



When writing a play, be creative!



IN previous articles, we have discussed the essential aspects of theatre – the six fundamental elements of drama. These elements are a 'must' in most dramas, movies, or stories you have read. However, they are not the most important part of writing a story. Rather, being creative should take precedence over everything. But first of all, what is creativity?



Many define creativity as "the **juxtaposition** of ideas which were previously thought to be unrelated." That is, you can combine and **manipulate** old elements to **create** new ones. Creativity is a skill that cannot be learned but can be acquired through practice. Some say we should let creativity **come** to us because creativity is **derived** from inspiration. So, we should get ourselves ready for its next unscheduled arrival by treating our bodies well – by getting enough sleep and exercise. Both will help the brain to function better and thus provide sufficient energy and flexibility to create.

Also remember that **creating** is an output. To have any output you first need to get input. To gain input, you need to be a good observer. Avoid passing judgment on unfamiliar things you observe. In addition, you should also read widely. New things and knowledge fuel the creative mind. Then exercise your creativity by combining these new-found observations and knowledge in your mind. In short, daydream.

Some of the best stories come from daydreaming.

After so much 'preparation', we can begin training our creativity. One of the many ways to 'jump start' your creative process is by doing free-writing. Get a piece of paper, a pen and a dictionary. Randomly pick two words from the dictionary and begin writing non-stop for five minutes. If your mind goes blank, keep scribbling until something comes to you. Don't worry about whether or not your writing makes any sense. The point is to write! When finished, read over your writing and count the words. Then reduce the words by half by crossing out the 'unimportant' words in each sentence. Repeat the procedure a few times until there are around 10-15 words.

With these words, we can start to develop our story. Remember, being creative is having the ability to juxtapose. We juxtapose our task, 'start writing', with climax. That is, we develop the most exciting action scene of our story first. The objective is to create as much tension in this scene as possible.

We first use those 15 words as a lead for us to create some characters related to those words – say, two teenage sisters aged 10 and 13. Then, put them in the worst situation that creates the greatest tension, and begin describing what happens to them. Perhaps they are running through a dark forest surrounded by tree monsters trying to eat them. But that's not all; a gigantic slimy and **hideous** creature with sharp teeth and nails is chasing after them. The sisters find a sewer pipe in which to hide for the time being. The howling of the creature is getting louder and louder.

Next, after the climax is done, we then write an ending to **defuse** the tension in our story, how the creature is caught. The sisters fall through a hole in the pipe and slide down to this strange world filled with people half their size. The sisters explain what happens and the little people get to work to help trap the creature. They catch the beast and punish it by working for this strange world.

To complete the story, we need to put ourselves in the reader/audience

position. After reading the above 'story', the audience would naturally ask, since the main characters are children, where the parents are. Also, where does the creature and such strange people come from? By answering the relevant questions and linking them all up appropriately, we form the basic exposition of the story. Add the climax and the resolution we have just created, and we have a basic plot to a children's fantasy.

Now we have the basic plot. The next thing we must do is create finer scenes and minor details to connect the dots between the exposition, the climax and the resolution. This will be a **cake walk** since we have come up with the basic plot. And this we will leave to a later article.

Exercise

This week your one and only task is to follow the above exercises to create a basic plot for your story. Then, write the key scene along a diagram, marking where they would fall into the plot development. Revise the developed scenes and add two more action scenes in between the exposition and climax using the same method. Share with a classmate/friend for feedback.

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GLOSSARY

1. juxtaposition (n. 並置)
2. manipulate (v. 運用)
3. derive (v. 取得)
4. hideous (adj. 可怕的)
5. defuse (v. 除去危險性)
6. cake walk (n. phr. 輕而易舉的事)