UNIT 5
THE PLAY’S THE THING

The BIG question
How does drama tell stories?

Key learnings
- Plays are unique and imaginative ways of telling stories about our lives and our communities.
- In order to understand plays, we need to know about their structure, language and characters.
- We can use our bodies, voices and minds to perform plays and influence the way an audience sees, hears and understands the story.

Knowledge, understanding and skills
Students will:
- examine the features of dramatic text
- explore characters and language in context
- perform as characters in a story
- use the skills of the playwright.
Exit, stage left . . .

Act 2, Scene 2: Juliet’s Balcony

JULIET O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou, Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name . . .

ROMEO [aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET ’Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet . . .

— Romeo and Juliet
by William Shakespeare

NARRATOR Son of Zeus — you must thwart the flesh-eating horses of Thrace!

CHORUS C/D Oh-oh — these guys are meanies.

CHORUS A/B Prepare to vamoose, son of Zeus!
[Enter the horses, ushered by Hera. The horses are not very bright.]

HORSES They call us the flesh-eating horses . . .

ALL Oooooohhhh . . .

HORSES Because — we eat flesh!

HERCULES [to the audience] These guys really enjoyed Year 8 — said it was the best six years of their lives.

— Hercules Has Some Fun
by Richard Yaxley


THEO’S MUM Christos, katabini nero. ['Christos, he’s breathing water!']

THEO’S DAD Theo, I got you. Mitera, xero ti kano. ['Mama, I know what I’m doing.'] Theo, head up. Up!

THEO [spluttering] Dad. Why can’t I float? They’re going to laugh at me at big school.

THEO’S MUM Theo, tha ise entaxi. ['Theo, you’ll be alright.‘]

THEO’S DAD Theo, no worries. We got one month to big school. I teach you swim so good you school champion cup butterfly. Year Two Thousand, you swim Olympic Game for Australia.

— Small Poppies
by David Holman
How is drama part of our lives?

Drama seeks ways to tell stories by creating or recreating people’s lives on stage or screen. These ways vary a great deal, as you will notice from the words and images opposite. However, the key element of conflict between people will always be present.

Drama can tell stories by using actors, puppets or invented characters, in real worlds or fantasy worlds. It can incorporate dance, movement, image, song or words. These stories can be further developed by adding music, sets, digital effects, lights and sound.

Drama is a dynamic and powerful method of storytelling that has been part of all cultures, from ancient times to the present, across all the continents. As a form of storytelling, drama is common to all people; it is a universal way of communicating.

Tuning in

1 Think and say why: Look at the images in the collage opposite. Describe each image. How might it relate to the idea of telling a story?
2 Read and say why: Now read the texts. How are they different? How are they the same? What kind of story does each text appear to be telling?
3 Recall and say why: What kinds of drama have you recently seen or been part of? Make a list that covers the last year of your life. For example, have you seen a play performed at school or elsewhere? Watched a TV show or YouTube clip? Been to the movies? Had an argument? Listened to someone’s story? Played a story-based computer game? Enjoyed a song about someone’s life? Why would you call these events or experiences ‘dramatic’?
4 Find out and share: Choose from the topics below and perform a quick internet search to find out a few facts about drama through history and across the world. Report your findings to the class, either verbally or using presentation software such as Prezi. You might be able to include some online video-clips of these types of drama in action.
   - Drama in ancient Greece
   - Noh plays in Japan
   - Commedia Dell’Arte in Italy
   - Corroborees of Indigenous Australians
   - Shadow puppets in Indonesia
5 Write your own definition of the word drama. Consider whether drama is more than simply storytelling.

LANGUAGE link

Word building with suffixes

Like many words, drama belongs to a word family. Other similar words can be built from the original, like cousins of the main member of the family.

Two words that can be made from drama are:
   - dramatist (noun) — a person who writes plays
   - dramatic (adjective) — having to do with drama.

We can build new words by adding a suffix (a letter or group of letters) to the end of the main word. For example, we added –ist (meaning ‘someone concerned with’) to drama to get dramatist.

Suffixes often change the word class of the main word. For example, if we add the suffix –ic to the noun drama we get the adjective dramatic.

Use a dictionary to find another word in the drama family that has been formed using a suffix, then use it in a sentence.
5.1 UNDERSTANDING PLAYS AS TEXTS

What are the key features of a play?

You have probably watched many dramas on television or seen many movies that have dramatic elements. But have you seen a play? A play is a story performed by actors in a theatre. It starts with a playscript, which has a number of key features. Some of these features, such as the development of a narrative, are similar to features found in other texts such as short stories. Other features are unique to plays. All of these features need to work together for the playscript to be successful as a text.

The most significant difference between playscripts and other written texts is that playscripts are meant to be performed. The words on the page are not there to be read silently and alone, as we might read a novel. They are meant to be spoken aloud and interpreted for an audience of listeners. Onstage, different dramatic devices bring the words to life.

The playscript

Richard Yaxley’s play Snagglewort is about the power of advertising. The first part of scene 1 is reproduced below, with explanations of the main features of a play alongside for easy reference.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

### NEED TO KNOW

**play** a story performed by actors in a theatre

**theatre** the place where plays are usually performed. It contains a stage, dressing rooms, seating for the audience and an entrance or foyer.

**playscript** the text of the play, written to be performed

**narrative** the literary term for story

**dramatic devices** different techniques used for presenting plays on a stage to make them more interesting for the audience

**scan** to glance over a text before reading it thoroughly, in order to quickly find particular features or anticipate difficult words

### READY TO READ …

- Look at the illustration that appears with this text. Describe what you see.
- Does this text look different from other story texts? Think about the use of italics, headings and brackets. What else looks different?
- Now scan the text and list any unfamiliar words. Use a dictionary to find out meanings for these words, and refer to your list as you read.

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1. **from Snagglewort**
   - by Richard Yaxley

   **Character list** (in order of appearance)
   - Nikki: schoolgirl, outwardly brash but inwardly shy
   - Omar: schoolboy, health-conscious and generally sincere
   - Bob: schoolboy, laid-back and a bit gloomy
   - Sascha: schoolgirl, enthusiastic and talkative
   - Crowd: excited shoppers (any number)

2. **Scene 1**

   **Omar, Nikki and Bob** are sitting on three seats lined evenly across the stage. They are in a schoolyard with a lunchbox balanced on each of their laps. *As the curtain opens, Nikki reaches in and holds up a very healthy-looking salad sandwich.*
Whenever a character’s name is used — unless it is said by another character — the name is written in capital letters. (14)

Stage directions are instructions to the actors about what to do. They are usually in brackets and often written in italic to separate them from the spoken text. (18–19)

Specific items that are needed for performance, such as the lunch boxes and Bob’s pie, are known as props: an abbreviated form of the phrase ‘stage properties’. (24)

Sometimes stage directions will refer to the emotion required by the actor, rather than an actual movement. (29)

Actors make entrances and exits, usually from the right or left side of the stage (from the actor’s point of view). This is an example of writing for performance, and shows how the writer must visualise the play on stage as they write it. (30)

Synchronised speaking, freezing and speaking directly to an audience are dramatic devices, used to make the performance more interesting. The inclusion of dramatic devices is a key feature of playwriting. (40,43,44)
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING the features of a playscript

Getting started
1 a How many characters are there in the scene?
   b What are their names?
   c Are there any characters mentioned who are not actually in the scene?
2 The four main characters are described in turn as brash, sincere, gloomy and 
   enthusiastic. Find out what each of these words means.
3 Is this scene mostly about:
   a the difficulties of having lunch at school
   b a group of friends arguing
   c a new invention?
   How do you know?

