

KEY STAGE 3 ORIGINAL DRAMA COMPETITION 2019/20

Our popular KS3 Original Writing Competition is a unique opportunity to engage KS3 students in writing and give them the chance to see their writing performed as a rehearsed reading.

Wiltshire Creative is a pan-arts organisation that brings together the energy and ambition of Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury International Arts Festival and Salisbury Playhouse. It is an ambitious and innovative joint arts offer that secures a bright future for audiences, artists and participants.

INSPIRATION AND THEMES:

Due to Covid19 restrictions we have adapted our programme, the KS3 writing competition will no longer take place as part of the festival however we have extended the deadline to the end of the summer term and plan to have the shortlisted writers and guests invited to a rehearsed reading in the Autumn.

The 2020 Salisbury International Arts Festival was to celebrate the beauty, the courage and the joy of human movement. We will draw inspiration from extraordinary journeys both large and small and from journeys that succeeded against all odds. Our programme will explore how movement has been represented in different art forms and will seek to capture the boundless potential of the human body.

The Festival will, of course, play out against the wider context of the octo-centenary of the founding of Salisbury. 800 years ago Salisbury Cathedral and its community moved from Old Sarum, a feat that required the greatest physical, technological and intellectual skills. Join in our Salisbury 2020 celebrations of movement recognising this great achievement.

Our Festival of Ideas which will be shown online will consider the challenge of creating sustainable, healthy and smarter cities in the future. 800 years ago, there was an opportunity to build a city from scratch. If such an opportunity was presented again, what choices would we make?

BRIEF:

In connection to the themes of the 2020 Festival, we would like to set the challenge that the entries must be based around a journey, the movement of people, or the physical movement of the body. These themes can be either figurative or metaphoric in their exploration.

THE SELECTION PROCESS:

Schools will be asked to select 5 scripts per class, scripts will need to be submitted by Wednesday 22nd July 2020. Once the shortlist has been made and comments given to the young writers, there will be a chance for edits to be made. The shortlist will be chosen by professional writers, actors and directors at Salisbury Playhouse and will be performed as rehearsed readings in the Autumn when we hope to be back up and running.

Assessment Criteria:**Imaginative and engaging plot: 30 marks**

The judges will be looking for a script which is structured and developed in a way that is likely to create an engaging performance.

Characterisation: 30 marks

The judges will look for characters which are clearly developed and consistent using imaginative and engaging methods. Dialogue should be purposeful and convincing and help to create a sense of the character.

Performance potential: 30 marks

As experienced writers/directors the judges will be looking for scripts that show real potential for a stage performance and an awareness of theatrical language.

Spelling and grammar: 10 marks

Although not a primary concern, the judges will take into consideration the clarity of communication through accurate spelling and punctuation.

RULES:

These have been kept to a minimum to allow for creativity but are meant to support students in their writing:

Scripts should be 10 – 15 minutes in length when performed (between 5 and 10 sides of A4) This is the upper limit and shorter scripts will also be considered. The aim will be to perform several of the scripts in one evening.

Characters and storyline must be original

Plays will be marked on their creativity and clarity. Whilst it is perfectly reasonable to use a published text or film as a starting point, students need to develop it in their own way. That could mean taking a well-known story and adding their own twist to it.

There should be no more than 4 characters

Imaginative characterisation will be another assessment criteria, and up to 4 well defined characters are likely to be more effective than a host of faceless characters.

No more than 3 scenes/setting

It is perfectly acceptable for all the action to take place in one setting and within one scene. However, some students may wish to develop the action over several scenes and locations but in order for these to be properly established, a limit has been introduced. (see section on structure below)

Individual or paired entries

Some students work better with a partner to motivate and share ideas with; for this reason we are accepting scripts from individuals and from writing partnerships of 2 students.

Script Layout

Although there are established ways of setting out a script for professional writers, it is not necessary to be so strict with our young writers. Two key elements must be made clear – the identity of the character speaking and the difference between dialogue and stage directions. How this is done is up to the individual or the class teacher, but it must remain consistent throughout the script. It is not essential for scripts to be typed, although hand-written scripts make the redrafting and editing process lengthy.

