

## **Writing for Problems in the World!**

### **Instructor:**

Casey J. Adler

### **Subject Matter:**

Learn about story through the process of writing your own short play

### **Time Required:**

2 hours

### **Lesson Overview:**

Students will learn about the basics of storytelling and write their own short play about a contemporary issue they are passionate about. The workshop will culminate in a 5-8 page script read aloud in groups.

### **Lesson Objectives**

Students will:

- Learn about the fundamentals of story: character (background, voice, etc), conflict/obstacles, and wants/objectives
- Learn to trust their instincts through free writing and letting their imagination and gut guide them
- Brainstorm problems about the world (i.e. contemporary issues) that are of interest to them
- Utilize the preceding three steps to then write their own short play without judging the process or perfecting it

### **Materials/Learning Tools**

**For students:**

Notebook or Computer  
Writing Utensil

**For instructor:**

Laptop  
Projector with full audio/video projection capacity

**Lesson Breakdown**

**I. Intros (10 minutes)**

- Go around and do introductions with students. Find out what each students' goals are with writing, what their experience level is, and what stories have influenced them.

**II. Free Flow (10 minutes)**

- Write/free flow your thoughts onto the paper. For example: What are you feeling right now? What are your hopes?
- Write everything about YOU: what do you look like, what are your interests, what makes you mad, what makes you sad, socio-economic level, do you have siblings (how many), relationships with parents/friends/teachers, what's your cultural background, etc. This is an exercise in learning about character through self.

**III. The Only Important Fundamentals of Storytelling (25 minutes)**

- What is a story? All books, movies, and plays are made of the same ingredients executed in a different form. Plays use dialogue aided by images to illustrate story. Movies use images aided by dialogue to illustrate story. And books use the written word to illustrate story. But they all have characters that GO AFTER an objective. They all have characters that have something (or many things) in the way of that objective (conflict). And they all DO SOMETHING to defeat those obstacles in order to achieve their want.
- Play a brief improv game I created with my friends called "Raise the Stakes". The class, in a popcorn discussion, will create a situation/problem, such as: a student wants to ask another student

to prom. Then the class has to come up with all of the problems in the way of that objective.

#### **IV. Problems of the World (15 minutes)**

- Brainstorm problems in the world that students are interested in writing about. For example: climate change, politics, homelessness, economics, immigration, war, etc.
- Now I will ask the students to choose one of those problems (contemporary issues) and formulate a story/short play about 2-3 characters dealing with that problem.

#### **VI. Solo Writing (30 minutes)**

- Using everything we have learned in class, students will write a first draft of their short play. I will be available to answer any questions that arise about their story and give ideas to help.

#### **VII. Play Share (15 minutes)**

- Students will read each other's short plays aloud (casting one another) in small groups, mimicking a development workshop. They will then provide constructive/solution based feedback. I will instruct them to refrain from saying comments such as "I like that" or "I don't get it" and instead urge them to think critically about what worked and what didn't work in the story elements, for example: "I thought your lead character went after their goal in a strong way. However, I would like to know a little more about them. Who are they? Where are they from?"

#### **VIII. Reflection / Conclusion / Questions (15 minutes)**

- I will lead a class discussion about how students can continue to edit and re-write their plays after this workshop, reminding students that writing is re-writing.