



Young Playwrights for Change: What is Family?

WRITING A PLAY – QUICK TIPS

THINK ABOUT:

Theme.

Is there something about families that you want to say with your play? What they are, what they should be, what they could be, why we need them, how they can sometimes be frustrating? What do you think makes up a good family? Are there unusual or unconventional families that are effective and loving?

Setting.

Where and when does your play take place? You have complete control here. You can write a realistic play, or set it in the distant future. Sometimes it can help to write about the kind of people and places you know well, but it can also be freeing to let your imagination roam and set your play in a universe you make up yourself. Often plays are more effective with fewer settings than movies, so choosing a good setting is important.

Characters.

You can have up to six characters in your play. Who are the characters you're working with? What do they want? What do they need? How do they feel about one another? What are they afraid of? How do they feel about themselves? Interesting characters have thoughts, feelings, reactions to situations, and sometimes are unpredictable. Do your characters change over the course of your play?

Plot.

What happens to your characters over the course of your play? Is there a beginning, a middle, and an end? What happens to get things going? What is the central conflict or event in your play? How does the conflict get resolved?

Quick Tips that might help you get started:

- Create a “portrait” by making a list of words and phrases that describe a character. Be as specific as possible.
- Write about a character’s worst day, favorite song, biggest fear, most treasured possession, person they admire, secret memory, secret wish, or a question they might want to ask another character.
- Outline or map out your story or plot before you actually start writing your script.
- Tell the story of what happens in your play to someone else and repeat this a couple of different times so you get the feel for what the important events in your story are.
- Try putting different scenes on separate sheets of paper and practice laying them out in different orders to experiment with the sequence of events.

What If I Get Stuck While Writing?

- Go back and read aloud what you have written so far. Sometimes reading out loud can give you fresh perspective or new ideas!
- Stuck on a particular scene or detail? Skip ahead or go back! Sometimes the order of your plot or sequence of events in your play is not the order in which you write your script.
- Take a break! Get up from the computer, take a stretch break, eat a snack, take a walk or just do something else for a little while. Then come back to your script with some fresh eyes.