SOME ADVICE FROM THE PROFESSIONALS:

Before you start writing...

This year we have introduced a broad theme/ brief for students to follow to help guide and focus the writing process. Consider some of the following ideas to aid the creative process:

WRITING WARM UP: Demonstrates our ability to conjure stories out of nothing

Arrange participants in a circle, with notebook/paper and pen.

- 1 minute to choose and write down 3 adjectives you felt at one point in the last 24 hours.
Everyone reads theirs out.
Everyone chooses the one they find most interesting from the person on their left – put into a descriptive phrase “a ... person” – e.g. “a **sly** person”.
- 1 minute to think of 3 places (could be anywhere).
Everyone reads theirs out.
Everyone chooses the one they find most promising from the person on their right.
- 1 minute to think of 3 kinds of time (could be a time period e.g. prehistoric time, or 2am).
Everyone reads theirs out.
Everyone chooses the one they find could enrich their situation from the person either side.
- Hear everyone’s scenarios – e.g. “a sly person underwater at 2am”.
Which are most memorable, most intriguing? Which ones made us laugh? Why?
What excites us? What makes us have a vocal response?
Opportunity to change one aspect of the sentence – person/place or time – we can zoom in/ amplify.
- Hear these again. Discuss what happens? How does this change things? Offer possibility? Important to always be asking these “what if” questions throughout the writing process – what if we changed this one thing, what would happen then?

STARTING POINT:

Link it to a story, play or event that the group have been looking at recently, but be careful to give it originality. Use newspaper headlines and stories as a stimulus.

Put the students in groups with big sheets of paper and answer the following questions to find out what the students feel is important to them:

- What matters about the world to you?
- What bothers you about the world?
- What have you noticed about where you live?

EXERCISES FOR CREATING CHARACTERISATION:

Quick Questions (to get a character started)

Use the questions on appendix A to get the students thinking quickly about a character. They may hold onto their answers or they may change them as the play develops but it focuses their mind on important elements of characterisation.

Role on the wall (see appendix B)

Students write words and phrases that describe the character inside the outline of the body and they write down what other characters think about the character in the space outside the body.

Hot seating

Students take on the role of one of their characters and answer questions from their peers.

Character objectives

Considering what each of the characters 'wants' is a key way of developing characterisation. Sometimes characters have opposing 'wants' which creates that all important idea of conflict within a play. Sometimes it is the outside world which creates the conflict and against which a character must fight. A clear sense of each character's objective is an important consideration.

Speech patterns

Characters' speech helps to inform the audience about them. Higher achieving pupils may like to explore some different speech patterns. (See appendix C for examples)

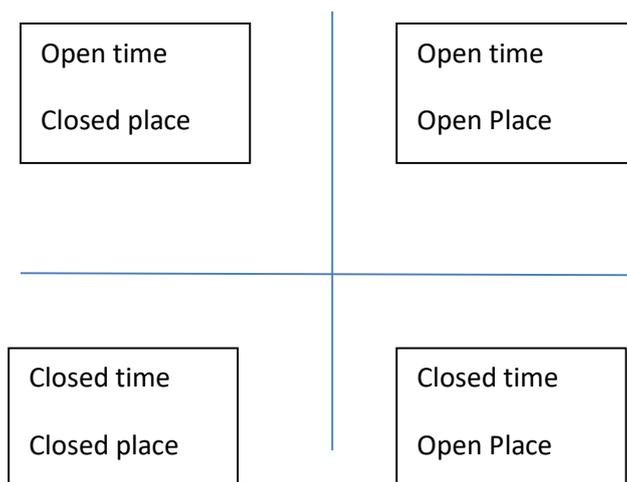
Design Task

Sometimes it is helpful for students to picture their characters as they write. Spending time thinking about the characters costume and finding a suitable name for their character helps them to fully engage with them.

