on something like this in any form? *Eg: on line forums? Twitter or social media? In person? Is giving feedback in person different to doing so online and if so, why?*
- Remind yourselves of any moments where your students have received feedback in any form: *For a performance in acting, music, sport, work? When did they feel the feedback was deserved? When did they NOT feel this? How did they deal with this?*
- Invite a volunteer to have one of their scenes performed. Cast the scenes within the group and give the cast 7 minutes to read the scene amongst themselves and decide on some basic staging - *where are they going to sit / stand / enter? How will they deal with stage directions?*
- Meanwhile, in a different area of the room, ask your writer to tell the rest of the group (the audience) briefly what their play is about: *What inspired them? Where this scene happens in the story of the play? What is meant to happen in it?*
- When the group are ready to perform the scene, ask a volunteer (not the writer) to read out the introduction to the scene, the **'This is the Scene Where...'** and then play the scene.
- After the scene has had its rehearsed reading, invite the audience to say whether they felt the scene matched the introduction. If not, ask them why. *Were they promised something they did not get? Did something else distract them? Did the performance highlight something more important that the introduction missed out?*
- Organise your students into small groups and hand out copies of the scene to everyone. Explain that they have a few minutes to read the scene out loud within the group.
- Discuss as a whole group, why there might be a difference between the introduction, the scene itself and the performance. *Is it a lack of scenery and set? Were certain lines or stage directions missed or unclear? Are there any areas of the scene they might change or add to and why? Remind your writers to take notes throughout this process.*

b) Draft 2

- Organise your students into pairs and make sure everyone has a copy of the scene they just watched.
- Explain that they will now have 10 minutes to rewrite this scene so that it fits the writer's introduction. Encourage them to base this rewrite on the previous discussion and what they have learned and remind them that their task is to get the scene as close to what they think the writer intended.
- Invite TWO pairs to volunteer their rewritten scenes to be performed and organise your students into groups to cast and rehearse them. (With larger groups, you can choose more than two scenes). Explain that they will have 7 minutes to rehearse this new draft.
- Invite your groups to perform their new drafts to the rest of the group and the writer. When each group has performed, allow them some time to explain what changes they made and why.
- Invite your audience to give feedback on these new draft and of course, you writer: What do they think about these new interpretations? Have they suggested improvements? Which bits might they steal and why? Is this new scene nothing to do with that they intended?! If not, can they see where it came from and why it might have been written?
- Repeat this activity with scenes from other writers.

Week 2. Summary:

At the end of this second week, students should have a good idea of what feedback is and how it can be an important part of their writing process. In particular, they will have explored the following:

- The difference between negative feedback and constructive criticism
- How it feels to share their work with others.
- Learning what it is that they've written.
- Listening to their own voice and instincts.
- How feedback can lead to editing and redrafting.

These activities may hopefully have developed their plays further or taken them in a different direction and it is important at this stage that they feel free to do this - there is no right or wrong here. In preparation for Week 3, the editing and redrafting process, they can continue experimenting with the following in their own time:

- Repeating the extension to activity 8 to see if they choose different 10 moments or quotes.
- Look over the feedback they have received from any activities and make two lists: a list of feedback they don't agree with and a list that they are interested in and might explore further.
- Read their plays again and, if possible use other students in small groups to record their plays so they can listen to the readings in their own time. Then check their 2 lists and see if anything has changed.
- Revise Activity 18 'First Reading' in the first pack to check they have laid out their script in a clear way, with act and scene headings, character names and stage directions, so people can follow it.

A WRITER'S PROCESS...

EDITING & REDRAFTING - What's the Difference?

Editing = making changes to individual sentences or lines, including grammar, punctuation or word order, and small character details or description. These are changes you make that don't have a big impact on the whole play - they're about tidying up your writing and making sure it tells the story you want to tell.

Redrafting = bigger changes to characters or plot or the 'tone' of your play that might create further changes as they effect other things in your play. These might be changes to the order of events, or the introduction of new characters and subplots.

WEEK 3.

EDITING & REDRAFTING

With any creative art, there's a lot of tinkering and reworking to create a finished product. Very rarely do great pieces of work come out fully formed first time. Famous painters make many sketches before they paint their masterpiece and most playwrights have a drawer of discarded ideas and first drafts. Even after your students have completed their play, it will be interpreted by a whole creative team of designers, directors and actors - how many different productions of *Romeo and Juliet* have there been? And not one of them the same!

It can be exciting for your students to think that they are now writing a play that can have a future life and involve lots of other people. So it's time to put the extra work in and create the most accurate blueprint of their idea because after all, that's what a play is: a blueprint or careful guidelines for a live production.

- Every stage direction you write is a guideline to the actors to do something physical.
- The dialogue or speeches you write are guidelines to the actor to communicate in certain ways.
- All the scenes you write are guidelines to the director about the story you are telling.
- And of course, your entire play guides the audience towards a reaction on a certain subject or story.

So, let's look at ways of making their guidelines as clear and as effective possible...

A) EDITING

"I cut the first six pages of the draft of the play and the last page. The first six pages are more of a warm up and the last page is a victory lap/come down. With these cut you can see more clearly what the play is IMHO."

- Mark Ravenhill, playwright.

