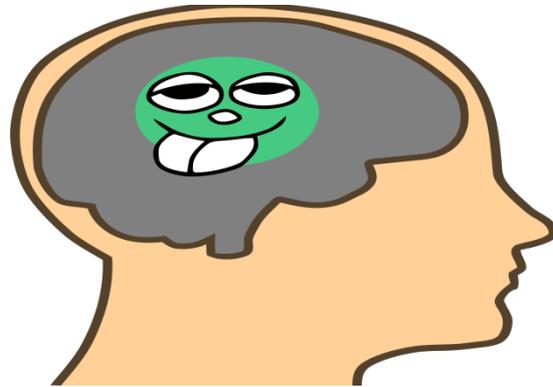


# INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING



# WHY BECOME A PLAYWRIGHT?

The poet, short story writer and novelist has the power to convert his/her thoughts into the individual readers mind at the pace set by the individual reader.



# WHY BECOME A PLAYWRIGHT? cont...

The playwright has the power to convert his/her thoughts instantaneously into the eyes, ears and minds of a multitude of people. Uh or minions in this case.



# WHY BECOME A PLAYWRITER? Cont...

The joy of watching an image from your mind come to life before your eyes

The opportunity to work with a multitude of people ranging from set designers, directors, actors, make-up artists, costume designers and more that come together as a team to bring your script to life

An opportunity to create a script designed around the talents of interested actors and actresses



# WHAT AM I GOING TO WRITE A PLAY ABOUT????

Several factors might weigh on your decision to write a play. Write a list of those factors and decide which factor is the most important to you. Ask yourself: What factor has the most impact on my desire to write a play and what resources do I have in order to get the play produced or published?

# FACTORS THAT MOTIVE YOU TO WRITE

- A POLITICAL/SAVE THE WORLD STATEMENT
- RELIGIOUS PURPOSE
- DOCUMENT HISTORY
- JUST HAVE A GREAT STORY TO TELL
- BRING OUT THE TALENTS OF OTHERS
- FAME/FORTUNE (Doesn't hurt to dream)
- SIMPLY WANT TO SEE YOUR WORK COME TO LIFE
- JUST LIKE TO WRITE
- GET PUBLISHED
- REALLY REALLY BORED

# CONGRATULATIONS!!!!

Congratulations on making your decision to write a play. Now you must choose a topic. Perhaps throughout the process of deciding your factors that motivate you to write, you already have a topic in mind. If you have that topic in mind, work on asking yourself what you want done with the play once you are finished with it.

# AVAILABLE SCRIPT OPTIONS

- 1. Have it produced locally (Barton Community College, 4-H groups, community theatre, church etc....)
- 2. Readers theatre workshops
- 3. Published – Jamie Oss is always looking for new talent with Prairie Ink Magazine produced right here at Barton Community College.

# AVAILABLE SCRIPT OPTIONS Cont...

The reason it is a good idea to have a **tentative** plan on what to do with your script is that it allows you to have an idea of your talent base while writing the script. As mentioned earlier, if you know the number of actor/actresses and the talent base behind those actor/actresses, you will have a better understanding as to what characters that you want your script to center around.

# PLAYS THAT REQUIRE A LARGER CAST

1. Children's theatre – Generally requires “The more the merrier”. (Seems like every child wants to be an actor.)
2. Religious theme theatre – Religious plays draw people of all ages.
3. Musicals – Draws both singers and actor/actresses



