

Theater
Iolo

Calling all

YOUNG PLAYWRRIGHTS



Welcome

There are stories everywhere.

Stories you read in a book, or see on television.

Stories on the news or that happen to people you know.

Stories from the past or ones you share on Instagram or Twitter.

We will introduce you to 3 topics to consider when writing for the stage.



Topic One

Telling Stories



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1. Writing for books

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When writing for book, the writer describes everything that is happening

Here's an example:

The day everything changed, Seren Jones was properly hacked off. Not only was her laptop broken and her phone screen cracked, but she'd been grounded for the foreseeable future.

Which was absolutely unfair, as far as she was concerned, because no-one had actually *said* that she had a ten o'clock curfew and anyway she was only in Erin's house watching *Friends*, not drinking in the park or whatever ridiculous idea her parents had dreamt up.

Seren moved to the window and looked outside with a big, sad sigh. She wondered whether she'd ever be free again. Life was carrying on as normal in the street.

Dean was out on the pavement pretending to fix his car while blasting Kiss FM.

Jean from across the road was doing the dance-of-the-moving-net-curtain's every time she heard a dog bark. A normal, boring Sunday in normal, boring Bontdu. And then suddenly she saw it.

Gliding by above the rooftops so quietly that you could have easily missed it.

A huge, shimmering silver disc moving effortlessly across the sky.



2. Writing for Newspapers



For newspapers, we concentrate on the facts

Here's an example:

Local Bontdu resident Seren Jones sees strange unexplained object in the sky



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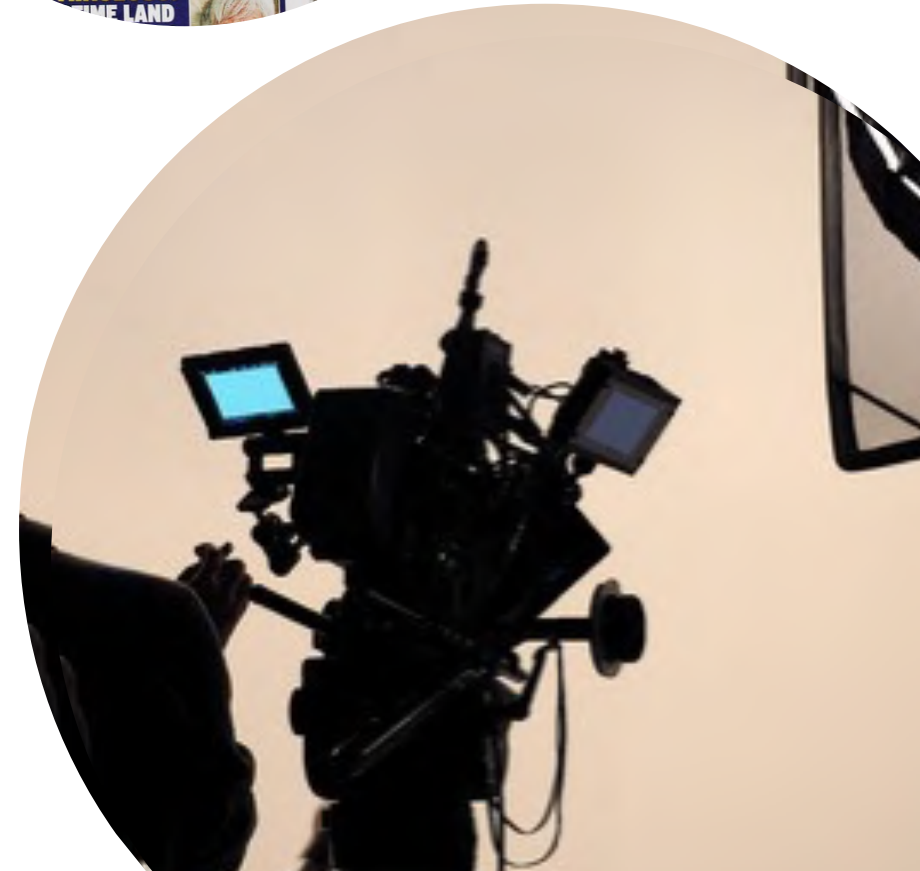
3. Writing for film



For films, we would see the action as the story unfolds

As an example, we would see Seren's bedroom, and maybe witness her trying to use her laptop.

The camera would definitely focus on the strange sight that Seren sees as well as her reaction.



4. Writing for the stage

Here's an Example:

Seren is sprawled on her bed. There is a knock on her door.

SEREN: Can't you read? It says KEEP OUT

Her mam opens the door

SEREN: Oh.

MAM: Yes.

SEREN: I thought it was Cai.