The following editing activities involve smaller changes your students might make to their work. Some writers like to do major redrafting work first (see 'A Writer's Process' above), writing is a combination of both so let's start small.



ACTIVITY 13: What's That Line Doing?

The best writers make sure every line of their play, including the stage directions, have a function and do a job. This is helpful way of thinking as it makes sure there is no flabby dialogue or pointless action.

This writing activity is designed to help students explore what job their lines of dialogue and action are doing in their play by studying how different writers use words wisely. **[You will need: pens and paper, copies of the extract 'Macbeth Act 1, Scene 1', and 'Extract 2 – Myth...' in the appendix.]**

*** For younger writers: let your students explore part of the extract and model the process using that extract to the whole class.**

Organise your students in a big circle and hand out copies of the Extract 1. Explain that this is the opening of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. Ask your students to read the scene, taking a line each, including all stage directions and scene headings - but NOT the lines in red.

- Discuss how Shakespeare has chosen to write these scenes. How has he written the start of both scenes in order to make an impact and attract his audience's attention?
- Now read the scene again but after every line, read the line in red that goes with it. Explain that these lines in red are to show how Shakespeare uses EVERY line of dialogue and his stage directions to do something, whether is to:
 - Tell the actors when they enter and exit.
 - Give us information about character or plot.
 - Set the tone or feel of a scene.
 - Make us excited about what's coming!
- Organise your students into pairs and hand out Extract 2, MYTH by Matt Hartley and Kirsty Housley. Explain that they will have 10 minutes to read this scene in their pairs and fill in the red lines with their own ideas of how the playwright is using each line and stage direction.
- Encourage them to think about any pauses or repetitions. At first look, it may seem like a line is not doing anything but even silences can speak volumes! Add that if they aren't sure, they can make it up based on how the words sound.
- Invite a couple of your pairs to share their results.

Extension:

[You will need: pens, 2 x copies of writers' scenes unless they are working from a computer.]

*** A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers.**

- In their pairs, give your students 10 minutes to work on ONE of their own scenes between them, reading each line and writing what that line does next to it. Encourage them to use each other for ideas and to help read out the lines.
- Ask your pairs: *Did they find more than one reason for some of their lines? If so, this is a an example of very useful language! Were there any lines or pauses that didn't seem to have a function?*
- Now invite your pairs to spend another 5 minutes on the lines that aren't doing anything and to make a decision: either to cut them or replace them with something that does a job. Remind them that sometimes, a pause can say more than a line! But a pause for no reason can be SNIPPED!
- When they have done this with one scene, ask them to swap so the other writer in the pair has a turn to work on their scene.

- Discuss your work as a group. *Have any students found that their scenes now start later than they did and end sooner? Explain that this is a common tip from writers: get into a scene as late as possible and exit as soon as you can. It cuts out a lot of baggage. This is EDITING!*



ACTIVITY 14: POLISHING DIALOGUE.

“Words! Mere words! How terrible they were! How clear, and vivid, and cruel! One could not escape from them. And yet what a subtle magic there was in them! They seemed to be able to give a plastic form to formless things, and to have a music of their own as sweet as that of viol or of lute. Mere words! Was there anything so real as words?”

- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Many writers think of words as living things, an interesting thought as plays are very different to a book. Books are meant to be read, plays are written to be spoken and performed. Take Shakespeare for example. It's not unusual to find his work difficult at first, even dull - most of us meet him for the first time in the classroom not in a theatre! Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed and he used a LOT of tricks to keep his audience interested - from rhyme and rhythm to strong words and imagery. Very few of his audience could read - they came to SEE and HEAR his plays.

So, how do we keep our dialogue ALIVE? Many writers talk about 'polishing dialogue' so it really shines or 'leaps off the page'. The following activity, in 3 parts, is designed to help students keep their dialogue fresh, believable and interesting - shiny if you will! **[You will need: pieces of blank paper.]**

a) WHO'S TALKING?

* A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers.

- Ask your writers to choose ONE page of a scene that they have written where one or more characters are talking.
- Without reading the scene, ask them to cover the margin of the page (with blank paper or a book) so that they can't see the character names at all.
- Give them a few minutes to read the page and see if they can tell who is talking just from the lines and not the character names?
- Invite your students to share their thoughts: *Could they tell who was speaking without the character names and if so, why? Do any of their characters have a particular way with words? Would it matter if they swapped the character names round?*
- Give them 5 more minutes to do this with all the pages of this scene. When they have done this, ask them to choose ONE character to 'polish'.
- Explain that they are going to re-write this character's lines so they can only talk in 5 -word sentences. Add that they can change these lines back again afterwards, this is just an experiment. Give them 10 minutes to do this.

- Now ask them to do the margin test again. Is it easier to spot who is talking now?!

Extension: this follows on directly from the above activity if you have extra time or could be set as home work.