Working through
4 a Where does the scene take place?
   b Should the description of the setting contain more details?
   c What might be the disadvantage of providing more details?
5 Some parts of the scene are written in italic type (like this). Why?
6 List all the props in this scene. Think of another prop you could add that would 
   fit in. Where would it be placed or which character would use it?
7 What are the two main purposes of stage directions?
8 Explain your understanding of synchronised speaking and freezing.
9 What features of this script tell you that it has been written to be performed, 
   rather than read passively?

Going further
10 This section of the play does not tell us what a Snagglewort is. Invent your own 
   Snagglewort, using your own choice of media (digital model, hand drawing, 
   actual model). Consider what it looks like, what it does and why people want it 
   so much. Would you like a Snagglewort? How would you convince others that 
   they should have a Snagglewort?

ANALYSING the features of a playscript
Now read the scene below from a play entitled The Time Machine, and then answer 
the questions that follow.

from The Time Machine
by Richard Yaxley

Scene 2

[Inside a lounge-room. Joy is dusting when her daughter jilly enters, pushing a 
large box.]

    joy Is that it?
    jilly That’s it.
    joy A time-machine. Looks a bit — weak. Does it work?
    jilly Yes, it does. Simply set the dial, press the red button, press the 
green and hey presto — you’re in history.
    joy Hm. And how exactly do you get out of history?]
JILLY Easy. Set the dial, press the green button, press the red and hey presto — you’re home again.

JOY Just like that?

JILLY Just like that.

JOY Okay then, little miss I’m-a-time-traveller-so-I’m-special, show me.

JILLY Sure. Just step inside.

JOY In there?

JILLY Yes.

JOY Oooh, I don’t know. Is it clean — or is it like your bedroom?

JILLY It’s clean . . .

[They step inside the box.]

JILLY Set the dial — red, green, GO!

[Explosions and smoke. Enter caveman.]

JOY Oooh, look! He’s not wearing a shirt!

JILLY Mum, he’s from the Palaeolithic Age. People were primitive.

JOY Just like that family from next door. They don’t wear shirts. Or much else, for that matter.

[The caveman makes primitive noises.]

He sounds like them too.

[caveman exits as two knights enter from the other side, sword-fighting.]

KNIGHT 1 Have at thee, you cur!

KNIGHT 2 Take that! And that!

JOY What’s this? Here, stop that!

[The knights freeze.]

JOY Ooh — feel the power!

JILLY We’re in medieval times, Mum. They were always fighting.

JOY Just like Woolworths on a Saturday morning. [To the knights]

OKAY, you can go now.

[Exit knights. Joy is pleased with her new-found power.]

JILLY Anyway, now you know it works, so we should go home. I’ll just set the dial . . .

JOY Here, let me have a go!

JILLY Mum, no. No, not that one, that’s the future —

JOY Oh stop blathering, you silly girl!

JILLY Mum, that’s light years away —

JOY Green, red — GO!

JILLY Nooooo!

[Explosions and smoke.]
How are plays structured?

There are many different ways to structure a play, depending on how many scenes or acts (groups of scenes) the playwright decides to use. One thing, however, does not change: the need for conflict.

Imagine watching a television show where all the characters speak nicely to and like each other. No-one disagrees or argues, and everyone supports each other the whole time. Realistic? No. Interesting? Not at all!

Like all stories, plays need conflict. Conflict occurs when characters disagree because they have different beliefs about what has happened, what is happening and what should happen.

Here is a familiar story that has been broken into acts and scenes. In each scene the major conflict, as well as other narrative elements, has been highlighted.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

**Getting started**
11 Does this text look similar to Snagglewort? If so, how?
12 How many characters are there? What are their names?
13 Is this text fictional (story) or factual? How do you know?

**Working through**
14 Study The Time Machine and create a checklist to show whether it includes the following features of a playscript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Entrances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character names in capitals or small capitals</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage directions</td>
<td>Props</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama devices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Going further**
15 In groups, discuss what will happen in the next scene of The Time Machine. What action will take place? Who will be involved? Use your answers to improvise the scene and act it out.

**READY TO READ …**

- This story is entitled ‘The Three Little Pigs’. Do you already know this story? What happens?
- Look in the column headed ‘Action’. Make a list of characters. Are there any characters that you did not expect to be in this story?
- The story of the three little pigs is a fairytale. Fairytales have special characteristics. They often:
  - begin with ‘Once upon a time’
  - include talking animals as characters
  - involve good and evil, where good always wins
  - have good characters who live happily ever after.
- Scan this version of ‘The Three Little Pigs’. Does it have these characteristics?
from *The Three Little Pigs*  
by Richard Yaxley

### Narrative elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>Scenes</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Once upon a time there was a mother pig who had three little pigs. She did not have enough money or food to look after them, so she sent them out to seek their fortunes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      | 2      | The first little pig found some straw and built a house with it. Just after the house was built, along came a wolf. He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and called, 'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!'
|      |        | But the little pig answered, 'No, no! Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!' So the wolf said, 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!'
|      |        | So he huffed and he puffed until he blew the house in, and then he ate up that little pig. |
|      | 3      | The second little pig found some sticks and built a house with them. Just after the house was built, along came the wolf. He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and said, 'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!'
|      |        | But the little pig answered, 'No, no! Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!' So the wolf said, 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!'
|      |        | So he huffed and he puffed until he blew the house in, and then he ate up that little pig. |
|      | 4      | The third little pig found some bricks and built a house with them. Just after the house was built, along came the wolf. He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and said, 'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!'
|      |        | But the little pig answered, 'No, no! Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!' So the wolf said, 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!'
|      |        | So the wolf huffed and he puffed and he puffed and he huffed, and he couldn't blow this third little pig's house down. |
| TWO  | 1      | When he found that with all his huffing and puffing he could not blow this little pig's house down, he was very angry indeed. He decided to climb up on the roof of the little pig's house and go down the chimney to get the pig. |
|      | 2      | When the little pig heard the wolf on the roof of his house and saw what he was about, he made a fire in his fireplace, filled a big pot with water, and hung it over the fire. Just as the wolf was coming down the chimney, the little pig lifted the lid off the big pot of boiling water, and in fell the wolf. |
|      | 3      | And that is how it came about that this little pig lived happily ever after in his snug little brick house. |
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING the structure of a play

Getting started

1 Match each feature to its correct definition in the columns below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>A new event in a story, which causes further conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>The high point of the story. All the complications and conflict have been directing us to this moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>The beginning of the story, where we find out about characters, place and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complication</td>
<td>The feeling created by conflict. This makes us want to find out what will happen in the rest of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>What happens when characters disagree about what is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>The end of the story; what happens to the remaining characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>When a character represents an emotion or idea, that character becomes a __________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Complete each of the following sentences:
   a Tension in the story is created when _________________________________.
   b This tension builds when _________________________________.
   c The tension reaches its climax when _________________________________.

Working through

3 What is the most important conflict in this story? How do you know?

4 The story is divided into acts and scenes.
   a What is the difference between an act and a scene?
   b Why has the writer chosen to finish Act 1 at the point where the wolf cannot blow down the third little pig’s house? Would you change this point? Why or why not?
   c Should Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2 be combined into one? Why or why not?

5 Write down responses to the following ‘if’ questions and discuss them with a group:
   a If the mother pig was rich, would the story be different?
   b If the first little pig had invited the wolf in for dinner, would the story be different?
   c If the third little pig had been a weak, scared character, would the story have been different?
   d If the wolf had accepted defeat by the third little pig, would the story have been different?
   These questions highlight the need to have characters who are in conflict with each other. For example, a wolf who accepted defeat would have stopped the conflict. The story would have become uninteresting.

