



# *Remixed* CLASSICS

SCRIPTWRITER'S HANDBOOK

Sarah Boess, Laurie Doan, Kathy McCullough,  
Max Mooney, Nadia Papachronopoulou & Annie Wang

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding has been provided by PA Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

Thank you to students Michelle Liu for the illustrations and Chanelle Ongagna for being our first reader and remixer. To Elle Kerrigan for proofing, and to Cliff Reese for the cover art.

This project originated as part of the Tredyffrin Township Libraries Remixed Classics 2022 series and is part of an ongoing commitment to giving local students wings to fly.

Tredyffrin Township Libraries are members of the Chester County Library System and we thank them for helping to print this original handbook.

This COPYRIGHTED handbook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost. You may copy it to use with your students. If you paid money for it, please contact us because you shouldn't have.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter One: Choosing Remix</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Research or Why Context Matters in Storytelling</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Building Your Structure</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Character</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Chapter Five: Writing For The Stage</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Writing For The Screen</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Chapter Seven: Bring your Script to Life</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Chapter Eight: Film: All You Need is Your Phone</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Epilogue: Now Voyager</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>93</b>
Appendix A: Librarian Tries Choosing Remix	93
Appendix B: Librarian Tries Researching For Remix	96
Appendix C: Librarian Tries Remixing Into a New Story	98
Appendix D: Librarian tries remixing character	103
Appendix E: Librarian Tries Film Format	106
Appendix F: The First Scene: Our First Student Reader Chanelle's Remix	109
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>126</b>

## Introduction

### ***A Few Words to Inspire You To Take a Literary Classic and Reinterpret It As Only You Can***

***“Everyone has literature inside of them.” - Anna Deavere Smith***

The Classics. The Canon. The Great Stories. They've stood the test of time. But why? What exactly makes a classic? And what is a Remix?

A classic is a tale about timeless questions of love, life, death, yearning, and more. A remixed classic takes the original heart of the story and looks at it through a different lens: your lens.

Any way you choose to remix is valid. You can change the ethnicity of the character, the gender, the occupation, educational background, age, the time period of the story, the culture, religion, country... It's your lens and you choose how to tell the tale. You tell your own powerful story using your imagination fueled by primary source material from research and your dramatic instincts.

I stumbled on a great remixed classic walking through the bookstore one night, *So Many Beginnings: A Little Women Remix* by Bethany C. Morrow. This story takes the heart of the *Little Women* original by Louisa May Alcott, a coming of age story of four white sisters in Concord, Massachusetts. They navigate love, heartbreak, disease, and their dreams for the future under the care of their loving mother, and the watchful eye of their rich aunt, while their father is mostly occupied with the Civil War.

*So Many Beginnings* remixes it into a story set in the Freedpeople's Colony of Roanoke Island which is a haven for the recently emancipated African-American March sisters. They too navigate love, heartbreak, disease, and their hopes and dreams for the future

under the care of their loving mother, minus the watchful eye of a rich aunt. Like the original March sisters, their father is involved in the Civil War.

In reference to Morrow's remix, one reviewer remarks, "Morrow's ability to take the lingering stain of slavery on American history and use it as a catalyst for unbreakable love and resilience is flawless. That she has remixed a canonical text to do so only further illuminates the need to critically question who holds the pen in telling our nation's story." —*Booklist*, starred review

Both authors worked hard to capture a moment in history where a foursome of sisters experience joy and sorrow as they try to find footing in a world that hasn't quite caught up to the scope of their dreams. The classic and the reinterpretation are likely to be appreciated by the same reader; a reader who appreciates the warmth and resilience of the March sisters.

Bethany Morrow used her heart, imagination, and her impeccable research skills to bring her version of the March sisters to life. In an interview with NPR, she stated, "It was horrible and wonderful. I adored it — it was one of the easiest things to come out of me in terms of the writing process."

For Morrow, the story seemed to pour out of her. Was that because she's a gifted writer? Yes, and with a lot of thinking and research, she was able to bring her belief in the story to her work. You don't have to be highly gifted to do the work. You don't need to be anything other than who you are.

**This is what you bring to the page:**

- Your humanity
- Your history of reading, seeing, and listening to stories and absorbing their structures
- Your intelligence
- Your wonder and ability to explore
- Your experiences and emotions
- Your ability to create a character
- Your instincts and intuition and ideas
- Your empathy and what you know about human nature
- Your energy
- Your childhood and all the times you played “let’s pretend”
- Your attention to detail for projects that are important to you
- Your ability to make choices. Thinking and choosing.
- Your style
- Your soul and your dreams
- Importantly, your ability to find your Muse by taking in the natural world, exploring related art, writing and music, or keeping a notebook and writing down your passing inspirations. Whatever works for you!

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Everything you need is already inside you. Just commit to the work, be guided by this handbook, and use your mentors. You'll see that something exciting will come of it all.

And to prove it, we are including one of our own experiences of reinterpreting a literary classic in this handbook. As we introduce the main ideas, formulas, and dramatic structures for writing a script that you'll use to build your script, we'll be building one right alongside you. If all goes well, we'll have a completed scene in the appendix.

To finish this introduction here's a couple of inspirational quotes for your notebook. The first pertains to why we are choosing to remix our stories to film-

***“Film as dream, film as music. No art passes our conscience in the way film does, and goes directly to our feelings, deep down into the dark rooms of our souls.” -  
Ingmar Bergman***

The second quote is why we think this project will bring people together-

***“The power of art can break the shackles that bind and divide human beings.”  
- Daisaku Ikeda***

It's time to begin your journey to creating a Remix. The first step is choosing the story you will take through a different lens to make a new story that only you could write.

## Chapter One

### *Choosing Remix*

There are a number of reasons to choose to remix a classic story including: your love for the original, the big ideas of the original, and the things that weren't said in the original. The original might be attractive for its setting, the plot, or the characters. You may choose remix because as you finished a book, film, or an audio book, you felt there was unexplored territory left on the map. You may remix a piece because it's been remixed before and you believe there is even more remix potential, you love the story that much.

A great example would be *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's source for the plot was a long narrative poem by the English poet Arthur Brooke, "The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet," which was based on a French translation of a tale by the Italian Matteo Bandello. Bandello created the Nurse character after he was inspired by da Porto's "Romeo and Juliet." And da Porto? He took a story from Masuccio Saleritano and changed Marriotto and Gianozza to Romeus and Giulietta. In



da Porto's version after Romeus poisons himself, Giulietta follows him to the afterworld by holding her breath.

See? Even the most famous works come from endless streams of source material.

*Romeo and Juliet* was put on the literary map when Shakespeare took these star-crossed lovers and made them legends. The play would go on to inspire music, ballet, art, ice dance routines and other ideations of the young star-crossed lovers through the ages. It was also the inspiration for a play, *Abie's Irish Rose*, an old-fashioned 1922 romantic comedy about Irish Catholics and Jews by Anne Nichols, which then went on to become the groundbreaking musical *West Side Story* in 1957.

When Jerome Robbins, the driving force behind the musical, initially imagined his remix, it was an "East Side Story" filled with the Lower East Side characters of Nichols' comedy. Arthur Laurents and Leonard Bernstein took a dramatic turn when they took it over to the West Side and changed the gangs to White and Puerto Rican. The team immersed themselves in Puerto Rican culture attending dances and absorbing complex Latin music. They created a new and exciting musical.

So, why in 2009 did Lin-Manuel Miranda tell the Washington Post, "I think *West Side Story* for the Latino community has been our greatest blessing and our greatest curse."? Did one of the few representations of Latinos on Broadway need to have the characters in gangs? Miranda would go on to rework the show for its revival in 2009.

**A note on racial tropes, stereotypes, and hypercorrection:**

- Racial tropes don't seem real and have no past or future
- Stereotypes can be positive or negative
- Hypercorrection can lead to creating more stereotypes

Think about how to avoid stereotypes and truly create a three-dimensional world with characters that are so specific and human that they too, like Romeo and Juliet, may become one for the ages. There's space for you if you choose to adapt *Romeo and Juliet* in an authentic way. You won't be able to match the *West Side Story* score with its

intricate complexities and big beautiful moments, but you may bring a simple truthful moment to the story that was missed.

Authenticity is what we strive for. Not necessarily authentic paint colors on the walls of your set or buttons on a character's dress but authenticity of a character living in a story that you can honestly write.

**This is where you take inventory of yourself and the stories you love and see how they can intersect:**

What do you believe?

What subjects are highly important to you?

What stories have you read that resonated with you?

What characters have you connected with emotionally?

What are the themes that draw you in? Justice? Man versus himself? Loneliness? Survival, etc.

**First things first. Before you choose, make sure the classic you choose is in the public domain or figure out if you need to buy the rights.**

Ideas, facts, and titles can't be copyrighted. Characters and plot structure can.

Was it published before 1926? If yes, then you're good. Shakespeare, Jane Austen, etc are all free and clear!

If you're not sure if the story you're choosing is in the public domain then do the research to find out at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov). Your librarian will gladly assist you in your research because they are trained to understand copyright law. A librarian can also assist you if you decide to formally copyright your work.

### **A few things to keep in mind while choosing a story for the remix project:**

- Situations can be changed
- Characters can be changed
- Theme is what sticks. Theme is an idea that you believe in and want to share

As you search for a classic story to remix and think about what that remix could look like, you may worry that you can only be authentic if you choose a story with a protagonist that is just like you. In her wonderful book, *Steeped In Stories: Timeless Children's Novels To Refresh Our Tired Souls*, Mitali Perkins points out, "to write any work of fiction, an author must cross *some* border of identity—such as age, class, religion, gender, race, culture, class, or education—unless the story is a memoir, in which case it isn't fiction at all."

<https://www.broadleafbooks.com/store/product/9781506469102/Steeped-in-Stories>

Which comes first, the characters and setting of a story you want to tell or deciding on a story that you want to remix? That depends on you. It's like the "which came first, the chicken or the egg" question.

### **What script format to remix to is up to you but you might want to think about:**

#### **A PLAY**

- A play is dialogue
- Speech is action
- A play is written in the present and moving to a future goal
- A one act play usually has one conflict and one location

- A play is not as realistic. It's "heightened reality"

## **A FILM**

- A film is image.
- Images are action
- Screenplays are cinematic and sweep through time and space
- Visual comes first. Then dialogue
- Adapting to film is easier (or so we've been told)

See Appendix A for:



LIBRARIAN TRY

## Chapter 2

### ***Research or Why Context Matters in Storytelling***

***"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." - Zora Neale Hurston***

\*NOTE: If you are remixing a classic fairytale or myth, you may find you don't have as much traditional research to pull from (ie. newspapers from the time period). That is ok! Take whatever is helpful from this chapter, and leave whatever is not. Maybe you will find that spending your "research period" really familiarizing yourself with the world or its characters, or all interpretations of your myth/fairytale, is a better use of your time! Follow where your curiosity leads you.\*

Before a painter embarks on painting a flower, they have to become familiar with the form. They place a flower in front of them and study the pistil, the shape of the petals, the rigidity of the stem, and all the way down to the particles of pollen resting on its surface. Only when totally familiar with it, can a painter begin to interpret, use their own hand and artistry to recreate the flower. Maybe the artist is more interested in how the

flower feels, instead of how it might literally look- so they brighten its colors and morph its shapes to assert their own artistic stamp on the flower. But they still begin with a deep understanding of the flower as it is, which gives them a solid enough footing to then make it their own.

Much like a painter, when remixing your classic story, beginning with a full understanding of the story you are pulling from will help you remix it with careful intention. If Lin-Manuel Miranda had only done a quick Wikipedia search of Alexander Hamilton's life before deciding to retell it through his own unique lens, we likely wouldn't have been exposed to the massive Broadway success of *Hamilton*. So although it may be tempting to immediately dive into writing your new take on a classic tale, allowing yourself a deep research period to spend time with the original story you are pulling from will make your adaptation process even richer.

### **What is Research?**

Western Sydney University defines research as “the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.” In simpler terms, research is relying on what we know to propel us into creating something new. To create the wheel, we had to master the shape of the circle.

To broaden what research can be even further: research is what happens when you are not writing. Most of the time, research will take place before you sit down to write for the first time, but it can also happen between writing sessions, at the library, on the internet or even on the bus on the way to school. Research is inspiration, it is any object, book, fact, song, movie, map, tree, etc. that informs and inspires your writing process.

Before sitting down to write, it is important to set a “research period” for yourself that has a set end date. Maybe one full week of research before beginning your script will prove useful. You can always dive back into the library stacks for more inspiration, but setting a limited time period to gather inspiration gives you a solid foundation to begin.

## **Finding A Writing & Research Mentor**

This is a big part of beginning your remix journey! A mentor is a person who can help guide you through the entire process of writing this story. They might help you through a specific aspect that is challenging, help you keep to a timeline, or even offer encouragement at key points. In the theatre industry, many playwrights work with artists called “dramaturgs” who work to help flesh out the content of their plays, provide feedback, and research into the time period and thematic content of the play. In novel writing, authors nearly always work with an editor who can help encourage them, edit their work, and fine tune it for publishing. Finding a mentor to help you along your project can be a massive benefit and trove of information that will prove invaluable throughout your journey. Take a moment to write down how a mentor could benefit your process. Do you need help finding research information for your project? Is writing feedback going to be most useful for you? Maybe you’d like someone who can help talk through cultural or historical elements of your piece? Having a clear idea of where you could use assistance will help you narrow down who you’d like to work with.

A mentor might come automatically to mind, but if you’re not sure who you’d like to work with or where to find them, here are some good starting points.

- **A Teacher You Trust** - One of the first places you can look when hunting for that perfect mentor is with your teachers! Your English teacher might be a good option, but we encourage you to think about all of your classes. Which of your teachers do you feel the most comfortable with? Is there a specific teaching style that you learn best from? Try talking to the teachers you most enjoy learning from first!
- **A Local Librarian** - At the time we are writing this handbook, there are over 17,000 public libraries across the country. Your local library might just be an untapped treasure trove of information, guidance, and support waiting for you! If you are unsure where your local library is, you can look up your location at [libraryfinder.org](http://libraryfinder.org) to see a map of all nearby libraries. Many libraries will have a

section specifically dedicated to children and teens, and they may even have a librarian assigned to that department specifically to help serve kids and teens in your area. Or, if your school has a library, try asking your school librarian for help!

- **A Family Member** - Your mentor doesn't have to specifically be an educator to make a fantastic mentor! Family members can make a fantastic guide for your piece, especially if you are involving your own heritage into the adaptation. Try talking to a grandparent, aunt/uncle, parent, guardian, or sibling to see if they would like to help you craft your remix!
- **A Coach, Club Leader, Tutor, or other trusted adult** - There is no limit to where you might find a mentor perfect to assist you on your project. Think about who you know and who you would enjoy working with and start there!

**\*\*Before contacting or meeting with your mentor, be sure to receive your parent or guardian's permission.\*\***

## **Reading Your Classic Story**

The first step in your research should be getting to know the work you're adapting. Start by reading the original classic story you are remixing (at least) two times:

### **First Reading:**

The first reading is to re-experience the story as an audience member, looking at it fresh like it is your very first time reading it. Remind yourself what pulled you to this source material to begin with. Was it the epic story of redemption? The three-dimensional, complex characters? Was it even the picture on the front cover?



**Tip:** read with a notebook and pen/pencil next to you. Take note of anything you notice for the first time- that's often a hint as to what parts of the story you still need to investigate.

### **Second Reading:**

The second readthrough is where you are acting as a researcher now, someone who wants to “master” this source material. Comb each paragraph for either, (a): references/mentions of things you don't know about or (b): things you might know a little bit about, but want to know more. If you are comfortable marking up a book, take a highlighter or pen to the page! If you aren't, feel free to write the page number and quote in your notebook as you read.

Examples of possible things you may want to highlight:

Mentions of:

- **Politics:** What government rules the people in this story? Who is in charge? How much political power do the characters hold?
- **Religion:** What do the people in this story believe? Where they are located- is there a dominant religion? Are their beliefs an important part of their identity?
- **Climate:** What is the weather like in this story? Does it rain a lot? Often, an author's choice of weather and setting can tell us a lot about the mood of the world (ie. how many stories have you read that at the moment of climax, it is storming outside?)
- **Culture:** What musicians are referenced? What type of art was popular at this time? Which writers? Was art at this time hopeful or bleak? Where did people get their news?

- **Language:** Are there words you don't recognize? Sayings? Is there working language that you aren't familiar with (ie. if a character is a seamstress, do they use words to describe their craft that you haven't come across before)?
- **Law:** What laws govern the people in this story? What are the punishments for breaking said laws? Does your protagonist think the laws that govern them are just?
- **What's Missing?:** Sometimes taking note of what is *not* on the page can be just as informative as what is on the page. Who isn't in this story? Is everyone in your story wealthy? Are they all children? Is there a war going on at this time period and in this place, but it isn't mentioned in the story of your choice?

Once you have your list of highlights, take note of what is most interesting or compelling to you and then ask questions. These questions should come from your pure curiosity: what about this story excites you?

For example, maybe you notice that your classic story takes place in a country you've never been to and know very little about. *And* you notice that the characters in this story seem to place a lot of value on their families. You might ask the question: how does the location of this story affect their familial relationships? What are the values of this country during this era?

Out of these questions, your research journey begins.

## **Dive In!**

**The two paths you can (and should!) go down when you research your classic story:**

**Inside The Story:** Examining the story on its own, pulling from the words on the page to begin your research process. It is research that is blind to the greater cultural context and impact of your classic story.

**Outside the Story:** Once this story was released into the world- how was it received? How did it change its audiences? How did people respond to it then vs. now? What other stories has it affected?

Deep research into both of these paths will provide a more round understanding of the story you are adapting.

### **Inside the Story**

Using your list of highlights/things you want to know more about, begin to research your story and its context! There are two types of sources you can research from:

#### **Primary Sources:**

Research that is closest to the source of information! These are accounts of an event that are written by someone who experienced it firsthand.

Examples of primary sources include:

- Diaries
- Letters
- Memoirs
- Journals
- Speeches
- Manuscripts
- Newspaper Articles
- Photographs
- Video Recordings

- Etc.

If your classic story takes place in 18th Century Paris, a primary resource could include portrait paintings, fashion drawings, diary entries, newspaper clippings, etc. from that era. This source would be important if you wanted to capture the mood/attitude of the people in this era.

### **Secondary Sources:**

Research that interprets primary sources, written by someone who didn't witness an event but is analyzing it in retrospect.

Examples of secondary sources include:

- Scholarly Journals
- Books
- Documentaries
- Historical Articles
- Etc.

If your classic story takes place in 18th Century Paris, a secondary resource might be a historian writing about this era two decades later, analyzing the art scene at the time with a wide lens, exploring how this era was distinct from others. This source would be important if you wanted to analyze this era and how it changed through time.

Both primary and secondary sources are essential to pull from to have a deep understanding of your story's context, but it may prove useful to begin with primary sources.

### **Outside the Story**

To research “outside of the story” is to examine the greater cultural context of your story and what made it “a classic”.

Questions you may ask when researching outside of a story:

- How was the story received when first released?
- How is it received now?
- Has this book ever been “banned”?
- Who wrote this?

**Biographical information on the author** can often illuminate how their experiences shaped their writing

- What has the author said about why they wrote this?
- Was the context (ie. era/location) of the story the same as the one the author was writing in?
- Who were the author’s contemporaries (ie. who else was writing at the time)? What were they writing about? How is what this author is writing about similar/different from their contemporaries?
- When else has this story been adapted? Why do people keep adapting it? And what mediums have they used to adapt it?

### **Where to Look?**

There are limitless free places to begin your research journey, but below are a few starting points to begin:

In Person:

- Your Local Public Library/Librarian
- Your School/School Library

Online:

- The U.S. Library of Congress
- The National Archives
- The Avalon Project
- *Life Magazine* Photo Archive
- Smithsonian Institution Collections
- + Many more through your local library

Once you have begun to develop a deeper understanding of your source material, you will be able to sort through what aspects of the source material you want to keep in your remix and what aspects are no longer necessary for the story *you* want to tell.

