

Basic Playwriting Terminology

Play: A written work to be acted, and mainly spoken.

Playwright or Dramatist: A person who writes plays. A storyteller.

Plot: Describes the action of a play and sequence of events.

Conflict: A struggle between opposing forces in a story or play, usually resolved by the end of the work. The conflict may occur within a character as well as between characters.

Character: The characters that form a part of the story in the drama. Each character in a play has a personality of its own and has a distinct set of principles and beliefs.

Dialogue: Two or more characters are speaking with each other.

Monologue: A story or speech given by a character as part of a scene or alone onstage.

Time: Time is when the events in the play take place, for example, September, 2011.

Place: Location where the play takes place, for example, a middle school English class.

Other Theatre Terms

Beat - A deliberate pause for dramatic or comic effect.

Collaboration: Learning to work together to realize shared goals.

Ensemble: Artists working together as a group.

Stage Directions: Instructions in the text of a play for the actor (e.g. entrances, exits or significant actions) and stage crew (e.g. lights fade).

Subtext: The feelings behind the words a character speaks.

Exposition: Information that is often presented at the beginning of the play. Here the playwright may set the atmosphere and tone, explain the setting, introduce the characters, and provide the audience with any other information necessary to understand the plot.

Draft – A version of a play.

Improvisation – A spontaneous performance in which the actor(s) simultaneously performs and creates dramatic material.