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# PLAYWRITING OUTSIDE THE LINES

## Instructor

STEVEN STACK

## Materials

Video modules, Handouts, Transcripts, MP3 Files, PDF of Powerpoint Slides, Completion Certificate

## Course length

6 modules

1 hours, 34 minutes of video

3 credit hours

## Course Description

Instructor Steven Stack leads this course in a unique way to teach playwriting. He will show you how to set foundations and guide posts for your students, and then give them freedom to play. The intent is to help students develop their own voice and create for creating sake. The 5 modules lead teachers through how to use this style of teaching playwriting, and includes handouts and resources to support the learning.

## About the Instructor

Steven Stack has been teaching students ranging from age 7 to adults for almost 20 years, both within and outside the public education system, and covering topics including math, science, social studies, and health – but his true love is teaching theatre. He’s been involved with theatre for more than 20 years as an instructor, director, playwright, and actor.

Steven has taught for twelve consecutive summers at the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY), working with gifted and talented students in an academically challenging environment where they learn the principles of acting, directing, and playwriting. Working with WCATY and the University of Wisconsin, he also teaches online writing courses to students all over the state of Wisconsin.

He is also a published playwright, having written and directed several full-length plays, countless one-acts and many scenes for various theatres, performing arts schools and professional organizations. His plays have been performed all over the United States, as well as internationally.

Steven is currently the lead acting instructor at Forte Studios in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, where he has the pleasure of working with amazingly talented actors of all ages.

He thoroughly enjoys teaching, directing, and writing for middle-school students, and that’s been a major focus of his career. His goal in working with that age group is to help students grow into themselves by giving them stories that resonate beyond the stage. Steven believes that the key to helping students become better actors is working with them to understand who they are and helping them bring that experience to the world of the play. He stresses each individual’s contribution to the play, while emphasizing that it’s about everyone, not just any single person. His students are expected to come through for their fellow actors.

## Course Curriculum

### Module 0: Introduction *15:31*

The introductory module introduces the instructor and sets out the objectives and structure for the course.

### Module 1: Creating for Creating Sake *16:39*

This module focuses on teaching students the act of creating itself - while ridding ourselves of creating for external reasons.

### Module 2: The Creative Sandbox: Your Journal *13:55*

This module is the creative sandbox: your journal. At the end of this lesson, students will be able to understand and use one of the most important things a writer has: their journal.

### Module 3: All About the Play *12:31*

This module is about the play. All about the play. This module will focus on why plays exist, what plays are meant to be, and my basic top principals for playwriting. Understanding the foundation of playwriting will create a strong foundation for the student’s playwriting journey.

### Module 4: The Non-Truths We Probably Believe *21:01*

In this module we’re going to discuss things we think and believe as writers that we probably shouldn’t, expand on where they came from, what the truth is perhaps, and how students can overcome believing these things. The objective of this lesson is to avoid labeling things and see them as they are and focus on creating the work we want to create.

### Module 5: The End of the Road *14:43*

In this module, we wrap up our journey.

# Standards Connections

## National Core Arts Standards

### Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 6

TH:Pr4.1.6.b - Experiment with various physical choices to communicate character in a drama/theatre work.

### Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr4.1.7.a - Consider various staging choices to enhance the story in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.7.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

### Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 8

TH:Pr4.1.8.a - Explore different pacing to better communicate the story in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.8.b - Use various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

### Perceive and analyze artistic work - Grade HS Proficient

TH:Re7.1.HSI.a - Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade HS Proficient

TH:Cr2.1.HSI.b - Investigate the collaborative nature of the actor, director, playwright, and designers and explore their interdependent roles in a drama/theatre work.

## Common Core

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## California VAPA Standards (2019)

### 6.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

6.TH:Pr4.a - Identify the essential events in a story or script

that make up the dramatic structure in a drama/theatre work.

6.TH:Pr4.b - Experiment with various physical choices to communicate character in a drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr4.a - Consider various staging choices to enhance the story in a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Pr4.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

### 8.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

8.TH:Pr4.a - Explore different pacing to better communicate the story in a drama/theatre work.

8.TH:Pr4.b - Use various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

### Prof.TH:Re7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Prof.TH:Re7 - Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

### Prof.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Prof.TH:Pr4.b - Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

### Acc.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Acc.TH:Pr4.a - Discover how unique choices shape believable and sustainable drama/ theatre work.

### 6.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

6.TH:Cr2.a - Use critical analysis to improve, refine, and evolve original ideas and artistic choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

### Prof.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Prof.TH:Cr2.b - Investigate the collaborative nature of the actor, director, playwright, and designers and their interdependent roles in a drama/theatre work.

### 6.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

6.TH:Cr3.a - Receive and incorporate feedback to refine a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

### 8.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

8.TH:Cr3.a - Practice collaboration, analysis and reflection to refine a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

8.TH:Cr3.b - Refine effective physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters in an improvised or scripted drama/ theatre work.

