



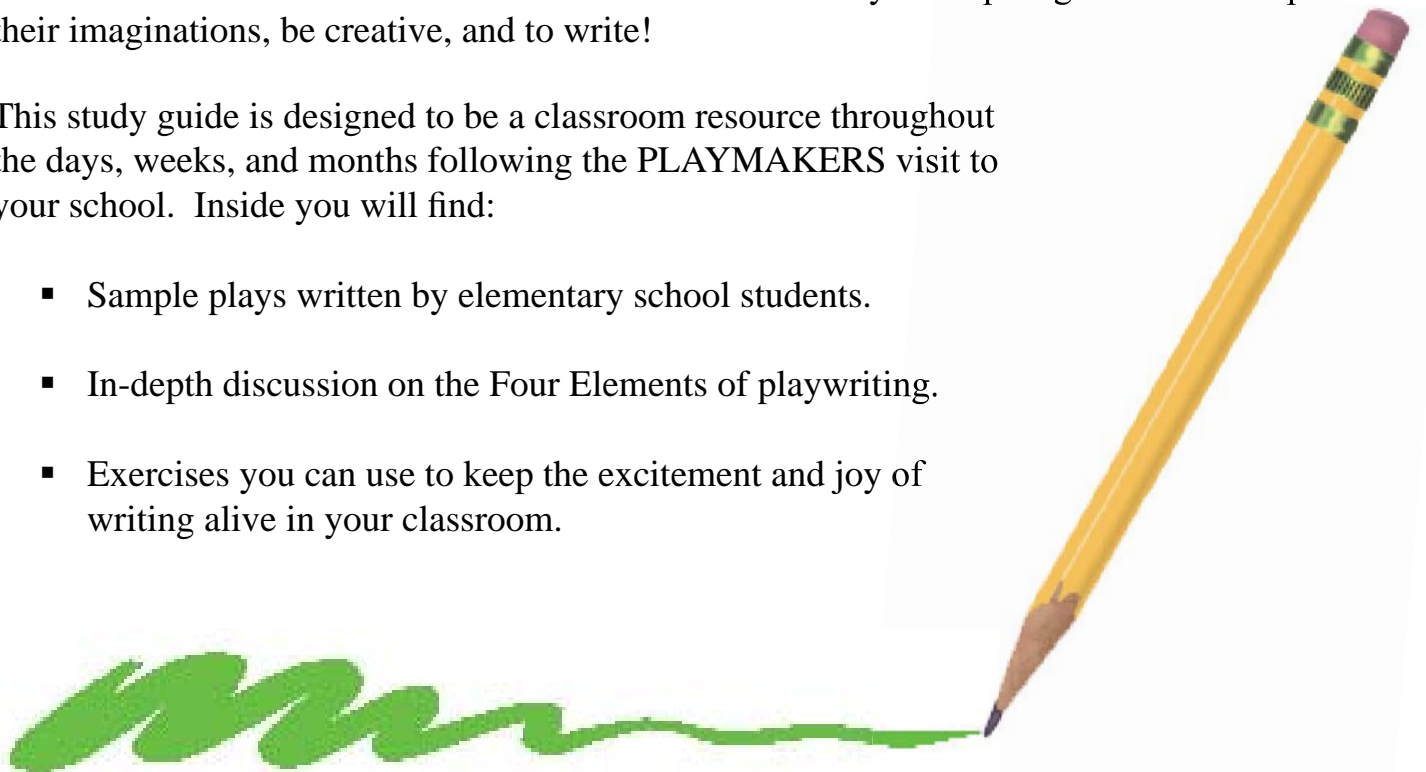
# PLAYMAKERS Tour: *Imagination Celebration* Study Guide



The PLAYMAKERS Tour: *Imagination Celebration* is traveling throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States – from the Panhandle to the Keys – inspiring students to explore their imaginations, be creative, and to write!

This study guide is designed to be a classroom resource throughout the days, weeks, and months following the PLAYMAKERS visit to your school. Inside you will find:

- Sample plays written by elementary school students.
- In-depth discussion on the Four Elements of playwriting.
- Exercises you can use to keep the excitement and joy of writing alive in your classroom.



# 2008-2009 AWARD WINNING PLAYS

Theatre is the oldest living art form. Before human beings painted and scrawled on cave walls, they were acting out their experiences. A play is alive! It is happening right now, in the same moment in which we exist. It is the moment when language, emotions, and imagination come together.