MAM: Did you now?...When are you going to stop sulking?

SEREN: When are you going to un-ground me?

MAM: If you keep talking to me like that, young lady, then no time soon.

SEREN: I can't *believe* how unfair you're being

MAM: You know the rules. You broke them.

SEREN: But it was like one minute past ten.

MAM: It was ten forty two.

SEREN: Anyway, since when have I had a curfew? I didn't know I had one

MAM: Yes, you did.

SEREN: Ugh! This is like Stalin's Russia, this house. And another thing. I'm deprived. I got a bust laptop. Rubbish cracked screen on my phone. How can I talk to anyone or do work? You're taking away my human rights, you are.

MAM: Read a book.

SEREN: Uuuugh!

MAM: Got any washing?

SEREN: No. Cause I can't go anywhere, ever again. I'm going to do a naked protest. That'll set Jean's net curtains going.

MAM: Ok. Enjoy.

Mam leaves. Seren thumps her pillow

SEREN: Uuuuuugh!

Seren goes over to and looks out of the window. She becomes interested in something above the horizon. She says to herself

SEREN: What theWhat is that??



For stage plays, we find out the story by Seren and Mam talking to each other as well as seeing some of what is happening



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Writing a Play

So, through the dialogue in our play we come to understand a lot about what's already happened, Mam and Seren's characters and the relationship between them.

Write down the things we know at the end of this scene:

- We know Seren's name
- We know that she's annoyed and bored
- We know that she's angry with her mam for grounding her unfairly



How many other facts can you find?



Try writing the dialogue for the next scene

Example 1

Perhaps we meet the rest of Seren's family and see if what she's been saying about them is true

Or

Perhaps we could go inside the silver disc to understand who or what is there

In plays we watch people doing things and while we watch them we find out more about their characters and the story.

We find out the story through the conversations the characters have, with us or with each other. In many ways the process of watching a play is like being a detective. We pick up clues about the character, the location and the plot.



Something like this maybe



What if the actors talk to the audience directly?

What if we just had Seren on her own on stage, in her bedroom? How might we get to know more about her and her situation? Perhaps she could talk to us directly.

Example 2

Lights up on a small, boxy bedroom. Seren, a teenage girl, looks despondently down at her phone

SEREN: I have just about had it. Seriously, I am a patient person but honestly! I'm grounded, right. And d'you know why? Because I got back *five* minutes late from Erin's the other night and Mam thought I'd been chopped up by some serial killer and fed to wolves. Or kidnapped by traffickers and sent to Romania to work in the rice fields. Do they have rice in Romania?...Anyway, I was watching *Friends*. It's hardly goin' off the rails is it, really? But the Dark Lord downstairs aka my dear mother, has decided that I am now grounded until...well...I don't know..Maybe next (well that my laptop and phone are both bust. She is A Sadist. And my life is officially over.

Seren moves over to the window. Sighs dramatically

SEREN: This town should be re-named. I swear. It should be called Boringsville. LlanBoring. BontBoring instead of Bontdu. Nothing *ever* happens. And if it does it's always the same. Yep. Dean next door is trying to fix his car even though he can't drive. Yep! Jean – across the road is doing her Nosy Parker dance of the moving nets. And then....

Suddenly her face changes

SEREN: Oh. My....Did you see that? Did you see that? That was...was it? I think I've just seen a UFO!

What extra things do we learn?

- Do we learn any more in this version?
- Is it a positive or a negative to learn more?
- Is it sometimes better to leave the audience to make connections?



An important point to make about Example 2, is that it just gives us Seren's point of view, not her mam's.

Topic Two

Location, Location, Location



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Location

Locations are the places where the story happens. This could be on the moon, on a beach, or even in your kitchen.

In a film, it's easy to show a location, as we simply show the place where it happens.

On stage it is difficult to move from one location to another realistically, so we must find ways of telling the audience when we change locations (of course this is assuming we want them to know!).

If the next scene was to take place inside the spaceship, how might we know that we are inside. If this were a film, there would be an amazing special effects moment where we would see Seren flying out the window and sucked into the spaceship with lasers.

How might we realise this on the stage.... without it costing millions of pounds?

Possible examples

- The stage goes dark, Seren screams and we hear strange alien sounds.
- Lights stay up but sound goes strange and Seren looks around her and says, "where am I?"
- If Seren is using direct address she can simply tell the audience where she thinks she is.



What other ways might there be to show where the scene is happening?

Tip 1: Theatre is often best at portraying locations **imaginatively** rather than **realistically**.

Tip 2: Of course as the writer you can just state where the scenes happen and let your actors and director work out how they get there.

Perhaps we can **convey** what we want to say with a story without ever moving, or meeting people without ever seeing them.

