



I. OUTLINE A TEN-MINUTE PLAY

I'm going to give you the seed of an idea for a ten-minute play, and I want you to write just an outline of what could happen. If you've never written one before, keep in mind that it needs to be short! There can be only one or maybe two dramatic events (ie, something changes). Use only a few characters—could be one, or two, no more than four. Here is the premise: one day, **a student comes to class and causes a disruption**. A disruption could be a negative thing or a positive thing, right? So whatever pops into your mind and causes some kind of strong feelings for you is a good place to start. Who is the student? What is the disruption? How does it affect nearby students? That disruption will be your first event. Now, think about the teacher. The teacher is going to try to deal with this disruption by moving the student to another place. What kind of person is the teacher? How does the teacher get the student to move? How does the move affect the disruptive student, the other students, and the teacher? The move will be your second event. I'll give you about ten minutes to make an outline. Don't write the whole play! Just tell what happens. This is important: you have permission to change any of the elements you want to.

Premise:

First Event:

Second Event:

OUTLINE OF ACTIONS (CHOICES):
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II. PLAGU: A SRIIOUS COMDY

We are about to enjoy a reading of a very fine ten-minute play written by Roy Blomstrom, which was performed by a different cast at the 10x10 Showcase in 2014. Tonight's performance was directed by Don McMahon. Here is Plagu: A Serious Comedy! Thanks to our actors: Heidi Gordon, Don McMahon, Eileen Dias, and Sean Jesseau.

Now, I'm going to give you copies of the script, with Roy's permission. He said to tell you he's not responsible for any contamination that may occur.

[SEE PLAGU SCRIPT]

Questions:

1. Is this a complete story, with a beginning, middle, and end?
2. How many events are in the play?
3. What is a dramatic reversal?
4. What is the premise of this play (the initial problem)?
5. What is the action of this play—what happens? What choices do characters make?
6. What makes this play fun to watch?
7. What makes it satisfying?

Script Format for 10x10 Play Submissions

Font: Times New Roman 12

Margins: L-R 1 inch / Top-bottom 0.5 inches

Spacing: single-spaced

Now I'm going to invite the playwright to come and tell us where this story came from.

[ROY GIVES HISTORY OF PLAGU]

Think about the play you outlined earlier. Look at your notes. This is the same premise that Roy started with. You can take one idea for a story, and every person in this room can go in a completely different direction with it. Even one writer could try several different versions of that story, just like Roy did. He kept looking for ways to improve the idea and make it stronger. This is the way plays are written, by thinking and re-thinking, writing and re-writing. And then we give the play to a director and actors, and they think and re-think, and try things and change them around, in order to make the strongest possible story.

III. VODOO

I hope that gave you an example of how to shape an idea into a ten-minute play. It takes a lot of practice. Sometimes, you get it right the first time you try. Sometimes, you write a few plays that don't work very well, until you hit on something that does work.

Right now, we're going to write a play together—another example of how you might shape an idea into the ten-minute play format. We're going to hear a very short story, and then figure out ways to change it from a piece of fiction to a piece of theatre. Roy's going to read this story, written by Fredric Brown in 1954 called Voodoo.

Questions:

1. What is the premise of this story? (The problem)
2. What do the characters want?
3. There are many ways to think about what will happen in this story. One important thing to decide is how to end it. The fictional story is not theatrical, because it's not 'on stage'—we don't see what happens. So we need to change that. Suggestions?
4. What are some possible dramatic events for this play, based on that ending?
5. Where will the play begin?
6. How will the characters speak?
7. What is the stage setting? (10x10 limits set pieces, light and sound effects, and props)
8. What is the closing line and image?

Now we'll get into groups of about four people. Together, I'd like you to use the handout as a guide. First, agree on an outline—what's going to happen. Writing dialogue and stage directions should be the last thing you do. If you want to experiment by acting out some scenes, please feel free to do that. Just find some room. I'll come around and see how you're doing. When you've all had a chance to write something, we'll gather together again and wrap things up.

VOODOO (AS A TEN-MINUTE PLAY)

Premise:

Characters (maximum four actors):

Setting (set pieces limited to four chairs, three large wood boxes, one small table):

First Event:

Second Event:

OUTLINE OF ACTIONS (CHOICES):

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VOODOO SCRIPT

LIGHTS UP.

(Describe the setting:)

(Tell who is on stage. What are they doing?)

(CHARACTER NAME) (DIALOGUE /OR/ STAGE DIRECTIONS)

WRAP UP

Tonight, each of you outlined two ten-minute plays and wrote one! You can do it!

There are many ways to approach writing a play. You could collaborate with one or more friends. You could write on your own, then ask your friends to read it out loud and offer feedback. You could ask some of the 10x10 playwrights from past years how they wrote their successful scripts. You could write on your own and submit it without making any revisions, but I wouldn't recommend that. Some of last year's playwrights requested an opportunity to get help with revising, before the submission deadline this year. So 10x10 will offer a Revising Workshop in the beginning of January. You can bring a draft of your script and discover ways to make it stronger! That will probably be January 10 or 11.

Also take a look at some ten-minute plays by talented professional playwrights. There is a list of recommended resources in your package—Thunder Bay Public Library has two excellent anthologies of ten-minute plays by Tony Kushner, David Mamet, David Ives, Susan Miller, and many others. You can read scripts online and try to find YouTube videos.

The best way to learn how to make great theatre is to see great theatre! Go to plays! If you can't afford to travel to the United Kingdom's National Theatre in London to see some of the best productions in the world, then join us for NT Live events right here at Silver City, almost every month. Following the shows, we meet and talk about the plays—that's a fantastic experience for any playwright! (Last month: Benedict Cumberbatch in Hamlet.) The next talk-back session will be Saturday, Nov 28th, after we see an encore of Tom Hiddleston in a fantastic production of Coriolanus, at 1pm at Silver City. Also come to hear Debbie Patterson, a Winnipeg playwright who grew up in Thunder Bay, read from her award-winning plays next month right here at CommuniTea. (Friday, December 4th.)

Please do submit whatever you've got ready by January 23. Everyone will receive written feedback on their work. There will be a Playwrights' Circle where you can share your plays with other writers, and if your script is selected for the showcase, then there will be many opportunities to develop your play and to see it on stage in April!

If you are interested in directing someone else's play, you may apply online by completing our director's survey. If you'd like to act, there will be an acting workshop in the new year, and a separate weekend for auditions.

And before you go, buy a button! Show it off, and tell people what 10x10 is all about!

If you're not on our email list, please give us your address so that we can send you updates about all our activities this year. Thanks and goodnight!