# PLAYS WITH FEW LIMITS AT ALL

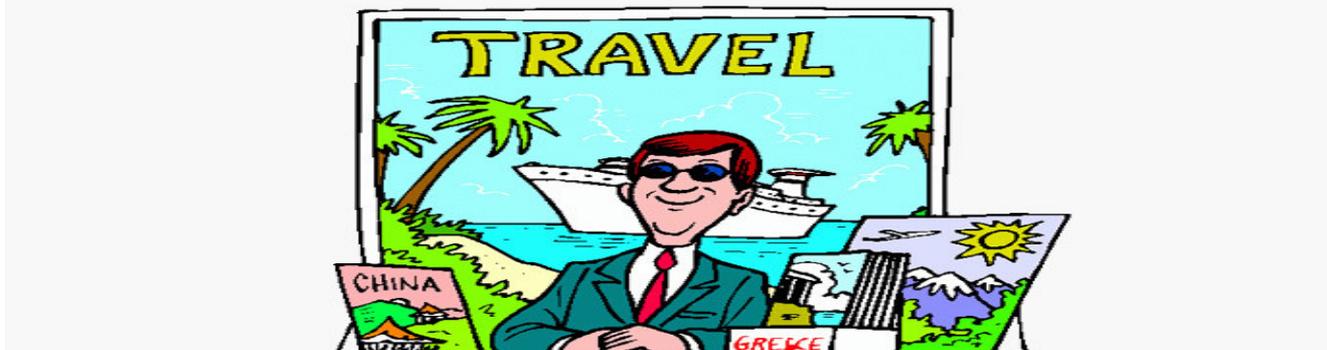
There are less limits in writing a play if your motivation to write the script is based on the following factors:

1. Getting published in a magazine, book, journal etc....
2. Document history
3. Simply like to write just to write



# PLAYS THAT REQUIRE A SMALLER CAST

1. Coffee shop/black box theatre – Limited space
2. Readers Theatre/Workshops – Actor/Actresses will generally have to travel.



# SMALLER IS BETTER

By and Large, it is much easier to get your work on stage if the cast size is smaller. Smaller casts make it easier to find enough people to perform, easier to direct on stage and easier to schedule rehearsal performances with.



# WHAT SHOULD I WRITE ABOUT?

The Answer can be found in  
one sentence.

## AND THAT ANSWER IS....



# WHAT SHOULD I WRITE ABOUT?

Answer has already been said which is just that

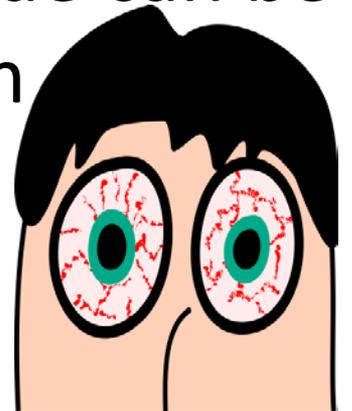
**ONE SENTENCE**

Your play should be based on a thesis statement. A thesis statement is simply one sentence.

# THESIS STATEMENT

Any type of really good story is based on  
**ONE SENTENCE.**

Often writers will stray off course of that one sentence thinking **BIGGER IS BETTER** philosophy. The fact is that this attitude can be too much and too overwhelming for an audience.



# STAR WARS



# STAR WARS PLOT.

(This is actually the first description seen of the movie when I googled: **Plot to STAR WARS**.)

The Imperial Forces -- under orders from cruel Darth Vader (David Prowse) -- hold Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) hostage, in their efforts to quell the rebellion against the Galactic Empire.



# STAR WARS EPISODE 1 – PHANTOM MENACE

This is the first description after I googled  
PLOT to Star Wars Episode I

- The evil Trade Federation, led by Nute Gunray is planning to take over the peaceful world of Naboo. Jedi Knights Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi are sent to confront the leaders. But not everything goes to plan. The two Jedi escape, and along with their new Gungan friend, Jar Jar Binks head to Naboo to warn Queen Amidala, but droids have already started to capture Naboo and the Queen is not safe there. Eventually, they land on Tatooine, where they become friends with a young boy known as Anakin Skywalker. Qui-Gon is curious about the boy, and sees a bright future for him. The group must now find a way of getting to Coruscant and to finally solve this trade dispute, but there is someone else hiding in the shadows. Are the Sith really extinct? Is the Queen really who she says she is? And what's so special about this young boy?
- - Written by [simon](#)

# STAR WARS MOVIE COMPARISONS

BOTH WERE BLOCKBUSTER HITS BUT THE CRITICS ALL AROUND LOVED STAR WARS AND HEAVILY BASHED THE PHANTOM MENACE.



THE STORY LINE TO PHANTOM  
MENACE WAS JUST TOO MUCH!





# JJ ABRAMS TO THE RESCUE!

After the prequels to the STAR WARS series, George Lucas sold the rights to the STAR WARS Series to Disney. Disney hired Mr. JJ Abrams. How did JJ Abrams bring the STAR WARS Series back to greatness?



