

Mastering the Stage: Writing a Playscript

Learning objective: To identify and use the features of a playscript, including character names, stage directions, and dialogue.

Read the scene below involving Max the monkey and Pip the caterpillar. Use the passage to answer the questions, paying close attention to how the layout of a playscript differs from a story.

SCENE 1: The Great Library Tree

[Max is sitting at a wooden desk with a stack of maths books. He is tapping his pencil against his chin, looking frustrated. Pip crawls onto the desk, carrying a tiny magnifying glass.]

MAX: (Sighing loudly) I cannot work out how many acorns we need for the winter festival, Pip. It is a tricky calculation!

PIP: (Smiling and pointing to a book) Have you tried grouping them into tens, Max? It makes the addition much easier.

MAX: (Eyes widening) That is brilliant! You are a genius, Pip! Let us start again.

[Max begins writing quickly in his notebook while Pip watches happily.]

Word bank: stage directions · dialogue · character · colons · brackets · scene

1. Identify two features of a playscript used in the passage above that you would not normally find in a standard storybook. (2 marks)

2. What is the purpose of the information written inside the square brackets? Explain why they are helpful for an actor. (2 marks)

3. Looking at the dialogue, what punctuation mark is used to separate the character's name from the words they are speaking? (1 mark)

4. Imagine Max and Pip find a new challenge. Write one line of dialogue for Max and include a stage direction in brackets to show how he is feeling. (2 marks)

5. Why do you think playscripts use names on the left-hand side instead of using speech marks (inverted commas)? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a sketch of what the 'Great Library Tree' looks like based on the scene. Include Max at his desk and Pip crawling nearby with his magnifying glass.



Extension challenge: Choose a favourite fairy tale or fable you know. Rewrite the opening paragraph of that story as a playscript, remembering to include at least two characters, stage directions for their movements, and clear dialogue.