Going further

6 The story does not tell us what happened to the mother pig. Write a paragraph that fills in this gap in the story.

7 In drama, it is necessary to have characters who are in conflict with themselves or with other characters. What would happen to the dramatic impact of ‘The Three Little Pigs’ if the wolf had accepted defeat?
ANALYSING the structure of a play
Below is Act 1, Scene 1, of the story, written as a playscript.

from *The Three Little Pigs*
by Richard Yaxley

Scene 1
*Inside a kitchen. There is a table with four empty plates on it. MOTHER PIG enters unhappily. She opens cupboards, searching for food. There is none to be found.*

**MOTHER**  Oh dear, oh dear, there’s nothing here. Nothing to eat, no bread, no meat, nothing to keep my family replete.

[Enter FIRST PIG, happily. He sits at the table.]

**FIRST PIG**  Hallo, hallo, what food is there?

**MOTHER**  Nothing my love, the cupboard is bare.

[Enter SECOND PIG, happily. He sits at the table.]

**SECOND PIG**  Hallo, hallo, what food is there?

**MOTHER**  Nothing my sweet, the cupboard is bare.

[Enter THIRD PIG, happily. He sits at the table.]

**THIRD PIG**  Hallo, hallo, what food is there?

**MOTHER**  Nothing my child, the cupboard is bare.

**THIRD PIG**  Oh well. Time to go.

[He stands and goes to the door.]

**MOTHER**  Piggy three, talk to me. Where do you think you’re going?

**THIRD PIG**  Please Mother, don’t be sore. The problem is we’re very poor.

**FIRST PIG**  [getting up to go] It’s true, it’s right, it’s very clear . . .

**SECOND PIG**  [getting up to go] We haven’t eaten food this year.

[Pause.]

**MOTHER**  I know. I’m sorry. There’s just nothing about, and what . . . with the drought . . . I should try harder to fill the larder . . . but since your father turned to bacon, I’m having awful trouble making . . . ends meet.

**PIGS**  [chorusing] We know, we know . . .

**FIRST PIG**  It’s time to go.

**SECOND PIG**  We really should be . . .

**THIRD PIG**  Independent . . .

**PIGS**  Resplendent . . .

**FIRST PIG**  Mother dear, don’t worry about us!

**SECOND PIG**  We’ll be right!

**THIRD PIG**  We’ll catch the bus!

[MOTHER hugs them all.]

[QUIETLY] But stay away from the wolf, that murderous villain.

[A drumbeat. Lights down.]
**Getting started**

Part of the story has been transformed into a playscript as Act 1 Scene 2.

8. Why are some sections of the text written in italic, and other sections not?
9. Draw a map of the room, as it is described in the first two lines. Include furniture and other items, including doors and windows.

**Working through**

10. In a group, read the scene aloud.
11. How has the writer established conflict in the story?
12. Are the pigs different characters? In what ways?
13. How does the mother’s final line ‘set up’ the next part of the story?
14. What is the purpose of the drumbeat at the end?
15. The writer has chosen to write the dialogue of the play in rhyme. Suggest why this might have been done. What effect does this have when the play is read aloud? Read it aloud before answering.

**RESPONDING to the structure and features of a playscript**

Read the following extract from a playscript, and then answer the questions that follow.

---

**from The Blue Coat**  
by Richard Yaxley

*Inside a department store: the male clothes section. MATT, a teenager, is browsing with his new girlfriend JEN. She sees a blue coat and goes to it.*

JEN  This one’s nice.
MATT  *[looking up]* I don’t like blue.
JEN  I think blue would suit you.
MATT  It can suit me as much as it wants, I still don’t like blue. My mother used to insist that I wear blue when I was a kid. Blue pants, blue shirts, blue socks, even a pair of blue shoes. My granddad used to call me True Blue. It became this weird family joke. I hated it.  
*[Pause.] So, because of all that, I don’t like blue.*
JEN  It’s a good coat.
MATT  Jen, it’s blue. Hey, why don’t we —
JEN  *[ignoring him]* Good cut. Strong material. Lining to keep you warm. Extra pockets. And look, fifty per cent off. Half-price; that’s —
MATT  Jen —
JEN  Amazing. You know, this really is a great coat. Most guys would love a coat like this. They’d even be grateful to the person who showed them this coat —
MATT  It’s blue! I hate blue!
JEN  Your eyes are blue.
MATT  My eyes are green!
JEN  They look blue to me.
MATT  I think I know the colour of my own eyes.
JEN  Are you sure about that? You can’t exactly look at them and check, can you? Besides, there are some things you just can’t see, no matter how hard you look.  
*[Pause. MATT looks away.]*
MATT  Want a coffee?
JEN  If Lucy had said to buy the coat, you’d have done it.
---
Getting started
16 How many characters are in this playscript? What are their names?
17 Look at the illustration. What information about the play does it add?

Working through
18 Jen wants Matt to buy the blue coat because of its qualities: colour, cut, strength, general appearance. Is there another reason why she wants him to buy it? If so, what is that reason?
19 Is Matt telling the truth about his hatred of the colour blue? How do we know?
20 Is the conflict between the two characters really about the blue coat? Explain.
21 What line tells us that Jen is talking about something else, not the coat?
22 Below are three possibilities for the next part of the scene. What will happen if:
   a Matt refuses to buy the coat
   b Lucy walks into the store
   c Matt’s mother walks into the store?

Going further
23 Choose (a), (b) or (c) from question 22. Write the next part of the scene, using dramatic devices that have already been modelled in this unit.
24 In groups, read the new scenes aloud. Do the words given to the characters sound right? Are there other words, lines or ideas that can be added? Discuss and then edit your scenes as required.

**MATT** [sighing] Forget Lucy. I have.
**JEN** What was her favourite colour?
**MATT** Does it matter?
**JEN** Yes. It matters a lot. Answer the question. What was Lucy’s favourite colour?

**[Pause]**
**MATT** Blue.
**JEN** I know. I also know that you won’t wear this beautiful blue coat because it reminds you too much of your ex-girlfriend. That family stuff — it was rubbish.
**MATT** No it wasn’t! I just don’t like blue.
**JEN** Wrong. You don’t like being reminded of Lucy, which also means that you haven’t forgotten her, not really.
**MATT** I have! I —
**JEN** Not only that, you’re still upset because she left you.
**MATT** No! It’s not — I don’t know. A bit, I suppose.
**JEN** A bit what?
**MATT** A bit . . . upset.
**JEN** So where does that leave me?
**MATT** Jen, you and I —
**JEN** Are going nowhere. Unless . . .
**MATT** Unless what?
**JEN** Unless you buy that blue coat. Buy it, and wear it. For me.

**[Pause]**
**MATT** You mean it?
**JEN** Sure do.

[They stare at each other for a long time.]
**Wordsmith . . .**

**WHAT IS SUBTEXT?**

Writers, including playwrights, are able to use words to mean more than they might appear to say on the surface. They have a *subtext* in mind when they write. Subtext refers to the hidden meaning below or behind the surface meaning of a word, phrase or sentence. Literally translated, subtext means ‘underneath the words’.

Writers use subtext to develop all aspects of their story: plot, characters, relationships, and particularly themes (the underlying messages that the writer is trying to convey). It adds to the conflict and the rising tension.