- Challenge your students to try different things with different characters:
 - One person only says ONE word at a time?
 - A character takes AGES to make a point and goes all round the houses. This could be useful if the character is supposed to be dull or irritating!
 - What if someone never stopped for breath and you took away all the punctuation!
- Discuss the results as a group: has anyone kept their changes and altered or developed any of their characters in this way?

b) STRONG WORDS

Extension: this follows on directly from the above activity if you have extra time or could be set as home work. **[You will need copies of the speeches from Romeo and Juliet in the appendix, pens.]**

- Organise your students into a big circle and hand out copies of the two speeches. Taking the first ROMEO speech, ask them to say each LAST word of every line in turn. When this is done, ask them what they thinking the speech might be about: *Is it a positive speech? What might these words tell us about the character speaking them?*
- Explain that this speech is spoken by Romeo after he first sees Juliet. What might his last words say about how he feels? What impact might hearing these words have on an audience?
- Now ask them to do the same with the 2nd speech. Explain that this is spoken by Juliet when she is in a tomb, just before she takes a sleeping potion that she fears might kill her. *Do these last words suggest how she feels at this stage in the play? Why do they think Shakespeare chose these particular words?*
- Discuss the importance of powerful words, words that make us think of particular images when we hear them. Why might these sort of words be important in a play, inside a theatre?
- Invite your students to look at any speeches they have written for any of their characters or a short scene of dialogue between characters.
- Ask them to make a list of every last word in every line of the speech or of dialogue, just the last word. Invite them to take turns reading their lists out. *Do any words stand out from these lists and if so, why?*

- Now give your students 10 minutes to replace as many of these last words as they can with stronger words that mean the same thing but have more impact.
- Invite your students to swap their speeches and scenes with each other and read them out loud to the whole group. *Which words stood out and why? Which might the writers keep in the next draft of their play?*



ACTIVITY 15: SNIP SNIP!

This 2-part writing and performance activity is aimed at encouraging writers to be brave with their editing and seeing the difference in making bold editing choices at the start and end of their scenes. **[You will need: Copies of your writers' scenes, pencils, copies of the 'Example Scene Opening' in the appendix.]**

a) Enter Late, Leave Early!

As mentioned earlier, many writers follow the rule of starting a scene as late into the action and possible and leaving the scene as early as they can. This can be a useful way of cutting moments from the start and end of scenes that aren't needed and that slow the action down.

- Hand out copies of the Example Scene Opening (a & b) and ask for two volunteers to play John and Kris.
- Clear a space in the room and set the scene up: Deciding where the entrances are. Creating a sofa out of chairs etc. You can mime the umbrella if you can't find one!
- Ask your volunteer actors to perform the first version of the Scene Opening, making sure they follow all of the action and making sure you start by saying 'LIGHTS UP' so they know when to begin.
- As a group, discuss what this opening does: *What might the relationship be between the two people? What is the tone of the scene? Funny? Sinister? What might happen next?*
- Now ask your actors to act out the second version (b). Don't forget to say, "Lights Up" to start.
- Discuss the results of this second scene. *How different is it in tone? Have the relationships changed? If so how and why? What might happen next? What has been lost or gained from cutting 4 points of action? How might this help a writer edit the beginning or ending of a scene?*

b) Group Edit.

This activity allows students to try this editing tool on their own work and also includes prior work on giving and accepting feedback.

- Invite a volunteer who would like to work on ONE of their completed scenes and cast the character in these scenes from other members of the group (including someone to read stage directions). Hand out copies of the scenes and pencils to everyone.
- Organise your students into a circle, seated and ask the cast to read the scene out loud. Ask the rest of your students to make a notes in the script of what will be physically needed for the scene. Eg: set, props, entrances and exits.
- Now clear a space in the room to set this scene and invite your students to help 'dress it' with what it needs as best as possible using whatever's to hand: chairs, desks etc.
- Invite your cast to read through the scene again but this time, using the space with all the action. Remind them at this stage that it is not an acting exercise and this won't be a finished performance of the scene, they are just 'blocking' it: working out where they enter and exit and what the action is. Make sure you use your playwright to help!
- Once this has been done, go back to the beginning and, as a whole group, list the first 6 'things that happen' and what they do.
- When you have your list of what is happening and why, ask your group if any of the 6 events can be cut to strengthen or add to the drama of comedy of the scene.
- Invite your cast to act out this new improved scene and discuss the results. *Does anyone feel the scene has improved or, indeed, that something has been lost? Do the playwrights agree?*

EDITING & RE-DRAFTING - our writers' tips...

"Cutting is your friend! It can feel scary to delete a favourite line or speech or even a whole scene but once you know it doesn't belong the play is much stronger without it!"

"Remember to SAVE your drafts! Then you can always go back to a previous draft if you cut or change too much. Nothing is lost!"

"Keep reading your work out loud to yourself. You will start to feel when something is right or overwritten or just doesn't feel GENUINE."

B) RE-DRAFTING



ACTIVITY 16: MANGA STRIPS!

* A Suitable Activity for Younger Writers.

