Grade 8

Unit Six

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS	
☐ Review as necessary to enable application of all revision skills appropriate for the genre	☐ Story: Script	
	WRITING ON DEMAND	
	☐ ongoing, all disciplines	

PATTERN STATEMENT

Direction clarifies the way.

NOTES

Several states include scriptwriting in their educational standards. Scriptwriting may seem simple, but reality refutes that perspective. Scriptwriting presents several unique challenges.

First, no descriptive passages appear in scripts. For example, the playwright cannot write, "Joe walked across the field as his mind raced with worries about tomorrow's meeting." To convey a similar thought, the playwright must write dialogue and adequate stage directions for the actor. Would Joe actually walk across a field? Would Joe think his worries aloud? Would Joe look worried and not say anything? Would he pause halfway across the field to indicate that he is thinking? The dramatic form determines the way the story is told. Dialogue and stage directions define how a playwright can communicate with readers and an audience.

Second, telling a story primarily through dialogue while keeping the dialogue from becoming stilted requires significant thought and revision.

Third, the playwright must keep in mind how the writing will appear on the stage. Two people simply talking may make for poor drama unless the topic or emotion is engaging. Scriptwriting requires more than attending to usual elements, such as word choice and active voice.

These challenges make the Acquaintance and Analysis activities for this unit especially important. Be sure to discuss the characteristics of scripts as you give students experiences reading and hearing them. When you have scripts read dramatically, encourage the students to imagine how the action and dialogue would look when staged. Use the A&A sessions to help students comprehend the limits and potential of script writing.

These additional aspects of scriptwriting make it quite challenging. Not only does the playwright need to tell a story in a unique form, but the script must also include all necessary descriptions and directions for the play to be produced. Encourage students to focus on storytelling first, to craft the dialogue and action so that a satisfying story results. Then have them return to the script to add the necessary descriptive and directive details. This will free them to focus on good storytelling without the additional material that scriptwriting requires. However, do not allow students to overlook the necessary details. Learning what to include and how to phrase things like stage directions is part of mastering the genre.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *Direction clarifies the way*, can be illustrated by giving students something that must be assembled but not providing them with the printed directions. For example, ingredients to make a type of food, pieces to a model car, pieces to ready-to-assemble furniture (this would be difficult due to scale but may be the most effective, if available). Anything that is not easily assembled without the accompanying directions would work. Give students a few minutes to suggest ways the

8
grade

unit
SIX

GENRE

Story: Script

provided pieces may be put together. Then hand one student the directions and have him read each step aloud as you do what is explained. Continue until enough of the assembly is complete to contrast having the directions with not having them (EX-ex). Have the students consider the contrast and respond to the following questions:

- What would you have done if you had to complete the assembly without the directions? Would your results have matched the designer's intended results? How closely?

- How did your approach change once you had the directions? How would your results have differed? Would your results have matched the designer's intended results? How closely?

- What is the relationship between having the directions and how you approached putting together the pieces to reach a result? (EX-co)

Use questioning to guide students to the pattern statement, *Direction clarifies the way* (EX-el). Engage the students in identifying other illustrations of the pattern, especially examples from their own experiences (EX-ap). Explain that in scriptwriting, the notes about scenery, staging, etc. provide enough direction for the director and actors to be able to produce the play as the author intended. Continue to the COmprehension Strand.

GENRE

STORY: Script	
Definition	Objective
Presents a story in dramatic form with lines to be spoken by actors and any necessary stage directions.	With teacher prompting, student writes a play with at least three different scenes and features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met and a reasonable (i.e., believable within the context) resolution.

Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	**PROFICIENT**	**ADEQUATE**	**NOT YET**
‣ Writing features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met and a reasonable (i.e., believable within the context) resolution. ‣ Dialogue is natural/consistent with the characters and setting. ‣ Script includes basic information necessary for staging. The writing suggests an understanding of the genre's form and methods. ‣ The script has elements of originality. The characters' words and actions are not overly predictable and/or the scene/play resolves in surprising but satisfying ways. ‣ Additional revisions may produce minimal improvements.	‣ Writing features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met and a reasonable (i.e., believable within the context) resolution. ‣ Dialogue is natural/consistent with the characters and setting. ‣ Script includes basic information necessary for staging. The writing suggests an understanding of the genre's form and methods. ‣ While believable, the script lacks originality. The characters' words and actions are overly predictable (i.e., stereotyped) and the scene/play resolves in foreseeable ways. ‣ Additional revisions could increase the script's originality.	‣ Writing features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met and a reasonable (i.e., believable within the context) resolution. ‣ Some dialogue is unnatural or inconsistent with the characters or setting. AND Script includes basic information necessary for staging. The writing suggests an understanding of the genre's form and methods. ‣ Additional revisions could improve the script's dialogue and/or staging information.	‣ Script lacks one or more of the following: a problem to be solved or challenge to be met and/or a reasonable (i.e., believable within the context) resolution. AND/OR Script is not presented in the correct form; it is not obviously a script for a scene or play. ‣ Additional revisions could significantly improve the script.