

Harrington
21M.604 Fall 2005
Handout, Week 2

As you think about writing a play, ask yourself the following questions BEFORE you begin to write:

1. Why is this day different from all others?
2. What is the EVENT that will bring your characters together?
3. NOTE: Write bios of your characters that include what they WANT.
4. How will they change during the play? NOTE: Plays are about how a course of EVENTS changes the characters involved. Characters do grow and change their thoughts, attitudes, relationships and perceptions through what they experience in the play.
5. What will the major CONFLICT be and how will it lead to the climax where the problems get resolved? NOTE: Resolved doesn't mean happily ever after. A resolution means something has changed and that the play will end with that change. I.e., for better or worse, the problem of the play has been worked to a conclusion.
6. Brainstorm a basic plot. Think about how the problem might be solved (again, the resolution may change as you write the play.) Sum up the plot briefly.
7. Answer the five "W's": Why am I writing it? Who's in my play? Why are they doing what they're doing? What's happening in the play? Where and when is it taking place?
8. Try outlining what happens in your scenes. This will quickly tell you whether anything at all is happening.
9. Start writing the scene that excites you the most even if it's not the official first scene from your outline. Make sure to write down whatever great ideas come along in your head as you're writing this or any other scene.
10. If you get stuck, keep asking WHY. Why does she go to the ferris wheel after midnight? Why does he stay in this terrible relationship? Why does he gamble with his tuition money?
11. Also, when you're stuck, put yourself in the physical reality of your characters—there are millions of clues here—from the rats that live under the floorboards to the empty dresser drawers to the 45 year old bathrobe he just can't bear to throw away.
12. Have fun!