### **What to Do With Your Research?**

As you are coming to the end of your research period, you may be asking: now what do I do with all of this? There is no set way to organize/use your research, and each process is different, but it is often helpful to organize your research into smaller sub-categories so that it is manageable.

It can be helpful to move all the research from your head to sticky notes to then put up on your wall. That way, you can organize your ideas with your hands, seeing how all of the information fits together. If any of your research is art/pictures, put those up on the wall too!

Potential subcategories to place your research under are:

- **Emotional/Mood Research:** how does this world feel?
- **Character Research:** who are the people in this world?
- **Setting Research:** where are we?
- **Time Period Research:** when are we?
- **Author Research:** who wrote this? what were they like?
- **Whatever category makes sense for the research you have/the story you are trying to tell!**

Once you see your research in front of you, set a timer for 10 minutes and free-write as to how it all connects, what questions it brings up and, most importantly, what sparks your curiosity the most? What research is pulling on you? Inside of those answers lives the story you want to tell.

### **Drawing Connections:**

A great place to begin in finding your story inside of the research you have pulled is to draw connections between the era of the classic story and other eras. For example:

Was a war occurring during your classic story? Maybe this was a war born out of disparities in wealth in your story's society? What other major world events does this remind you of? When/where did those take place?

You can also use yourself to draw connections! Where do your experiences and the experiences of the protagonist in the story you are remixing overlap? Where do they differ? Your life is just as (and sometimes more) exciting of a research subject as the original story.

Once you have chosen the context of your remixed story, you can go through the same research process with this new era and begin to draw connections between the original story's context and the context you are writing in!

### **Non-Traditional Research**

***“My idea of research is to take a walk in the bush and watch the birds fly past, and I am exhilarated by every meteoric movement,” - Lars Knudsen***

Often when we think of research we think in a very traditionally academic way: books, journals, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. We often prioritize the written word as the most valid form of research, but there are many other, equally valid ways to research.

Many cultures do not pass along information through written word but orally, through practices and rituals of storytelling.

There are as many types of learners as there are people in the world, and research processes are individual. Follow *your* curiosity! If databases aren't your forte, find a way to research that fits you!

Some other, non-traditional, ways to research:

- Observing/Being With Nature
- Listening to Music
- Interviewing Others
- Going to an Art Museum
- Site Visits (ie. seeing a battleground)
- Respectfully Participating in Cultural Events (ie. attending religious services)

Talking to people now living is a great way to research in a way that celebrates the humanity and community surrounding us! History is not a static thing- it is breathing all around you and unfolding. So many stories that haven't been told sit in each of us. Did someone in your community live through an event in your story or something similar? Did their family members live through said event? Do they have a personal connection to your ReMix that you are curious about? Often, history misses a key element to any major world event: it's *humanity*. Connecting with someone face-to-face or over the phone is a way to bring that humanity back into your story!

Similar to finding a mentor- rely on the trusted adults to help connect you with people to interview. It is important, before interviewing, to discuss the boundaries of your work with them. Make sure they are aware of and consent to how you may use this interview to inspire your story, how they will be credited in your work and what topics they are/aren't willing to discuss in this interview. If you end up directly referencing or using a part of their interview in your story, consider reaching out to them first to make sure they



consent to how you use it! Remember that interviewing someone is just as much about connection as it is about research; remember to care for the people and their feelings before you care for your ReMix.

### **Tips for Researching**

1. Don't use it all! You can't possibly insert every bit of research you've collected into your piece.
2. You can't know everything! Knowing when to stop researching is just as important as knowing when to start.
3. Balance accuracy with fun. Not every story is 100% accurate, and that's ok! The key is to know what rules you are breaking, and why it is important to break them.
4. Bibliographies are your friend- if you are reading a journal/source that seems to be very well researched- check their bibliographies to learn where they are getting their information from!
5. Cite where you are getting your research from and give credit.
  - For more information on citing, see <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
6. Know where you are getting your information from. If you are unsure if your source is a trustworthy one, research its reputability.

### **Activity: Newspaper Theater**

Looking for an activity that can help you take your research and turn it into performance? Try this version of Augusto Boal's "Newspaper Theater Technique" (adapted for the benefit of this handbook) detailed in his book, *Theater of the Oppressed*. This activity requires a group!

**Step One:** Find a primary source newspaper article from the period of your classic story. Pick one that speaks to you and that you are curious about. Print this out.

**Step Two:** Find a second primary source newspaper article from the period you are remixing the story to. Pick one that speaks to you and you are curious about. Print this out.

\*If you are not changing the time period of your classic story, try a newspaper article from that time period that explores something your classic story does not (ie. issues of gender, class, etc.)

**Step Three: Crossed Reading**

Have one person read each article out loud, alternating line by line. Note how these articles shed light on each other- how they might be in conversation.

**Step Four: Complimentary Reading**

Have one person read the newspaper article from the period of your classic story. Have the other person verbally add in information that is missing/omitted from the article.

\*Ie. if the article is about a battle- what information did the newspaper leave out? Can be real or imagined!

**Step Five: Parallel Action**

Both articles are read out loud while actors mime the action of the newspaper article as it is made. Literally acting out the details of the newspaper article.

See how easily research can become theater?

Take some time to journal, answering the questions:

1. What stuck out? What did you notice?

2. What did placing these articles next to each other tell you about them?

3. How are these time periods in conversation?

4. What are their similarities and differences?

See Appendix B for:



LIBRARIAN TRY

## Chapter Three

### ***Building Your Structure***

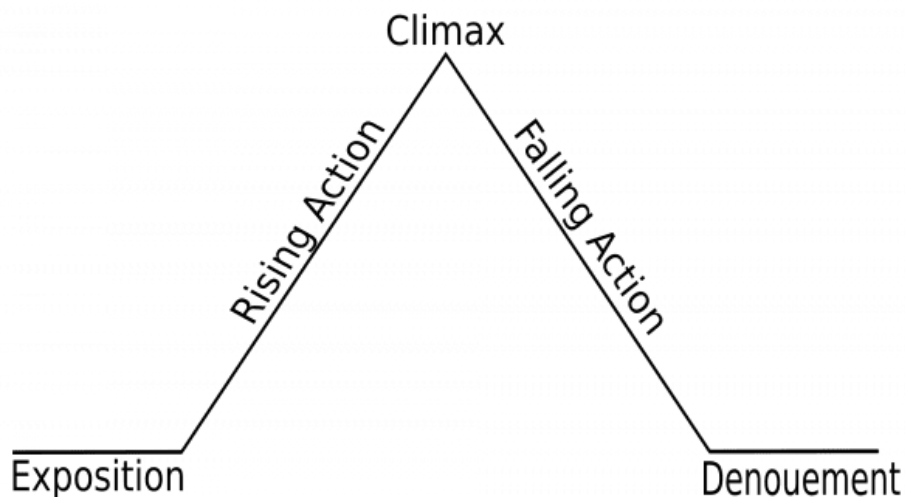
#### Building Your Structure

Perhaps the most essential element when crafting your Remix, or any story for that matter, is the essential question of *what happens and why, and what changes as a result*. Or, in simpler terms, to write a story you need to know what the story itself is! When it comes to remixing an existing tale, you have the benefit of an existing plot structure to go off of. To start creating the roadmap of *your take* on this classic, you must first understand the ins and outs of the story as it exists now. To do so, we're going to break your chosen classic apart into its essential elements using one of the most widely-used writing structure guides: **Freytag's Pyramid**.

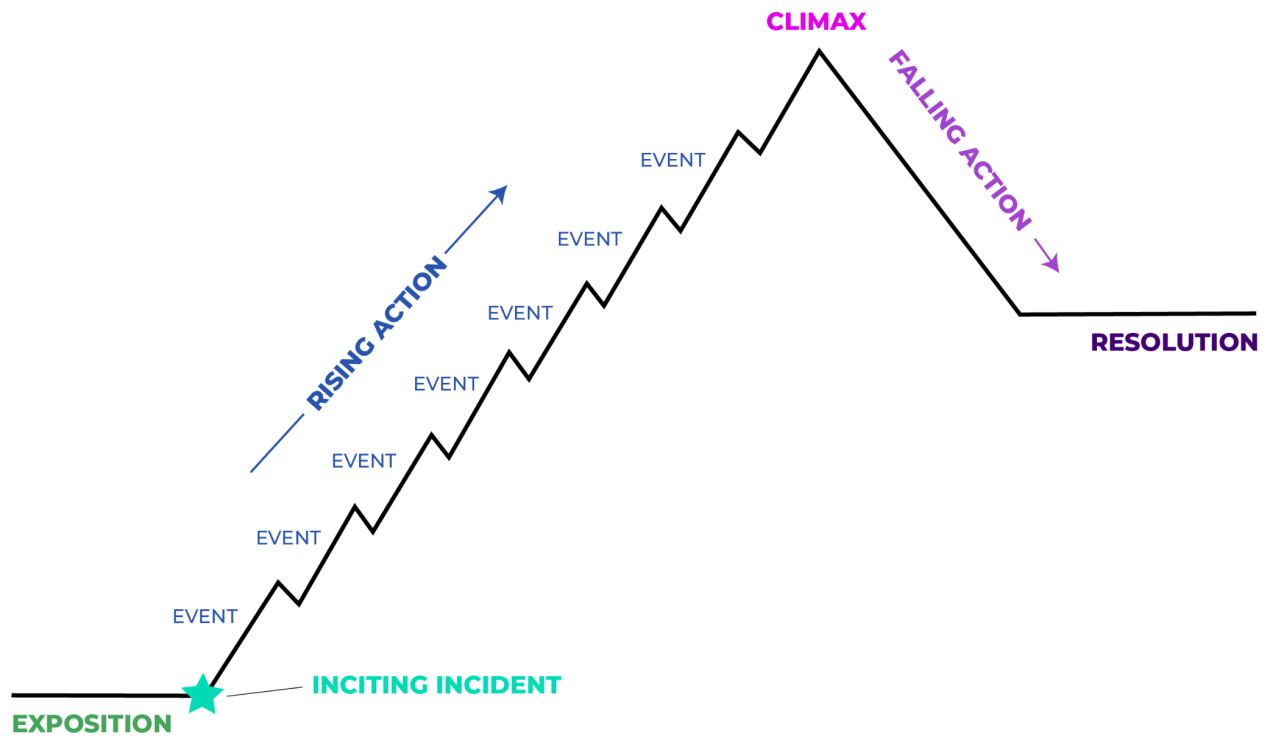
Before we jump in, it's important to acknowledge that there are countless philosophers and writers who have attempted to create a definitive guide for the structure of a story. There is no one "right" way to map out your story. If you are finding Freytag's Pyramid is not fitting with your story, try exploring other plot structures like The Hero's Journey, Dan Harmon's Story Circle, The Fichtean Curve, Seven-Point Story Structure, or build your own by writing down each key event in the story and looking at the cause and effect that string them together. As long as you can start your process with a key understanding of

the existing plot elements in your pre-remixed classic, you'll be in good standing to start changing elements and making the story your own.

When 19th-century German novelist and playwright, Gustav Freytag created this pyramid, it was formed around a five-point dramatic structure based on the classical Greek tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripedes. It had five key elements: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Denouement (French for “the ending”).



This creates stories that spend an equal amount of time in the exciting rising action as in the somewhat-less-engaging falling action. If you are remixing a Greek or Shakespearean play, mythological epic, folk tale, children's story, or something else of the kind, you may see this more traditional structure represented in the original version. For our purposes, we will be looking at a somewhat more modernized version of the triangle which builds in a couple additional key elements. That pyramid looks a bit more like this:



## EXPOSITION

This section of our story presents the world before the story begins. This is often where readers or audiences learn about the main characters and setting of the tale. The end of the exposition is marked by the **inciting incident**, which launches us into the story. Without the inciting incident, the world we are introduced to in the exposition would remain unchanged.

Let's look at a classic example: Cinderella.

Think about the beginning of Cinderella before anything happens in her story. In the first couple minutes, we know that Cinderella is a young woman living with her evil stepmother and stepsisters. We also know that her father and mother have passed away and that she is treated very poorly. In the exposition we also learn that despite these misfortunes, she is kind hearted and dreams of a better life for herself. Without

the inciting incident that is about to occur, Cinderella would remain in the home with her stepmother and sisters destined to forever scrub the floors and wash the dishes.

### INCITING INCIDENT

The **inciting incident** is the event that starts the main conflict of the story. After this moment, our characters are thrust into the story that will forever change their world that we learned about in the exposition. Inciting incidents can be as dramatic as a bomb going off or as subtle as a flick of the eyes, but the impact of this moment must be grand and instantaneous.

Again taking our example of Cinderella, the moment that it is announced to the town that “the prince is having a ball!” everything changes. The stepsisters are instantly obsessed with wooing the prince and their mother is determined to keep Cinderella home. For the first time in our story, Cinderella is offered a window of hope of a different life and we are off to the races (or, off to the **rising action** that is)!

### RISING ACTION

This section is the meat and potatoes of your story broadly defined as “the series of events leading up to the climax of the story.” Often, the rising action is depicted as a straight line directly up to the **climax**, but in fact each **event** that occurs along this path actually follows a mini Freytag’s triangle of its own. They have a beginning similar to the exposition, a middle with complication and a climax, and finally a resolution with the outcome of the climax.

There are many events in Cinderella that lead up to the eventual climactic moment. Let’s zoom in on two of these events and see how they follow a similar triangular structure:

EVENT : Cinderella tries to go to the ball with her step sisters.

**Beginning:** Cinderella sews her own dress in order to go to the ball

**Complication:** The stepsisters are jealous of how beautiful she looks and do not want her to go.

**Climax:** They rip apart Cinderella's dress.

**Resolution:** Cinderella runs to the garden in tears, unable to go to the ball.

*\*Note: This resolution then serves as the new beginning for our next event!*

EVENT: The Fairy Godmother appears and grants Cinderella's wishes to go to the ball.

**Beginning:** Cinderella is in tears in the garden because she is unable to go to the ball.

**Complication:** Her fairy godmother appears.

**Climax:** The fairy godmother makes her a beautiful dress and carriage that will last until Midnight so that she can go to the ball

**Resolution:** Cinderella leaves to go to the ball in her new gown, knowing she can only stay until midnight.

These series of events continue, often ramping up in pace and excitement until we reach our Climax.

## CLIMAX

Things in the story have bubbled and bubbled and now they finally reach their boiling point with the climax, also known as a *point of no return*. It is at this moment where the most intense crisis found in the narrative and the biggest question of the story is answered. It is often called the point of no return because it is the moment our main character can never return to their normal life (which we saw in the exposition).

Immediately after this event, we are tossed into the falling action and all the wrap up details to conclude our story.



Going back to Cinderella, what might the climactic moment be?

You might be tempted to point to the moment the clock is striking 12 and Cinderella runs from the castle so that the Prince won't see her in her ripped dress. This is certainly an exciting and high stakes moment that changes what is about to happen next, but it is not yet the climax. As she is dashing from the ball with her carriage popping back into a pumpkin and her dress dissolving around her, we still have a handful of major events to come. We also know that if the story were to end there with her running home, she would return to her normal life as a poorly treated maid thus proving it is not yet our point of no return.

The climax comes in the moment when the Prince sees Cinderella again and tries the shoe on her. In a moment of high stakes and anticipation, he slips the shoe onto her foot aaaaaannndddd it fits! We have reached the resolution of our climax and into the falling action we tumble.

### FALLING ACTION

In most modern stories, the falling action moves pretty quickly. This section of the story is the pulling of all the loose strings getting ready to tie that final pretty bow on your tale.

In Cinderella, immediately after the slipper is popped onto her foot, the prince proposes to her, she accepts and is whisked away from her stepmother and sisters off to the palace. She meets the King and Queen who love her and we are perfectly poised for the famous final sentence of this story.

### RESOLUTION

This one explains itself! The resolution of a story is the ending. It is where we find ourselves after all the questions of the story have been answered and we are ready to close the book, roll the credits, or come out for the final bow.

In Cinderella– “and they all lived happily ever after.”

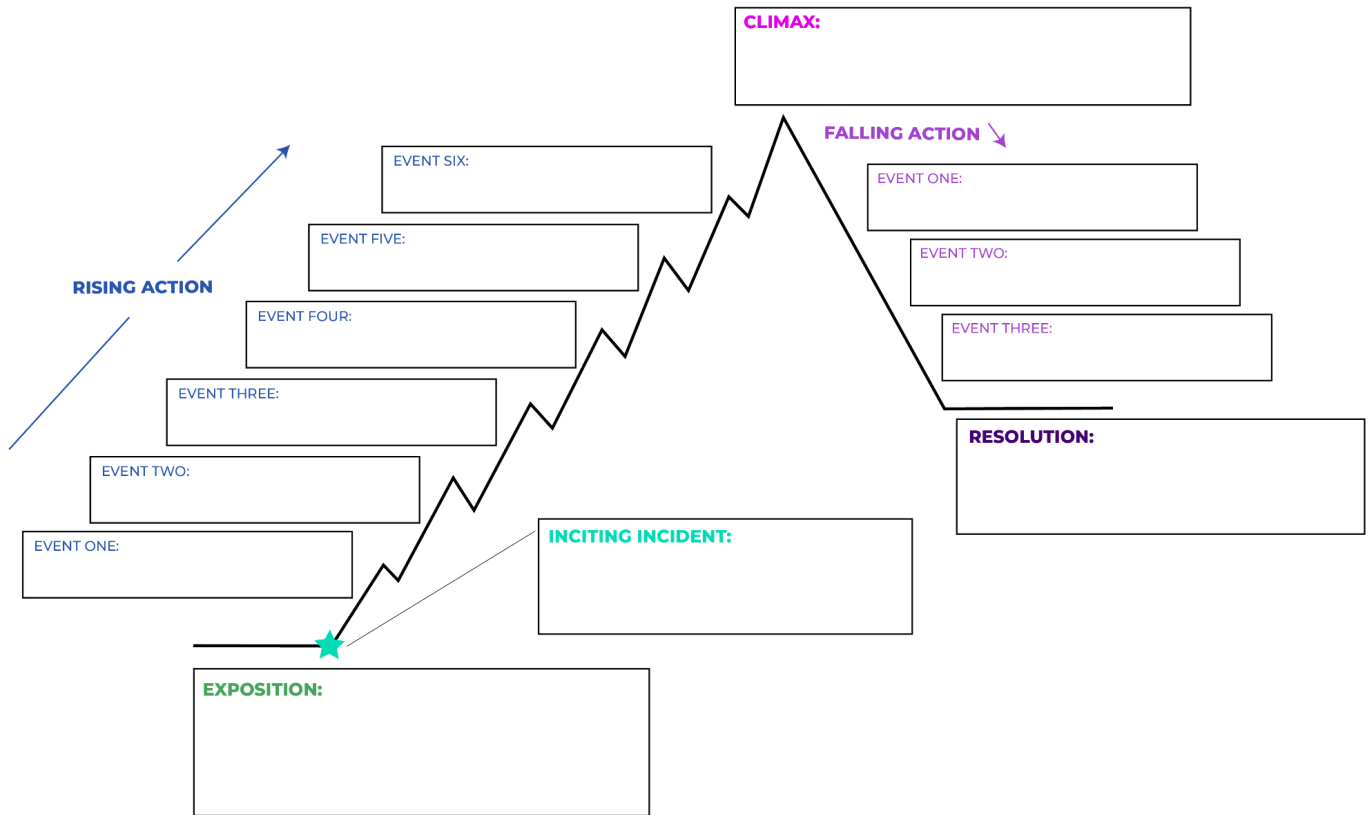
Now it's your turn! In this notebook or in a separate document, fill in the plot structure for your classic as it exists in the original version.

1. **Exposition** – How does your story start? What essential details do we learn before the story begins?
2. **Inciting Incident** – What happens that kicks off the events of your story?
3. **Climax** – Going slightly out of order, what moment is the absolute height of your story? Also known as the point of no return, this moment should be immediately followed by the falling action and resolution of your tale.
4. **Rising Action** – What are 5-10 key events that happen after the inciting incident that directly lead up to the climax?