N.B. A particularly memorable play written by a young person, had an ashtray and a pair of boxer shorts as its main characters. By taking inanimate objects as the key characters, developing their personalities using some of the above activities, including what their objectives are, they were able to create an extraordinarily original and imaginative piece of work.

STRUCTURE:

Unities of time and place:



Closed time closed place: The action happens in real time and in a single setting.

Open time closed place: allows students to explore the action in one setting but over several days, weeks or even years. E.g. *Hedda Gabler*

Closed time open place: a single day but in 2 or 3 locations; lots of 'meanwhile over here, this is happening...'

Open time open place: 2 or 3 locations at different points in time. E.g. all of Shakespeare's plays

EXERCISE TO DEMONSTRATE DIFFERENT TIME/PLACE FORMS

Separate into groups.

Everyone has the story of Little Red Riding Hood – each has 5-10mins to make a play of this story (describe what would happen) if it was either open time open place, closed time closed place, open time closed place, open place closed time. (E.g. closed time closed place – set inside the wolf’s belly, we meet grandma and Little Red as they enter and then discover what happens through their reported speech, and then see their release at the end).

Each group focuses on a different combination of time/place form.

Share results.

DISCUSS – it’s all about where you put the focus – where you put the plot is a big choice.

EXERCISE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF TENSION WITHIN SCENE

- Draw a straight line from bottom right to top left. This kind of scene is called Build and Deliver. The tension rises to a crescendo; the punch comes at the end of the scene.
- Draw the opposite, from top left to bottom right. This kind of scene is called Shock and Aftermath. The reveal is at the beginning; the scene is the fallout.
- Draw a line going up to a mid-point and then coming down. An upside down V. This is called Rise and Fall. The scene builds, delivers, then explores fallout.

This can be true of individual scenes, and of acts, and of whole plays.

Sometimes you want to repeat a certain kind of structure, and then surprise us with the change. EastEnders for example, is largely Rise and Fall and then the final scene in any episode is always Build and Deliver.

Sometimes you want a wild variety – but this can also create vertigo.

It’s all about rhythm – when to repeat and when to break it.

PLOT:

Plot vs Story

Explain difference between **story** and **plot**

e.g.



or



An Inspector Calls The Tempest

or



A Midsummer Night's Dream

A useful activity for students is to consider exactly what bit of the whole story is going to be told in the play. For example, in the story of Little Red Riding Hood, a student may decide to only write about the part of the story where the Wolf (Vincent the Vegan) finds himself in the home of the grandmother (Barbara the BBQ Queen) and ends up locking her in the wardrobe to prevent her from force feeding him spare ribs. The rest of the story remains untold. (see appendix D for diagram)

EXERCISE TO DEMONSTRATE STRUCTURE/PLOT

Separate into groups.

Each group has 4 pieces of paper.

Write down the final moment of the play on one piece of paper.

Then use the other 3 to work out the key events which take you to that moment. Lay them out on the floor and share with the group. Or students work in their groups to create still images and captions for each part of the story.

BASIC STRUCTURES:

LOVE ACROSS THE DIVIDE – one character is trying to connect with another but there is a massive problem. E.g. Romeo and Juliet

RAGS TO RICHES – aspirational story, anything where a low situation becomes a high. Dickens loves these structures. E.g. Great Expectations

THE FATAL FLAW – someone who is doing well but something inside them creates a spectacular fall. E.g. Oedipus/Macbeth

THE DEBT THAT MUST BE PAID – someone in the present who is haunted by something from the past. E.g. Faustus

THE HOSTAGE DRAMA – a powerful thing takes a tiny thing hostage. E.g. kitchen sink drama where family are held hostage by poverty

OVERCOMING THE MONSTER – someone who needs to overcome a monster and keeps trying until they succeed. E.g. Beowulf

THE QUEST – there is a golden thing which someone is moving towards. E.g. Lord of the Rings

VOYAGE AND RETURN – someone goes away, experiences another world/something new to them which changes their perception of things and then they come home. E.g. Alice in Wonderland

CONFUSION RESOLVED – we start with an enormous mess and it is unravelled and sorted in the course of the play. E.g. The Hangover (2009)

During the writing process...