There are many examples of subtext in *The Blue Coat*. One example occurs when Jen says: ‘Most guys would love a coat like this. They’d even be grateful to the person who showed them this coat.’

The surface meaning of these two sentences is that most males would like the coat, and they would also like her for taking the time to point it out. The subtext, or hidden meaning, is that Matt is being ungrateful and Jen is not happy with his behaviour.

Our ability to understand subtext is as important as our ability to understand the words themselves, as well as social cues such as tone, gesture and expression. This is because the same statement can have different subtexts. For example, the statement ‘What a great day this has turned out to be’ could have subtexts such as:

- The day has actually been awful (a sarcastic subtext, where the hidden meaning is the opposite of the surface meaning) OR
- I really enjoyed today because I went shopping with Matt (a subtext based upon additional information).

In playscripts, we can also find subtext in the directed action. For example, early in *The Blue Coat*, Matt tries to cut off any further discussion of the coat.

Matt Jen, it’s blue. Hey, why don’t we —

Jen *[ignoring him]* Good cut. Strong material. Lining to keep you warm.

The stage direction for Jen, *[ignoring him]*, clearly indicates a subtext that she wants to continue the conversation so that the issue of their relationship can be resolved.

**OVER TO YOU . . .**

1 In *The Blue Coat*, Jen says, ‘…there are some things you just can’t see, no matter how hard you look’. What is the subtext for this statement?

2 Straight after Jen’s statement, we see the following stage direction: *[Pause. Matt looks away.]* What is the subtext of:
   - a the pause
   - b Matt looking away?

3 Suggest two different subtexts for each of the following statements:
   - a You know what I mean.
   - b Where were you?
   - c Look at him.
   - d She’s wearing a hat.

**My view . . .**

After working through this sub-unit, do you think that plays are an effective way of telling stories? Would you prefer to read a story in a book or online, or view it live, as a play? Revisit the definition of *drama* that you wrote on page 125 and decide whether it needs any adjustment.
How do plays make us engage with their characters?

All plays contain characters: people who love and hate, argue and make up, make good and bad decisions, just as real people do. Reading, watching and performing plays allows us to step inside the lives of characters and study how and why they behave as they do. In this way, we can find out more about ourselves and about people generally, as we learn to understand the complicated but wonderful thing that is humanity.

Desire and obstacle

Everybody has desires, or things that they want in life. One way of classifying these desires can be seen in the diagram below:

Our desires can be major or minor, and concrete or abstract. For example, Jeremiah’s desires are:

- a new car (major/concrete)
- to have fun tonight (minor/abstract).

In contrast, Jenny’s desires are:

- world peace (major/abstract)
- to get her bracelet fixed (minor/concrete).

Concrete desires are measurable; things that we can see happen. Abstract desires are less measurable, and more likely to be based upon feelings and impressions.

Try making a list of your desires and then classify them according to the diagram above. To assist with this process, ask yourself: is there a new object or item that you would like to own? Do you have the desire to travel to a particular place? Do you have a particular career in mind? Is there something that you would like to do that will benefit others?

Now imagine that you are lost inside a haunted house. All around you are shadows, birds shrieking, bats flapping, doors rattling, a cold wind blowing. When you turn left, the hallway is blocked by bricks. When you turn right, you find yourself going down an endless stairway. Straight ahead there is nothing but darkness, and a curious dripping sound…

In this situation you, the character, have a single, concrete desire: to get out of the house. You may have other desires — to be happy, to fly to the moon on a jet-propelled skateboard — but in terms of the story of the haunted house, you simply want to get out. However, there are obstacles that prevent you from doing so: the blocked exits, the darkness, your growing fear.

Like all stories, plays are built around the desires of the characters, the obstacles that stop them from achieving those desires, and the solutions that they find to deal with the obstacles.
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING and ANALYSING characters
Read the scene below and then answer the questions that follow.

from Birthday Party
by Richard Yaxley

Enter KIRLIA and APRIL, excited.

APRIL So, who’s invited?
KIRLIA Just the usual. You, of course.
APRIL Of course. Rae, Jess and Jordy?
KIRLIA Definitely.
APRIL And Tara? What about Tara?
KIRLIA I kind of . . . had to. We’ve been friends —
APRIL [who’s heard it all before] . . . since Grade 1.
KIRLIA Yeah. And look, I know things have changed —
APRIL Things haven’t changed. It’s not things. It’s her. She’s turned into a cow.
KIRLIA Maybe. Sometimes. But I still feel sorry for her —
APRIL Because of her dad.
KIRLIA Yeah.
APRIL Don’t! Big deal, he’s a loser. Doesn’t mean Tara has to be so mean to people.
KIRLIA I know. I just —
APRIL You just couldn’t say no because you’re too kind to everyone, even people like Tara.
[Pause]
APRIL Anyway, the party. What about —
KIRLIA Pete? Oh yes. I invited Pete.
[They smirk together.]
APRIL Knew you would, big-mouth.
KIRLIA He said thanks Kirls, thanks very much. And I said, that’s fine Pete, and he said, so, who else is invited? So I said, well, April of course. And he said, okay and thanks again in that cool kind of way but it was there, in his eyes, that funny little spark.
APRIL Pete doesn’t have a spark!
KIRLIA For you, he does.
APRIL No!
KIRLIA Admit it.
APRIL Well, he’s a nice guy. A bit nerdy.
KIRLIA Mention your name and the nerd becomes Superman.
APRIL You are so full of it!
[KIRLIA mimes Superman, swooping in and pretending to kiss APRIL. Laughter.]
KIRLIA Anyway, it should be fun.
APRIL Despite Tara.
KIRLIA Can’t you just . . . ignore her, or something?
APRIL After what she did? And said?
KIRLIA I know that wasn’t —
APRIL It was a lie! Ignore her? Not likely.

138  English is . . . Year 7
Monologues

A monologue is a speech given by a single character who speaks his or her innermost thoughts aloud, and thus reveals his or her desires to an audience. The character will often be alone on stage, or at least in a position where other characters cannot hear.

The plays of William Shakespeare contain many famous monologues. For example, in Romeo and Juliet, Romeo delivers a monologue that tells the audience how much he loves Juliet:

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Monologues are a powerful tool for communicating thoughts and feelings, and thus further developing our understanding of characters and their desires.

The following monologue is spoken by fifteen-year-old Ashleigh. After a behavioural incident at school, Ashleigh has been asked to ‘give back’ to the community by working with disabled people.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.
The title of this monologue is *On The Inside*. What are some possible meanings of this title?

Look back at the earlier playscripts in the unit. How does the appearance of this monologue text differ from them?

As you read the text, write down any unfamiliar words. Use a dictionary to find definitions for these words.

---

**from On The Inside**  
by Richard Yaxley

We drove over the river, parked, went inside this big old brick place. There was a guy called Santorini, the boss, a fat bloke with a really soft voice. I could hardly hear him. He said stuff about space and respect, which was kinda predictable, then something which wasn’t: ‘We are all disabled.’ Weird, but I know that’s what he said because he repeated it: ‘*We are all disabled.*’ Then he said: ‘Ashleigh, these people are profoundly disabled. But we all carry disabilities of some sort.’

Interesting idea, made me think. And I didn’t mind Santorini. He took me on a tour, Bracks tagging along but nicely, not like a cop. The workshop is all chipped paint on concrete and really high ceilings. It’s cold, echoey. Some of the rooms are offices and others are spaces for the clients. (His word. I asked about the patients and he said, ‘No, no, we never call them that.’)