# JJ ABRAMS TO THE RESCUE cont..

He simply went back to the basics.

A simple thesis statement - just one sentence.

Here is what first popped up after googling:  
Plot to FORCE AWAKENS.



# JJABRAMS TO THE RESCUE cont...

Thirty years after the defeat of the Galactic Empire, Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and his young allies face a new threat from the evil Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and the First Order.



# JJ ABRAMS continues...

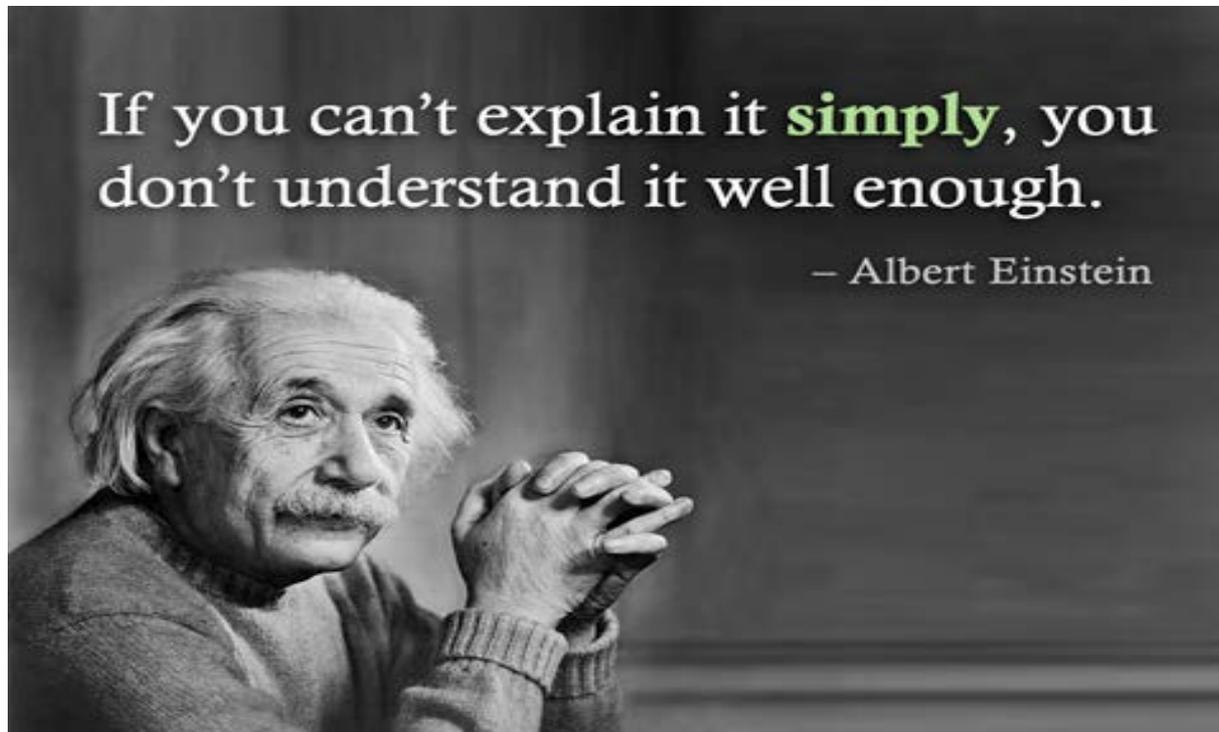
Once again the STAR WARS series was brought back to a simple plot. JJ Abrams also brought back old school actors, such as Harrison Ford and Carrie Fischer, along with adding modern day culture with an African American man – John Boyega and a woman - Daisey Ridley becoming the toughest warriors of the flic.

# JJ ABRAMS TO THE RESCUE cont...



# ALBERT EINSTEIN SAYS IT BEST

A quote from Albert Einstein:



# WHAT NEXT??

AFTER THE THESIS STATEMENT – Decide whom your protagonist and your antagonist are.

What is a Protagonist and an Antagonist?

# Protagonist and Antagonist cont...

Your Antagonist is generally the character in your script that keeps the plot moving. He or she is generally but not always the

**BAD GUY!**



# Protagonist and Antagonist cont...

Example: Dorothy doesn't have to chase all over Oz for the ruby red slippers if the wicked witch doesn't take them. So generally speaking, your Antagonist is just plain BAD!