**5. Falling Action** – What happens directly after the climax? What loose ends need to be tied up? Try to list 2-4 events.

**6. Resolution** – What is the final resolution of the piece? This can sometimes be presented as a moral of the story in classic tales, or simply the way the piece is concluded.

*Now plug these events directly into this diagram, reordering or adjusting wherever needed. If you need additional space, feel free to add boxes or draw this pyramid shape on a separate piece of paper.*



## REMIXING PLOT

Now that you have a good understanding of the way your original story's plot works, it's time to make it your own! To do so, let's start by looking back at *Romeo and Juliet* and using the example of perhaps the most famous remix of all, *West Side Story*.

### ROMEO AND JULIET

#### EXPOSITION:

We learn there is a feud between two rival families, the Montagues and the Capulets, and that the story is set in "fair Verona." We meet Romeo, a Capulet, who is introduced to us as a lovesick and dashing young man, and we meet Juliet, a Montague, who is in an arranged marriage and daydreaming of true love.

#### INCITING INCIDENT:

The Capulets hold a ball at the Capulet mansion. Romeo and Juliet meet and instantly fall in love.

### WEST SIDE STORY

#### EXPOSITION:

We learn there is a feud between **two rival gangs, the Sharks and the Jets**, and that the story is set in **New York City**. We meet **Tony, a member of the Jets**, who is introduced to us as a lovesick and dashing young man, and we meet **Maria, sister to one of the Sharks**, daydreaming of true love.

#### INCITING INCIDENT:

**The Sharks and the Jets** attend a **dance** at the **gym**. **Tony and Maria** meet and instantly fall in love.

---

**The setup is pretty close to the original, but we see some key differences!**

- 1. The primary conflict is between rival gangs instead of families. This tells us there will likely be a heightened sense of violence throughout this story.**
  - 2. Conflict is divided on cultural lines. This means this story has an additional layer of historical complexity to the plot and the relationships within it.**
  - 3. The time period is vastly different. This changes the priorities of characters, the way they speak and act, and the way the authority figures around them affect the choices they make.**
-

RISING ACTION:

*Event One*

Tybalt (Juliet's cousin) is angry with Romeo for crashing the Capulet party, but Lord Capulet stops Tybalt from challenging Romeo to a sword fight at the party. Tybalt leaves and plots his revenge.

*Event Two*

Romeo and Juliet meet in secret on Juliet's balcony. They profess their love to each other and decide to get married.

*Event Three*

Romeo goes to Friar Lawrence to arrange the marriage. The Friar reluctantly agrees to marry them in secret, hoping their union might help to end the feud.

*Event Four*

Tybalt sends Romeo a letter challenging him to a duel because he is still angry at Romeo for coming to the Capulet party, but Romeo was not home to receive it.

*Event Five*

Romeo tells Juliet's nurse to tell Juliet to meet him at Friar Lawrence's place that night where they will be married. The nurse reluctantly agrees and passes along the message.

*Event Six*

Romeo and Juliet are married in secret by Friar Lawrence.

*Event Seven*

Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt. Romeo arrives, and Tybalt challenges him. Romeo refuses, so Mercutio fights Tybalt. Tybalt kills Mercutio, so Romeo kills Tybalt.

RISING ACTION:

*Event One*

Bernardo (Maria's brother) is angry at Tony for dancing with his sister, but Tony's buddy Riff intervenes and agrees to meet Bernardo later to discuss holding a "rumble" to settle the conflict between the two gangs.

*Event Two*

Tony and Maria meet in secret on Maria's balcony. The two profess their love and talk about their future.

*Event Three*

Tony tells Doc, the shop owner where Tony works, about Maria. Doc is worried for them while Tony is convinced that nothing can go wrong.

*Event Four*

The Jets and Sharks meet to discuss the terms of their upcoming fight. Tony suggests "a fair fight" (no weapons allowed), which all eventually agree to.

*Event Five*

Maria learns about the upcoming rumble from her brother's girlfriend, Anita. Maria begs Tony not to fight and to stop the rumble from happening the next day.

*Event Six*

Maria and Tony sing a song dreaming about their future wedding.

*Event Seven*

The two gangs meet for the rumble. Tony arrives, and Bernardo challenges him. Tony refuses, so Riff ends up fighting Bernardo. Bernardo kills Riff, so Tony kills Bernardo.

The Prince orders that Romeo be banished and Romeo leaves.

*Event Eight*

The Nurse tells Juliet about Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. Juliet makes a plan with Friar Lawrence to fake her own death and run away with Romeo.

*Event Nine*

Friar Lawrence gives Juliet a pill that will make her appear dead for two days and sends Romeo a letter telling him to come so they can sneak away together.

*Event Ten*

Romeo never gets the letter telling him Juliet is not actually dead. The Capulets discover Juliet's "dead" body, and Romeo's servant Balthazar tells him that she has died.

Tony flees the scene when police arrive and goes into hiding.

*Event Eight*

Chino tells Maria that Tony has killed Bernardo. Maria and Tony make a plan to meet at Doc's where Tony has been hiding out and then run away together.

*Event Nine*

Anita tells Maria that Chino is out looking to kill Tony. Maria convinces Anita to go to Doc's to tell Tony to stay there where he's safe and wait for her.

*Event Ten*

After being taunted with racist slurs and assaulted by The Jets, Anita spitefully delivers the wrong message, telling the Jets that Chino has shot Maria dead.

---

**Each event along the way follows the same general path as the story from Romeo and Juliet, while also taking some liberties with the story.**

**The essential tale however is the same: Feuding groups with star crossed lovers who try to be together against all odds. Violence foils their hope of being together within their community and when they try to escape a failure of communication leads them to their respective tragic climaxes.**

---

**CLIMAX:**

Romeo arrives back in Verona to find Juliet "dead" and poisons himself out of grief. Juliet wakes up from the drug and finds Romeo lying dead next to her. She tries to kiss the poison off of his lips but when that doesn't work, she takes Romeo's dagger and kills herself as well to be with him.

**CLIMAX:**

Stricken with grief, Tony goes out into the streets shouting for Chino to kill him. Maria arrives, revealing that she's alive and they run to each other, but Chino steps out and shoots Tony before they are able to embrace. Maria takes the gun and condemns the hate in the world. She threatens to kill herself, but does not fire the gun.

FALLING ACTION:

*Event One:*

Watchmen find the pair's bodies and the Prince as well as the Capulets and Montagues all arrive.

*Event Two*

Friar Lawrence and Balthazar are arrested

*Event Three*

All learn what happened and realize what their feud has done to these two lovers.

FALLING ACTION:

*Event One:*

Police arrive at the scene to find The Jets and Sharks standing over Tony's body and the grieving Maria.

*Event Two*

Chino is taken away by police

*Event Three*

A mixture of Sharks and Jets carry away Tony's body. Maria exits alone.

RESOLUTION:

The Prince scolds the grieving Lord Capulet and Lord Montague, who finally agree to end their feud.

RESOLUTION:

It is implied, but not specifically shown, that by carrying away Tony's body together, the rivalry between the Sharks and the Jets has ended.

---

**Despite the different twists and turns along the way, we land at roughly the same conclusion. A tragic scene of death and heartbreak brings two warring groups to see the error of their ways and end the violence between them.**

---

Now it's time for you to try remixing your classic! Answer the questions below and then try filling in the plot points on another Freytag's Pyramid. Think about the ways your adaptation lines up with the structure of the original, and where it might divert and take its own path.

1. **Exposition** – How does your story start? What is different about this world from the original? What is the same? How might those differences affect the way the story unfolds?



2. **Inciting Incident** – What happens that kicks off the events of your story? Is this changed from the original and why?

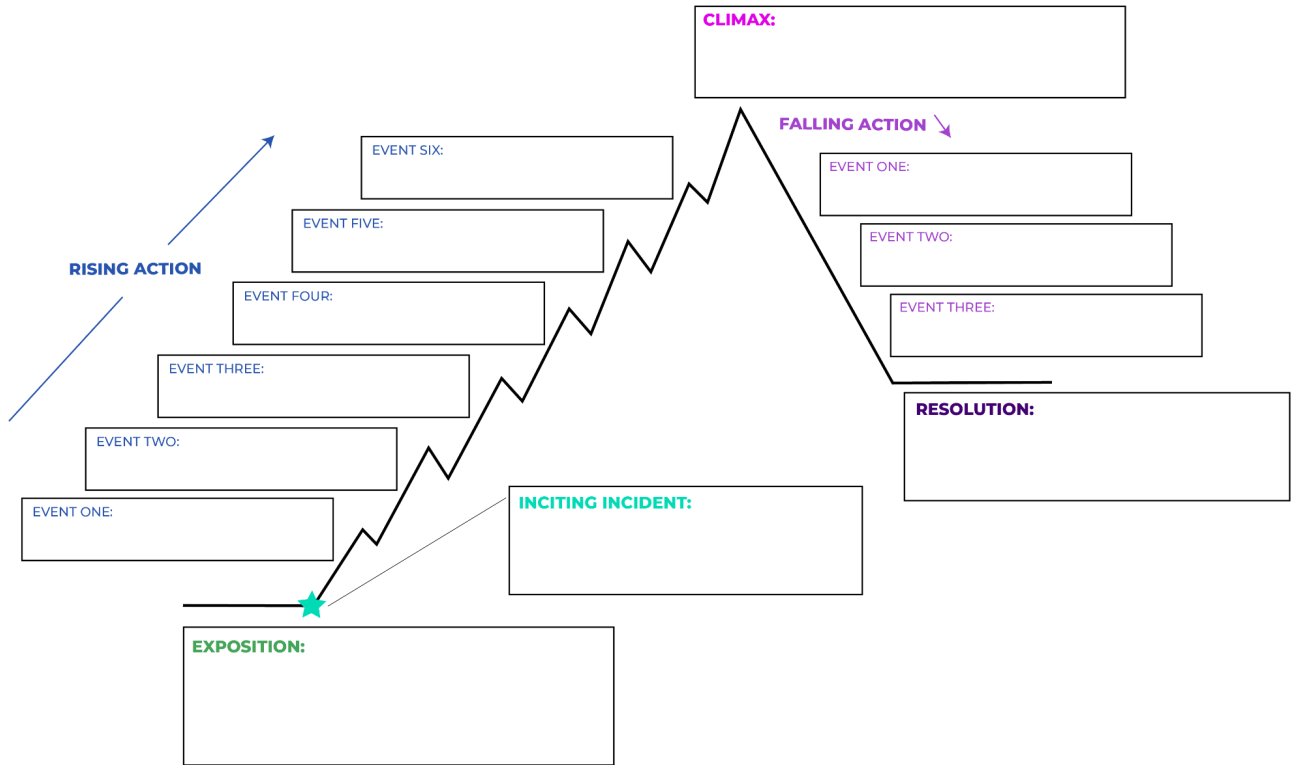
3. **Climax** – What moment is the absolute height of your story? Most adaptations will mirror their climax fairly closely to that of the original. Does yours take a different route? Why or why not?

4. **Rising Action** – What are 5-10 key events that happen after the inciting incident that directly lead up to the climax?

5. **Falling Action** – What happens directly after the climax? What loose ends need to be tied up? Try to list 2-4 events.

6. **Resolution** – What is the final resolution of the piece? Does it resolve in the same way as your classic?

*If it is helpful, map out the events of your remix along this figure, or draw your own!*



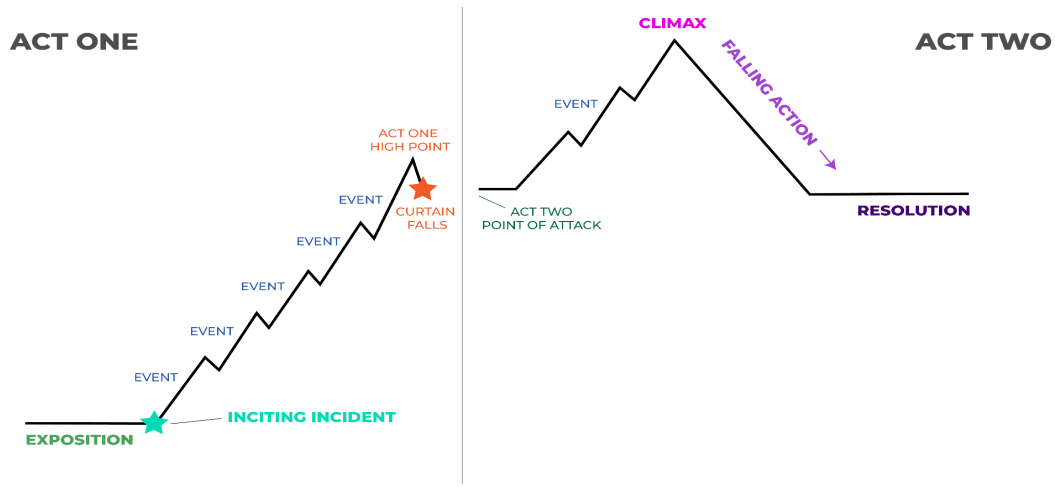
## TURNING PLOT INTO STRUCTURE

If you are turning your story into a play for the stage or screen, you will need to think about the Act structure of your piece. An act is simply a major division of a play built out of multiple scenes. As you flesh out the major story points of your play, it's a good idea to pick which act structure you'd like to use and then group the events of your story into specific acts.

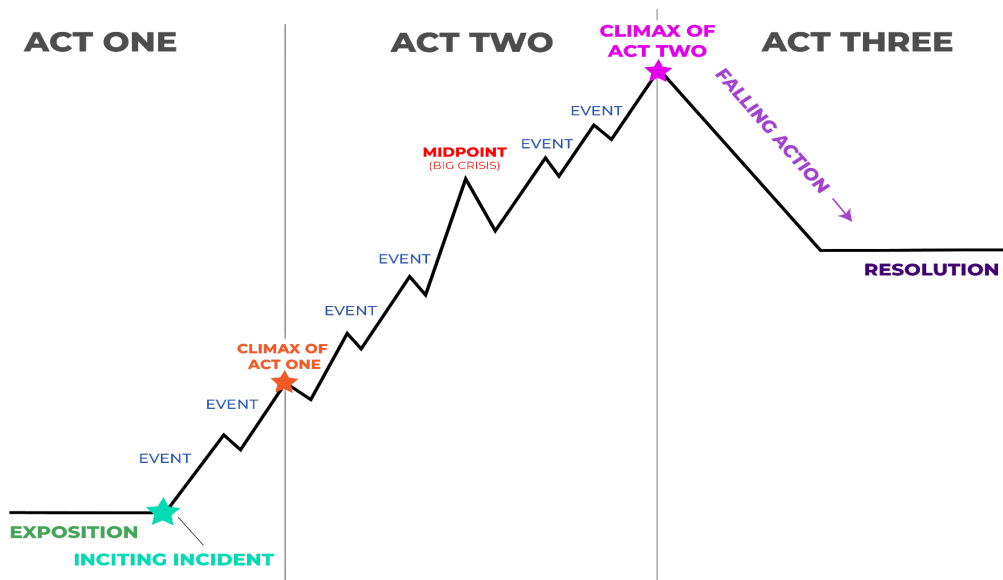
The most common act structures for contemporary plays are:

- **One-act structure:** These stories generally have more direct plots with no major twists and turns or side plots. They generally run anywhere from 10 minutes to about half an hour. In theatre, one-acts typically never have an intermission. If your story has a smaller number of “events” along the pyramid, this structure might be for you!
- **Two-act structure:** Most contemporary plays use this structure. It consists of two major parts and, if your play is longer than 90 minutes, an intermission will be taken in the middle. The first act will capture the exposition, inciting incident and rising action, then end on a high point or cliffhanger to keep the audience excited to come back for act two. Act two picks up where we left off, quickly brings us to

our climax, and then wraps up the story in our falling action and resolution. This alters our above pyramid slightly so that it might look something like this:



- Three-act structure:** This is the most complex contemporary story structure, and generally is most common for full length films or grand plays. This form breaks our plot pyramid into three parts. It follows roughly the same format but with the key addition of an act one climax (which follows the same “point of no return” rules, but does not answer the essential question of the story yet), and a midpoint or big crisis smack in the middle of act two. These additions help drive a longer and more complex story forward and keep audiences engaged. If this is your first time writing a script, you might want to stick with a simpler one act or two act structure. If you’re ready for a bigger challenge, then dive into the three act structure!



Go back to the story map you wrote out and think about the elements of the different act structures. Draw a line (in pencil) anywhere you think an act break could fall. You may find you want to change this as you begin to write, but for now you can keep that as a rough guide for your story.

*Note: If you are writing a play and have a major shift in your story (ex. a new setting, jump forward in time, changing of characters, etc) an act break can be a good way to both provide a clean break in the story for audiences, and give creative teams time to switch over set pieces, have actors change costumes, or any other big practical changes that need to take place.*

See Appendix C for:



LIBRARIAN TRY

## Chapter Four

### *Character*

#### **Remix the character**

There are no rules, so please take these examples as a source of inspiration. However, if you feel compelled to try something else, then go for it. Follow your passions and your unique voice. You can be as faithful to the original source material as you choose, but you can also use it as a starting point for your own creation.

It's important to identify why you are drawn to the original material. What is it about the piece of writing that you find interesting or moving? What about the characters speak to you? How do they make you feel?

Then think about what you want to add to the character to remix them. What do I want to change and why?

You can add and change as much as you like, but make sure you keep going back to why you enjoyed the story and character in the first place. Keep checking back to see if you are still happy with every update.

**Did you know that *Mean Girls* was inspired by a non fiction novel called *Queen Bees and Wannabes*? Tina Fey (the writer of *Mean Girls*) used the observations the author had written about teenagers and the effects of cliques on girls as inspiration for the plot, but the characters were all remixed.**

Adapting/Remixing is incredibly unique, as it needs 3 essential ingredients: a clear central character, a character goal, and obstacles. This will give your adaption focus, clarity, and direction for the audience to follow the story.

- The main character needs to want something specific, and it is their desire to achieve that aim which propels the action along.
- Obstacles are what they experience along the way, keeping them from reaching that goal as quickly or as painlessly as they would like.
- Finding these elements in the source work should be any adapter/remixer's first job. Remember these can be remixed and embellished to tell the story you want to tell.

**Did you know *Legally Blonde* is based on a novel by American novelist Amanda Brown that inspired both the film and musical?**

### **Creating your Character:**

It's important to establish a noticeable base early on, so the audience can understand where your character starts, and later, ends.

You can start with how your character feels and acts at the start of the story. What is their past? Why are they who they are today? How do they feel about others? What are their fears and dreams?

Now that you have an understandable base, your next goal is to develop a sense of progression for the character's adaption as the story continues. You can do this through plot, obstacles, antagonists, goals and character interactions.

The end goal is to have a noticeable (or subtle) contrast between point A (the character at the beginning) and point B (the same character at the end).

What are the characters' arcs in the story?

What events happen in the story that change and shift the character's perspective?

Pay attention to the character's motivation and how that evolves throughout the story.

When adapting, you might want to try re-telling the story back to yourself after you have read the source and trust your subconscious to remember the bits that matter.

Also, pay attention to how the author ends chapters. These are important turning points.

Exercise: Try writing 10 key moments your main character goes through in the original story.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)



10)

**Did you know Disney's *Frozen* is originally based on a story by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen called *The Snow Queen*. The same writer is also responsible for *The Little Mermaid* and *The Princess and the Pea*.**

Now that you have explored your main character's journey in the original source, we can now have fun by adding things or taking them away to make it our own.

Again going back to the important question: What do I want to change and why?

Do I want to change the time period? Do we want to bring it to the modern day to make it feel fresh and relevant? How does this change the character? Remember that a person nowadays will act very differently to someone from the 1800s. Their problems and obstacles might be very different.

Do I want to change the place or ethnicity of the characters? This can be an exciting and interesting way to take well-known characters from the novel and set them in a different culture or context. Setting the action somewhere else can allow for a fascinating fresh perspective on the original story. It might completely change the characters and allow for very exciting new possibilities.