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Location

Example 1

So, rather than having a scene on a spaceship, maybe Seren's broken laptop suddenly comes to life, portraying a strange but beautiful young alien.

Or maybe he turns up at Seren's window.

Example 2

Rather than changing location to the kitchen downstairs, maybe all the action with Seren's family happens offstage, so that we never actually see them but rather hear their voices but stay in Seren's reality in her bedroom.



Something like this maybe



Remember imaginative solutions will need to be found to set locations and you can state these in the script as "stage directions", or leave it for the actors and director to solve.

Seren is lying on her bed, completely fed up. She (and the audience) can hear her parents' voices shouting from downstairs

DAD (OUT OF SIGHT): What d'you expect me to do?

MAM (OUT OF SIGHT) There's electric...gas....

DAD (OOS): I'm workin all the hours...

MAM (OOS): ...BT Sport! That can go for a start

DAD (OOS) WHAT?!

MAM (OOS) It's non-essential, Mal.

DAD (OOS): It's the only thing that's keepin me sane, love.

Suddenly, the broken laptop crashes into light and explodes. Mam and Dad are still arguing, oblivious. Seren jumps up.

SEREN: Oh my...(God). Damn, damn damn...

She grabs her glass of water and chucks it over the laptop. She closes her eyes and waits for a further explosion. None comes. But the room is plunged into darkness.

DAD: (OOS) Seren! Se-ren! That daughter of yours 'ave fused the bloody house again!

MAM (OOS) Get down here young lady before I drag you down.

Seren moves towards the door. From the darkness comes a quiet voice

HARRY: Don't go.

SEREN: What

HARRY: Please. Don't go.

As if by magic, the lights come back on. Stood just across from Seren, a little damp from the water, is the most beautiful boy you've ever seen. Apart from the fact that he's bright blue from head to foot.

DAD: (OOS) Panic over. Lights back on!

Seren just stares and stares. Harry smiles at her.

Topic Three

Images, Symbols & Sound



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Images & Symbols

Lots of theatre works with **Images** and **Symbols**.

These are pictures or objects that make us associate with certain ideas, concepts, feelings or even locations.

So if I show you this picture of a shiny red apple

Well, it's just an apple, isn't it? A refreshing, healthy snack. But say the lights came up on the stage and all you could see was this big, juicy red apple on a plate on a table, what would you think?

Maybe you might think that someone had been poisoned (like in *Snow White*). Or that someone had been tempted to eat it (like with Adam and Eve)



Certain objects work very powerfully on stage to symbolise certain ideas or worlds, without anyone saying a word.



Let's try some more.

If the lights came up on stage and you saw this washing line

- What would it make you think of?
- Who would be the first person you would expect to see?
- What could the play be about?



What about this image?

- Would you have a different reaction?
- Who would you think the play was going to be about?



Clothes are particularly good images because it makes us think of the people that would wear them



What about this image?

- What words come into your head?
- How do you feel?
- Where are we?
- What would you expect to see and hear?



What about this image?

- What would it make you think of?
- Where and when might the play be happening?

The ship in a bottle is a bit different to the other images as it is more of a symbol. It **represents a different world** in a more poetic way.



Images and symbols can make us think of a time, a place, a world even before we see a person. We can do the same with sound too.



Sounds

Let's imagine the sound of the wind blowing loudly on a winter's day.

- Which picture might that sound go well with?
- Think how the pictures might help you imagine the sound?
- What if we put the sound with the apple or the School desk?



Sometimes it's fun to put two things together that we wouldn't usually think of.

When something is **unusual** or different to the things we see every day, it surprises us and can often spark our imagination to think of an interesting starting point for a play.



Have a think and try different pictures and sounds together.

Here's a list for you to try from:

PICTURES	SOUNDS
A flickering candle	An ice cream van
White shirts on the line	Wood being chopped up
A woman in a long white dress and veil	Rain pattering down on the window
A ball of red wool	Children playing
A row of children's toys	An aeroplane taking off
Lots of big jungle plants	A lawnmower cutting the grass
A large brown leather case	A church bell ringing
Piles of money	A dog growling

- What do they make you think of?
- Can you imagine a possible world and characters?
- Maybe even what could happen in a play that has these images in?



Images, symbols and sounds can give us a very clear and powerful sense of place and time.

To sum up:

Writing for the stage is **different** to writing stories for radio, television and film.

It's important that we ask audiences to use their **imagination** when we show different places and times.

Dialogue and Monologues, or the talking between the characters or to an audience, is particularly important in theatre as it helps us come to understand the characters, what they want and the situation that they are in.

Images, symbols and sound can give us a very clear and powerful sense of place and time.