There’s one really big workshop on the ground floor with benches and machinery. Santorini said they only use that one under strictest supervision, whereas most of the other activities can be done independently, although they do have CCTV in every room. Fair enough, I suppose. Gotta look after the clients, keep them safe from mad outsiders. Like me.

I saw a few and they seemed okay. You get these stereotypes in your head that people with mental stuff going on will look damaged, maybe even a bit lopsided. But they didn’t. I met Troy, David, Mark and Jeremy. They were quiet. Polite. Soft voices, like Santorini. Didn’t really look at me, just kept on doing whatever they were doing. Making stuff. It was like Grade 3 craft afternoon: balls of wool and icy-pole sticks.

After the tour, Santorini said that I could start in Room 12 with Mr B. I asked, ‘Is there anything I should know?’ and he said, ‘No, just remember what I already told you: space, respect. Off you go.’ So I did, and when I looked back it was weird, I swear Bracks was crying. She was wiping her eyes and Santorini was patting her shoulder and it was — it made me feel funny, like I’d looked through a window and seen something that I shouldn’t have.

Anyway, I found Room 12 and I found Mr B. He was making pin-cushions and I think it’s safe to say, even now, after one day, that he was nothing at all like I expected.

---

**Monologues start with a sentence that sets the scene.** (1)

**Colloquial language** (2,4)

**Characters use monologues to tell anecdotes — stories that have happened to them.** (5–6)

**Sentence structure is informal.** (8)

**Describes the scene; easier for an audience to imagine** (11–12)

**Rather than dialogue between characters, the conversation is remembered.** (15)

**Inner thought: she sees herself as ‘mad’** (19)

**Sometimes people address themselves in the 2nd person:** you see, you think. (20)

**Reported speech: only those parts that are necessary to the story** (27–28)

**Personal response** (31)

**Cohesive tie:** This word takes the reader back to the main narrative line.
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING and ANALYSING a monologue

Getting started
1 Who is Santorini and what is his job?
2 Is this the first time that Ashleigh has met Santorini? How do you know?
3 Who could Bracks be? What is her relationship with Ashleigh?

Working through
4 Santorini, the boss of the workshop, tells Ashleigh that ‘we are all disabled’. What do you think he means by this? Find a dictionary definition for disabled. Then discuss with a partner your understanding of the word.
5 Why would Santorini insist that the workshop clients not be called ‘patients’? What does this reveal about his attitude to these people?
6 What point does Ashleigh make about stereotypes?
7 Give at least one reason why Bracks might be crying.
8 There is evidence in this monologue that Ashleigh has a low opinion of herself. Find that evidence and write the relevant lines in your notebook.
9 Ashleigh says that Mr B is ‘nothing at all like I expected’. What would Ashleigh have expected him to be like?
10 If this wasn’t a monologue, can you suggest someone who Ashleigh might tell this to? How would a dialogue change the monologue?
11 Below are three statements relating to the monologue. Do you agree or disagree with each statement? Give a reason with each answer.
   a Ashleigh is angry with the world.
   b As a result of her experience in the workshop, Ashleigh will learn about herself.
   c Ashleigh admires Santorini and wants to be like him.

Going further
12 Are there any similarities between this monologue and, say, a journal or diary entry? What are they? What is different?
13 Choose one of the options below and write a dramatic monologue for that option. Some starter sentences have been provided if you need them.

Option 1
Santorini talks about Ashleigh after she has gone

Option 2
Ashleigh talks about her first meeting with Mr B

Option 3
One month later; Ashleigh talks about what she has learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible starting sentence</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She seemed like a decent enough kid, but there was obviously something worrying her.</td>
<td>The weird thing about Mr B is ... he's not that weird.</td>
<td>It's been a month now, and I feel like my whole view of the world has changed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wordsmith...

Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

Facts can be supported with evidence. For example, in her monologue, when Ashleigh says ‘they do have CCTV in every room’, it is likely that she is stating a fact. It is easy to find out if there are CCTV cameras, simply by looking.

Opinions are based upon personal beliefs or views, and cannot necessarily be supported by evidence. Ashleigh’s claim that the clients ‘seemed okay’ is clearly opinion. It is her belief that they are okay, and ‘okay-ness’ is not a quality that can be measured.

Is Ashleigh’s monologue mainly fact or mainly opinion? Why might this be the case?

Drama explores characters, and the opinions of those characters are likely to be more interesting than a series of facts. Re-read Birthday Party on page 138. Note how the conversation, and therefore the conflict, continues to happen because of opinions.

This conversation is almost entirely opinion-based. Very few facts or supporting evidence are mentioned. Most of our dialogue, or conversation, tends to be opinionated rather than factual, probably because opinions are more interesting and liable to change, whereas facts are fixed and unchanging.

A good way to distinguish fact from opinion is to examine the words used by the speaker or writer. For example, fact-based sentences will use words such as those bolded below.

The article demonstrated…
According to the results of the survey…
The evidence confirmed…
Scientists have discovered…

Opinion-based sentences will use different kinds of words, like those below.
She claims that…
We argued that…
In my view it is obvious that…
Many people believe that…

Over to You…

Work in groups. Each member of the group is to write two fact-based statements and two opinion-based statements, each on a separate slip of paper. (Use the topic list below to help you.) Mix them up in a container and then pass them on to another group whose job is to sort facts from opinions, putting the papers into two piles. Complete and check.

Topic list: Sport, Social networking, Movies, Songs, History, Animals, School, Technology.

My view…

How important to a play are the characters? Does drama always need to be based on characters whose behaviour and motivations we can relate to and understand?
How can we create a dramatic performance?

As we have already seen, plays are written to be performed. On stage, the characters come alive as their words and actions reveal their desires and answer questions about who they are and why they are in this place.

Becoming the character

Constantin Stanislavski was a Russian director who had a major influence on how actors prepare to play characters. One of his best-known quotes was: ‘When you play a good man, try to find out where he is bad; and when you play a villain, try to find where he is good.’ Stanislavski meant that in order to properly play the role of a different person, an actor has to know as much as possible about that person — more than is shown in the actual play. We have to imagine all that we can about their life before and after the action of the play, and in that way we can get to know the character very well.

Who, where, what, if

Stanislavski suggested that in order to properly know the character, we need to become that person and then ask ourselves some basic questions:

- Who am I?
- Where am I?
- What time is it?
- What is my desire?
- What are the obstacles to my desire?
- What are my relationships with other people?

Stanislavski also asked his actors to consider questions containing the Magic If. This meant asking even more questions, the first one being:

- What if I were in the same situation as my character?

Other Magic If questions for the character could be:

- What if I did this differently?
- What if I let go of my past?
- What if I changed my future goals?
- What if I changed my innermost desire?

Knowing characters

Let’s explore Stanislavski’s questions further, using a scene from Richard Yaxley’s play Snap-Snap! Chrissie is a famous movie actress who is sick of being chased by photographers (known as the paparazzi) — including JT.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

**READY TO READ …**

- Scan the text for unfamiliar words. Use a dictionary to find definitions for these words.
- Read the scene aloud with two classmates. One of you can read the directions in italic while the other two read the words spoken by Chrissie and JT.
A bare stage, except for your standing on the table, which is at stage right. He has his camera poised. He listens for a moment, smiles knowingly, and then waits. Chrissie enters from the opposite side. Obviously upset, she keeps looking behind her as she rushes across the stage.

Chrissie [to the imagined paparazzi behind her] Vultures! Get away from me! Go on, get away! Leave me alone!

[She runs straight towards JT, who promptly takes a photo of her startled face.]

JT Snap-snap!