Remember: it's important the work speaks to you as an artist! There are so many exciting possibilities for remixing and adding your own individual flair.

How to use these character development questions? These character questions are here to unlock your imagination and delve deeper into the characteristics that make up your protagonist. You can use as much information from the original source material as you like and feel free to change it up to add your unique spin.

**Do:**

- Start by looking at the questions below and get an idea of the section.
- Approach it as a brainstorm exercise.
- Mix it up so you add your own interpretation.

- Allow your mind to go down a rabbit hole, if one question inspires you to write an entire scene from that character's history, that's fantastic!
- Understand that your in-depth knowledge of the character will bleed into your writing, even if the vast majority of this information is never written in your manuscript.

**Don't:**

- Try to answer all of the questions for any given character.
- Feel you have to go through the questions in order.

**Questions About Your Character**

1. Who am I?

Who is your character? Identify all the details: name, age, physical traits, education, personal opinions, likes, dislikes, fears, ethics and beliefs.

2. What time is it?

The year, the season, the day, the minute. What is the significance of time?

3. Where am I?

Identify the country, the city/town, the neighborhood, the building, the room or the specific area of the room.

4. What surrounds me?

What is happening in the environment around you? Weather, landscape, people, animate/inanimate objects?

5. What are the given circumstances?

Identify events in the past, present, and future. What has happened? What is happening? What is going to happen?

6. What are my relationships?

This is more than your relationship to other people. Think about your relationship to objects, characters and events.

7. What do I want?

What does your character want immediately? What do they want overall?

8. What is in my way?

What are the obstacles to getting what your character wants?

9. What do I do to get what I want?

What actions does your character take (both physically and verbally)? What tactics do they use?

### **Questions About Your Character's Background and Lifestyle**

1 Where were they born?

2 Who are their parents?

3 Where do they live?

4 What do they do for a living?

5 What is their greatest achievement?

6 What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to them?

7 If we searched their name on Google, what would we find?

8 When was the first time they fell in love?

9 What is their biggest secret?

10 What is their greatest regret?

11 Do they have any bad habits?

12 Did they attend high school? College?

13 What's the worst thing that's ever happened to them?

### **Questions About Your Character's Interests**

1 What do they like to do for fun?

2 What's their favorite food?

3 What does your character do for entertainment?

4 What do they like to do with their friends?

5 Do they have any hobbies?

6 What's their favorite color?

7 What is the greatest extravagance they allow themselves?

8 What is their most treasured possession?

9 Which living person would they most want to meet? Which dead person?

### **Questions About Your Character's Relationships**

- 1 Who do they consider their closest friend or best friend?
- 2 Do they have a romantic partner?
- 3 Which family members are they close with?
- 4 With whom do they share their deepest secrets?
- 5 Do they have any co-workers they're close with? Any they can't stand?
- 6 Who do they trust? Who do they not trust?
- 7 Who would they turn to for help?
- 8 What is their relationship like with their parents?

### **Questions About Your Character's Thoughts and Emotions**

- 1 What is their spirit animal?
- 2 What are their biggest pet peeves?
- 3 Do they consider themselves an introvert or an extrovert?
- 4 What does perfect happiness look like to them?
- 5 What is their greatest fear? What keeps them up at night?
- 6 Are they a glass-half-full or glass-half-empty kind of person?

**Did you know that *Shrek* is based on a children's picture book by William Steig? He was a cartoonist, illustrator and author.**

See Appendix D for:



LIBRARIAN TRY

## Chapter Five

### *Writing For The Stage*

The best way to get a comfortable grasp for the style and format of a playscript is to read as many plays as you can. If you'd like to take it a step further, read a script, and then watch a production of that play to understand how everything transfers from the page to the stage! There are many websites where you can visit to read plays online for free including: Playscripts's Free Reads Corner, The Folger Shakespeare Library's Digital Archives and Lazy Bee Scripts. Plays also call for very specific formatting so that creative teams can clearly read and interpret your work. In this section, we'll walk you through how to format your play and some writers' pro tips to bring your script to life.

#### The Basics

Before we dive into crafting thrilling scenes or writing dramatic action sequences, we have to make sure you've got the basics covered. Much like a school assignment, the primary text of your play should be single-spaced, size 12 font with standard margins. Always be sure to choose a standard, easily read font like Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier New.

## The Cover

Start off with a clean page that conveys all the essential information for your play.

Title is all caps and underlined

Directly under that, include a line crediting the title and author of the piece you are remixing

Include your full name underneath the adaptation credit

On the bottom right of the page, include your name and contact details. Be careful who you send this information to! You can always remove sensitive contact information for drafts of the play you'd like to share more widely.

YOUR REMIX TITLE  
Adapted from *Title Of Original* by Original Author  
By Your Name

Your Name  
Your Address  
Phone  
Email

## Character & Setting

The second page of your play should briefly introduce your characters, setting, time, and any notes from the author you'd like to include. Be sure all headings and character names are in all caps, and everything is written out very clearly for the reader. Within those guides, it is your own creative choice to include long character descriptions or



short. You can leave your setting and time open ended, or provide specific dates and locations for each scene.

Let's look at three examples of how different playwrights have chosen to write out this information:

*Edith Can Shoot Things & Hit Them*

By A. Rey Pamatmat

In this example, the character descriptions include only key details—age, race, and relationship to the other characters. This leaves characters more open to creative interpretation based on their dialogue. The setting and time present a simple container to root the play in, and the playwright's note communicates some essential details regarding casting that might not be otherwise apparent to a reader.

<p>CAST (in order of appearance)</p> <p>EDITH, 12, Filipino-American, a girl, KENNY's sister KENNY, 16, Filipino-American, a young man, EDITH's brother BENJI, 16, any race, a friend</p> <p>SETTING A remote non-working farm outside of a remote town in remotest Middle America.</p> <p>TIME The early '90's.</p> <p>PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE EDITH CAN SHOOT THINGS AND HIT THEM should be performed by young-looking adult actors, not actual teenagers.</p> <p>The shadows in FOR MOTHER can be done with puppets, projections, or something else non-human. Please do not use actual people — NO GROWN UPS!</p>
---

## *Bad Jews*

By Joshua Harmon

Here, the character descriptions are much longer and give a detailed snapshot of the character. This means that going into your piece, readers will already have a clear sense of who the characters are and gives the playwright more control over the interpretation of their work.

We are also given a specific area and time where the play takes place, but the details about the apartment are left up to the reader and/or creative team.

### CHARACTERS

**DAPHNA FEYGENBAUM** – 22, Liam & Jonah's first cousin. 2/3 body, 1/3 hair. Thick, intense, curly, frizzy, long brown hair. Hair that clogs a drain after one shower. Hair you find on pillows and in corners of the room and in your refrigerator six months after the head from which it grew last visited. Hair that could not be straightened even if you had four hours and three hairdressers double-fisting blow driers. Hair that screams: Jew.

**LIAM HABER** – 25. Daphna's cousin: his mother is the sister of Daphna's father. Wire-rim glasses. U of Chicago Asian studies Ph.D. student. Former Fulbright scholar in Japan. Has as much of a sense of humor as an overdue library book.

**JONAH HABER** – 21, Liam's younger brother. Sometime-UVM sophomore. Less lanky than his brother. Less brainy. More brawn. More heart.

**MELODY** – 24, Liam's girlfriend. Short, stick-straight blonde hair. Which she wears with a barrette. To be extra cute. Mousy. She looks like someone who would have been abducted when she was nine but returned to her parents unharmed. Works for a non-profit.

### SETTING

A studio apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan

### TIME

Present day

## *Baltimore*

By Kirsten Greenidge

For this play, we see an example of character descriptions that provide some details about each character while remaining flexible to how this show could be cast. Key information is given about age, gender, and race, while some characters have notes about their personality and appearance.

We have a clear but open guide to where and when this play takes place as well in the “Setting” and “Time” sections.

Lastly, this playwright leaves a note to specifically describe how the play can be adapted to the actors playing the role. Leaving a playwright’s note is your way of clarifying and communicating specific themes, requests, and guidelines that you think are essential to anyone who might produce or read the play.

### CHARACTERS:

Shelby	20, African American, Resident Advisor, sheltered upbringing but outspoken, naïve despite her many academic and extra curricular achievements, female
Alyssa	18, of color, one of Shelby’s residents on the floor, smart, female
Fiona	18, White, American, one of Shelby’s residents on the floor. Also smart, loves pranks, female
Rachel	18, Latina, also identifies as being a Latina with light skin, one of Shelby’s residents on the floor. Smart. Socially conscious, perhaps overtly so, female
Leigh	18, of color, one of Shelby’s residents on the floor, female.
Bryant	18, of color, one of Shelby’s residents, male
Carson	18, white, one of Shelby’s residents, male
Grace	20, Shelby’s friend, lives off campus, Asian*
Dean Hernandez	50s, of color, male

It is not essential Dean Hernandez be played by an actor who is actually in his 50s.

### SETTING:

The Dean’s Office; a campus bench; a common room on a dormitory floor

### TIME:

The present.

All action takes place over between the afternoon and sunrise of same twelve hour period.

### NOTES:

In regards to casting and race: race and how it is represented and discussed in the text as it refers to the actors chosen can and should be fluid. For example, as written, there are references to Rachel identifying as a Latina (i.e. her family and ancestors are from Spanish speaking countries in North, Central, and/or South America/Latin America and the Caribbean Island, not Hispanic, and that when people see her they do not identify her as Latina. If the actor playing Rachel has traits that seem to identify her as being Latina, it is okay to slightly modify text to reflect this. To verify these text changes, please contact the author’s publisher and/or agent before public presentation.

## Acts & Scenes

Now it is time to get into the meat of your play! To help organize and break apart your play, you'll need to clearly label each act and scene.

The start of an act should be centered, in all caps, underlined and bolded. The number should be listed in roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, etc). It will look like this:

### **ACT I**

To end an act, use the exact same formatting and be sure the end of the act is the very last thing on the page. Your next act should begin on a fresh page.

### **END ACT I**

Scene labels operate similarly, but do not need to be in all caps. They are numbered with standard numbers rather than roman numerals.

### **Scene 1**

At the end of the scene, you do not need to write "End Scene \_\_\_". Simply finish the last line of dialogue or stage direction for the scene and then start the next scene on a fresh page.

You can see this formatting in action in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde.

<p><b><u>ACT I</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Scene 1</u></b></p> <p><i>Morning-room in ALGERNON's flat in Half Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room. LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters.</i></p> <p>ALGERNON. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?</p> <p>LANE. I didn't think it was polite to listen, sir.</p> <p>ALGERNON. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—<u>any one</u> can play accurately—but I play with a wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.</p>	<p>JACK. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! The only girl I ever cared for in my life. (<i>ALGERNON is laughing immoderately.</i>) What on earth are you so amused at?</p> <p>ALGERNON. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.</p> <p>JACK. If you don't take care, your poor friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape someday.</p> <p>ALGERNON. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.</p> <p>JACK. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.</p> <p>ALGERNON. Nobody ever does. (<i>JACK looks indignantly at him and leaves the room. ALGERNON lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>END ACT I</u></b></p>
---	--

## Dialogue & Stage Directions

Dialogue is anything read aloud by an actor during the course of the play. Whether it is read on stage, heard through a voice-over, or acted out by puppets, it's dialogue! To write dialogue, you need to start with the character's name and then follow with the line they are speaking. There are many ways to format dialogue, but for our purposes we'll be looking at one standard formatting method:

---

Sample:

**JANE.** Hey Joe. Did you finish the homework assignment?

**JOE.** What?

**JANE.** The paper we had to write on Shakespeare? It took me forever to finish.

**JOE.** Oh no. I totally forgot. Mrs. Slater is going to fail me if I don't get this project in on time! I already flunked the quiz the other day and handed in the last two papers late. Jane, you gotta help me out here. What do I do?

---

Character names are capitalized and bolded, followed by a period.

Different character lines are double-spaced, but when a character's dialogue goes over one line, it is single-spaced.

Writing dialogue that feels natural takes some practice. There are a couple tools you can use to help you write dialogue that feels smooth and realistic. Pause every couple of minutes to read out what you've written and see if it flows well. Check to see if your characters each have a unique personality and way of speaking, and if there is anything that feels awkward. You can also ask friends or family members to read scenes out loud so that you can hear how other people might speak those lines. Check for moments of redundancy (where something is unnecessarily repeated) or moments of confusion (where the characters make illogical leaps, or if an important detail is not clear from the script). You also want to be sure that all dialogue is pushing the story forward, and each scene is essential to make the overall story flow.

Don't worry about getting it perfect on the first try though—it's better to get it down on the page as much as you can first, and then go back through and edit as much as you would like.

**Stage Directions** - These describe an action taken on stage. This can be anything from a description of a physical fight, or something as simple as an entrance or exit.

In most plays, there are two main types of stage directions.

1. Stage directions that direct only the character speaking. Typically these are directions around emotions, speech types, and simple actions and movements. These stage directions are typically incomplete sentences and should exist within the dialogue line(s).

Example:

**CHARACTER 1.** *(Looking over CHARACTER 2's shoulder)* What are you working on?

2. Stage directions that involve large movement, physical interaction between characters, or set larger details of the scene or moment. These directions are often complete sentences and should exist separate from lines of dialogue on their own line(s).

**CHARACTER 2.** I'm adapting this novel into a play!

*(CHARACTER 2 passes CHARACTER 1 a novel. CHARACTER 1 opens the book and flips through a couple pages)*

**CHARACTER 1.** Neat!

Now let's look at how we would format stage directions into the sample dialogue from before:

---

Sample:

*(JOE enters and goes to his locker and fiddles with the lock. JANE enters and walks over to him.)*

**JANE.** Hey Joe. Did you finish the homework assignment?

**JOE.** *(Still struggling with his locker)* What?

**JANE.** The paper we had to write on Shakespeare? It took me forever to finish.

*(JANE pulls out her paper and holds it out to JOE. JOE turns and looks at it with horror.)*

**JOE.** Oh no. I totally forgot. Mrs. Slater is going to fail me if I don't get this project in on time! I already flunked the quiz the other day and handed in the last two papers late. *(grabbing JANE's hand)* Jane, you gotta help me out here. What do I do?

Stage directions go all the way to the left hand margin, while dialogue is tabbed in by one indent.

Character names are always in all caps.

Similar to dialogue, stage directions that are longer than one line are single-spaced, but always separated from other dialogue by double-spacing.

All stage directions should be in italics and contained by parentheses.

---

When writing stage directions, avoid the impulse to be a novelist. Remember that theatre is a collaborative art form and you need to leave some things up to interpretation! In general, you should only write what is absolutely necessary in your stage directions. Shakespeare famously includes very few stage directions beyond entrances and exits. One of his most famous stage directions simply reads "exit pursued by a bear" which is characteristically short and to the point. This has allowed his plays to be interpreted in virtually limitless creative directions!

Consider the below stage direction:

*(JANE stands and rolls her eyes at her sister. She crosses to the dresser irritably and snatches the envelope up. She opens the letter quickly and returns to her chair, where she flops down in a huff and reads the letter with increasing horror.)*

In this direction, what is the essential information? What single detail needs to happen for the plot to continue onward? Consider the version below:

*(JANE gets the letter and reads it.)*

In the second example, notice how much more room there is for both the actor and director to interpret this moment. Trusting your creative collaborators might end up revealing something new and unexpected from your story!

### Structuring A Scene

Now that you've got an idea of how to format your dialogue and stage directions, and a general idea for the plot of your piece, it's time to talk about the key elements of a scene that make dialogue tick!

The possibility for what can happen in a scene is truly endless, and will be very specific to the story that you are telling. When you're first starting out (or if you're ever hitting writer's block!) it's a good idea to follow these core building blocks.

1. **Objective** - What do your characters *want* in this scene? This can mean they want something from the other character(s) in the scene, something from their environment, something from themselves, or any other number of possibilities.
2. **Obstacle** - What prevents your character from immediately getting the thing they want? Is it blocked by the other character in the scene? Are they tackling a problem that seems unsolvable? Is the thing they are seeking hidden out of sight? The obstacle of the scene is what creates *conflict* that the character(s) must solve in order to find a resolution.
3. **Tactic** - What are the different ways each character attempts to get past or solve the obstacle of the scene? There can be several of these per scene—for example,



if your main character is trying to convince their friend to tell them a secret, they may employ any range of tactics from reinforcing what a great friend they are, to offering a bribe, to pleading, to getting upset with their friend, etc.

- 4. Resolution** - How does the scene end? Do one or more of the characters get what they want?

Let's look at a couple of examples and pull out what the objective, conflict, and tactics of each character.

### **Example One:**

It is Christmas Eve and a mother is trying to find a good hiding spot for a very special present when her young daughter walks downstairs. The mother quickly puts the present behind her back, but the daughter is immediately curious. The daughter asks her mom what she is hiding, to which the mother pretends she does not know what her daughter is talking about. The daughter runs over to her mom to try to look behind her back, but before she can get there the mother quickly puts the present up in a cabinet out of the daughter's reach. The daughter begins to get upset, begging her mother to let her see the present. The mother hugs her daughter and promises she can open it tomorrow morning, warning her that it's bad luck to open a Christmas present before Christmas day. The daughter gives in and lets her mother take her upstairs to bed.

### ***Time to break this down into its pieces:***

#### **Objective:**

Character One (Mom) - She wants to prevent her daughter from seeing the present so that the surprise can be saved for Christmas.

Character Two (Daughter) - She wants to open the present!

**Obstacle:**

Character One (Mom) - Her daughter is trying to get to the present

Character Two (Daughter) - Her mother won't let her see the present.

In this example, the conflict of the scene is that both characters want something that is in direct contrast to the other.

**Tactics:**

*Both characters employ several tactics. Let's look at those in order.*

Character One (Mom):

1. Hides present from daughter behind her back
2. Puts present up out of her daughters reach
3. Reassures her daughter that she will open the present tomorrow

Character Two (Daughter)

1. Asks her mother for the present
2. Rushes to try to physically take the present from her mom
3. Gets upset and begs her mother to see the present

**Resolution:**

The mother succeeds in her objective of hiding the present, while the daughter fails in hers to open it early.

*Think about how this scene might've been different if we changed any aspect of these building blocks. What might've happened if the mother used a different tactic and angrily scolded her daughter for trying to grab the present? Would we still have come to the same resolution?*

## **Example Two:**

Two bank robbers are in the vault of a bank trying to get as much money into their bags as possible. From a nearby window, they see flashing lights and hear sirens revealing to them that the police are here. Burglar #1 turns to Burglar #2 and frantically points to the window saying that they should leave the money and get out now before the police come down the hall. Burglar #2 says they need to get the rest of the money before they leave. Burglar #1 insists that there is no time and starts trying to push Burglar #2 toward the window. Burglar #2 shouts "Wait!" and says that she will create a diversion to distract the police while Burglar #1 gathers the rest of the money and hops out the window. Burglar #1 reluctantly agrees and goes back to gathering money while Burglar #2 slips out of the vault door. Seconds later, the vault doors open and 4 police officers are standing in the doorway with Burglar #2 standing beside them, now wearing a police badge. Burglar #2 reveals that she's been an undercover police officer the whole time. Burglar #1 makes a break for it, but Burglar #2 catches him just in time and puts handcuffs on him. The police take him into the cop car and whisk him off to jail.

### **Objective:**

Burglar #1: To steal the money and get away with it.

Burglar #2: To help the police catch Burglar #1.

### **Obstacle:**

Burglar #1: The police are here and he has to figure out how to get away without getting caught.

Burglar #2: She has to prevent Burglar #1 from getting away before the police can catch him.

### **Tactics:**

Burglar #1:

-Tries to convince Burglar #2 to leave the money and get out through the window

- Tries to physically push Burglar #2 out of the vault
- Reluctantly agrees to Burglar #2's plan to create a diversion
- Makes one last attempt to get away when Burglar #2's betrayal is revealed

Burglar #2:

- Tries to delay Burglar #1 by saying they have to get the rest of the money.
- Offers to create a diversion so that Burglar #1 thinks he has more time
- Outside the vault, rushing police to the exact spot Burglar #1 is
- Grabs Burglar #1 when he tries to break away

**Resolution:**

Burglar #2 is successful in leading the police to capture Burglar #1.

