



# PLAY SLAM!

## WRITING TIPS & BRAINSTORMING

The following are brainstorming ideas, prompts, and writing tips from Playhouse on the Square and AATE to help give you some ideas if you're lost. Please see the additional **Formatting Guide** and **Handbook & FAQ's** for more information.

### **(Year 6) 2023-2024 Theme:** **"Caring for Our World"**

At times the world seems small and other times vast. How do you care for the earth? How does the earth care for you? Whether through science or connecting with wild things, seeing the earth as a scientific marvel or a mother, how does caring for our earth create change for the climate of your heart or the climate of our entire planet.

### **THEME**

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#### **Brainstorming:**

- Make a list of things that you enjoy doing that involve the earth
  - Examples: sports, picnics, family events, etc.
- Make a list of things that you think folks should do to take care of the earth
  - Examples: recycle, get outside, etc.
- Make a list of ways to try and convince folks to make conscious changes that improve the world
  - Examples: tell them about how special the earth is, invite people outside with you, etc.

**Write It Out:** Now do some short writing to explore some of the following questions:

- "Caring for Our World"

- o What does it mean to care for our world?
- o What do you already do to show care for the natural world around you?
- o What impact do individual actions have on the earth?

### Exploring Deeper:

- What might your central character discover that influences how they feel about the earth?
  - o How might that character make that discovery?
  - o Is the discovery pleasant, painful, or both?
- A lot of times, it can be hard to prioritize living sustainably when no one else is.
  - o What situations require courage the most?
  - o What could motivate the character to make that discovery, or avoid making that discovery?
- Speaking up sometimes involves going against the status quo.
  - o How do your characters shape the world around them?
  - o How have your characters changed or evolved?
  - o What do your characters' futures look like?

## SETTING

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### Brainstorming: Where is your play set?

- Locations:
  - o School, Home, Bedroom, Park, Jungle, Island, Planet, Imaginary World, etc.
    - Your play can be set anywhere!
  - o Think About:
    - Is it local to your community?
    - Is it a place you are familiar with?
    - Is it a city far away?
    - Is it a brand-new country?
    - Is it an unknown place?
- Time:
  - o Day time or Nighttime
  - o Does it span 10-minutes, or an hour, or one day, or much longer?
  - o Is it set in the past, present, or future?
- Season/Weather:
  - o Does the play take place Indoors or Outdoors?
  - o Is it hot, freezing, or a mild temperature?
  - o What time of year is it?
  - o Think About:
    - Does the weather have an effect on your characters or not?

**Brainstorming:** How does location affect a character's ability to inspire hope?

- Where would your character feel hopeful?
  - Does your character want to be in a familiar place?
  - Do they desire to be in a more comfortable place?
- Where would your character feel hopeless?
  - Would your character feel more compelled to inspire hope if they are in a strange, unknown, or uncomfortable location?

## CHARACTERS

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**Brainstorming:** Who is this story about?

- Who is your central character?
  - They don't have to speak the most, but the story is focused on them.
  - Two or more characters can be the central focus as well.
  - Is it a group story?
  - What do they want?
- Who are the other characters needed to tell your story?
  - How does each character feel about one another?
  - What are they afraid of?
  - How do they feel about themselves?
  - Do any characters have interesting thoughts, feelings or reactions to situations?
  - Are they unpredictable?
  - Are there any characters not seen onstage?
    - Friends, family, or enemies they talk about
- Do any characters change over the course of your play?
- **Remember:** You are limited to 6 characters

**Write it Out:** Character Backstory

- Character "Portrait"
  - Make a list of words that describe your central character (be specific)
- A Day in the Life
  - Write about your central character's:
    - Worst day
    - Favorite song
    - Biggest fear
    - Most treasured possession
    - Person they most admire
    - A question they want to ask another character

## PLOT

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**Brainstorming:** What is the story of your play?

- What happens to your characters over the course of your play?
- Is there a beginning, middle, and end to your story?
  - Is the show in chronological order or a mixture of the order?
- What is the central conflict or event of your play?
  - Does this event change, grow, or transform your characters?
  - Is there a problem that your central character tries to solve or has to learn from?
  - Who or what prevents your central character from solving the problem or getting what they want?
  - If the characters do not end up “happily ever after,” does the discovery the character makes change their life in a small or large way?
  - Does the discovery make a difference for any other characters?

## TIPS

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- Outline your story or plot before you start writing your script
- Try telling the story of your play to a friend or family member
  - Repeat this a couple of different times so you get the feel for the important events of your story
- Create a storyboard with text and/or images, or even some kind of map.
  - Use drawings, symbols, or doodles to represent events, characters, etc.
- Try putting key scenes on a separate sheet of paper and lay them out in different orders to experiment with the sequence of events.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET STUCK?

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- **Don't give up.** All writers get stuck; even your favorite playwright or author has gotten stuck during the writing process.
- **Go back and read aloud what you have written so far.** Sometimes reading out loud can give you fresh perspectives 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.
- Find a friend or family member to read your work and give you some **feedback**.
- **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 fresh eyes.