Chrissie You!

JT Having trouble, Chrissie? [He hops down and bars her way.]

Chrissie Let me through! You’re as bad as the rest of them! No . . . you’re worse!

JT Chrissie, Chrissie, Chrissie! We’re just doing our jobs. You know that.

Chrissie [trying to get past] Let me through!

JT Sure, but they’ll find you anyway. I can let you through — but where to? Where will you go? Where can you go?

[Chrissie pushes past and then stops.]

Chrissie It’s true, isn’t it? You’ve got nowhere to go. There is nowhere private for you.

JT Unfair? There’s nothing unfair about this! It’s all your doing; you choose to be the person you are! You could’ve stayed anonymous, could’ve been stuck in the same boring routines as the rest of us. But you didn’t! It’s hardly unfair.

Chrissie Constantly harassed . . .

JT Ten million dollars per movie, minimum.

Chrissie A life caught in pictures . . .

JT Everything you could ever want — spoiled little rich kid.

[JT walks towards centre stage. Chrissie turns, watches him.]

JT You know what really gets me about all of this? You whinge and complain about us taking photos, yet without us, without the publicity that comes from those photos, you’d be nothing.

Chrissie Publicity shots are one thing. You people — you invade my privacy!

JT There’s no such thing, sweetie. You gave that up when you signed on the dotted line ten years ago.

Chrissie [approaching him] I signed a contract to make a few movies, bring a bit of happiness into people’s lives. I didn’t sign anything about being harassed and chased and having my private life turned into a misery by people like you!

JT Then you were pretty naive, weren’t you?

Chrissie I guess I was.

[Pause]

JT [looking off-stage] Here they come. The vultures are about to land.

Chrissie Then I’m going.

JT Like I said, where to? Home — they’ll be waiting. The studio — they’ll be waiting. On holiday — they’ll be waiting, snap-snap!

Chrissie I hate this. I hate it so much.

JT Tell you what: I’ll do you a deal. I’ve got this place, a little hideaway in the mountains. You can shelter there if you like . . . as long as I get a range of exclusive photographs and a full interview.

Chrissie You’re not serious!

JT Never been more serious. Sweetie, it’s all about mutual benefit. You get a break from the vultures, I get my shot at fame and fortune. Come on, what do you say?
Discovering the character

By asking Stanislavski’s questions about the character of Chrissie, we can discover further information such as this:

**Who am I?**
- A world-famous movie actress. Given that I’ve only been making movies for ten years, I’m probably still quite young, maybe late twenties.

**Where am I?**
- Outside, in the public view, perhaps on a street or in a park. I hate being outside because people, particularly photographers, will not leave me alone.

**What time is it?**
- The subject matter and style of speaking tells me that this scene is set in the modern world, probably in a big city like Sydney or even overseas in Los Angeles, the home of Hollywood and movie-making.

**What is my desire?**
- To have a private life. I like making movies and I’m grateful for the money and the lifestyle that I can afford, but more than anything I want to be able to live a normal private life without any intrusions.

**What are the obstacles to my desire?**
- I tend to blame the photographers but the main obstacle is my fame. If I wasn’t famous, then no-one would hassle me.

**What are my relationships with other people?**
- I tend to distrust everyone because I’m so used to people trying to make money from using my image.

**Activities ...**

**ANALYSING character for performance**

**Getting started**

1. Do you agree with all the information about Chrissie? Is there anything that you would add or change?
2. Based on this, what could Chrissie do in order to overcome the obstacles and achieve her desire?
3. Ask yourself the main Magic If question: If you were in the same situation as Chrissie, what would you do?

**Working through**

4. Here are some more Magic If questions for Chrissie:
   a. What would happen if you went to the police and asked them to arrest JT for harassment?
   b. What would happen if you changed your desire and accepted that you will never have a private life?
   c. What would happen if you never made another movie?
5. Now use the basic questions to discover more about the character of JT. Begin by asking yourself the main Magic If question: If you were in the same situation as JT, what would you do?
6. Here are some more Magic If questions for JT:
   a. What would happen if you left Chrissie alone? Would you find someone else to harass, or would you stop being a photographer?
   b. What would happen if the roles were reversed, and people were constantly invading your privacy? How would you react?
Understanding back-story

Now that we have considered aspects of these characters more fully, it is time to establish their back-stories. This means imagining the past of the character by asking yourself this question: What happened to bring this person to this place, at this time? In other words, we are looking back at the story of the character’s life.

Before you read the extract, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

READY TO READ …

- How can you tell that the following is *not* a playscript?
- A number of words have been omitted from the text about Chrissie. As you read, decide what word or words to put into the spaces. After you read it, discuss these with a partner and then decide on the best choices.

**Autobiography of Chrissie**

I always loved **______**. As a child I used to dress up and pretend to be other people: a teacher, a mother, an adventurer. I was an only child so I guess that pretending was a way of finding friends. My Dad passed away when I was eight; for a long time I used to pretend that he was still there, in the ‘audience’, **______** me.

When I was fourteen, I was lucky enough to get a part in the end-of-year school play. It was only a small role because the older girls got the best parts. But that was it — I was **______**. I loved being in that play. Most of all, I loved being someone else, and not having to be me.

On the last night, Mum brought a man backstage to meet me. His name was Rudi and he was an agent. He said that I had the right ‘look’ to get some modelling work if I was interested. I hadn’t really thought about modelling but I knew that Mum had never had much money after Dad died. So I said yes, and things went from there.

It all happened incredibly **______**. In January I modelled some cosmetics; by April I had so many jobs on offer I had to go to school part-time. Then in September I quit altogether. That’s one of my biggest **______**; not finishing school, and particularly not getting to do all that crazy, end-of-school stuff. But the money and lifestyle were so good, I couldn’t stop.

I guess you could say I was addicted.

From there, it was a natural journey into other media — television at first, this dreadful mini-series called *Time and Tide* which I **______**, but it did teach me about how to act in front of a camera — then movies. My first role was as a stuck-up shop assistant in *Beautiful Daze*, and then my big break was the lead, Sarah K, in *The Huntress*. Nineteen years old and starring in an action blockbuster; it was **______**. Unreal. And that was the problem. Doing that kind of stuff removes you from all reality. You start thinking that life is just one giant movie, and you’re in the centre of it all, with people watching you and loving you and wanting to be you.

It took me a few years to realise how **______** I had become.
Blocking, rehearsing and performing

Now that we have a more developed understanding of the characters in the play, it is time to work on performance. Our first priority is to block the script.

Blocking means planning where and how actors move on a stage. This allows each actor to rehearse where on the stage they will be in each scene and where they will move so that they do not upstage another actor. Without blocking, the performance is likely to be unformed and unconvincing. Blocking is best done by dividing the stage into sections:

- **Upstage Right (USR)**
- **Upstage Centre (USC)**
- **Upstage Left (USL)**
- **Centrestage Right (CSR)**
- **Centrestage Centre (CS)**
- **Centrestage Left (CSL)**
- **Downstage Right (DSR)**
- **Downstage Centre (DSC)**
- **Downstage Left (DSL)**
- **Audience**

It is important to use the correct language when blocking. For example, to make a character more important in the eyes of the audience, we could suggest that the actor move from USR (upstage right) to CS (centre stage).

**Activities ...**

**CREATING back-stories**

**Getting started**

1. How did Chrissie’s childhood affect her later life?
2. What was she ‘addicted’ to?
3. What point does she make about being ‘removed from reality’?
4. Does this autobiography suggest that Chrissie does not like what has happened to her? Explain your answer.
5. Do you feel sorry for Chrissie? Why or why not?