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

## cont...

Although the “Bad to the Bone” image generally fits the description of an Antagonist, the Antagonist can come in many forms that aren’t evil. To figure out whom your antagonist might be – just think to yourself which character moves the storyline along.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST cont...

An example of a “good guy” Antagonist would be Elsa from frozen. Hans is the obvious villain but it is Elsa that drives the storyline along.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

## cont...

Next we need to decide whom your Protagonist is? Your protagonist is the character that is the person that brings the plot to a close. He/She brings resolution to the problem at hand. Often this person is the “HERO” of the storyline.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST cont...

However, as is the case with the Antagonist not always being the “BAD GUY”, The Protagonist isn’t always the hero that saves the day “GOOD GUY”. He or she is simply the person that eventually finds a way to put closure to the storyline. So when deciding whom your protagonist is – think whom will put resolution to the issue at hand.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST cont...

An example of movie themes that would have a  
NON HERO as the protagonist would be:

When I googled NON-HERO PROTAGONIST  
immediately what popped up what seemed  
like 15,000 movies with one common theme.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

## cont...

### GANGSTERS

Although the head gangsters such as Al Capone, John Dillinger or “Machine Gun Kelly”, might not have started the issues in their lives. They certainly end up the guys that put an end to it.



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST cont...

Can there be multiple Protagonists and Antagonists and can one be both a Protagonist and an Antagonist? The answer is YES AND YES. An example of a movie/play that portrays characters that are all Protagonists and Antagonists would BE:



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST cont...

## The Breakfast Club



# PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

## cont...

- Although it works to have multiple antagonists and protagonists that interchange in their roles in certain cases, by and large it is a better idea to have one protagonist and one antagonist.
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE!**



# OUTLINE

After deciding on who is your Protagonist and Antagonist, you need to make a very basic outline. The outline for a play consists of nothing more than an

OPENING

BODY

CONCLUSION

# OPENING

The opening part of the play generally introduces the audience to the major characters, especially the Antagonist and the Protagonist. It also sets up the plot that supports your thesis statement. The opening part of your play must have an eye opener that will draw us in! – A **WOW** moment!



# OPENING cont...

My Personal favorite opening to a movie as cheesy as it sounds is the opening to GREASE.

The movie starts out with a nice sweet parting ways of a beach romance that turns into two completely different versions of how the couples relationship developed that summer.



# OPENING Cont....

As portrayed in the hit song Summer nights.

With the beach scene and the lyrics to summer nights - the antagonist Danny (John Travolta) and protagonist Sandy (Olivia Newton John, are established. The thesis statement is in place: **A Boy falls in love but tries to portray the image of being to “cool” for his girl.**

# BODY

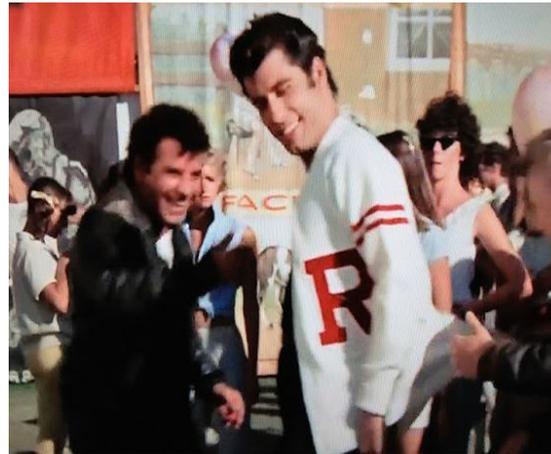
With the opening, Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey (Playwrights) have drawn your audience in with the hot steamy beach scene along with the hot steamy original song dance scene of “Summer Nights”. Now you have to keep their interest going while not pulling away from the basic thesis statement.



# BODY cont...

These two writers do this by creating a simple but fun and aspiring plot which is:

- Have Danny ferociously try to become the protagonist by trying to become good.



# BODY cont...

BUT HE BASICALLY FAILS AT BEING GOOD.  
BECAUSE HE'S JUST PLAIN **BAD!** HE IS WHAT  
HE IS.