This creative activity is designed to help students identify any holes in their work by identifying any missing steps in the journeys of their characters. Using a Manga, cartoon or graphic novel format will help them see this journey visually and bring their character's story to life and off the page. **[You will need: pens, large blank paper.]**

- Give each student a large piece of paper and ask them to draw 6 big squares, like a Manga, cartoon or graphic novel strip. Explain that they are going to make a simple cartoon of the journey ONE of their characters makes in their play.
- Encourage them to choose a main character and to begin by writing down all the main things this character does and what happens to them in the play, in order.
- Now ask them to choose the 6 most important things from this list and to call them EVENTS.
- Invite them to draw a picture of each event in order in their squares. Add that they do not have to produce incredible finished works of art, they can be just sketches to help them 'see' this journey and make it come alive from the page.
- Organise your students into pairs and ask them to talk through their character's 6-part story with their partner in turn. Encourage the partners to ask questions about these events and the character's choices to get more information and detail.
- Using your partners positive feedback, decide if there are any events that seem less detailed than others. What are these events missing? More tension or drama? Humour? A plot twist?! Is there anything they can add to the drawing to help this event stand out more: *Adding lines of dialogue or strong words? Changing the location. Bringing another character into this moment?*
- Encourage them to alter their pictures to show this change. As they do so, what might they have to change in the other squares to make room for this change? Eg:
 - You change the location of one square to a public place, rather than a private one to increase the tension. Do you need to add another character (security guard, shopkeeper?) or change the dialogue? How does this change the next square? Do you bring the security guard into the play?!
 - Your character doesn't really take much action in one square so you decide to make them use much stronger words. How does this affect the next square? Do they fall out with someone as a result? How do they make up?
- Ask your students to look at the squares they have altered. Have the things they have added helped the rest of the events in the other squares? Have they made the story funnier or more dramatic?

- If the answer is YES, then encourage them to start adding these changes to the scenes themselves.
- If the answer is no, maybe they don't need this event at all and it is something they can cut completely from the play!

Extension:

- If you have time, invite students to draw a Manga strip for every scene of their play, dividing the scene into 6 squares and making sure something significant happens in each one.
- Encourage them to change / add things to every square that appears less developed or detailed than the others and to either keep these changes or CUT THE EVENT!
- Once they have done Manga Scenes, challenge them to do a Manga for their WHOLE play. Add that it will be a challenge to only have 6 squares but that this will really help them identify any weaker or underwritten parts of their story.



ACTIVITY 17a: CHARACTER STATEMENTS.

This 2-part writing activity builds the previous one and is designed to help students check what their character are doing in each scene and identify any repetition or plot holes! Again, it allows your students to work collaboratively and to give and receive positive feedback to inspire their redrafting. ***[You will need: copies of your writers' first 3 scenes to read out, either printed or on students' devices if appropriate.]***

- Ask your students to write CHARACTER STATEMENTS for the FIRST SCENE of their play. This statement must include 3 things: WHO their characters are. / What their characters are up to IN THAT SCENE. / What their characters WANT from this scene. Encourage them to write this in the first person as if they are their characters. Eg:

Scene 1, Gail's statement:

- **I am Gail, I am 17 and am obsessed with music but need more confidence. I live with my mum and 2 brothers who get way more attention than me.**
- **I am rehearsing for a very important singing competition that I believe I can win.**
- **I want to rehearse without anyone hearing and teasing me.**

Scene 1, Martha's statement:

- **I am Martha, I am 34 and a single working mum who lives with 3 teenagers.**
- **I have just come in from working one job and have 30 minutes to get dinner ready before I leave for the next job.**
- **I want my 3 kids to help out and be able to leave without any rows.**

- Encourage your writers to be as accurate with these statements as possible and if there is anything missing, to make a note of it or make something up for now!
- Organise your students into groups of 3 or 4 and ask one writer to volunteer their first scene to be read out by the rest of the group, including stage directions. (Explain that they can have people reading more than one part with larger casts).
- Make sure the cast have access to the CHARACTER STATEMENTS and explain that each character is to read out their statement before the scene is read.
- Encourage your writers to listen carefully to the reading and check that each of the things they wrote in the statements happens and is clear in the scene.
- After the statements and scene have been read, discuss with the rest of the group: *Did they feel the scene matched the statement? Was there anything missing or unclear? Can they think of any details that might help their writers fill in these gaps in this scene?*
- Then swap writers and let your groups repeat this exercise with their scenes.

17b: CHARACTER STATEMENTS REWRITES.

- After your writers have worked on their first scene in this way, encourage them to look at the notes they made and the feedback they got and give them some time to rewrite this scene, making all the changes they think are necessary.
- Give your writers a few minutes to list the things they might change from this feedback and next to it, list possible solutions. Eg:
 - o **Feedback:** A character did not really try to achieve the things they wanted. / **Solution:** Write ONE action and TWO lines of dialogue for your character in this scene that helps them try and get what they want.
 - o **Feedback:** The character sounded a bit too young for their age. / **Solution:** Spend some time studying people of the right age and noting down how they talk: using more or less words / using trendy sayings or outdated references. Then look at all the lines you've written for them in the scene and try and fit some of these things in.
 - o **Feedback:** The characters did not get what they wanted. This could have been more dramatic. / **Solution:** Look at how your character reacts in the scene, would it suit them to be more emotional? To react in actions rather than words? **OR:** Look at the following scenes - could the results of their actions in Scene 1 be more extreme later on in the play?
 - o **Feedback:** These 2 characters seemed very similar. / **Solution:** Cut one of your characters completely!
- Once a writer has rewritten their first scene, invite the original cast to read the scene again with statements first and compare the two versions: *What has changed? How have the rewrites affected the scene? How do the writers feel now about their rewrites? How might these changes affect their 2nd scene and so on...?*

Extension:

- Encourage your writers to complete statements for ALL of their scenes and read their scenes out loud to themselves, starting with the statements and then reading the scenes to double check their statements are working for ALL characters.
- Invite them to work in groups and use each other to do this if they can so they can make the most out of collaborations and feedback, especially after their rewrites.
- Invite writers to have their new rewritten scenes read out by their colleagues so they can hear them out loud.