### Prof.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

Prof.TH:Cr3.c - Refine design choices using technical theatre elements to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

### Adv.TH:Cr3 Refine and complete artistic work.

Adv.TH:Cr3.b - Synthesize ideas from research, script analysis, and context to create a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant in a drama/theatre work.

## Florida Sunshine State Standards

### Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.68.C.1.2 - Develop a character analysis to support artistic portrayal. Create, refine, and sustain complex and believable

TH.912.C.1.2 - Create, refine, and sustain complex and believable characters for performance through the integration and application of artistic choices based on research, rehearsal, feedback, and refinement.

TH.912.C.1.7 - Justify personal perceptions of a director's vision and/or playwright's intent.

TH.912.C.2.7 - Accept feedback from others, analyze it for validity, and apply suggestions appropriately to future performances or designs.

TH.912.C.2.8 - Improve a performance or project using various self-assessment tools, coaching, feedback, and/or constructive criticism.

### **Innovation, Technology & the Future**

TH.912.F.1.1 - Synthesize research, analysis, and imagination to create believable characters and settings.

### **Organizational Structure**

TH.68.O.3.3 - Discuss the collaborative nature of theatre and work together to create a scene or play, respecting group members' ideas and differences.

### **Skills, Techniques & Processes**

TH.68.S.2.1 - Discuss the value of collaboration in theatre and work together to create a theatrical production.

TH.912.S.1.5 - Write monologues, scenes, and/or short plays using principles and elements of writing found in dramatic literature.

TH.912.S.3.9 - Research, analyze, and explain the processes that playwrights, directors, designers, and performers use when developing a work that conveys artistic intent.

## **Georgia Performance Standards - Theatre Arts**

### **Grade 6 - Creating**

TA6.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process., b. Interpret a character's motivation by understanding the relationship between their background and their behavior., c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters., d. Identify, define, and classify character traits., e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance., f. Use resources to identify and create technical elements of theatre.

### **Grade 7 - Creating**

TA7.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify and rehearse effective communication skills., b. Compare and contrast character types and relationships by analyzing character motivations, objectives, and goals., c. Compare the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character., d. Investigate the role and responsibility of the cast and crew., e. Identify and model ensemble skills in the rehearsal process., f. Utilize staging and blocking choices to enhance the performance., g. Compare, contrast, and design elements of technical theatre., h. Utilize theatre vocabulary throughout the rehearsal process.

TA7.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Create ideas for stories., b. Analyze the theme and structure of a play., c. Use the dramatic writing process to generate a script., d. Utilize dramatic conventions in the scriptwriting process (e.g. stage directions, dialogue, scenes).

### **Grade 7 - Connecting**

TA7.CN.1 - Explore how theatre connects to life experience,

careers, and other content., a. Compare and contrast theatre with other art forms., b. Articulate relationships between theatre and life., c. Utilize a multi-disciplinary approach to create original theatre., d. Describe the careers and professional responsibilities associated with theatre production (e.g. director, stage manager, designer, technician, playwright, actor).

### **Grade 8 - Creating**

TA8.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Differentiate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a variety of characters., b. Compare the relationships and interactions between characters by analyzing character motivation (objectives, obstacles, strategy, action, stakes, outcome), c. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., d. Connect theatre vocabulary to the application of theatre performance., e. Identify and demonstrate both ensemble and leadership skills in the rehearsal process., f. Evaluate the effectiveness of artistic and technical elements used in a theatre production., g. Design and create scenery, props, costumes, lighting, and sound., h. Assume different roles and responsibilities in the rehearsal process.

### **Grades 9-12 - ACTING LEVELS I-IV - Creating**

TAHSA.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Use script analysis in the development and presentation of formal and informal theatre performances., b. Examine various theories of dramatic structure., c. Engage in and apply meaningful cultural, literary, and historical research to create acting choices or directorial concepts.

TAHSA.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Examine theatre practices regarding the development, structure, layout, and format of scripts., b. Use improvisation, personal experiences, heritage, imagination, literature, and history to develop scripts., c. Perform formal and informal monologues and scenes based on published and original scripts.

### **Grades 9-12 - ADVANCED DRAMA LEVELS I-IV -Creating**

TAHSAD.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Examine various theories of dramatic structure., b. Engage in and apply meaningful cultural, literary, and historical research to create acting choices or directorial concepts.

TAHSAD.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Utilize theatrical conventions to produce scripts based on personal experiences, imagination, literature, and history.

### **Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Creating**

TAHSFT.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse., b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., c. Recognize and interpret artistic choices in performance.

TAHSFT.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Differentiate between dramatic and traditional literary writing and utilize common steps of the playwrighting process., b. Assess the need for script analysis, concept development, and directorial and technical concerns of a theatrical script., c. Construct and critique elements of dramatic structure, character, and dialogue., d. Create and perform scenes for audiences.