Now it's your turn! Practice formatting, establishing the building blocks of a scene, and getting the flow of dialogue by picking one of the below scene prompts.

1. A mother teaches her child how to make a family recipe.
2. At an outdoor wedding, a bride is moments from walking down the aisle when it begins to pour.
3. Two brothers find an unexpected creature in their house.
4. In an emergency room, a doctor is surprised to find his or her patient is someone he or she knows.
5. After spending months perfecting a painting, an artist returns home to find the painting cut down the middle.
6. Two friends are at a sleepover gossiping when they realize they both have a crush on the same person.

Who are your characters and what does each of them want? **(Objective)**

What is preventing them from achieving what they want? **(Obstacle)**

What are some tactics your characters might use to get around this obstacle? **(Tactics)**

*Think of all possibilities, even if you don't include them in the scene. Just use this as a space to brainstorm!*

How does the scene end? Do the characters get what they want, or do they fail to overcome their obstacle? **(Resolution)**

Now using the guiding blocks you've written down above, write 2-3 pages of dialogue responding to the prompt. Be sure to follow correct script formatting guidelines and have fun with it! When you're done, cast two actors and ask them to read the scene for you! Notice if there are any moments of confusion, any lines that work particularly well, any moments that surprise you, and anything you'd like to go back in and edit.

## Chapter Six

### *Writing For The Screen*

No doubt, you've watched your share of movies, but have you ever sat down and read a screenplay? Reading one or a few will show you how what you see on the screen starts on the page. There are plenty of film scripts online and in print. Seek them out or enlist the help of your local librarian.

Watch as many great films as you can, and since you're writing a remix, check out these examples of film remixes:

- SHE'S THE MAN inspired by *Twelfth Night*
- MY FAIR LADY (film and play) inspired by *Pygmalion*
- A KNIGHT'S TALE inspired by *The Canterbury Tales*
- CLUELESS inspired by *Emma*
- THE DARK KNIGHT RISES inspired by *A Tale of Two Cities*
- CARMEN JONES inspired by *Carmen*
- 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU inspired by *The Taming of the Shrew*
- HIS GIRL FRIDAY inspired by *The Front Page*
- OPHELIA inspired by *Hamlet*

## Film is Visual

The word “movie” evolved from the term “motion picture.” Where photographs showed life frozen in time, movies showed people and things in *motion*. Keep this in mind when coming up with how you want to craft your screenplay. Where in plays, dialogue traditionally dominates, in film, what the characters do is just as important and sometimes even more important than what they say.

When describing the action of a scene, include **only what we would be able to see on the screen**. Find ways to show the thoughts and feelings of the characters in what they say and the way they behave rather than spelling them out in the description. Similarly, look for opportunities to fill us in on any background details about them by weaving this into conversations or using objects we can see, such as a photo or a trophy.

## Standard Screenplay Format

Screenplay format has evolved over time to a standard form. Scripts are generally written in Courier 12 point. The title page of your screenplay follows the same format as shown in Chapter Five. Unlike theatrical plays, however, screenplays don’t include a list of characters at the beginning of the script. There also isn’t a page at the start describing the setting and time period. Instead, these elements are woven into the text of the script. With the exception of some scripts written for television, screenplays also don’t note act breaks in the text.

Let’s show a sample scene to give you an idea of what the elements are that you’ll need if you follow this format, where they go, and why.

**FADE IN:**

**INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM – DAY**

**SUBTITLE: 1973**

**SASHA MALONE (15) blinks away. She's lying in her bed, tangled in her covers. BLEEP-BLEEP-BLEEP blares from her phone, on the nightstand next to her bed. "6:00 AM" flashes on the phone screen.**

**Sasha groans and reaches for the phone.**

**SASHA**  
**Snooze! Snooze! SNOOZE!**

**SASHA'S MOM (O.S.)**  
**Sasha! Time to get up! You'll be late for the bus.**

**Sasha groans again and pulls her covers up over her head.**

**OLDER SASHA (V.O.)**  
**That was the moment. The morning that everything changed...**

**The Elements:**

- **"FADE IN"** is a carryover from the early days of screenwriting and is still used today to indicate the start of the story—even if your movie doesn't actually fade in from black. Scripts also typically have **"FADE OUT."** at the very end, at the far right of the page, like this:

**FADE OUT.**

- The scenes of your script are introduced with "sluglines." These indicate whether the location is inside ("**INT.**") or outside ("**EXT.**"). After **INT.** or **EXT.** comes the location and then, a dash and then either "**DAY**" or "**NIGHT.**"

("DAY" and "NIGHT" are used by the production crew to group the filming of scenes in the same location at the same time of day together. Unlike a play, which unfolds in real time, a film script is often shot out of order.)



- If your story is taking place anytime other than present day, you can indicate the **time period with** a subtitle, in bold, under the slugline (like in the script sample above), or just put it at the end of the slugline. Underlining will help it stand out for anyone reading the script:

**INT. SASHA'S BEDROOM – DAY – 1973**

- After the slugline comes the action of the scene, which you convey with description and dialogue, similar to a stage play. However, in a screenplay, the **characters' names** are CAPITALIZED and indented (about 1½ inches from the left), with the dialogue indented (about 2½ inches) centered below it. Character names are also capitalized the first time they appear in the description.
- As in a play, the description is written in the **present tense**.
- **Sound effects** are usually CAPITALIZED, for the benefit of the production crew, while also serving to set off the sound for a reader of your script. For certain types of sound, you may want to add *italics*.
- **“(O.S.)”** is used after a character’s name to indicate the voice is heard off-screen. This is different than **“(V.O.)”**, which is used by a narrator not present in the action. (**“(O.C.)”**, which stands for “off-camera,” is used only in multi-cam sitcoms—the kind that are video-taped in front of a live audience.)
- **You don’t need to include camera directions** such as “CLOSE-UP” in your script. You can hint at shot changes, however. For instance, because the description states Sasha’s phone alarm is flashing “6:00 a.m.,” this tells the filmmakers they’ll need to film a close up of the phone. Once you work on your storyboard and/or shot list (see Chapter 8), you can figure out how the scenes will be filmed and how the visual beats will work together.

- For your main characters, stating the **age** of anyone under 20 and a **general age range** for anyone older helps convey where these people are in their life journey. However, unless it's essential to the plot, there's no need to specify physical characteristics such as height, weight, or hair, eye, or skin color.

## Final Thoughts on Formatting

If you decide to use a standard format for your screenplay, Google Docs and Microsoft Word both have templates. [WriterDuet.com](http://WriterDuet.com) offers three free projects.

But there's no need for anything fancy! **All you need is paper, a pen or pencil, and your creativity.** Sylvester Stallone wrote the scripts for all of the ROCKY movies in spiral notebooks by hand!

## Writing Your Screen Story

The basic craft techniques explained in Chapter Five work for films as well. Each dramatic scene will have a **core conflict** of some kind: a character **wants** something, runs into an **obstacle**, and takes **steps to overcome the obstacle**.

In a film, **the result of these steps** tends to lead to the next scene. Either the character fails to achieve their goal and has to try something new, OR they *do* succeed, but this leads to a new situation or complication that introduces a new conflict.

In addition, unlike a play, you might have short transitional scenes linking your longer dramatic scenes, such as a shot of the characters riding their bike to a location, or a static “establishing shot” of the outside of a building before we see the action happening inside. These types of linking or establishing scenes can help with the pacing of a film—but they aren't essential, especially if you're taking a less traditional visual approach to your film, such as a single location.

Even if you do set a film in one location, it's possible to create separate beats that serve as scenes by focusing on one character or set of characters and then shifting the attention to another character, set of characters, or area of the location where something dramatic is happening. In your script, you can indicate this shift by stating where the action will now be focused, like this:

**AT THE SNACK TABLE:**

**Ben and Hector, at the snack table.**

**BEN**

**Where's Molly?**

**HECTOR**

**Over there, with Ali.**

**Hector nods across the room toward two girls:**

**IN THE CORNER:**

**Molly chats with Ali.**

**ALI**

**Have you talked to Ben yet?**

**Molly shakes her head.**

Setting and props can also create drama. Think about how you can use the characters' surroundings and the objects in the space to create conflict, tension, or comedy.

## Give it a try

Write a short scene introducing your main character. First figure out:

- What is the setting?
- Is it day or night?
- Is there anyone else in the scene?
- What does your character want, and who—or—what is standing in their way?

Then, write a rough draft of how the dialogue and action will show this conflict, develop it, and then resolve it—propelling the character or characters into the next scene.

Don't worry about it being perfect! Just start and see where your imagination takes you as your characters come to life. As you continue writing your script, you'll discover certain scenes need to move, certain characters need to enter the story earlier, and that there are beats you don't need and can cut. But first, you have to begin...

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

See Appendix E for:



LIBRARIAN TRY

## Chapter Seven

### ***Bring your script to life***

Now we are going to start to think of how to make our piece of writing into a performance.

#### **If you are creating a theatre piece:**

Costume/Set

Sound/Lighting

Vocal warm ups

Staging

#### **If you are creating a filmed piece:**

Storyboarding

Sound

Editing

## **We'll cover theatre in this chapter and film in the next**

**"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts..."**

**-William Shakespeare, *As You Like It***

### **Staging**

Think about how you want the audience to experience your production of a remixed classic. Do you want them to feel part of the story and in the middle of the action, or do you want them distant and observing? Do you want the actors to talk directly to the audience or pretend they are not there? The most important question is how do you want the audience to feel during the show?

There are many ways to stage a piece of theatre, you can have elaborate sets or make it simple and effective. Though one of the most important things about staging is working with actors, as you know the play so well you can communicate to them the intention and feelings of characters they are playing.

Casting and who you choose to act in the piece is important. You want to work with people you can trust and who believe in your work. Remember you can also act in your play too!

**"I regard the theater as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say, less alone." - Arthur Miller.**

### **Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are a brilliant way to see your play take shape and be brought to life by the actors. This is your chance to play, discover and try out ideas. Sometimes these ideas won't work and other times they will. Don't be disheartened by this as rehearsals are there for you to practice ideas. Making mistakes is an essential part of the process.

Decisions about where actors enter, exit and stand on the stage is called blocking. Blocking needs to be carefully considered so that the space is used well and everybody watching can see the action. For example, if you had a large playing space but had chosen to perform upstage, cramped in a corner then this might not create the most interesting visual picture for the audience.

Blocking is also important because if an actor has to turn upstage (away from the audience) to address another actor, their performance might be lost. So try to work out the blocking during the rehearsal process to make sure all the actors are happy with what they are doing. Look for any clear changes of thought or intention, which are often accompanied by movement. A sudden realization might make a character get up excitedly from their seat and start walking about.

Character relationships will also impact movement onstage. If one character is in agreement with another they may move closer, but if they were feeling uncomfortable they might choose to move away from each other.

### **Power points and levels**

Some parts of the stage are more 'powerful' in terms of the audience's focus than others. For example, downstage center (in the middle near the audience) is a more prominent position than upstage right at the back of the playing area. These are known as power points. Consider where you want the audience's focus when you decide where the actors should stand onstage.

-Levels can also affect the audience's interpretation of the status or importance of a character in the scene. If a weaker character is sitting in a chair while a stronger character stands above them, their relationship is mirrored in the levels they use.

**"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."**

**- Oscar Wilde.**

## **Costume**

Putting on your character's costume can really allow the actors to truly embody the person they are playing, as they are literally stepping into another person's shoes. This can be extremely powerful as it allows for a transformation from being an actor to a character. Costumes can be used in different ways and a great way to express character feeling and emotions. You establish their personalities through clothes, so make sure you are as creative as possible.

You can be as creative as you want with the costume, either have actors in all black but one accessory that indicates the character, or you can go full naturalism and have them in period costume.

## **Sound and Lighting**

Sound and lighting can really help you establish atmosphere and mood, you are creating a space where your piece can live in. You can play with different music and sound effects in rehearsals to establish what works best. Music is also really helpful in transitions when you are going from one scene to another, allowing you as director to set that tone for the audience.

Lighting can also be an incredibly fun tool to play with as you can have fun with colour and shade. You can set the time of day by using different lighting states but also you can highlight different parts of the stage you want the audience to focus on.

**“The word theatre comes from the Greeks. It means the seeing place. It is the place people come to see the truth about life and the social situation. The theatre is a spiritual and social x-ray of its time.” - Stella Adler, 'New York Times', December 1992.**



## **Set**

Set means the scenery and furniture onstage.

For a naturalistic performance, the furniture and décor are as authentic as possible. Every detail has been considered to create a world onstage that is as believable as possible.

However, a simple or minimalistic set can be very effective and the modern trend in theatre is to have much less onstage.

## **Props**

Props are the items held or used by actors onstage to make the action more realistic.

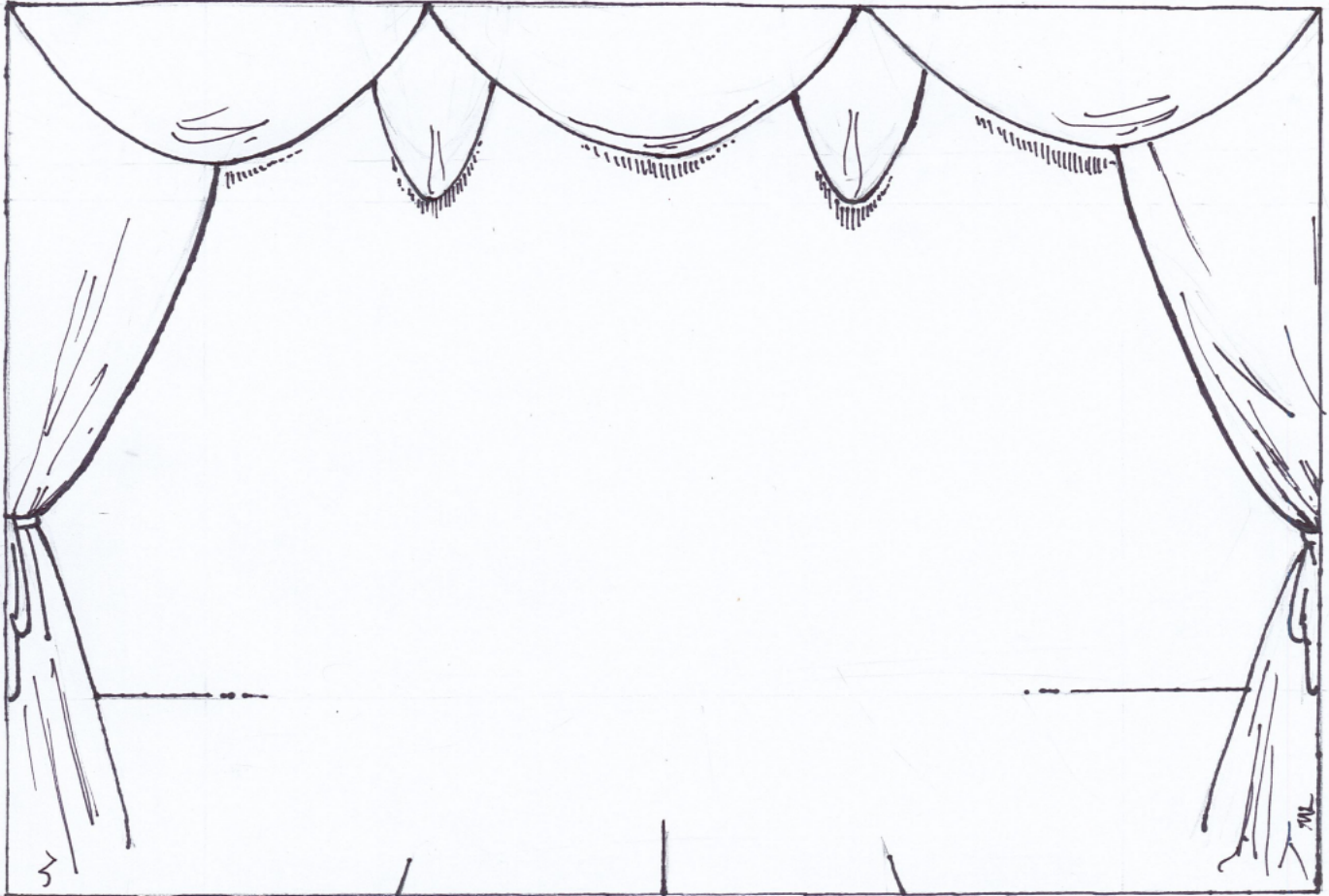
Some naturalistic performances use many props, but when staging drama you should question what is really necessary. Too many props can be difficult for the actors to use and they have to be brought on and off the stage so it can slow down the action.

If you do use props in a performance, it's important that actors work with them early on in the rehearsal process so that they can practice with them and identify any issues.

Sometimes it's perfectly acceptable to mime a prop, depending upon the style of theatre being created. Or you could be creative and choose a simple prop that can represent many things.

**"On the stage, it is always now: the personages are standing on that razor-edge, between the past and the future, which is the essential character of conscious being; the words are rising to their lips in immediate spontaneity." - Thornton Wilder.**

**Draw what is on your stage:**



**"To enter a theatre for a performance is to be inducted into a magical space, to be ushered into the sacred arena of the imagination." - Simon Callow**

## **Warm up and exercise:**

Here are some fun exercises you can do as a team to warm you up before you go onstage to help you bond, get energized and project your voice before the performance.

### **Vocal Warm Up:**

**The “Hum”:** Exhale slowly, humming until you have exhaled all of your air. Repeat approximately five times.

**The “Ha”:** Stand and place your hand on your abdomen. Breathe in by expanding your stomach outward; you are now breathing from your diaphragm. Exhale slowly, uttering, "ha ha ha ha". Push your abdomen in with every syllable. Repeat.

**Lip trills and flutters:** Roll your tongue on the roof of your mouth to make a “trr” or “rr” sound.

**Descending nasal consonants:** Say the word “onion,” stretching the “ny” sound and voice it downward in pitch.

**Tongue twisters:** Memorize a few tongue twisters, like “red leather yellow leather” and repeat them to get your mouth loosened up.

**Yawn and sigh:** Open your mouth as if to yawn and let your voice sigh loudly from the top of your register down to its lowest note.

### **Energizers And Bonding Warm Up:**

STOP/ Go

1 You have to lead your actors in this exercise by giving them instructions. The first two: When you say “Go” they will start moving around the space. When you say “Stop,” they will stop where they are.

2 Call out “Go.” Then “Stop.” And repeat as desired.

3 Next, tell everyone you are going to switch those two instructions. Now when you say “Stop” they should start moving and when you say “Go” they should stop moving.

4 Call out “Stop.” Then “Go.” And repeat as desired.

5 Next, let them know you’re adding two more instructions. When you say “Name” they say their character’s name out loud, when you say “Clap” they clap once. The other two commands stay the same, so “Go” means stop, “Stop” means move, “Name” means say your name, and “Clap” means clap.

6 Call out a combination of “Go,” “Stop,” “Name,” and “Clap.” Repeat as desired.

7 Finally, let them know you’re switching the last two commands. So “Go” means stop, “Stop” means move, “Name” means clap, and “Clap” means say your name.

## Chapter Eight

### *Film: All You Need is Your Phone*

You don't need fancy equipment to create a film, all you need is your phone as the camera on your phone is powerful. You can grab your phone, your storyboard or shot list, actors and costumes, then find a location and start creating your film.

**“Pick up a camera. Shoot something. No matter how small, no matter how cheesy, no matter whether your friends and your sister star in it. Put your name on it as director. Now you’re a director. Everything after that you’re just negotiating your budget and your fee.” - James Cameron.**

## Keep It Simple

Follow the model of first-time directors and independent filmmakers and keep things simple. This will let you focus on your story rather than fancy techniques, and also allow you to make a movie cheaply and quickly.