**Working through**

6. Create an autobiography that explains the back-story for the character of JT. How did he come to be a photographer? What is his family background? What have been the main influences in his life? Some possible starting lines have been provided below:
   - I came from a family of photographers, so from a young age there were always cameras available.
   - When I was eight years old, my parents took me to see Christopher Silk, the famous actor, who was visiting Australia. I was fascinated by the people surrounding him...
   - I have two main interests in life: money and fame.
   - What people don’t realise is this: I actually hate my job — but I’m addicted to it.

**NEED TO KNOW**

**upstage** This expression comes from the theatre, where, if you are an actor and you stand upstage from another actor (towards the rear of the stage), it forces that person to turn away from the audience in order to interact with you. You are then the one directly facing the audience, getting all the attention. Actors dislike being upstaged!
Below is a section of the script of Snap-Snap! with blocking included.

A bare stage, except for JT standing on the table which is at stage right. He has his camera poised. He listens for a moment, smiles knowingly, and then waits. CHRISIE enters from the opposite side. Obviously upset, she keeps looking behind her as she rushes across the stage.

CHRISIE
[to the imagined paparazzi behind her] Vultures! Get away from me! Go on — get away! Leave me alone! [CHRISIE runs straight towards JT — who promptly takes a photo of her startled face.]

JT Snap-snap!

CHRISIE You!

JT Having trouble, Chrissie? [JT hops down and bars her way.]

CHRISIE Let me through! You’re as bad as the rest of them! No . . . you’re worse!

JT Chrissie, Chrissie, Chrissie! We’re just doing our jobs — you know that.

CHRISIE [trying to get past] Let me through!

JT Sure — but they’ll find you anyway. I can let you through — but to where? Where will you go? Where can you go? [CHRISIE pushes past — then stops.]

JT It’s true, isn’t it? You’ve got nowhere to go. There is nowhere private for you.

CHRISIE It’s so unfair.

JT Unfair? There’s nothing unfair about this! It’s all your doing — you chose to be the person you are! You could’ve stayed anonymous, could’ve been stuck in the same boring routines as the rest of us — but you didn’t! It’s hardly unfair!

CHRISIE Constantly harassed . . .

JT Ten million per movie, minimum . . .

CHRISIE A life caught in pictures . . .

JT Everything you could ever want . . .

CHRISIE A spoiled little rich kid . . . [JT walks towards centre stage. CHRISIE turns, watches him go.]

JT You know what really gets me about all of this? You whinge and complain about us taking photos — yet without us, without the publicity generated by those photos, you’d be nothing.

CHRISIE Publicity shots are one thing. You people . . . you invade my privacy!

JT There’s no such thing, sweetie. You gave that up when you signed on the dotted line ten years ago.
**Activities …**

**BLOCKING a playscript**

*Working through*

1. Either photocopy the section of the script of *Snap-Snap!* below or access the digital copy in your eBookPLUS. Then work with a partner to block the script, remembering that movement should happen only if there is a reason to do so. You don’t have to move on every line. Once you have worked out each actor’s movements, write them into the blocking column.

2. Rehearse the blocked script, checking that each movement works. Change if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Blocking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>JT Then you were pretty naive, weren’t you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHRISSE I guess I was. [Pause]</td>
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<td>JT [looking off-stage] Here they come. The vultures are about to land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISSE Then I’m going.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT Like I said, where to? Home — they’ll be waiting. The studio — they’ll be waiting. On holiday — they’ll be waiting, snap-snap!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISSE I hate this. I hate it so much.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT Tell you what: I’ll do you a deal. I’ve got this place, a little hideaway in the mountains. You can shelter there if you like… as long as I get a range of exclusive photographs and a full interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISSE You’re not serious!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT Never been more serious. Sweetie, it’s all about mutual benefit. You get a break from the vultures, I get my shot at fame and fortune. Come on, what do you say?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working with tone

When we speak, we show our emotions partly by our tone of voice. Tone is not about the pitch of your voice, or how loud it is (though pitch and loudness may be involved) but about the emotion you are expressing. We have all heard someone speak with a sarcastic tone of voice, and even though we might not be able to describe exactly what it sounds like, we know it when we hear it.

A single sentence can be spoken with different tones of voice, each of which will change its intended meaning. For example, imagine the sentence ‘They’re back’ said in three different ways:

- excited, because you’re looking forward to seeing them
- annoyed, because they’ve been away for too long
- curious, because you want to know what they’ve brought with them.

To express various tones of voice, intonation usually varies. Intonation is the rise and fall of your voice when you speak, or the ‘tune’ of it. If you say ‘They’re back’ in the three different emotional tones above, listen to what happens to your intonation.

Tone is one way that we can detect the subtext, or hidden meaning, of the sentence. Often, punctuation will provide a tonal clue. For example, ‘They’re back!’ is likely to have a different, more excited tone than ‘They’re back?’

Below is the same section of the script of Snap-Snap! with tone included. Not every line is described; only those at the start of the scene or when the tone changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You know what really gets me about all of this? You whinge and complain about us taking photos — yet without us, without the publicity that comes from those photos, you’d be nothing.</td>
<td>Annoyed by what he sees as her selfishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity shots are one thing. You people — you invade my privacy!</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s no such thing, sweetie. You gave that up when you signed on the dotted line ten years ago.</td>
<td>Angry; justifying her choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[approaching him]: I signed a contract to make a few movies, bring a bit of happiness into people’s lives. I didn’t sign anything about being harassed and chased and having my private life turned into a misery by people like you!</td>
<td>Calm and precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then you were pretty naive, weren’t you?</td>
<td>Realising that her life is unlikely to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I guess I was.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A beat.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[looking off-stage]: Here they come. The vultures are about to land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then I’m going.</td>
<td>Decisively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A
ctivities . . .

EVALUATING tone

Getting started
1 JT’s tone is described as a) ‘smooth, calm’ and b) ‘calm and precise’. How would these tones be different? (Hint: look at the lines spoken by JT.)

Working through
2 Why does Chrissie adopt a defensive tone early in this conversation? Tonally, what does ‘defensive’ mean?
3 JT’s tone is described as ‘calm and precise’. Could this line be said differently? How?
4 What kind of tone would you use for JT’s line, ‘The vultures are about to land’? Why? Justify your choice.
5 Chrissie’s lines, ‘I hate this. I hate this so much’ have a range of possible tones. Working with a partner, experiment with different ways of saying these lines. What works best? Why?
6 Do you agree with the suggestion that JT has ‘probably’ had the mountain-hideaway idea ‘in mind for some time’? Why or why not? Does this information change the tone with which the lines are said?

Going further
7 Dialogue between characters always features power-plays, meaning that one character will be in control of the conversation (although this can and often does change). Who is in control of this conversation? How do you know?
8 Imagine that one of the ‘vultures’ — a press photographer — now enters the scene. With a partner, develop and write a brief scene that features the three characters, JT, Chrissie and the press photographer. Include an extra column for ‘Tone’, as in the above example, and make tonal suggestions for some of the key lines.
9 Swap scripts with another pair. Take turns in reading each other’s scripts, focusing on the tonal suggestions that have been made. Does the script read well? Should any changes be made?