### **Grades 9-12 - MUSICAL THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Creating**

TAHSMT.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Analyze various theories of dramatic structure in a musical and explain how text, music, and movement can be used to

advance the plot of a musical., b. Engage in and apply meaningful cultural, literary, and historical research to support formal or informal theatrical performance.

## North Carolina Essential Standards

### Beginning High School Standards - Communication

B.C.1.3 - Understand how to read and write scripts that communicate conflict, plot, and character.

### Intermediate High School Standards - Communication

I.C.2.2 - Interpret scenes through formal and informal presentations.

### Proficient High School Standards - Communication

P.C.1.3 - Create original works, such as monologues, scenes, or performance pieces.

### Advanced High School Standards - Communication

A.C.1.3 - Use constructive criticism to improve original works both written and read orally.

## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts

### HS 117.315 LI - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.F - create, write, and refine original monologues, improvisations, scenes, or vignettes that reflect dramatic structure to convey meaning to the audience through live performance or media forms.

### HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.F - create, write, devise, and refine original monologues, improvisations, scenes, or vignettes to convey meaning to the audience through live performance or media forms.

### HS 117.317 LIII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.E - write dialogue that reveals character motivation, advances plot, provides exposition, and reveals theme.

## Alberta, Canada

### Playwriting - Drama 20

1 - demonstrate understanding of the basic structure of a play

10 - define conflict

11 - construct a conflict between two characters (protagonist and antagonist)

12 - construct a scene with two contrasting characters

13 - give and accept constructive criticism

2 - define and identify plot, character, thought and diction

3 - demonstrate understanding of script format

4 - generate and collect ideas that have dramatic possibilities

5 - write a scenario

6 - identify character types and their functions and attributes

7 - demonstrate understanding if and write exposition

9 - define character objectives

### Junior Goal III Objectives

develop the ability to analyze and assess the process and the art

### Senior Goal I Objectives

apply imaginative and creative thought to problem-solving situations

demonstrate a sense of inquiry and commitment, individually and to the group

demonstrate a sense of responsibility and commitment, individually and to the group

### Senior Goal II Objectives

gain knowledge of disciplines that enhance dramatic process and product

## British Columbia (2018)

### GRADE 6 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

### GRADE 7 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

### GRADE 8 - ARTS - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop, refine ideas, and critically appraise ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations

### GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Reasoning and reflecting

Develop and refine ideas and technical skills to improve the quality of performance pieces

### GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Communicating and documenting

Revise, refine, analyze, and document performance pieces and experiences to enhance presentation in a variety of ways

### GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect

Apply feedback to develop and refine ideas

### GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect

Receive and apply constructive feedback to develop and refine ideas

### GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Explore and Create

Create, rehearse, and refine dramatic works through collaborative and individual presentation or performance

### GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect

Receive, provide, and apply constructive feedback to refine dramatic works

Use self-reflection and awareness of audience to refine ideas

## Ontario, Canada

### Grade 7 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing

B2.1 - construct personal interpretations of drama works, connecting drama issues and themes to their own and others' ideas, feelings, and experiences

### Grade 8 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing

B2.1 - construct personal interpretations of drama works, connecting drama issues and themes to social concerns at both the local and global level

### Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to accept criticism and build consensus)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom**

B.3.1 - identify and describe skills, attitudes, and strategies they used in collaborative drama activities (e.g., brainstorming, active listening, and cooperative problem-solving skills; strategies for sharing responsibility through collaborative team roles)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - The Critical Analysis Process**

B.1.1 - use the critical analysis process before and during drama projects to identify and assess individual and peer roles and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., identify and assess the contribution of leadership and supporting roles, group dynamics, and cooperative problem solving to their process of creating drama works)

### **Grade 11 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom**

B.3.1 - identify the collaborative skills and techniques they used to produce ensemble drama works, and explain how they can be applied in a variety of other contexts

## **Virginia Standards Of Learning (2020)**

### **Grade Six**

6.1 - The student will apply creative thinking to theatre.

### **Grade Seven**

7.2 - The student will demonstrate a creative process for theatre.

### **Grade Eight**

8.1 - The student will refine creative problem-solving, ensemble-building, and improvisational skills by devising and improvising theatrical works.

### **Theatre Arts I: Introduction to Theatre**

TI.2 - The student will apply a creative process for theatre.

### **Theatre Arts II: Dramatic Literature And Theatre History**

TII.1 - The student will write an original script utilizing an accepted script format and revise based on feedback.

### **Theatre Arts III: Intermediate Acting & Playwriting**

TIII.1 - The student will demonstrate playwriting.

TIII.2 - The student will apply the creative process for theatre.

### **Theatre Arts IV: Advanced Acting And Directing**

TIV.1 - The student will evaluate and refine original scripts for performance.