There are a few ways you can do this:

- As mentioned in Chapter Six, you can film the movie in a **single location**.
  - Choosing an **exterior location** in daytime means you can use natural light, but keep in mind that the light will change over the course of the day. Depending on how long your film is, you may need to film over a couple of days so the lighting stays consistent. You'll also need to plan for unexpected noise or interruptions, depending on the location.
  - If you choose to film inside, in a single **interior location**, you don't need fancy lighting. You just need to make sure there's enough light to be able to see whatever you want to be visible on screen.
- You can also film scenes or your entire movie in **one long shot**. This means you don't have to worry about editing, but it does mean you'll need to map out and rehearse the story with the actors enough times that the performances and filming go off smoothly to prevent having to start again too many times.
- You can also "**edit in the camera**." To do this, you need to figure out what shots you want in advance and stop filming before each cut. If something goes wrong in one of the scenes, it's a little easier to do another take than it would be if you were doing the film all in one shot. Since you'll be shooting the scenes in order, practicing this technique a few times will help you get the hang of it.

**"Filmmaking is a chance to live many lifetimes." - Robert Altman.**

## Storyboards and Shot Lists

Whether you film the entire story in real time, edit in the camera, or shoot several scenes and edit them together, there are a couple of tools to help you plan ahead how your film will look.

Some filmmakers use **storyboards** to map out the basic visual beats of a scene or sequence—sort of like the panels of a graphic novel. These don't have to be elaborate, however. They can be simple sketches that show who and/or what is in the frame and what camera angle you plan to use to show this.

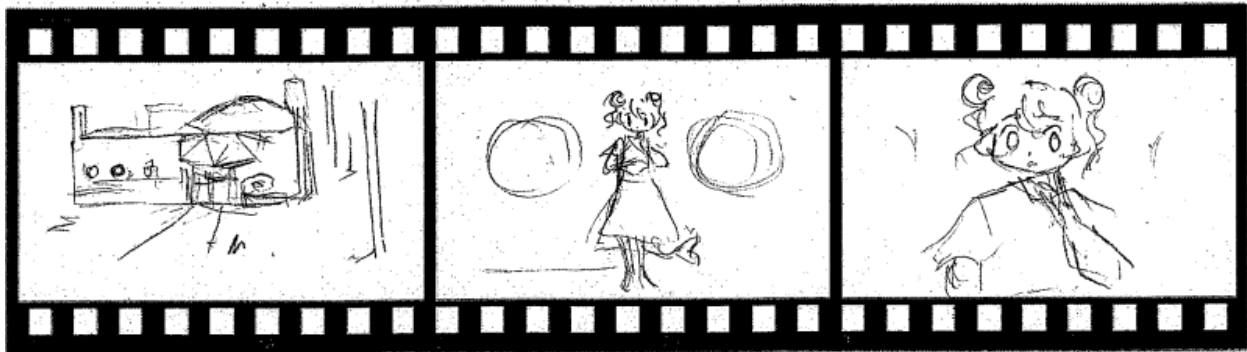
An alternative technique is a **shot list** or **shot breakdown**. This is just a written list of the shots or groups of shots in the order they'll be seen on the screen, specifying the camera angle for each. You don't need to draw anything for this. Just list the shots for each scene, like this:

- 1. Establishing wide shot of Dana's house.**
- 2. Medium shot of Dana and Theo at the kitchen table.**
- 3. Intercut close-ups on Dana and Theo as they talk.**

If you decide to film all in one shot, you can still use these techniques to map out how the characters will move or the camera angles will change over the course of the action.

Doing this preparation in advance will help make your filming go much more smoothly. Don't feel locked into your storyboard or shot list, however. **Magic can and will happen on the day of filming!** You may discover that a moment works much better as a two-shot than a close-up, or you may realize you need to zoom in on an object or part of a location that you didn't think of when you were planning everything out.

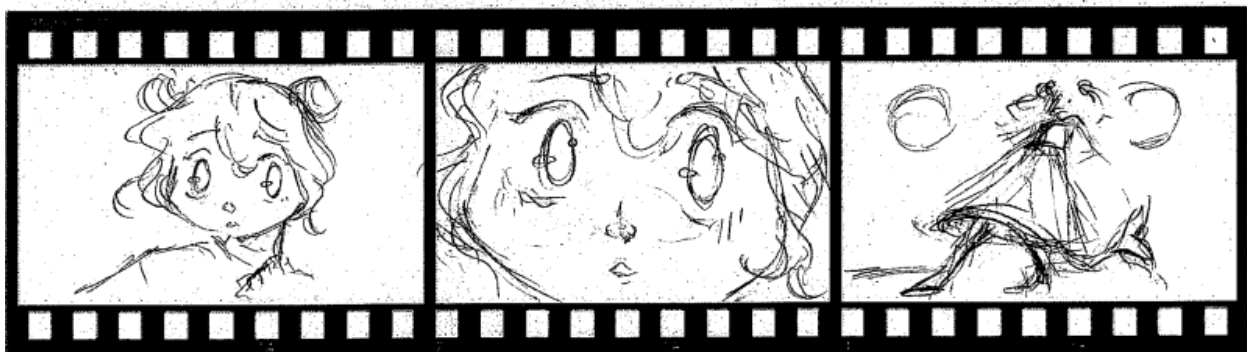
Look at the **sample storyboard** on the next page for an idea of how storyboards are laid out. The storyboard also includes captions with descriptions for the camera angles.



**Establishing Shot**

**Full Shot**

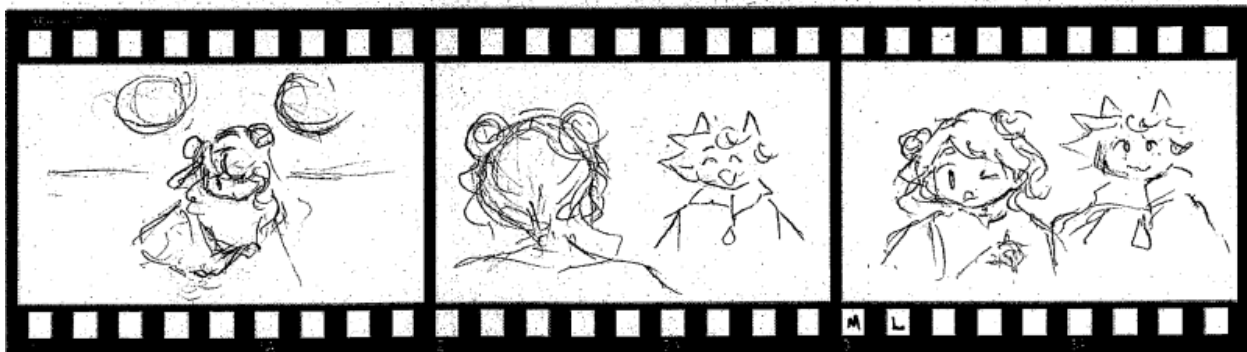
**Medium Shot**



**Close Shot**

**Extreme Close Shot**

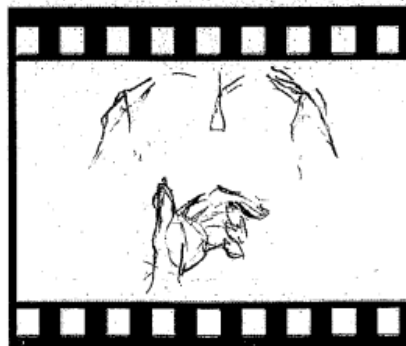
**Up Shot**



**Down Shot**

**Over the Shoulder**

**Two-Shot**



**POV Shot**



## Filming

There are a couple of technical elements to keep in mind when you're making the movie if you will be editing different shots together:

- **The 180 degree rule:** When filming a conversation that you plan to edit later, the camera should stay on the same side of both actors so that one person will be looking to the left side of the frame, and one person should be looking toward the right. If your actors look straight at the camera, it will appear as if they're talking to the audience and not each other. If they both look in the same direction, this is called "crossing the axis" and their eyelines won't match. Watch a few conversations in TV shows or movies and notice where the actor's focus their gaze.
- **Jump cuts:** If you plan to move from a wide shot to a closer shot of something or someone, it's best to shift the angle of the camera, or intercut another person or object first before cutting back to the closer shot. If you stay on the same object or character and cut to a closer view from the same angle, this is called a jump cut and it won't look natural. Again, look at some TV shows or movies and notice how this is done. Jump cuts are also created by eliminating beats of a shot or scene that create the sense of the action jumping ahead artificially.

**Feel free to break either or both rules** if you intentionally want to jar the audience or throw them off-balance. French New Wave directors often used the jump-cut, for example, to create unease. Just be sure you're intentional with either technique so that your scene doesn't come across as confusing. Here are two videos that explain the 180 degree rule and jump cuts and shows how different directors have broken them:

[180 degree rule](#)

[Jump cuts](#)

**"A story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end...but not necessarily in that order." - Jean-Luc Godard.**

## **Putting Your Movie Together**

### **Editing**

If you filmed your scenes separately, you'll need video editing software to put the scenes together. You can find many good free versions online, such as HitMovie Express, Lightworks, and iMovie.

Use your storyboard or shot list as a guide to assemble a "rough edit." At this stage, let the shots and scenes be too long. It's always easier to cut than to add. You may find that the pacing you initially imagined for the scene has changed due to the performances or new ideas that came up while you were filming.

**"I love editing. It's one of my favorite parts about filmmaking" - Steven Spielberg**

### **Sound**

To create atmosphere you might want to consider using music or a score to lift the performance. By using music, you can create tension or underscore the emotion of the scene. You can always play around with different music and scores to see how it changes the way the scene comes across. You can compose your own music or work with a musician friend. There are also websites with royalty free music.

<https://www.bensound.com/royalty-free-music/cinematic>

<https://filmstro.com/music>

**“The most honest form of filmmaking is to make a film for yourself.” - Peter Jackson.**

**Give it a try**

Take a scene or short sequence from your screenplay and map it out with a **storyboard** or **shot list**.

Experiment with **moving the shots around** or trying **different camera angles** to change the pace or create tension.

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Epilogue

### *Now Voyager*

*The untold want by life and land ne'er granted,  
Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find. - Walt Whitman*

Read the quote above and think about what it means to you personally, then remix it into your own words, add it to the checklist, and use it as a guide as you remix a classic story into one that only you could write.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I read, listen to, and watch diverse stories looking for the ones that inspire me most
- I research the context of the original stories using traditional and non-traditional sources
- I carry a notebook to write my ideas in
- I build my structure brick by brick
- I revisit *Romeo & Juliet* and *West Side Story* to fully understand the comparison laid out in this manual
- I delve deep into my story characters by thinking about the questions in Chapter Four
- I allow myself the time and space to write by scheduling it into my day
- I remember that I can use the scaffolding in the handbook or I can veer off the beaten path and try something different
- I leave my heart on my page

**That's all. Now voyager.**

## **Appendix A**

### **Librarian Tries Choosing Remix**

In choosing what to do for a remix, I originally thought of a pioneer story. The well-known pioneer girl books in the “Little House on the Prairie” series had recently come under scrutiny for its depictions of Black and Native Americans. There are stereotypes for sure, but it was turned into a well-loved television show that focused on the warmth of family, a community strong through faith and friendship, and a terrifically romantic Ma and Pa.

I thought about all the pioneer stories that hadn't been told. There were young girls everywhere that had been told to pack a few things and hurry to the wagon, or the boat, or to start walking. I wanted to tell a pioneer story! Giddyup!

I had read a bit about the history of Chinese immigrants who crossed the Pacific and then walked across Mexico to get to the United States but ended up settling in Mexicali. They established a strong community and thus was born Mexicali's Chinatown. The Chinese people were not used to the extreme heat of Mexico and dug a series of underground tunnels to stay cool and to travel between underground teahouses, hospitals, theaters, etc. Many of the tunnels endured and can be accessed to this day.

I thought about what a remix of the “Little House” story could look like in a new location with a new protagonist but keeping the warmth of family, the joy found in discovering a new place, and the safety of belonging to a tight-knit community. I even started to imagine another version of Laura's nemesis, Nellie Oleson. For those who have seen the TV show, Nellie is a truly unforgettable character.

I began to do some research, and it occurred to me that I might not actually be able to tell this story authentically. There wasn't a lot of intersection between me and the protagonist. It dawned on me that this was a story that I'd want to see or read but not one that I felt I could write.

But, while I was researching Chinese-Americans that settled in New York in the 1800's, I stumbled on a fact that got into my subconscious and stuck. In the 1800's, in early Chinatown, NY, about 40% of Chinese men were married to Irish women. How did I never hear about this or the Five Points neighborhood in Lower Manhattan that housed a mix of America's immigrants?

Images of a Chinatown in the 1800's, Mott Street, my young Great-Grandmother sewing all day to make her living...all this seeped into my thoughts. A tea shop, carriages, the bakery, carts pushing through the streets; there were photographs and stories and traditions swirling around a Five Points that I conjured up through books, the internet, and the ability of my empathetic imagination to sketch a time and place where a young couple could overcome obstacles to find a lasting love.

So, my remix started with an approximate time, a definite place, and just a glimmer of who the characters would be. Now I needed to think about a classic story to remix. It was time to, "break bread with the dead," or as W.H. Auden said, "Art is our chief means of breaking bread with the dead." (I came upon this quote in Mitali Perkins book *Steeped in Stories* that I quote in Chapter 1 of this handbook)

You may have known from the moment you heard about the Remix project what story you are going to remix. If so, this is where you might start thinking about the length of the original work, the number of characters, the time frame, and the number of locations. Importantly, will you try to tell the whole story or extract part of the story for your remix?

I chose a short story "The Gift of the Magi," which has the benefit of fewer characters and a shorter time frame. A short story seemed like it would be less pressure, and the format left room to expand my concept. It had a vibe that suited my characters and it was set in NY. Its themes were love, generosity, and that the value of a gift is in the giver.

I mapped out the story and was able to use my instincts to choose the structure.

Every instinct told me that it should be a film. The shots of Chinatown and Five Points. The movement through lower Manhattan. The close-up of the character's expressions especially when they're not in-sync with what they "should" be feeling. Every instinct said film!

## Appendix B

### Librarian Tries Researching For Remix

Because I chose a very short story to remix, I was able to read and reread it in a jiff! The theme was just as I remembered; the best gifts of all are generosity and love. But what would those meaningful gifts look like as a remixed “The Gift of the Magi” into a Chinese-Irish love story set years earlier than the original?

I began my research by looking at the history of New York City’s Chinatown in its early days. I wanted my story to coincide with the influx of Irish immigrants to NY as a result of the Irish Potato Famine. This meant going back to the mid-1800’s Ireland. I meandered around, researching those places (Chinatown, NY and the “Emerald Isle”), by taking in stories and, importantly, reading personal accounts of the people who lived in those places.

I knew a lot about Ireland already through family history including letters and stories passed down. I didn’t know as much about the politics of the famine and the effect it had on women’s standing afterwards. I researched and found many documentaries detailing the famine. I also found myself meandering down other lanes of inquiry including how to make a Rustic Irish Potato Casserole and how crochet schools started by nuns for Irish women in need of work resulted in the prized Irish Lace.

I began my research on Chinese in America and soon realized that I knew a lot more about the country of China than I did about Chinatown, NY. I had chosen China for my world culture class in high school in 1977. That course had focused on dynasties in Chinese history. I needed to study a more contemporary Chinese culture that may have been shaped by a distant past but was contemporary in the mid-1800’s and was happening right here in New York!



I was lucky at this point to find the book, *My Chinese Marriage* by Mae Franking ghostwritten by a young Katherine Anne Porter. Katherine would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award later in her career. Her talent shows through in Mae's story which is the story of a young Scotch-Irish girl named Mae Munro Watkins who, in 1907, meets an also young Tiam Hock Franking of Amoy, China while in high school in Michigan. Their love grew as they attended University of Michigan together. Their relationship was discouraged by their families and they faced opposition from society, still, their love persevered and they married and raised a family.

Reading about May and Tiam, I was drawn to the early 1900's and, because that was the time period that "The Gift of the Magi" was set, I decided to scrap some of the work I'd done and move the story up about 50 years to 1905. Gear shift!

I won't bore you with all of my research, but a few highlights were reading the beautifully written *Eurasian: Mixed Identities in the United States, China, and Hong Kong, 1842-1943* by Emma Jinhua Teng, looking at a *Sears Roebuck Catalog* from the time period, finding scads of old photos of Chinatown, NY in all kinds of weather (and stumbling on the contemporary "Chinatown Snowman"!), watching the 20 minute *Gift of the Magi* film with Jeanne Crain and Farley Granger, and watching the incomparable holiday love story set in 1903, *Meet Me in St. Louis*.

All through my research period, I was getting ideas for my story and the people in it. Things started happening. The more I immersed myself in the research, the more a story started to form from the vapor. I knew that my subconscious would continue to ponder but it was now time to give the story some structure. I needed to take my notes and ideas and begin to distill them into a plot.

## Appendix C

### Librarian Tries Remixing Into a New Story

In the spirit of “Meet Me in St. Louis,” which was part of my research, my remix will start with a still of a captivating footbridge in Central Park, NY. The still photo will be framed by an oval of lush spring flowers; Spring, 1905. As the scene comes to life, Irish-American Delia, 20’s, walks out from under the bridge and sees a dead frog in the road. It’s obvious that it had been flattened by a passing carriage. “The poor thing.” Delia’s natural state is to have an air of sorrow about her and the dead frog exaggerates this.

As Delia plods down the muddy road, she comes upon an area where frogs bubble up and down like a boiling tea kettle. She sighs as she begins to scoop them up. And that is when Chinese-American Jian, 20’s appears and asks her if he could help. She is startled that he appeared out of nowhere and because he is too handsome and well dressed to be picking up frogs from the mud.

Delia is overcome by the heat and the activity of moving the frogs and is unsteady. Jian takes her arm and steers her to a bench. She touches her empty stomach and tells him that she’s just missed her lunch. “That’s all.” Jian insists on taking her to tea.

She tells him that she needs to get back to the millinery where she works making lace and he says the tea shop is near the shop. They go in a carriage to the tea shop he owns which is located near Mott Street where she works. She is in a rush so he gives her tea in a vacuum flask and wraps some biscuits in a linen napkin to take with her.

The next day at Bluxume’s Millinery, Delia and her co-worker Winifred work making lace by hand. The young lacemakers’ gentle treatment of the fragile lace is contrasted by Winnie’s excitement as they talk about Delia’s tea with Jian. Winifred asks Delia if she thinks she’ll fall in love with her dashing prince who dirtied his elegant coat helping her rescue the frogs?

Delia flatly states, “I didn’t want to hurt his feelings and I didn’t have an excuse ready. I’ve no time for romance. If I stick to my plan, I can open my own shop in a few years. Besides, I spoke with Mr. Bluxume today about expanding into making the actual wedding gowns. We can copy the ones we see in the windows. Just change the trimming,” she catches herself, “ The trimming. (Delia sighs) I need to get home in time to add something to my good dress. Jian is taking me to the theater tonight. I can’t let him know I have only one dress.” Winifred now looks skeptical but Delia blurts out, “I do have some pride...and anyway, if I’m going to open a dress shop, I need to see what the ladies are wearing. Anyway, he’ll tire of me soon enough..”

Delia, now in a pretty newly trimmed dress, sits across from Jian in the box seats of the Chinese Theater on Doyers Street. She smiles a practiced smile in-between fairly devouring candies from a tray next to her. When Jian turns to look at the play, she slips a few candies into her purse.

A series of scenes back and forth between the millinery shop where Delia empties her purse of sweet confections to share with Winnie and outings with Jian to restaurants and theaters. When she’s with Jian, she is always in her navy dress which is trimmed with rotating fripperies and fobs and the dress is topped with alternating wraps, shawls, and capelets.

- Jian plays his violin outside the millinery.. The music is a snippet from the musical they saw at the theater. He looks smitten and Mr. Bluxume tells him so as he realizes it’s the Jian the young women have been talking about. He admires the violin. We find out the history and meaning of his finely crafted violin.
- Mr. Bluxume tells Delia that he has a good feeling about Jian. He looks familiar but he can’t quite place him.
- Delia and Jian picnic in a pretty grove. Delia eyes the bountiful spread of foods, overwhelmed. Jian looks happy yet Delia maintains her reserve and her smile is again, a practiced smile. Jian is so enthusiastic about everything that Delia laughs a bit in spite of herself.