Discussion:

- As a group, discuss how your students are feeling about rewrites at this stage. Has anyone had a breakthrough with their changes so far?
- Don't forget to tell them how much they are achieving. Rewrites is not easy and can feel very technical but this is an important part of the playwriting process and to get to this stage is AMAZING!

MORE WRITER'S TIPS (on redrafting):

Some famous writers have different ways to describe the rewriting process. Here are a few:

“Create a scene-by-scene chronology of what you've actually written, not what you think/believe/hope/wish you'd written.” - Sanjida Kay

“By the time I am nearing the end of a story, the first part will have been reread and altered and corrected at least 150 times. Good writing is essentially rewriting!” - Roald Dahl

“ It's like learning an instrument, you've got to be prepared for hitting wrong notes occasionally, or quite a lot. I wrote an awful lot before I wrote anything I was really happy with.” -JK Rowling



ACTIVITY 18: HIT LIST!

This writing activity is designed to help students improve their first draft by spotting possible mistakes that other writers make! **[You will need: marker pens, big sheets of paper.]**

- Place some big sheets of paper on the floor and ask your students to sit in a big circle. Invite a volunteer to use the marker pens to take notes on the paper.
- Ask you students to come up with a HIT LIST of examples of writing they don't like. Eg: Too many big boring speeches. / Uninteresting characters. / Unbelievable dialogue. / Predictable endings. Makes sure you volunteer writes these down clearly on the paper. (You may need more volunteers!)
- As each example is listed, encourage your students to dig down deeper was to WHY this is. Eg: *Boring speeches are repetitive, go on forever, use difficult or dull language. Ask you volunteers to include these reasons.*
- When you have a pretty good HIT LIST, take each piece of paper and brainstorm the problem, asking a volunteer to write solutions on separate paper. Eg:
 - Long Boring Speeches: A writer should cut any lines that repeat ones that have gone before. / Another character should interrupt them off sooner! / Choose more interesting, vibrant words! / Cut the speech and use a stage direction in instead!
- Put this HIT LIST with the solutions up on the wall as constant inspiration to your group. Invite your writers to spot any that they think they might be guilty of! Are there any solutions that might help them?
- Encourage your playwrights to take each problem on the HIT LIST one by one and check through their play to see if they can spot examples of these things in their work. If they can, ask them to highlight these sections or draw a red circle round them.
- Invite your playwrights to describe one HIT LIST problem they have identified to the rest of the group and which solution they are going to try.
- Organise your playwrights into pairs (if students have similar problems or solutions, they could work together) and give them 15 minutes to try out their solutions on one of their problems together and report back on their results.

Discussion:

- Discuss the above activity as a group. *Is it getting easier to accept feedback and spot things that need improving in their work? How easy is it to spot your own mistakes?*
- Has anyone made a positive change in their work? If so, invite them to share it with the rest of the group.
- Similarly, is anyone having particular difficulty making a change to their work? Can the whole group help by looking at the hit list and making suggestions?



ACTIVITY 19: FAST DRAFT

This writing activity is designed to help students make bold decisions about their rewrites and inject even more new life into what is fast becoming Draft 2!

- Ask your writers to choose ONE scene from their play that they feel might be a little long or overwritten or repetitive. If they don't have a scene like this, ask the to use any scene just to experiment with!
- Challenge them to rewrite this whole scene so no character speaks for more than 8 words before the next character interrupts.
- Add that if this makes them want to add any stage directions or action along the way, let them know they can do this.
- Invite a few writers to have their scenes read out in the group so they can hear this new scene for the first time.
- After they have heard the new draft, ask them if it did anything to the scene. *Was it funnier? More dramatic? Did it force the characters into any dramatic action? Will they keep or use any of these changes?*

Extension:

- Encourage your writers to do this with all the scenes in their play until they have a complete FAST DRAFT!
- If you have the time, invite one of your writers to have their complete FAST DRAFT read out by other members of the group.
- Discuss the results with your writer and audience: *Was the story clear? What stood out? What might the writer keep from this exercise?*



ACTIVITY 20: 2nd Draft Reading.

Now your students are well into the rewriting process, they may be feeling inspired to hear their 2nd draft out loud or see it staged in front of them.

There are many different types of play readings and these depend on what stage your writer is at and what the reading is for. Eg:

- A table read though - the play is read out by actors around a table in front of the writer (and contemporaries so the writer can hear the play out loud and get feedback). This is usually done with a first or second draft and can be recorded for the writer to watch back.
- A rehearsed reading - the actors have more time to read the play and rehearse scenes between them with the writer and director so they can perform the play, script-in-hand, in

front of an audience for feedback. This is usually done with a later draft and can also be recorded for the writer to watch back.