All of the above tasks can be visited and revisited during the writing process to refine and refocus the work. But key to the writing process is to try it out as it develops. Students should be encouraged to perform it to their peers and ensure they can understand what is going on.

DRAMATURGICAL QUESTIONS (useful during writing/ re-editing process):

Why this play now?

Whose story is this?

What does each character want?

What is stopping them from getting what they want?

What do they learn/understand in the play?

Does what happens in the play change them?

What are the pressures on the story/ them?

How is this play a response to the world?

What do you want to happen/ achieve in each scene?

TIPS FOR READING EACH OTHER'S WORK:

Print it out and read it in a quiet space.

Make simple notes in the margin if something confuses you - ? or you love something/ it makes you laugh - ! or ***

After you have read it, write down as many questions you can think of – simple, comprehensive. Look at list of questions – is there one you keep asking? Can you group them together? Might help to summarise the one which needs work.

DIAGNOSTICS – you can use this to think about possible areas which might benefit from some development (the list below isn't about judging, it's about diagnosing areas of improvement. There's no right or wrong, it's all about MAYBES – e.g. maybe it would help if...):

1. CHARACTERISATION – can't pin it down?
 - what's fuelling the character?
 - does the character feel thin or clichéd in an unhelpful way?
 - whose story is this?
 - are there too many characters, creating an incoherence? (see rules)
2. DIALOGUE – does it sound more written than spoken? Would it help to read it aloud? Does it help to create a sense of the different characters? Is it suitable for the period of the story? Is there a purpose behind the dialogue or is it just irrelevant conversation? (something needs to be happening through dialogue)
3. STRUCTURE – are there scenes that don't need to be there?
 - What is the ebb and flow of the piece? Where are the shifts in energy/pace?
 - How does the story progress?
4. PLOT – is it confusing? Predictable? Flat? Or is it too reliant on backstory? What is the ticking clock/ time pressure which raises the stakes and allows the story to progress? What is the action? (helpful for these to refer back to the structure diagrams – think of the play in terms of these, how does it fit, how could it improve?)
5. BACKSTORY – is it irrelevant? Inconsistent? Clichéd? Does it suffocate the action of the play?
6. STAGE CRAFT - Does this feel too much like it is written for television or film – think about the transitions between scenes and the inherent action of the piece. How is this going to be told on the stage? Are the stage directions distinct from the dialogue?
7. RESEARCH – is it wedded to its research? Is there too much factual content which prevents/suffocates the story-telling?

Tips for giving each other feedback: First LISTEN to the writer – what is the play about? What are they trying to say? - Then respond with your questions. Don't go in with lots and lots of notes straight away as this can affect confidence. Try to LISTEN, UNDERSTAND, then GUIDE by ASKING QUESTIONS.

Appendix A

Quick Questions (3 seconds for each):

Try to:

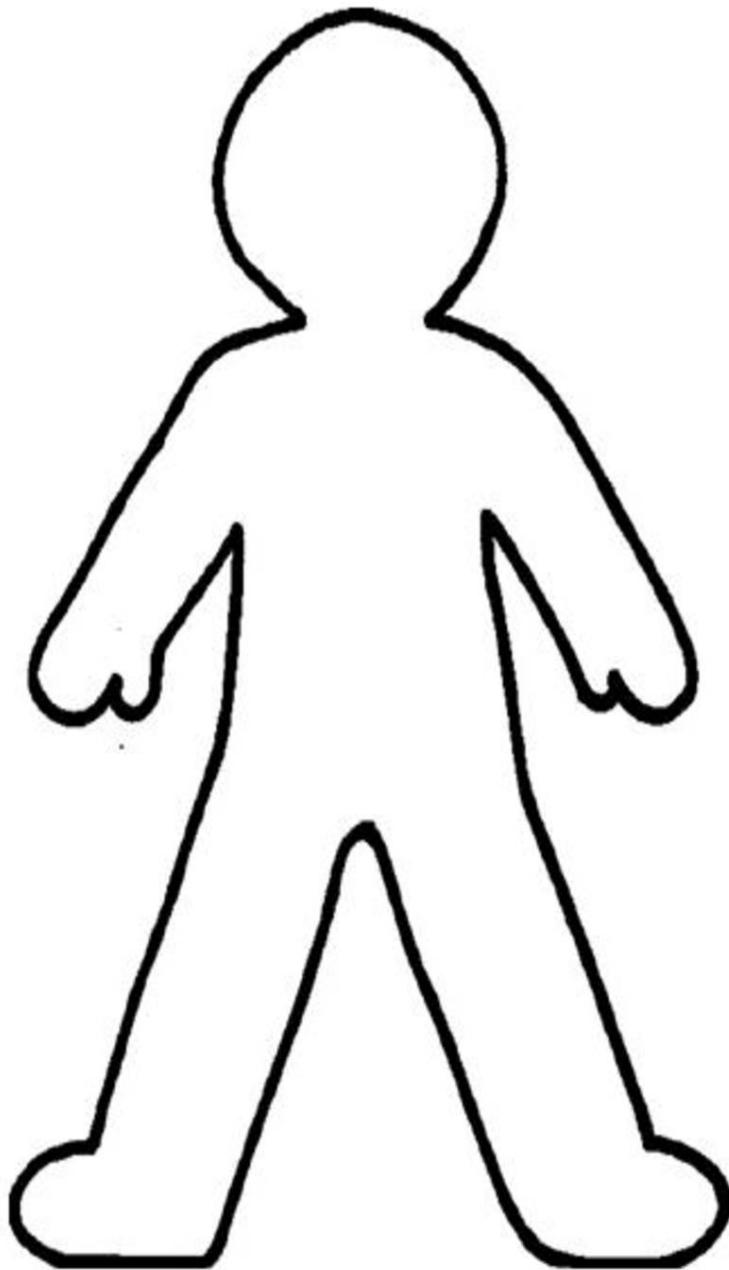
- Go for someone different from yourself
- Avoid basing the character on a real person
- Follow the instructions and don't think too hard

Write down:

- Their gender
- Their age
- Their name
- 3 things about their physical appearance
- A secret they have
- A memory they have
- A problem they have
- Something they need right now
- Something they wish for
- What they are doing at this very moment
- What they are thinking or saying at this very moment
- 3 other things you now know about them having answered these questions

Appendix B

ROLE ON THE WALL



Appendix C

SPEECH PATTERNS

1. This person is very precise. He speaks in short sentences. Very short. Let's be clear. No messing about. I'm sure you understand.
2. This person, however, just has so much to say that she never has time to put in a full stop, in fact barely a comma for that matter, because she just needs to make sure you've heard everything she is thinking about before anyone else can interrupt.
3. This person is never quite sure of...well he never knows how to sort of finish...or end things properly. He starts to say one thing, to tell you about his day, or no his journey, or maybe his brother's trip to...but then he just...sort of...
4. This person uses the most exorbitant language conceivable. It's like they've assimilated a thesaurus and espouse only the most unexploited vocabulary.
5. This person has a word, like, or a phrase, that, like they actually use like all the time.
6. This person keeps getting side-tracked by other seemingly meaningless things. Oh by the way, that reminds me, did I mention that...
7. This person always turns everything into a question, do you see? You know the sort of person, don't you? She just wants to check you agree. Well do you?
8. This person puts...pauses in very strange...places, so that everyone has to...wait to find out exactly...what is going...on.

The Wolf (Vincent the Vegan) finds himself in the home of the grandmother (Barbara the BBQ Queen) and ends up locking her in the wardrobe to prevent her from force feeding him spare ribs.

Little Red Riding Hood at home being asked to take some cakes to grandma.

The wolf goes to grandma's house ahead of Little Red Riding Hood.

The woodcutter comes to the rescue and frees grandma.

Little Red Riding Hood walks through the forest and is seen by the wolf.

Little red Riding hood arrives at the house and finds the wolf in bed.

Plot for script