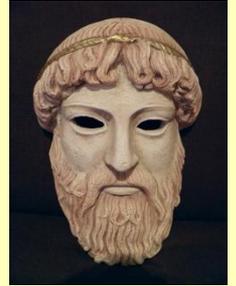


Playwriting in the 21st Century



Class #1 at Helena High
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Presented by Pamela Mencher

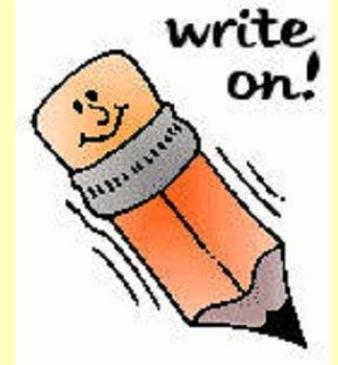
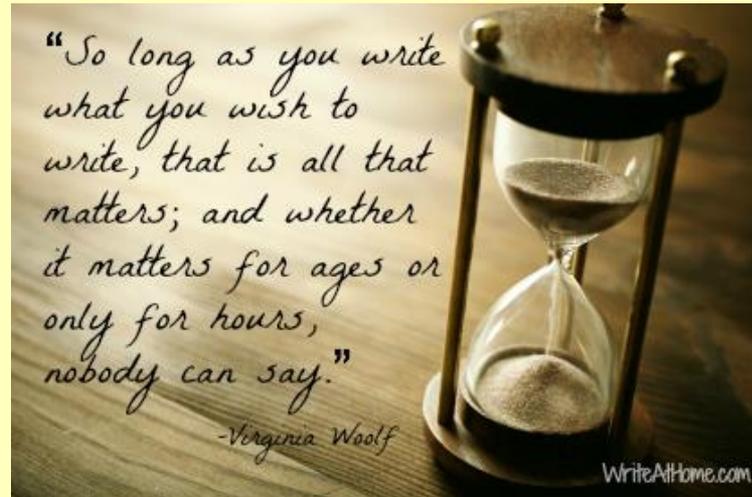
A Quick History of Playwriting



1. How did the craft of playwriting begin?

- A. It began as prayer competitions in Ancient Greece.
- B. Evolved into poetry and music competitions in worship of the gods.
- C. Eventually involved a poet with a speaking, chanting chorus. Then the innovation of two actors and the chorus. And eventually had 3 actors and the chorus with dancers and music.
- D. It became more and more sophisticated and eventually developed three distinct forms: Tragedy, High Comedy, and the Pastorals.
- E. It spread throughout Western Civilization.
- F. Eventually was outlawed in the dark ages. Only the Church could tell stories using dramatic performance techniques well into the middle ages.
- G. In the Renaissance, it became highly developed in Europe. (14th -16th Centuries.)
- H. It changed in the 20th Century. America invented the modern musical.
- I. Today it is evolving even more. Plays have been influenced by the movies. Magical Realism is common.

Why do Playwrights Write Plays?



Playwrights have something to say about what is important to them.

Effective plays reflect back to society what we are concerned about in our personal lives, our community, country and the world.

Playwrights communicate through the dramatic arts. They create complete worlds on a live stage with live actors.

It's fun.

It's really cool to see actors and stage designers bring your words to life.

Modern Story Plays in Literature & Performance

All plays (and stories) have three basic parts: a beginning, middle and end.

All plays center upon a central conflict.

Plays are written to be performed, and not to be read. Scripts have specified formats, length, styles and genres (as do literary forms).

Plays have a protagonist and antagonist. (So do stories.)

Plays focus on dramatic action, and the characters' responses to what happens in the story.

Plays have themes, a message or overall meaning, a purpose for telling. (So do stories.)

The Story Play is the most common form of play literature. (Approximately 95%.)

Structure of the Story Play

Five Parts of the Story Play:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Rising Action
3. Complications/conflicts
4. Climax
5. Denouement