Anything more than this, with lines learned and lights, props and scenery is an actual show!!

This performance activity is based on how much time you have to devote to a full-length reading and how far your students have got with their writing.

The activity is suited to students who have completed 2nd draft and would like to volunteer to have it read out loud and receive feedback. It is also a chance for your students to practice the feedback element of the process, to check the layout of their plays on the page is written in a way that actors can understand, and inspire your other writers to complete their work by seeing a 2nd draft come to life!

- Discuss with the group what they understand by 'a second draft.' This is still early on in the writing process and some writers like to tinker away on their first drafts for a long time before they complete a 2nd, others write many drafts before settling on a FINAL DRAFT that is ready for the stage.
- Depending on that time you have and the size of your group, invite one or more of your writers to volunteer their 2nd draft for a table read (description above) and cast the play(s) within the group (including someone to read stage directions and doubling up any smaller roles).
- If you have the time, give the cast(s) a chance to read through the play with their writer to familiarise themselves with it. Encourage them at this stage to ask their writers questions, especially about their characters and the layout of the script.
- Invite the cast to read the scene out loud to the rest of the group. Discuss the experience with the writer: *How did it feel to work with a cast for the first time on this scene? What was it like to hear the words out loud? Do they know what they will do next to this scene? Will they be making any changes following the reading?*

A WRITER'S PROCESS...

So you've started redrafting. Now what? Some tips from our writers on keeping going:

"Take a break! Do something physical that's not like writing! Then come back to it with a fresh mind."

"Trust your instincts. If you feel strongly that certain feedback is wrong, maybe it's wrong."

"Speak your lines out loud, it's good to hear them. Words sound different to how they look on the page!"

This is YOUR process. If one method doesn't work for you, try something else. Just keep going!

Week 3. Summary:

At the end of this third week, students will have begun to see the benefits of feedback, understand the principals of editing and redrafting and started to explore the following:

- How to look for and respond to positive feedback.
- When their writing needs editing or redrafting.
- How to polish dialogue.
- Ways to visualise scenes.
- If their editing and redrafting works!

The most important things they are learning is that the writing process is continuous and does not need to be done alone, it can benefit hugely from collaboration. It may feel like a huge achievement for them to complete their first draft but when they start to see how rewrites can improve and strengthen their work, their sense of achievements will only increase and then they can move on to the most exciting phase - seeing their plays come to life. After all they were meant to be performed, not read!

"Making mistakes, writing things and then starting again, trying things out, rewriting are all part of the process. You're not wasting time - it all has value. You can let yourself think, research, ask questions, dream before you write anything down. Or you can get started right away and let yourself try things. It's all part of writing a play."

- Juliet Gilkes Romero, playwright.

FURTHER INSPIRATION...

Below are the names of the playwrights we worked with to create these ideas. Look them up and read their plays. The more stories you absorb, the more it feeds your imagination. At some point, all of these writers (including Shakespeare) had never written a play and didn't know how to begin - or indeed finish!

Amy Ng
Bea Roberts
Brad Birch
Chris O'Connell
Isabel Dixon
Ishy Din
Isley Lynn
Juliet Gilkes Romero
Nina Segal
Phil Porter
Rob Drummon
Sami Ibrahim
Jack Holden
Stephanie Dale

RESOURCE

1. Ending from *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare (edited)

Much Ado about Nothing is a comedy about 2 pair of lovers: one pair are older and refuse to admit they love each other, the others fall in love at first sight but there are mistakes along the way. In this end scene, the two main characters, Beatrice & Benedick (the older pair) are finally brought together and young Claudio has been forgiven for thinking his girlfriend, Hero, was unfaithful and rejecting her on their wedding day. Claudio has now been reunited with Hero who has been proved innocent. Then the prince, Don Pedro, gets news that his brother is raising an army to fight him.

BENEDICK 'Tis no such matter. Then you do not love me?

BEATRICE No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

CLAUDIO And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

HERO And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

BENEDICK A miracle! here's our own hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee; but, by this light, I take thee for pity.

BEATRICE I would not deny you; but, by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion; and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.

BENEDICK Peace! I will stop your mouth. (*Kissing her*)

DON PEDRO How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my cousin.

Come, come, we are friends: let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels.

LEONATO We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK First, of my word; therefore play, music. Prince, thou art sad; get thee a wife, get thee a wife.
Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER My lord, your brother John is ta'en in flight,
And brought with armed men back to Messina.

BENEDICK Think not on him till to-morrow:
I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.
Strike up, pipers.

Dance. Exeunt.

RESOURCE

2. Ending from *King Lear* by William Shakespeare (edited)

King Lear is the tragedy of a King who makes foolish decisions and loses everything, including his mind. In this end scene, Lear has entered carrying the dead body of his youngest daughter, Cordelia. He realises he has been wrong in thinking she was plotting against him, Cordelia was in fact innocent. He has also heard that his two other daughters have been killed (they ARE guilty of plotting!), his beloved Fool has been hanged and Edmund, one of the key villains that caused much of his pain, is now dead.

Captain *(Enters)* Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY That's but a trifle here.
You lords and noble friends: we will resign,
During the life of this old majesty,
To him our absolute power.
All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

KING LEAR And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!

He dies.