- Delia and Jian walk past a shop with a wedding gown in the window. She asks Jian to wait so she can make a mental note of the dress. He looks hopeful as she studies the dress. She makes a comment about the construction so we know she's just eyeing it as a seamstress.

Spring turns to summer. Delia gazes out the window of a fine restaurant. As the camera pulls back there is a cherry red Chinese pattern window frame and bright colored hanging lanterns meant to bring health, happiness, and luck. It's Summer, 1905. After they order, the owner comes over and asks if it would be too much trouble for Jian to play some Puccini. Delia seems transported by the music and we see actual joy in her expression. Then tears. Jian is flattered that she is so moved but as he sits down, she says, "Jian, please take me home."

He asks if she is sick and she slowly nods.

Delia misses a day of work and Winnie brings her soup thinking that she is sick. Jian leaves a note and some flowers for her at the millinery. Mr. Bluxume recognizes Jian from the 1903 benefit performance for the Jewish victims of the Kishinev pogrom in Russia. Jian was part of the organizing group. We learn that Mr. Bluxume is Irish and his wife is Jewish.

On the weekend, Winnie coaxes Delia to share a box lunch at the beach. Winnie tries to find out what happened at the restaurant. Delia breaks down and tells her that it was the music. She doesn't understand herself what happened. Everything was beautiful and then she felt, "the deepest sadness I've felt since Mary-."

Jian visits the shop to see if Delia has recovered. Winnie answers the door when the bell jingles. She warns Jian not to press Delia on what has happened to upset her.

Jian convinces Delia to see him. Jian doesn't sidestep the sadness. He treats her gently, while rowing on Central Park Lake, he quotes, "To every thing there is a season...A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance"

- Horse and Carriage Ride down Riverside Drive

- Hot dog in hand by Broad Street Lunch Cart

Still of a fall scene Autumn 1905

Delia and Jian go walking on Thanksgiving and are caught in a band of children, many wearing masks, who are dressed as ragamuffins and begging for fruit, candy, and pennies. In the wild scramble of children, some with grotesque masks, Delia becomes disoriented and a carriage swerves towards them. Jian pulls Delia close and out of the way of the mayhem. She is frightened and upset. He asks her into his tea shop which is warm and comforting.

Delia opens up about her childhood in Ireland and the stress and how she emigrated alone and at a young age. She had no support system and had many harrowing experiences. Worse, she encouraged her friend Mary to come when Mary became pregnant. The father of the baby readily agreed that it was a good idea. He paid for her passage and said he would come after. Weeks went by and then months and he never came. As hope turned to resignation, Mary would often take long walks by the river to clear her head. One day she didn't come back and soon turned up drowned in the river. "It wasn't suicide like they said in the papers. I saw her after. Her hands were raw from trying to hang on to the bridge." "She was my best friend."

Jian consoles Delia. He asks her to marry him so she won't have to walk through life alone, "we could have a good life together. I could be your anchor. And you'd be mine."

Delia bursts out into further tears. Jian asks her why she is crying. She replies, "I'm no anchor. I'm a sinking boat."

Jian says, "You've suffered but you've not sunk. Don't answer yet. Think about it. If only so I can have hope for a little while."

Delia tells Winnie she isn't sure that marrying Jian would be the right thing to do. She feels a tenderness towards him that she's never known but she feels vulnerable. Still, he's been so patient and generous and good to her. She doesn't know what to do. She tells Winnie that she feels a flutter of joy being with Jian but then sadness too.

She focuses on getting the money to buy Jian a special present for Christmas. She asks Mr. Bluxume if he has extra work she could pick up for the holiday. He has a special order for a wedding veil and agrees to pay her ahead for it.

- Delia works almost every night on the veil. Without Winnie chattering away, and without the distraction of a book or the phonograph, she flashes back to scenes with Mary before she slipped away into the water. She starts to remember some good things. We see them:
  - at age 7: looking over at each other and stifling laughs in church as the priest warns them to avoid damnation
  - at age 14: dancing with abandon in the Irish countryside as a fiddler plays and revelers sing “Black Velvet Band.” [Black Velvet Band - YouTube](#)
  - at age 18: Delia and Mary work in the millinery shop. Mary chats about her love coming over
  - Again, age 18, several months later with Mary showing and giving up hope of love coming over but still hopeful, “I could always sell muscles like Molly Malone,” they laugh and sing a snippet. [MOLLY MALONE \(Cockles and Mussels\) - YouTube](#)

Mary maintains that although things are hard now that someday they’ll have their parlors stinking with imported summer roses and carnations in the wintertime.

- Mr. Bluxume and Winnie both try to convince Delia to let the extra sewing work go. It’s too much. Delia confides in Winnie that she feels a joy that she’s never felt thinking of Jian unwrapping his special present for Christmas. She feels excited for the first time in a long time.

A still shot of Delia standing before a Christmas tree. Winter, 1903. This is the climax where Delia gives Jian the expensive bow for his priceless violin. He begins to laugh because he has sold his violin for her gift. He hands her a small box. She is

overwhelmed that he would have sold his violin for her. She opens the box and there is a key.

Delia and Jian ride in a carriage to the door of a shop labeled Delia's Luxury Dresses. Delia shakes her head no and tells him he should get his violin back. Jian tells her he believes in her and, "besides, I hope to reap the benefits when we marry." He hands her a pin cushion with a modest ring sitting on top, "when your shop becomes successful, I'll get the seed money back from you to buy you a bigger ring."

As he tries to put the ring on her finger, he realizes her finger is swollen from the needlework and it won't fit. Now she laughs.

Winter 1905, Delia and Jian's wedding day. The Bluxume living room is filled with red poinsettias. As the bride walks into the room, the first notes of "Joy To The World" ring out. Now Jian is overcome by his emotions. Everyone is tearing up and smiling at the same time but the smiles outweigh the tears.

END

Note: I radically changed my Remix as I watched "Meet Me In St. Louis" over and over to absorb the time period. That plot considers what it means to pick up roots and destabilize a very happy and stable family. I considered the immigrant experience and how that was also going on at the time; often playing out in New York City. It wasn't a mirror of the almost fairytale life in the Smith household; it was turned inside out. Sometimes, while trying to find their footings, young Irish women's stories involved miserable endings. My mind started to think about why Delia would be so resistant to falling in love. I thought that maybe she had her bosom friend, who had one of the miserable endings. Delia had suppressed her feelings after the tragedy and just shouldered on with her goal of opening a business. Jian brings joy into her life which brings her silenced sadness to the surface. Delia sees that as a weakness but comes to realize that by silencing her sadness, she would never release it to make room for some joy. So, "Meet Me In St. Louis" turned inside out with a touch of the "Magi."

## Appendix D

### Librarian tries remixing character

I feel I know Delia pretty well, so I'm going to focus on my antagonist Jian here. I will also include notes about Winnie, and the Bluxume's in my notebook.

In a love story, the love interest can be the antagonist. Jian is pushing for love while Delia resists his love. Before they fully commit, they must work out the issues between them.

About Jian:

Jian is the son of one of the first mixed marriages in Chinatown. His father was an interpreter and deals in imports and exports. His mother died in childbirth. Because he was motherless and a winning child, Jian was the darling of Chinatown.

From a young age, Jian would venture out past the borders of Chinatown with his father. His father had friends across the city. His father was patriotic, progressive, and optimistic about both China and America.

Jian is optimistic because he's reached most of his goals painlessly. Of major importance to him is the importance of falling in love. Possibly, and because Delia's resistance is an obstacle, this is one of the first times that optimism and hard work may not win his goal of making Delia his partner.

Jian's greatest achievements so far are establishing a successful tea import business with the mentorship of his father but without financial backing, and playing the violin well enough to perform publicly.

His treasured possession is his violin which was sent to him from Europe and was a gift from his maternal grandparents.

Playing the violin publicly also caused his biggest embarrassment. He hit a long horrible terrible note at one performance in the large theater. The audience laughed and he



vowed to never again play a concert. Recently, he has been jollied into playing at restaurants.

Jian recently bought the book *Wehman Bros.' fifty new card tricks: a comprehensive description of the continuous front and back hand palm with cards, and the sensational new rising card trick, also many new and unpublished tricks with cards* by Howard Thurston.

His bad habit is staying out late or staying up working on his hobbies. His tea import business is profitable but he thinks he could do better if he wasn't taking a long nap at his desk each afternoon.

His greatest fears are political. He wants to see problems solved with thought and careful transitions to more just forms of government. His fear was realized two years prior when he read about the Kishinev pogrom in the papers. He participated in the fundraiser held at the Chinese Theater on Doyers Street and at Delmonico's. [The Night New York's Chinese Went Out for Jews | China Heritage Quarterly](#)

His political awakening occurred as he was beginning to think about his goal of falling in love. He thought about what he would look for in a life partner. He imagined a pretty and kind young woman for his bride. That is why when he sees Delia helping the frogs off the road, he's smitten. She fits his two-dimensional view of a fitting partner, but Delia has flaws and has her own story.

Can Jian realize that, even though she doesn't fit neatly into his vision of what falling in love should look like, and she has her own complicated story, with patience and understanding falling in love might be much more satisfying than he ever imagined.

## Appendix E

### Librarian Tries Film Format

FADE IN:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

As the music comes up; a still photo of a captivating footbridge in Central Park, NY. The photo is framed by an oval of lush spring flowers and captioned "Spring, 1905."

As the scene in the photo springs to life, Irish-American DELIA, 20's, trudges out from under the bridge, her face dusted with dirt, and there's a lean, hungry look to her. She sees a dead frog in the road. It's obvious that it had been flattened by a passing carriage.

DELIA

The poor thing.

Delia sighs as she continues down the road.

She pauses suddenly, spotting a mass of hopping green forms ahead. She steps closer. The green forms are revealed as FROGS, making their way across the road.

Delia glances behind her and spots a carriage approaching. She comes alive and hurries towards the frogs, picking them up one by one, and carrying them across the road to safety.

JIAN (O.S.)

Can I help?

Delia turns to see Jian (20's) leaning out of the carriage, which has pulled to a stop behind her. Delia blushes with embarrassment, but Jian's smile is open and kind, taking no notice of her impoverished appearance.

Delia nods and Jian steps out, revealing he's dressed in an elegant coat indicating wealth. Delia watches, shocked, as he bends down to pick up a frog, seemingly oblivious to the mud dirtying his boots as he delivers the frog to safety.

JIAN (O.S.)

Would you like tea?

Delia's hand goes involuntarily to her stomach. She drops it quickly, trying to recover. She forces a polite smile.

DELIA

Yes, thank you. That would be nice.  
It's just the heat and the frogs...

Delia sits up with a start.

DELIA

But I have to get back to the  
Millinery!

JIAN

Wait right here.

Jian tucks into his carriage and brings out a vacuum flask of tea and some wrapped biscuits to take with her.

JIAN

May I see you to the millinery?

Jian helps Delia into the carriage and they travel through the park to Bluxume's located south of the park on Broadway.

JIAN

Here we are.

Jian exits the carriage and helps Delia step down.

JIAN

May I escort you to the theater  
tomorrow evening? I could pick you up  
here if you'd like and we could have  
supper first. Delmonico's?

DELIA

Delmonico's?

JIAN

Delmonico's it is!

INT. BLUXUME'S MILLINERY - DAY

Delia and WINIFRED(20's) sit at a table making intricate stitches of Irish lace on separate wedding veils.

WINIFRED

Leaf after leaf after leaf. Just once  
couldn't a bride want anything but  
roses and leaves?

DELIA

Do you want to switch and I'll take the  
roses, you take the leaves?

WINIFRED

Really, I'd give anything to add a few  
shamrocks or some Irish wildflowers  
or...or...or just anything besides  
roses and leaves!

DELIA

We won't be needling Irish lace  
forever. If I stick to my plan, I can  
open my own shop in just a few years.  
Besides, I spoke with Mr. Bluxume today  
about expanding into making the actual  
wedding gowns. We can copy the ones we  
see in the windows. Just change the  
trimming-

(she catches herself)

Ack! Trimming! I need to get home to  
add some bit of nonsense to my good  
dress! Jian is taking me to the theater  
tomorrow night. And Delmonico's!

Delia begins to wrap up the veils they're working on in tissue.

WINIFRED

Jian?

DELIA

The gentleman with the carriage who  
gave me the tea and the biscuits.

To be continued...

## Appendix F

### The First Scene: Our First Student Reader Chanelle's Remix

High school senior, Chanelle, graciously agreed to help us with our handbook and became our first reader and remixer. She researched 1920's New York and took the classic fairytale *Cinderella* through her lens into a story we loved. We asked if we could include the beginning here and she said yes!

Adapted from *Cinderella* by Charles Perrault and *The Great Gatsby* by  
F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Screenplay by Chanelle Ongagna

FADE IN:

Black-and-white title card, like in a classic movie: "A Ziegfeld Cinderella" appears in large, white cursive letters. Sweeping orchestral music plays. The screen "crackles" a little, the way it would in an old-timey film. Credit cards appear, then disappear.

EXT.: New York City - DAY

A group of pageboys race down the street, urging each other to hurry up. A flock of pigeons squawk and take flight as they race past; a set of elegantly attired women, taking their morning strolls, gasp and eye them disapprovingly as they streak past. The boys pay no heed to them, expertly weaving in and around vegetable carts, shoe-shiner stands and doorways filled with families setting off for work. Though no skyscrapers stand as of yet, and though glossy, block-shaped motorcars clog the streets instead of yellow cabs, there's no mistaking the location: New York City.

EXT.: WARNER'S THEATER - DAY

A grand movie theater, all gold and velvet, with revolving doors. Above, a marquee announces the picture playing and the actors in big block letters.

The boys stop in front of the ticket window. A bored-looking man in a fine suit is carefully combing the curl in his mustache, examining the effect in a handheld mirror. He ignores them for a while. Finally, one of the boys, impatient, knocks hard on the window. The man sighs and opens it.

TICKET CLERK

No.

He closes the window.

BOY 1

We haven't even asked for anything yet!

TICKET CLERK

(slides window open)

I am sufficiently acquainted with you ruffians to anticipate the ludicrous demand you were on the verge of making. I saved us all the time and trouble of haggling over something you

likely could not have afforded. We don't hold with beggars here. Now, direct yourself to the nearest Salvation Army or I will be forced to alert the authorities to the disappearance of five boys from the local orphanage, as I'm sure you are.

BOY 2

(squeezing in)

Sir, we ain't beggars or orphans or ruffians, neither. And we wasn't panhandling. All we want is to see that picture, the one with all them dancers and planes and things!

TICKET CLERK

Impossible! The picture has already begun.

BOY 3

Just started! I bet they haven't even gotten through with credits, yet!

TICKET CLERK

I won't have you tramping in there and causing a commotion. Perhaps this will teach you to invest in a watch.

BOY 3

We tried our hardest to come on time, sir, honest! But they don't let us off work till we've sold every paper and today it took a little longer than usual. We ran here as fast as we could and we've got the money for tickets, too!

TICKET CLERK

A likely story.

The boys protest loudly, insisting that they do have the money.

TICKET CLERK

Young men, a picture is a quarter per head. Twenty-five cents make a quarter. Do you know, then, how much admission would cost for the five of you?

BOY 4

Yessir! Five nickels.

TICKET CLERK

(muttering to himself)

Look at me, talking arithmetic with a passel of street urchins. Not one of them could tell me how many pennies make a dollar, much less perform mental multiplication.

CUT TO: BOY 1's face, indignant.

BOY 1

Now look here. I don't pretend to have as much schooling as you do. I can't talk as pretty. And as far as clothes go, well, you can see for yourself that you've got us beat. But I do know that eggs are fifty-nine cents a dozen, coffee costs forty-five, and there's a loaf of bread to be had for a dime.

TICKET CLERK

How nice for you.

BOY 1

I know you need food to live and you can't get food without money. But you can't live without medicine, either, when it's thirteen degrees in December, the coldest winter on record, in a tenement by the river, and half the family coughing their lungs out every night 'cause the radiator don't work and the windows don't shut and the ceiling keeps finding new places to leak through. You already got to make a penny stretch like it has no business stretching, just to keep everyone fed and clothed, and to make the rent. But now that penny's got to stretch to the pharmacy, to the doctor's.

TICKET CLERK

Young man—

BOY 1

So you cut corners. No new clothes, no books, no meat 'cept at Christmas and maybe Easter. You go to school when you can, but you're there so rarely you barely learn a thing and forget what little you do. Working, working, taking whatever work you can, because a penny gets harder to stretch by the day. You need two pennies to stretch the way one penny did. And you're hungry all the time, so bone-tired and hungry, that it don't seem like much else matters but a full stomach and a place to rest your



head when you can't hold it up anymore. And you feel like that most of the time, 'cept when you go the picture shows. Everything's magic there, everything's possible. Every time that reel gets going, why, it's like running into an old friend.

CUT TO: TICKET CLERK'S FACE - Astonished, moved

A pause. His words sink in with everyone.

TICKET CLERK

Well-I-well, alright! Alright, step up now, and don't breathe a word of this to anyone, so long as you live! I have a reputation to maintain, and if word of this reached the boss, letting people in late..

The boys, gleeful, rummage around in their pockets for the money.

TICKET CLERK

Mind you don't get any of that ink on my gloves! (Hands them their tickets) Now you'll make your way in there as quietly as if you were entering church!

The boys hurry in, chorusing "thank you"s. The ticket clerk says "hmpf"--then resumes combing his curled mustache.

INT. A DARK MOVIE THEATER - DAY

A sea of heads - bowler caps and beaded cloche hats - is turned towards the screen. On screen, a group of women in Spanish heels, bejeweled headdresses, and drop-waist gowns of shimmering silver silk perform the Charleston in immaculate synchronization, standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the wings of a biplane. With their thin eyebrows and finger waves, they are almost entirely identical.

Dancing on the ground is a group of men, their pin-striped suits, bowler hats and canes reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin. With an over-enthusiastic flourish of his cane, one of the male performs whacks a woman off the plane. The others jump down and--still in perfect time--begin line-kicking him.

CUT TO: Audience, laughing hysterically

CUT TO: Screen

ANNOUNCER

(deep, richly modulated, old-timey accents)

Don't let their antics fool you. The Ziegfeld Follies are the premiere dancing troupe of the world. Currently on tour in Europe, the chorus line is kick-stepping its way across the continent, where they are a great sensation.

On screen, we see the women dancing in front of the Eiffel Tower, before a crowd of amazed Parisians.

ANNOUNCER

The popularity of the Follies is only the latest symptom of the dancing craze which has seized the nation. Gone are the days of the demure two-step. The Charleston, the lindy hop, the fox trot and the shimmy are the reigning favorites with today's youth. Each dance proves trickier and more daring than the last. But when done right, oh, is it a sight to behold!

On screen: lots of young people kicking and spinning and flipping neatly, executing these complex dances with ease.

ANNOUNCER

'Dance' is the word! Everyone's getting in on the act—Clara Bow, Josephine Baker, Louise Brooks!

CUT TO: Clips of Bow, Baker and Brooks dancing.

ANNOUNCER

What impossibly glamorous lives these lovely ladies lead! For groups like the Ziegfeld Follies, where vacancies are almost as rare as blue moons and auditions as rigorous as try-outs for the military, you might consider looking elsewhere. Fortunately for fox-trotting hopefuls of New York, you need look no further than the many elite dance troupes of Harlem.

As he talks, we get lots of footage of black women in beautiful Jazz Age attire rehearsing.

ANNOUNCING

Not for the faint of heart, these! They practice from sunup to sundown and put on as many as four shows a day. Anyone who can't swing and step in her sleep need not apply.

The announcer's voice drones on. Pan across the audience. Camera stops in the middle of the theater, where two young women in maids' uniforms share a bag of popcorn. Both are in their 20s and dear friends. Our heroine, Eloise, is the one with a pink ribbon around her neck—one of her few luxuries. Dancing, daydreaming and moviegoing are the others.

