



Young Playwrights' Theater

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Founding Artistic Director

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Young Playwrights' Theater Writing Process

The goal of the YPT writing process is to inspire students to write creatively and personally about topics they care about. Playwriting engages students in an active, tangible process that allows them to see their ideas come alive. It also helps them recognize the importance of character, conflict, voice, and dialogue, as well as conventions of grammar that make their writing understandable and dynamic.

The writing process we have developed at Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) consists of seven stages: inspiration, articulation, presentation, alteration, clarification, publication and evaluation. Each phase of the process is designed to solidify students' writing skills and their sense of ownership over the work. YPT believes that this process can be useful for any writing. We emphasize process over product, encouraging the free flow of ideas, and taking students through the steps of editing and revision.

The phases of the YPT writing process are:

- **Inspiration** – (Pre-writing). This phase is like warming up before playing in the big game or singing the national anthem. In order to write a play, a writer must be inspired. Young Playwrights' Theater asks students to not only think of a topic/story but to think about writing in an unfamiliar format. Therefore, it is essential that our students "warm-up" by spending a good deal of time in the pre-writing phase. In this phase we introduce them to a variety of exercises to get their creative juices flowing and to learn about the dramatic form. Students who find something they are excited about writing about in this phase will navigate the other phases with ease. It is much easier to create when you are excited about your topic.
- **Articulation** – (Writing). In this phase students take their ideas from pre-writing and begin writing their plays. Articulation might be the phase students are most familiar with due to the papers they write during school. However, we encourage students to work quickly during this phase and not concern themselves with being "right." The playwrights will have ample opportunities to revise and edit in later stages of the process. YPT has learned that it is much easier to develop students' work once it is out of their heads and on paper. The best way to relieve the stress of needing to be "right" in this phase is to ensure that the "inspiration" phase contains quick writing exercises that can carry over into "articulation."
- **Presentation** – (Sharing). Plays are meant to be seen and heard. So, "presentation" is a vital stage in the playwriting process. YPT supports the sharing of student work by bringing professional actors into the classroom to perform the work of the students. The actor visits bring the work alive and make the rules of grammar and the dramatic form a vital, three-dimensional experience. The respect the actors give to each playwright validates the work and helps to propel the students into the next writing stages. Peer revisions and one-on-one sessions with professional playwrights also take place during the presentation phase.

Student playwrights. Professional actors. Bold new voices.



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- **Alteration** – (Revising). Students often regard this stage of the writing process as the most frustrating and unnecessary. YPT aims to aid students in understanding that alteration can be the most important aspect of the writing. We challenge them to focus and clarify their message to find and extend the essential elements and deepen the impact on an audience. The presentation workshop with the actors helps to solidify this because the students have actually been an audience to their own work. This helps to engage students in altering their scripts because they have experienced the value of revision in directing others, including actors and directors, toward your purpose.
- **Clarification** – (Editing). Clarification is the stage where playwrights work on editing their script for conventions in grammar. At this point in the process, students fix unintentional typos, errors in capitalization and punctuation, the misuse of commas, etc. YPT focuses on clarification as a separate stage than revision for two reasons:
 - In dramatic writing, playwrights make every effort to capture the speech communities of their characters, which often requires breaking the rules or grammar. In this phase students are required to justify any intentional errors in their writing while correcting unintentional mistakes.
 - This phase is extraordinarily important to teaching and helping our large population of students who speak English as their second language.
- **Publication** – (Publishing). While Young Playwrights' Theater values the process over product, it is important that students feel a sense of accomplishment about their work. In the publication phase, students turn in a draft with a title page, a character list, page numbers, etc. The students' plays are "published" in their school portfolios and in the Young Playwrights' Library. Students are also given the opportunity to submit their plays to national contests for young playwrights and are encouraged to submit their plays to YPT for production.
- **Evaluation** – (Assessing). Young Playwrights' Theater continually assesses students throughout each phase of the process. Students also self-assess and give on-going feedback to each other. By assessing their own work and the work of their peers, students are better able to identify the elements of effective playwriting and thereby become better playwrights.

Following this process for dramatic writing will afford students the opportunity to express themselves creatively and clearly through practical experience as a young playwright.

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