# CONCLUSION

Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey succeeded tremendously in their quest to write a great opening and body for their musical but they are still lacking a great MEMORABLE CONCLUSION. This is the part of the storyline that leaves the audience with a BANG!



# CONCLUSION Cont...

The playwrights did this by making “Sandy” a most unconventional protagonist, as she turns from **HERO** to **BAD** in her quest to put a close to the story. Instead of trying to change “Danny” to good. She decides that **BEING BAD AIN’T SO BAD!**





# FORMAT

The odds on **PAPER** of having a play produced by a larger market are 1 in a thousand, however, an estimate by most credible analysis found on the net state that **90%** of all scripts are thrown out because the scripts weren't formatted correctly.



# NEXT PAGE – CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

- CAST:
- Amy Jensen – A woman in her late 40's. She is a licensed psychologist. She is the owner and manager of a counseling service that is located in a small Kansas town, called Larned.
- Olivia Cone - A woman in her late 40's. She is a former friend and former employee of Amy Jensen. She is also a licensed psychologist. She is an alcoholic that has lived her life in despair the past six years.
- Gina Stallworth – A 24 year old woman that displays a split personality. Her alter personality is Phillip Cone, a 5 year old boy.

- 
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- 
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- 

## ACT I

### SETTING

- {Scenes 1 and 2 of ACT I take place in the office of Amy Jensen. It is a large office as it is also a room used for counseling sessions for her clients. It is equipped with a desk chair, couch, small desk, computer, pencils and pen.}
- {Scene 3 of ACT I takes place in a bar. A small portable bar placed at the corner of the stage will work, making it unnecessary to move the office scene.}

# OLD SCHOOL STYLE OF ACTUAL SCRIPT

Amy: Hello Olivia, good to see you. (Olivia does not respond.) (Next line is said with sarcasm.)  
Why hello Amy. It's good to see you as well.

Olivia: I didn't know I was supposed to roll out the red carpet.

Amy: Ha ha. I know our relationship is rocky but I don't think it is too much to ask for you to acknowledge my presence.

**THIS STYLE IS OUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

# THE ACTUAL SCRIPT NEW STYLE

I-1-1

## ACT I SCENE 1

(The scene begins with Amy on the computer. She appears to be thoroughly studying information. Amy is professionally dressed wearing slacks and a button down shirt or a dress. In walks Olivia Cone. Her hair is messed up, dressed rough and appears depressed. She is hung over.)

AMY

Hello Olivia, good to see you.

(Olivia does not respond. Next line is said with sarcasm.)

Why hello Amy. It's good to see you as well.

OLIVIA

I didn't know I was supposed to roll out the red carpet.

Amy

Ha ha. I know our relationship is rocky but I don't think it is too much to ask for you to acknowledge my presence.

# WORKSHOP PROJECTS

NOW BREAK INTO GROUPS OF 3-4.

Write a two-three page script based on two characters: One character is a human of any age, nationality, gender etc... that thinks he or she is an animal/animals of your choice.

The character that the animal wannabe is talking to is a preacher of any age, nationality, gender etc.....

# WORKSHOP PROJECT

RULES: There are no rules other than your group has twenty minutes.

After your group is done we will have a read through and as a class we will analysis the script and provide advice.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

Final thoughts are to ALWAYS look outside the box. Don't just look at a paperclip as nothing more than a paperclip. The paperclip can be shaped into a key to get escape from a house. It can be a way to fix up hair, nose for a paper airplane etc..... The most original scripts look at people in a different light than their typical unfortunate stereotype. Nothing defines this more than the script FOREST GUMP!!

# FINAL THOUGHTS cont....

Every piece of the Academy award winning script for best picture - Forest Gump expresses the heart and feelings of individuals outside of the image that others first see. Not only from the humans in the show but even through the use of a feather in the script.



# FINAL THOUGHTS ...

AND FINALLY MY BEST ADVICE IS TO WRITE.

WRITE WRITE WRITE!!!! When your finished with your script, before you send it anywhere or do anything with it do one more thing. RE-WRITE RE-WRITE RE-WRITE and when your finished rewriting do one more thing.

REWRITE RE-WRITE RE-WRITE!!!



# ANY FINAL QUESTIONS????

IF NOT THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

OH ya before you go one more thing.

WRITE WRITE WRITE

WRITE WRITE!!!!!!

