

Starlight Stagecraft: A Guide to Playscripts

Learning objective: To understand the structural features and purpose of a playscript.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below, using evidence from the passage where necessary.

Nova the owl perched on her favorite branch, watching the theater troupe prepare for their evening show. She noticed that the actors were not holding books, but thin, stapled papers called playscripts. Unlike a storybook, a playscript is a set of instructions for a performance. It begins with a character list, introducing everyone who will appear on stage.

Inside the script, the names of the characters are written on the left-hand side, often in bold or capital letters, followed by a colon. This tells the actor exactly who is speaking. The lines they say are called dialogue. Nova spotted something interesting written in brackets and italics: (she sighs and looks at the sky). These are stage directions. They do not get spoken aloud; instead, they tell the actors how to move, what emotions to show, or where to stand. Without these vital clues, the performance would lack heart and movement. By following the script, the cast brings the story to life, turning simple words on a page into a magical experience for the audience sitting in the dark.

Word bank: dialogue · stage directions · character list · scene · props · performance

1. According to the passage, what is the main purpose of a playscript? (2 marks)

2. How can you identify who is speaking when reading a playscript? (2 marks)

3. Why are stage directions written in brackets and italics? (2 marks)

4. What might happen to a performance if the actors decided to ignore the stage directions? (2 marks)

5. Do you think playscripts are more difficult to write than standard stories? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene from a play where a character is following a stage direction. Include a prop and a speech bubble showing their dialogue.



Extension challenge: Write a short playscript (no more than 10 lines) featuring Pip the caterpillar and Max the monkey discussing a mysterious object they found in the garden.