Every spring, Florida Studio Theatre recognizes thousands of these imaginative moments during the Young Playwrights Festival. Students of all ages, from around the world, send in plays that reveal heart, humor, and unlimited creativity. The following sample plays were featured in the 2009 UNDER SIX production at Florida Studio Theatre and are great examples to share with your students as they begin their creative journey.

## **You Don't Scare Me Cow!**

Written by a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student

**SETTING:** On a farm hill

**CHARACTERS:** Gracie and Gary are blades of grass and Daisy is a cow

**SCENE ONE:**

**GRACIE:** (panicking) Gary, why are you so scared?

**GARY:** (quivering) Haven't you heard?

**GRACIE:** No, what?

**GARY:** The cows are grazing today under the hill'

**GRACIE:** So the cows never go up the hill because there is plenty around the hill.

**GARY:** Yeah, I guess you are right, but Bill said the farmer bought new cows and there is not enough grass.

**GRACIE:** I guess we are just going to have to wait and see.

**SCENE TWO:**

**GARY:** (yelling) Gracie wake up, the cows are coming!

**GRACIE:** What do you mean they're coming?

**GARY:** (talking normal) They're coming up the hill. Marigold, (the piece of grass on the bottom of the hill) told Lola, then she told Jake, and he told Kyle and so on.

**GRACIE:** (starting to panic) Gary, you're right; I see one coming right now!

# 2008-2009 AWARD WINNING PLAYS (continued)

**DAISY:** Moooooooooooo, Moooooooooooo this looks like one good patch of grass!

**GRACIE:** (frightened) Oh no Gary, you were right, what are we going to do?

**GARY:** (shaking) We can try to talk to her.

**GRACIE:** Hello Ms. Cow can we talk to you?

**DAISY:** First, I'm not Ms. Cow, I'm Daisy. Second, I don't talk to grass; it makes it harder to eat you.

**GARY:** Well I'm Gary, and that is Gracie.

**GRACIE:** Please don't eat us. The farmer never waters us so we are dry.

**GARY:** And I'm sour and she is organic.

**DAISY:** (during munching on grass) Well I'm feeling nice today, I won't eat you. I need to tell the other cows. *She walks away*

**GRACIE:** Good thing she didn't eat us, right Gary.

**GARY:** Gracie, I have some good news and some bad news.

**GRACIE:** What is it?

**GARY:** The good news is that we didn't get eaten today

**GRACIE:** The bad news?

**GARY:** I heard that farmer Jeb is going to mow the lawn next week.

**THE END**

## Why This Play Was Chosen

*You Don't Scare Me Cow!* was selected because of its originality, use of the Four Elements of playwriting (Setting, Character, Conflict, Dialogue), and how well the dialogue matched each character's personality. Also, the playwright displayed wonderful creativity and explored the universal theme of daring to be different and to use your wits to solve a problem.

# 2008-2009 AWARD WINNING PLAYS (continued)

## **Little Red Flower**

Written by a 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Student

**SETTING:** Under the ground in the dark dirt

**NARRATOR:** Once upon a time there was a little red flower that lived in a little dark house under the ground. One day she was sitting there, all by herself when she heard a little tap, tap, tap, at the door.

**FLOWER:** Who is it?

**RAIN:** It's me, the rain, and I want to come in.

**FLOWER:** No, you can't come in.

**NARRATOR:** It was quiet for a very long time. Then she heard another little tap, tap, tap, at the door.

**FLOWER:** Who is it?

**SUNSHINE:** It's me, the Sunshine, and I want to come in.

**FLOWER:** No, you can't come in.

**NARRATOR:** Then as she sat so still, she heard two sets of tap, tap, taps at the door.

**FLOWER:** Who is it?

**RAIN AND SUNSHINE:** (speaking together) It's the rain and the Sun, and we want to come in.

**FLOWER:** Oh my! If there are two of you, I think I have to let you in.

**NARRATOR:** So the door opened a little crack and they came in. One took one of her little hands and the other took the other little hand, and they ran, ran, ran with her right up to the top of the ground. Then they said,

**RAIN AND SUNSHINE:** Poke your head through.

**NARRATOR:** She poked her head through, and she was in the middle of a beautiful garden. It was springtime, and all the other flowers had their heads poked through. She was the prettiest little red flower in the whole garden!

**THE END**

## **Why This Play Was Chosen**

*Little Red Flower* was chosen because of the authentic emotional story told by the playwright. Through the use of personification the story of the flower sun, and rain help to inform us of a child's perspective of fear of the unknown and often scary process of growing up. It is a strikingly deep piece coming from a 1st grader, and the play proves how smart and emotionally aware your students can be.