BEA

(leans towards Eloise)

Well, now you've got to try out, Eloise! This has your name written all over it. You live in New York, you love to dance, you're a great dancer—which, of course, is the real clincher, since enthusiasm doesn't always translate into skill—and you're hardworking as all get-out. Plus, your legs are fabulous. This couldn't be more perfect if it wanted to be.

Eloise

Wouldn't it be wonderful? But only if I could bring you on as my partner. We're a two-for-one deal.

BEA

You sure? I'd just trample your toes and put you out of a job.

They laugh. Then Eloise grows serious.

ELOISE

Bea...do you honestly think that things like that happen? In real life?

BEA

Well, not to me. I'm no dancer.

ELOISE

I mean, people getting discovered. Becoming a star, being celebrated for who you are. Or is at all just movie magic? A fairy tale?

BEA

(munching on popcorn)

How do you mean? Sure it happens. I mean—not to me, obviously. Or to anyone I know. I don't know any stars. I guess poor people can't be stars. But they get lots of stars from nowhere, don't they? Look at Marlene Dietrich and Clara Bow—

ELOISE

Oh, it's just a castle in the air, dancing. Seems like I spend every day dreaming of it—but real life always manages to get in the way, somehow. I don't know how I keep deluding myself. I'm not half as good as those girls (*gesturing to the screen*).

BEA

You're twice as good, and self-taught, to boot.

ELOISE

But these girls are classically trained—just look at their technique, their precision, their form.

BEA

Not one of them could hold a candle to you in expression.

ELOISE

They probably learned to dance before they could walk. Not to mention they have so much more performing experience.  
(*Wistfully*) How I wish Papa had sent me to ballet lessons with Ana and Dee!

BEA

What you don't know, you can learn. You're the fastest learner I know. And when they see how much you know already, they'll be tripping over each other to help you pick up the rest, 'cause you're a natural-born talent and everyone wants to say they taught a natural-born talent. And if you needed a dance partner, well, I'd be willing to stand in as one until we could find someone whose hours match yours and who wouldn't be

trampling your toes all the time. We could make it work. We're Beatrice and Eloise. We make everything work, that's what we do best.

ELOISE

It would be hard...But then, what isn't? It would be more than hard—it would be wonderful. Oh, I won't let them get to me. I won't stop dreaming.

BEA

*(triumphantly)*

You're picturing it, aren't you? Well, picture this: champagne and pate for dinner every night, a new Roadster every year, fur coats and everything trimmed in lace, a thousand dollars a week...Entire cities turning out for your performances—

ELOISE

Hundreds of fan letters every week—

BEA

*(correcting her)*

Thousands every day. You'd need a secretary working around-the-clock to keep up with all. You'd be the biggest star in the world. Bigger than Bow, Baker and Brooks combined. Celebrities and presidents would line up for your autograph. *(Pretending to be a telephone operator)* Hello, Miss Tremaine?

ELOISE

*(giggling)*

Speaking.

BEA

Mr. Ford on the line, please hold.

ELOISE

*(in a nasal, exaggeratedly prissy voice)*

Him, again? No, don't put him through. Tell him I won't be joining the Mellons for dinner tonight. Tell him not to call me again until he starts carrying the kind of caviar I like.

They laugh.

BEA

Forget dancing, you should get into impressions. You sounded so much like Eleanor I nearly leapt out of my skin. Well, anyway, it's fun to dream.

ELOISE

But that's the thing, Bea. Why must all our dreams remain dreams? There's just one thing separating dreams from reality. Do you know what it is? Courage—that's the only thing. The courage to try and make that dream a reality.

They sigh wistfully, considering this.

BEA

Well, stranger things have happened. This is New York, after all. You have people wash up here on Monday without two pennies to rub together. By Friday, they're millionaires. Why, it happens every day, just look at Carnegie and Rockefeller and Madame Walker, with her pomades. Anything's possible. (*Slyly*) And with me acting as your manager—

ELOISE

Manager, huh?

BEA

(*sweetly*)

Well, we won't haggle over commission rates just this moment.

ELOISE

No, because—

Her eyes widen in alarm. She remembers something. She glances at her watch and gasps. Suddenly, she shoves the popcorn bag into Bea's hands, scrambling to gather her things.

BEA

What's the matter? You look like you've seen a ghost.

ELOISE

I was supposed to be back at the house fifteen minutes ago. To wash the linens.

BEA

Oh, this is all my fault. I shouldn't have kept you.

ELOISE

No, no, I'm the one who got distracted, you're on your day off—

BEA

Yes, but I stopped you on your way to the butcher-shop and asked if you'd like to stop in and catch a picture with me—

ELOISE

*(gasps)*

The butcher's! It's Tuesday! I didn't get the roast beef!

BEA

*(in a tone of quiet horror)*

No.

ELOISE

Yes.

BEA

The roast beef?

ELOISE

Yes!

BEA

But she loves that roast beef.

ELOISE

I know.

BEA

She loves that roast beef more than she loves her own daughters.

ELOISE

She loves that roast beef more than she loves *me*. Oh, I'm finished! I don't have the time to get the roast ready and do the linens before Eleanor gets home. And Ana and Deirdre will

be home early today because of tennis! They'll tell her I was skylarking and-

BEA

No, no, we can't panic. We've got to keep our heads. Now, let's think. You rush home, fast as you can and start on the linens. I'll get the roast beef and meet you back at the house fast as a flash. If it isn't all the way cooked through in time for dinner, well, a little raw meat is much less than Miss FINE AIRS and her daughters deserve. How's that sound?

ELOISE

Bea, how'd I ever get on without you?

BEA

It's not even a drop in the bucket of what you've done for me. But we can hug and argue about who's nicer later. What are we sitting around here for?

She turns around and shoves the bag of popcorn at a group of boys. The boys from earlier, with the ticket clerk. The boys' eyes widen in amazement. They didn't have enough money for popcorn. Eloise and Bea hurry out of the theater as noiselessly and neatly as possible, whispering "pardon us" (Eloise) and "coming through, lift your legs" (Bea).

EXT.: Streets of New York-DAY

Squinting at the light, hissing, Bea and Eloise take off in different directions, breaking into the crowd. It is reminiscent of the boys running to the ticket window.

INT.: Sitting room, the Tremaine household - NIGHT

This is a spacious and elegant room, yet pared-down in the art deco style: geometric, stream-lined, symmetrical and planar. The floor is perfectly mopped, glossed, buffed and waxed. Lots of statues and expensive-looking artwork, a giant piano in the corner-where Eloise sits, playing classical music-and pointy-looking, avant-garde furniture. Stylish, but a little cold. Just like Eleanor and her



daughters, who are currently lounging around. Eleanor is drinking champagne and thumbing through a book while her daughters chatter away. Ana, the youngest, is reading a magazine. Deirdre is laying with her hand draped over her eyes, very dramatic.

ANA

*(shows Deirdre a picture in the magazine)*

See, that's the effect I'm going for tomorrow night. I even showed the seamstress the picture. My dress is the same color, even the same material. And I had her do a dozen fittings to make sure it'll hang off me the same way.

DEIRDRE

*(snorts)*

Ha! You'd have a better time imitating the hippo at the Brooklyn Zoo. You don't look a thing like that woman. You're too big. And your skin's not nearly as nice. Maybe her hair, you'd stand *half* a chance at recreating. But you'd need a complete makeover if you want even a *prayer* at catching the prince's eye.

Shocked and hurt, Ann takes back the magazine.

ANN

What do you think, Eloise?

ELOISE

*(comes over to look at the picture)*

Why, you're the spitting image of that lady-prettier, even. Whatever you wear to the ball, I know you'll look just divine in it.

Ann beams. Deirdre scowls.

DEIRDRE

That fireplace is looking mighty dirty, don't you think, *Cinderella*? Why don't you get down there and scrub it out, instead of poking your nose into other people's conversations? Last time I checked, you weren't even invited to the ball.

ANN

Not true, Dee! Remember the prince's invitation? It said the party was open to 'all eligible ladies of New York.'

DEIRDRE

And do you think a scullery rat, a creature without even a pair of dancing shoes to her name, qualifies as an eligible lady? Please! Anyway, mother already told her she can't go. Who'd sweep the cinders out of the fireplace? What would she even wear? She has no clothes and doesn't know the first thing about fashion, anyway.

CUT TO: Cinderella, kneeling by the fireplace, stiffens.

ANN

You've been begging her all week to style your hair and help you get ready.

DEIRDRE

Won't you leave me alone? I'm resting my eyes and you're distracting Mother. She's trying to read.

ANN

What're you reading, Ma?

ELEANOR

How many times have I told you to call me *mother*? Ma's so undignified. I didn't send you to all those elocution classes so you come home and bray at me like a common farm hand.

DEIRDRE

Say, I recognize that cover. Suzie Barker was reading it on the train. That's that book, *The Great Gilmore* or *Gregson* or—*Gatsby*, I think it was. I heard it's no good.

ELEANOR

Pure rubbish. That Fitzgerald would do better to look after that wild wife of his than lecture us better-off people. The way he talks about the wealthy, you'd think they were monsters.

DEIRDRE

Certainly! Don't we give a little to the poor folk at holidays?

ELEANOR

And if you ask me, even that's more than they deserve. I don't see the point of charity: what obligation do I have to give my hard-earned money to some fool who wasn't clever enough to invest on the stock market? Charity promotes bad values. Don't we want to teach people to work for what they want in life?

ANN

What's the book about? *The Great Gatsby*?

ELEANOR

Some mysterious millionaire who gives great parties in Long Island. Pure nonsense. Only nobodies live on Long Island. Certainly not millionaires.

ANN

Why, that sounds a little like the man who's giving the ball tomorrow night. The prince. No one knows anything about him except that he's fabulously rich, lives in a big mansion on Park Avenue and gives the most sought-after balls in the city. They say he has more money than Croesus. Even the prince of England begged him for a go on his yacht in the Sound sometime. That's why they call him the prince, because he's even richer than royalty. I've never seen him in my life. I don't even know how he knew to invite us.

ELEANOR

Never mind how he did it. Just thank your lucky stars that he did. This is the chance of a lifetime. Do you know what it would mean if either of you girls snared the prince?

DEIRDRE

Fabulous riches: mansions, yachts, jewels—

ANN

All the clothes we could ever want.

ELEANOR

Not to mention social status. The prince rubs elbows with royalty, doesn't he? If he marries one of you, the other can leverage his connections to marry one of his many rich and

powerful friends. It is very important that both of you girls dance with him tomorrow night.

DEIRDRE

There'll be a line.

ELEANOR

You cut to the front of the line. I'm serious. If I find out you didn't dance with the prince, I'll never let you set foot in this house again. That's a promise. Now come on, it's time for bed. You need your beauty sleep if you want to entice the prince tomorrow night.

They all rise. Ana and Deirdre bound up the stairs, arguing about who the prince will like better. Eloise rises from the fireplace, seizing her chance. Eleanor drains the last of her champagne and makes to leave.

ELOISE

Lady Tremaine—please wait. There's something I've been meaning to ask of you.

ELEANOR

There's not a chance I'm letting you off dish duty. You always want to skive off. Just like your father. If it weren't for me, he'd always be home, lurking around the house instead of working.

ELOISE

But Papa's hardly ever home. He works so late he's never here in time for dinner.

ELEANOR

Don't you lecture me!

ELOISE

Please, Lady Tremaine! I meant to ask you about the ball. I was wondering whether I might not go, after all.

ELEANOR

Impossible!

ELOISE

I know my clothes won't be nearly as nice as everyone else's, but I wouldn't mind! I've been working all year on a nice dress I made from some old material. It's nearly done. If you just give me tomorrow to put the finishing touches on it, I should be finished by tomorrow night.

ELEANOR

Tomorrow you have to help your sisters prepare for the ball.

ELOISE

But please! All I want is to dance!

ELEANOR

Oh, spare me. All you want is a day off. How do you think you could appear in society with your twice-turned finery, anyhow? A scullery maid named Cinderella, dancing with a prince? It's too ridiculous!

ELOISE

*(softly)*

My name isn't Cinderella. And I don't even want to dance with the prince. I just want to dance.

ELEANOR

Well, you can dance at home without fear of humiliating yourself. Maids have no place at parties. Now, we both have to get up early tomorrow so I'll leave the conversation here. Make sure to wash the dishes before going to bed. And look after the linens—they still need to be folded.

Without a backwards glance or a 'good-bye', Eleanor goes upstairs and turns off the light—leaving Eloise suddenly in the darkness.

## About the Authors

**Sarah Boess** is a producer, director, and educator based out of New York City. She is the Artistic Director of Sanguine Theatre Company and has worked on producing teams on and off-Broadway with Manhattan Theatre Club (*My Name Is Lucy Barton* adapted from Elizabeth Strout's novel by Rona Munro; *The Perplexed* by Richard Greenberg), The Civilians (*Black Feminist Video Game* by Darrel Alejandro Holnes; *Whisper House* by Duncan Sheik and Kyle Jarrow; *Showing Up* by various authors), and more. She recently led the launch of The Civilian's education series alongside teaching artist Alison Weller and worked with Falconworks Theatre Company's "Off The Hook" young playwright program. She is thrilled to once again join forces with the Tredyffrin Public Library in the creation of this handbook after leading the development of the Tredyffrin

Performing Arts Camp and assisting on their award-winning Shakespeare In Isolation program.

What book would you adapt?

I love the unlikely lover's story of Cinderella and would like to create a big family-friendly version that casts the prince as a princess and features two women falling in love.

Favorite adaptation?

Too many to list! Three I can't seem to pick favorites from are *Men On Boats* by Jaclyn Backhuas which adapts real-life journals of an 1869 boating expedition to explore the Grand Canyon and features a cast of all women and gender non-conforming actors, *Oedipus El Rey* by Luis Alfaro which places the Greek tragedy of Oedipus in the context of contemporary Chicano gang culture of Southern California, and *Once On This Island* which reimagines The Little Mermaid into a Haitian folk tale musical. The list of stellar adaptations is nearly bottomless--check out *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, *She's The Man* by Ewan Leslie, or even current box office favorites *Hadestown* by Anaïs Mitchell and *Hamilton* by Lin Manuel Miranda.

A Tip for the reader of this handbook?

Don't delete your work! Every time you're ready to create a new draft, duplicate your document and edit the new copy. That way if you get further down the road and realize something you wrote in an earlier draft works better, you'll have something to go back to! It will also empower you to make sweeping changes if you know you have an existing copy of all your previous drafts.

**Laurie Doan** is the librarian for teens at Tredyffrin Public Library, Strafford, Pennsylvania. Inspiring youth to pursue creative and philanthropic endeavors is one of her goals, and she accomplishes this by hosting theatrical performances and encouraging charitable fundraising. "Laurie helps each kid discover their passion," says

one of her mentees, “and she does everything she can to help us develop those passions.”

What book would you adapt?

I gave Remixed Classics Scriptwriting a try as seen in this handbook. I began by adapting “The Gift of the Magi.” During the research period, I watched “Meet Me in St. Louis,” and added more than a dash of that theme as well.

Favorite Adaptation?

Is probably yours!

A tip for the reader of this hand book?

Always keep a piece of paper and something to write nearby so you can write spontaneously!

**Kathy McCullough** is a screenwriter and novelist. Her screenplay, “Santa Hood” won the Austin Film Festival Screenwriting competition and was later bought by Universal Pictures. She’s written scripts for Nickelodeon, Hallmark, Lifetime, and the Disney Channel. She’s also written over a dozen novels, including two teen fantasy comedies, Don’t Expect Magic and Who Needs Magic? She was hired by Disney to adapt Don’t Expect Magic into a TV-movie and is currently adapting the book as a TV pilot. Kathy worked for several years as a story analyst for TV and movie studios, including HBO Films, Imagine Entertainment, and Castle Entertainment, among others, in addition to working as a private script consultant. Her book How to Make Your Script Better Than the Rest is based on what she learned from her many years of reading and analyzing scripts.

What book would you adapt?



The War in Val D'Orcia by Iris Origo. This is a wonderful, cinematic World War II memoir, which could be summed up as the female version of SCHINDLER'S LIST.

Favorite adaptation?

A tie between ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST and THE ENGLISH PATIENT. Instead of trying to copy the novel, both screen adaptations took a different approach to the novel's events that worked for film, like the original story worked on the page.

A Tip for the reader of this handbook?

Concentrate on getting the words down. Don't try to make anything perfect to start. Remember that your story, your characters, and the world they live in, didn't exist until you started writing them. There's no way for you to know everything at the start. Just keep writing.

**Max Mooney** is a director, playwright, producer, dramaturg, stage manager, and theatre educator who works primarily in New York City and the greater Philadelphia area. Within all of his practices, Max focuses his energy on developing language-based new work in collaborative settings that find the intersections between poetry and theater. He leads processes that prioritize non-hierarchical power structures and balancing rigor with the undeniable joy we should feel when making work. He graduated from NYU Tisch's Playwrights Horizons Theatre School in 2022, studying directing and playwriting. Max has worked with Ars Nova, New Victory Theater, Playwrights Downtown, SoHo Playhouse and The Strafford Players to create work. Currently, Max sits on the core artistic team of Sanguine Theatre Company in Brooklyn.

What book would Max adapt?

"I would adapt Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë, but particularly the scene in which Heathcliff digs up Catherine's grave. It is one of my favorite scenes of all time and I think

that kind of grieving and desperation to connect with those who have passed transcends time.”

Favorite adaptation?

“My favorite adaptation most recently is Aleshea Harris' *On Sugarland* that was done at New York Theatre Workshop this Spring. It adapts Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and combines it with the experiences of Black veterans from several American wars across history returning home to tell an epic, devastating and overwhelming story. It is an adaptation in the truest sense of the word- using the source material to elevate the story she wanted to tell, but with enough creative license to produce something wholly original.”

A tip for the reader of this hand book?

“This isn't school! There's no right or wrong! Break rules- what is laid out for you in this book isn't the law but an offering. Take what works and throw out what doesn't! You know your process better than anyone, the handbook is only there to help you along your way.”

**Chanelle Ongagna** is a senior at Conestoga High School in Berwyn, Pennsylvania and a reporter for her school newspaper. She loves reading, writing and watching movies—and anything that combines the three mediums. Her favorite books are *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret History*.

What book would you adapt?

*Little Women*. The story of four girls' very different approaches to womanhood, life and love is one that remains very relevant and fresh.

Favorite adaptation?

*The Song of Achilles*, a novel adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*. I think what makes it so special is its deeper characterization of both Patroclus and Achilles's famous friendship, which made the story feel so alive and intimate and almost ethereal.

A tip for the reader of this handbook?

Don't be afraid to be out there! As long as your story keeps the same elements and themes, you can get as creative with the source material as you want!

**Nadia Papachronopoulou** is a theatre and film director with a breadth of experience working in venues across the UK and Internationally. She has worked as both a freelance artist and been part of theatre buildings working alongside artistic directors of the Orange Tree and National Theatre Wales as their emerging director. She has also worked with the BBC, the National Theatre, Royal Lyceum, West End, Regents Park Open Air Theatre, Kiln, Old Vic and The Unicorn.

What book would you adapt?

Catcher in the Rye by J D Salinger and setting it today with social media.

Favorite adaptation?

Odyssey by Homer adapted by Robert Wilson for the stage, it was so epic and spectacular a first for the eyes. It was utterly magical and it really brought the Ancient Greek Poem to life in a fantastic way.

A Tip for the reader of this hand book?

Be bold and brave to try new things. Trust your instinct.

**And our proofreader Elle Kerrigan**, Elle is a 23 year-old lifelong reader and writer. She enjoys reading literary fiction, memoirs, and poetry collections. Elle studied English at Fordham University and hopes to write a novel of her own one day.

*Contemporary Writers Featured In This Handbook Include:*

**A. Rey. Pamatmat**

**Kirsten Greenidge**

**Joshua Harmon**

**END**

**We'd love to hear from you:**

**remixedclassics@gmail.com**