EDGAR He faints! My lord, my lord!

KENT Break, heart; I prithee, break!

EDGAR Look up, my lord.

KENT Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him much
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR He is gone, indeed.

KENT The wonder is, he hath endured so long:
He but usurp'd his life.

ALBANY Bear them from hence. Our present business
Is general woe.
(To KENT and EDGAR)
Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

KENT I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
My master calls me, I must not say no.

ALBANY The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

Exeunt, with a death march.

RESOURCE

3. Ending from *MYTH* by Matt Hartley and Kirsty Housley.

Myth is a play about the things we don't want to see or say. Sarah has news, but her partner, George, is too busy to listen. They've just bought their first home, but Sarah's commute is now so long that she may as well turn around and head straight back to work. Worst of all, the local shop doesn't even stock decent wine, let alone wine that's been in the fridge. It's a full-blown booze crisis. But George has a surprise...He's invited Laura and Tom around for dinner. Sarah hasn't seen Laura since behaving disgracefully at Laura's daughter's second birthday party and, as the wine flows, their civilised dinner party descends into drunken truths. Finally, the chaos of the world can't be kept outside any longer. Sarah has a big decision to make. Friendships come into question and their lives may be irreparably changed. Can they continue? Or is this the end?

Sarah. We need to change everything. Can we just start again please?

George. It's a bit late for that now.

Laura. It's fine.

Sarah. Clearly everything is not fine.

Laura. This whole situation will make you look at the future in a different light.

Tom. Laura -

Laura. I'm trying to help.

Tom. I know, but perhaps tread carefully -

Laura. I fought my natural instincts for so long.

They all look to Sarah. She's totally overwhelmed by the state of the stage: the oil, the water, the rubbish and the disintegration of their carefully constructed set.

Sarah. I'm sorry, I think we should stop. Can we stop? Please? Can someone please just do something about this?

Laura. To listen to you you'd think the world is ending.

Sarah. It is.

Tom. She's always having a crisis. But it won't actually change anything.

Sarah. This isn't a joke.

The world of the play has now collapsed beyond salvation. All of the performers are now aware of this.

George. There's no turning back now.

Sarah. No, that's not true.

Tom. There's no turning back now.

Laura. This. Us. Everything. Is over.

Sarah. I wish we'd talked about all this sooner.

George. I had never seen anything like it.

Sarah. End of something beautiful.

George. There is something beautiful about not letting things in.

Sarah. It's everywhere. There's no way of not anymore.

George. So... what are we going to do with this?

They look to Sarah for an answer.

Sarah. We clean up this mess.

Blackout.

RESOURCE

**Image of set 'model box' of First Encounters: Twelfth Night
Designer: Georgie White**



RESOURCE

FEEDBACK LINES:

1. You're better than this.
2. I would love to see you to develop these skills.
3. You've not just let me down, you've let yourself down.
4. That was so much better. And it can be better still.
5. I think it's important that you try.
6. To be honest, I wasn't sure you'd be able to do this, but I'm glad you proved me wrong.
7. I'm not angry, just disappointed.
8. I hope you take this to the next level.
9. At least you finished.
10. I can see how hard you've worked.
11. I have no words.
12. I'd love to see your next play.
13. I didn't like the ending.
14. That made me feel all sorts of things. Not all of them good.
15. Brilliant, as always.

RESOURCE

Matilda in 10 scenes:

1. **Narrator:** A girl is born to stupid, lazy and dishonest parents who don't care about or want her – she is called Matilda

Doctor: *'Mr Wormwood, this child is a girl. A girl, a beautiful, beautiful little girl.'*

Father: *'I don't suppose we could exchange it for a boy, could we?'*

Father: *'This is the worst day of my life.'*

2. **Narrator:** Matilda's parents are very mean to her as she grows up and she finds she can't talk to them at all.

Father: *'If you can't talk sense then shut up!'*

Mother: *'You're a little cheat madam, a cheat and a liar!'*

Father: *'Just keep your nasty mouth shut will you!'*

3. **Narrator:** Matilda discovers that she loves reading and can escape her unhappy family life by entering the fantasy worlds of books

Father: *'A book, what do you want a flaming book for?'*

Matilda: *'To read Daddy'*

Father: *'What's wrong with the telly for heaven's sake?'*

4. **Narrator:** To get back at her mean parents, Matilda plays tricks on them like sticking her Dad's hat to his head with superglue, to cheer herself up – she's too clever for them and never gets caught

Father: *'Don't do that! Let go! You'll take half the skin off my forehead!'*

Matilda: *'What's the matter Daddy has your head suddenly swollen or something?'*

Father: *'Aaaarrrrg!'*

5. **Narrator:** On Matilda's first day at school, she meets her lovely teacher Miss Honey who sees how clever the girl is when testing the class on their times tables.

Miss Honey: *'What about something much harder like two times four hundred and eighty seven? Could you tell me that?'*

Matilda: *'I think so, yes. Nine hundred and seventy four'*

Children: *'Wow!'*

6. **Narrator:** Matilda and her friends meet the terrifying headmistress of the school – Miss Trunchbull who puts children into a horrifying torture chamber

Hortensia: *'The chokey is a very tall but very narrow cupboard, with bits of broken glass sticking out all over.'*

Matilda: *'Can you lean against the door?'*

Hortensia: *'Don't be daft! The doors got thousands of sharp spiky nails sticking out of it'*

(The children react in horror)

7. **Narrator:** Matilda discovers that if she concentrates really hard, she can make things move with just her eyes, the first time she does it is in class she moves a glass with a newt inside which tips itself onto Miss Trunchbull.

