

Prescott Fine Arts Association's YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

PLAYWRITING: an Elementary Breakdown

Every play has a *beginning, middle, and end*. Below you will find definitions for the main parts of a play. These are meant to help explain how a play works. You may notice that these “ingredients” are similar to those that you would find in many familiar stories.

Understanding these literary/theatrical “ingredients” will help you to write a better play.

PLAY “INGREDIENTS”

Characters: Every play has to have a main character and other supporting characters. Even though there might be many characters in a play, the main character is usually who the story is about.

In the story of Little Red Riding Hood, Little Red is the main character while The Wolf and Little Red Riding's Grandmother are supporting characters.

Plot: This is another word for the *story* of the play. Every play has a plot that revolves around your main character's goal and the steps he/she takes to overcome the obstacles in their way to achieving it.

A Character's Goal is the thing that he/she wants to achieve

*Little Red wants to visit her grandmother.
The Wolf wants to eat Little Red.*

Obstacles are the things that get in the character's way.

The Wolf pretends to be Little Red's grandmother. This is an obstacle for Little Red.

Dialogue: The words spoken by your characters.

When Little Red says “Oh! grandmother, what big ears you have!” she is speaking dialogue.

Stage directions: Directions for either the actor or director of a play. These are not spoken during the performance, and are only used to help the director, designers and actors understand the play.

In Little Red Riding Hood, the stage directions would tell the actor playing The Wolf that he should put on grandmother's clothes... Nobody would read this direction during the performance; instead the actor would just do it.

Now that you have learned about playwriting, you can write your own play! Remember that above all, writing a play should be fun! It is a chance for you to imagine your own characters, and tell your own story about them.