G
oing further
7 Dialogue between characters always features power-plays, meaning that one character will be in control of the conversation (although this can and often does change). Who is in control of this conversation? How do you know?
8 Imagine that one of the ‘vultures’ — a press photographer — now enters the scene. With a partner, develop and write a brief scene that features the three characters, JT, Chrissie and the press photographer. Include an extra column for ‘Tone’, as in the above example, and make tonal suggestions for some of the key lines.
9 Swap scripts with another pair. Take turns in reading each other’s scripts, focusing on the tonal suggestions that have been made. Does the script read well? Should any changes be made?

LITERACY link

Using non-verbal interaction skills

Playscripts provide characters, story and words. However, performing the scripts requires much more, including the actors’ use of non-verbal interaction skills such as pitch, pace and pause.

- Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of a voice. For example, an excited character might use a high pitch.
- Pace refers to the speed at which we speak. An excited character might speak at a faster pace than is usual because of his emotional state.
- Pause refers to the spaces that we might put between words or sentences. It can be used to show that a character is thinking, or to build up tension in the scene.

Experiment by varying your pitch, pace and use of pause when you read playscripts. Use these non-verbal skills to further develop your performance skills.
**Wordsmith . . .**

**WRITING YOUR OWN SCENE**

As we have seen, playwriting is linked to other forms of writing that tell stories. However, playscripts contain a range of unique features. This is because they are written for performance, and include instructions to directors and actors about setting and characters. It is also because playscripts are formed from dialogue rather than prose.

Practise writing your own scene by working through the following process.

**Develop a premise**

The premise of the playscript is its main idea. The action in each scene is based around that premise. For example, the premise of *The Blue Coat* (page 134) could be that honesty is needed for relationships to work. The premise of *Snap-Snap!* (page 144) could be that fame comes with disadvantages as well as advantages.

Here is a story divided into five sections. What do you think is the premise of this story?

1. A man finds a wallet in the street. He opens it and finds that it contains one thousand dollars.
2. The man decides to keep the wallet and use the money to buy his new girlfriend a beautiful golden ring.
3. The man goes into a jewellery store and finds a ring. When he gets out the wallet to pay, the store-owner claims that it is his wallet, lost on the street that morning.
4. The store-owner calls the police and convinces them that the man stole his wallet.
5. The man is taken away by a police-person. He asks to see his girlfriend but she is ashamed of him and refuses to have any more to do with him.

**Planning further**

Before you begin to write one of the scenes of this story, complete these planning steps.

- Get to know your characters by imagining more information about each of them; that is, their back-story, names, ages, occupations, family backgrounds, relationships, likes and dislikes, desires and obstacles.
- Anecdotes are brief, personal stories that give us insight into the lives of people. As part of the planning phase, put yourself into the minds of each of the characters. Write anecdotes for each, based on the following guidelines:
  - Describe a key incident from your childhood or adolescence that explains your attitude to love (The Man).
  - Describe the moment when you first met your boyfriend (The Girlfriend).
Describe a key incident from your life that explains your attitude to money (The Storeowner).

Either draw a sketch of each character — their size, costume, general appearance — or search the internet to download images of how you see them. This will help you to ‘see’ your characters on stage as you write.

Sketch the stage setting for your scene. Where is the store in relation to the street? Are there other places within the stage, such as a park?

Give this scene a title that reflects the premise of the play.

Anticipate writing problems and how to solve them. For example, perhaps you chose scene 2, where the man decides to keep the wallet and use the money to buy his new girlfriend a beautiful golden ring. Below are two options for how this scene could be written. Which do you prefer and why? Are there other alternatives?

**Scene 2, option 1: with dialogue**

**JACK** looks around. No-one else is nearby. He puts the wallet into his back-pocket. Enter **ELLA**.

**ELLA** Hi there!

**JACK** Ell...

[They hug.]

**JACK** You look great this morning.

**ELLA** Thanks.

**JACK** But you’d look even better with some jewellery.

**ELLA** Jack?

**JACK** Come into this shop. Come on. Let’s have a look.

**Scene 2, option 2: monologue**

**JACK** looks around. No-one else is nearby. He holds the wallet out, undecided.

It’s wrong, of course it’s wrong — but I need the money. Desperately. I mean, I’ve been with Sal for months now, and it’s going really well, but I’ve never been able to afford to do anything for her, buy anything. I go to footy training and all my mates are on about how they give their girlfriends stuff, jewellery mainly, and I can’t say a word because I haven’t got a job and... and —

[**JACK stops, looks around once more, then puts the wallet into his back pocket. Enter **ELLA**.]

---

**OVER TO YOU …**

You should now be ready to write. Work individually, in pairs or small groups, to write the scene.

1. Make sure that you include dramatic features such as stage directions and colloquial language if appropriate.
2. Check the fluency of your writing by reading it aloud at regular intervals, or by asking other members of class to be actors, and read for you.

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**My view ...**

By now you should have a well-developed understanding of drama and stories. What are some of the unique ways that drama tells stories? Based on what you now know, how would you define the term drama? How different is your definition now from your definition at the start of this unit?
COMPOSE AND CREATE

Productive focus: writing and speaking

1

Transform a myth or legend into a play

Working in small groups, find a myth or legend from the ancient world by either using the links in your eBookPLUS or searching the internet.

The images below may provide some ideas. Transform the myth or legend into a short play, using the narrative and textual features shown earlier in this unit.

Some key points to remember

Before writing:
- work out the basics of the narrative such as setting (time, place) and characters (how many, who)
- develop a scene-by-scene plan, as shown earlier in this unit with The Three Little Pigs
- develop a brief back-story for each character (see page 146)
- identify any writing problems and solve them.

When the script is completed, prepare it for performance.

You will need to:
- assign roles to members of the group
- work together to create a stage setting
- block the play (see page 147)
- rehearse by practising lines and movement
- perform without scripts.

Use the assessment criteria rubric to guide you through your chosen task.
Write a scene for a play

Either:
In pairs, write the next scene of either The Time Machine (pages 128–9) or The Blue Coat (pages 134–5)

Or

Write a new scene based upon one of the ideas below.
- A character invents something remarkable.
- A character wants to buy/take/own something dangerous.
- A character has to choose whether to do the right thing.
- Two characters find themselves trapped in a haunted house.

Some key points to remember
As you write, make sure that you have included:
- a title
- a list of characters, with a brief description of each
- a description of the setting
- the correct conventions of playwriting, such as character names in capitals and stage directions in brackets (see page 148).

Remember that for drama to work, there must be appropriate conflict between the characters as they attempt to overcome obstacles and achieve their desires.

When the script is completed, use appropriate software to publish it. Then hold a ‘reading’ in front of the class.
Create a character description or monologue

*Either*

Working individually create a character description

*Or*

Create a monologue.

You can choose to do this from the point of view of:

- a character from one of the texts in this unit, or
- a character from a different text of your own choosing, such as a book, film or TV show, or
- a character who is:
  - about to embark upon a dangerous mission
  - extremely frightened by where they are and what is happening
  - hoping to be forgiven
  - remembering an incident that changed their lives forever
  - unsure of a friend.

When your character description is complete, read it to the class.

When your monologue is complete, prepare it for performance, considering subtext, tone and movement as you do so.

Some key points to remember

- Consider the subject of what your character says.
- Experiment with tone and intonation in rehearsing your performance.
- Rehearse pitch, pace and pause of your delivery.
- Then rehearse movement around your ‘stage’!

Self-evaluation . . .

After you have completed your assessment, answer the questions below in an individual reflection on the unit and the task.

1. What were your favourite parts of this unit? What were your least favourite?
2. What would you like to learn more about after completing this unit?
3. Have you learned any speaking strategies during this unit?
4. What was your experience in completing the assessment task? Would you do anything differently, if faced with a similar task in the future?