Matilda: *'Tip it. Tip it over...'*

Miss Trunchbull: *'Aaaaaarrg! There's a newt in my knickers!'*

(Miss Trunchbull leaps about, holding her bottom)

8. **Narrator:** Matilda discovers that her lovely teacher Miss Honey has been treated terribly by the cruel headmistress Miss Trunchbull for many years

Matilda: *'How old was your aunt when she moved in?'*

Miss Honey: *'Not very old, but I hated her right from the start'*

Matilda: *'Hmmm...'*

9. **Narrator:** Matilda uses magic to make the chalk write something on the blackboard for the evil Miss Trunchbull which scares the headmistress and makes her run away forever

Nigel: *'It's writing something! The chalk is writing something!'*

Miss Trunchbull: *'What the blazes is this?' Noooooo!'*

(In horror, Miss Trunchbull runs away)

10. **Narrator:** Matilda's parents run off to Spain and so the girl and the lovely Miss Honey live together happily

Miss Honey: *'I would love to have Matilda. I would look after her with loving care Mr Wormwood and I would pay for everything.'*

Father: *'I'm in a hurry. I've got a plane to catch. If she wants to stay, let her stay, it's fine with me.'*
(Matilda and Miss Honey hug)

RESOURCE

***Macbeth* by William Shakespeare.**

ACT I

SCENE I. A desert place.

This tells us where we are.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches.

This tells us what we see & sets a spooky tone.

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

A question from character 1: when are we going to meet?
Introduction of rhyme & rhythm, suggesting spooky tone.
Gets straight into the action: no messing about, setting up cauldrons!

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

An answer from character 2. More powerful language.
Gives information: there is a battle being fought.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

Confirmation of that answer from character 3.
These witches are magic - they predict when the battle will be over.

First Witch

Where the place?

Another question from character 1: where's this meeting?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Answer from character 2, suggesting a change of scene.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

More info from Character 3. They're going to meet the
main character of the play. His name's only the title!

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin!

Weird words enter the 'spell' to increase spooky tone.

Second Witch

Paddock calls.

Character 2 continues the spell.

Third Witch

Anon.

Information that's it's going to happen 'anon' - soon.
Creating urgency!

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

All characters complete the spell. More spooky language.
Another rhyming couple to add power to the end of the scene.

Exeunt

And they're gone. No hanging about cleaning cauldrons.

SCENE II. A camp near Forres.

We're somewhere else already!

Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Sergeant.

Lots of people enter now so a big change.

DUNCAN

What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

We meet an important character, a King (murder victim!)
He gives us a strong word 'bloody' - this play's got a lot!
Info: We're going to hear the latest news about a battle.

RESOURCE

Extract 2 - from *MYTH* by Matt Hartley and Kirsty Housley (edited).

George and Sarah's living room/kitchen. East London. They have only been here two weeks, and this is evidenced by several boxes that have yet to be unpacked. A couple of Ikea bags spill their contents out onto the floor. Waitrose bags sit on the kitchen counters, partially unpacked. Despite the mess, it is clear that in time it will be a very chic and stylish home.

George is rooting around in the packing boxes, clearly looking for something and failing to find it. Sarah enters, flustered. She has a shopping bag with her.

Sarah. Sorry sorry sorry, I know I'm late!! It's taken me literally forever to get home.

George. They'll be here in fifteen minutes.

Sarah. I know I know. I said, I'm sorry.

George. What happened?

Sarah. Err, what happened is that we moved so far out of town that by the time I get home at night it's practically time to turn around and go back to work.

George continues to rummage, finally finding some plates and unpacking them onto the kitchen counter.

George. Right.

Sarah. Seriously, you can make that noise but you don't have to do my journey. It's complete chaos out there. And as if it isn't bad enough on a normal day, tonight the tube just decides to stop dead /

George. / Uh huh /

Sarah. /right in the middle of the tunnel. It just stopped there /

George. / Uh huh /

Sarah. / for ages. Literally the worst journey ever. Are you even listening to me?

George. Yes. Yup. Definitely. Did you get the wine?

RESOURCE

Romeo and Juliet

SPEECH 1:

It is my lady, O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

SPEECH 2 :

Alack, alack, is it not like that I,
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad:--
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?
And madly play with my forefather's joints?
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?
O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
Upon a rapier's point: stay, Tybalt, stay!
Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee.

RESOURCE

Example Scene Opening:

a)

1. The stage is empty.
2. John enters, shaking a wet umbrella.
3. John sits and says "that was the worst journey of my life."
4. Kris enters from the kitchen and says "get those wet clothes off the new sofa!"
5. John tuts and stays where he is.
6. Kris sighs and asks "Whatever! Did you get the gun?"

b)

1. John sits, soaking wet, on sofa. Kris is standing over him.
2. Kris says 'Whatever! Did you get the gun?'