Notice that both *You Don't Scare Me Cow!* and *Little Red Flower* are short pieces. The plays aren't incredibly complex, yet are complete and contain wonderful depth. We encourage the young playwrights to write the stories they wish to write, explore their imaginations, and search for the truth.

# LET'S WRITE A PLAY: The Four Essential Elements

The WRITE A PLAY Program emphasizes Four Elements of playwriting:

- SETTING
- CHARACTER
- CONFLICT
- DIALOGUE

Your students already have creative ideas for stories, and by utilizing these elements you can help them focus those ideas into great plays. In this section, each playwriting element is defined, discussed, and followed by exercises to help your students develop their very own settings, characters, conflicts, and dialogue.

## Element 1: SETTING

The Setting is **WHERE** and **WHEN** the play happens. From ordinary to extraordinary, the options are as limitless as your student's imagination.

Examples of Settings include:

- A backyard
- The White House
- A deserted island
- Underwater
- The planet Xergnon
- Inside a shoe

**Make It Juicy.  
Include details to add clarity.**

Remember, in addition to the physical location of the play, the Setting also includes time – or when the play happens. Students can establish time by writing the time of day, the season, or even the specific year (i.e. present day, in colonial times, or the future). Most importantly, encourage your students to use supporting details because the more the reader knows about the Setting, the more interested they will be to learn about the second element, Character.

### CLASSROOM EXERCISE

When working to create Settings with your students, try having them close their eyes and imagine that they are actually there. Then ask:

- Are you inside or outside?
- What time of day is it?
- What is the temperature?
- What is going on around you?
- Are there any objects in the environment? (mountains, trees, furniture, etc...)

# THE FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (continued)

## Element 2: CHARACTER

The Characters are **WHO** the play is about. Characters can be absolutely anything - people, animals, even objects! Your students can write about two frogs on a lily pad, a lonely crayon, famous and historical figures, and even people who are familiar to them such as a grandparent, friend, or neighbor. When writing about Characters, the sky's the limit!

Remember that Characters need supporting details too. When writing, students can bring a Character to life by describing their appearance, personality, and, most importantly, their emotions.

### CLASSROOM EXERCISE

Try conducting a "Character Interview" with the students. It will help them to be specific and create believable Characters. Have each student choose a Character from their play, come to the front of the class and answer the following "interview" questions as that Character:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What do you look like?
- What do you like to do?
- What is your job?
- How do you feel today? Is this different than how other Characters in the play feel?



## Element 3: CONFLICT

The Conflict is **WHAT HAPPENS** in the play. Every play has a Conflict (or problem), and, as playwrights, your students are responsible for deciding what that Conflict is and how it will be resolved. Examples of Conflicts are not difficult to find, and many will be inspired by the everyday lives of your students. Common Conflicts include:

- Losing lunch money
- Missing the bus
- Finding a lost dog

Be sure to remind your students that a Conflict does not necessarily mean that Characters fight. Instead, a Conflict could be an extraordinary event such as

- Entering a room filled with bubbles
- Discovering a new planet
- Getting an A+ on a hard test

# THE FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (continued)

## CLASSROOM EXERCISE

Create a brainstorm list of Conflicts with your students. Explore options that are ordinary, extraordinary, dramatic, and comedic. For instance, a dramatic conflict involves Characters with strong or contrasting feelings, while a comedic conflict emerges from strange situations. Allow the students time to let their imaginations flow and discover what their plays could be about.

## Element 4: DIALOGUE

Dialogue is the final element of a play. It is the **WORDS** the Characters say. To write Dialogue, your students must consider how the Characters in their play sound and what types of words or expressions they might use. For instance, a conversation between two Characters could consist of everyday speech such as:

**Who Speaks Next and  
What Do They Say?**

A: Hi.

B: Hi.

A: How are you?

B: I'm OK.

A: Is something wrong?

B: No....well, yes. (sighs) My friend moved away and I miss him a lot.

The Dialogue could be written with a funny accent, animal noises, or even in gibberish. As the playwright, your students have the power to make their Characters do and say whatever they want!

One of the best ways to help your students develop Dialogue is to have them step into the Character's shoes. Have them close their eyes for a moment and pretend they are the Character. Allow them to imagine how the Character would feel and what they would think. Then as the students begin writing, encourage them to include the Character's emotions in the Dialogue through stage directions (such as jumping up with excitement, laughter, or tears) or with the words they speak.

## CLASSROOM EXERCISE

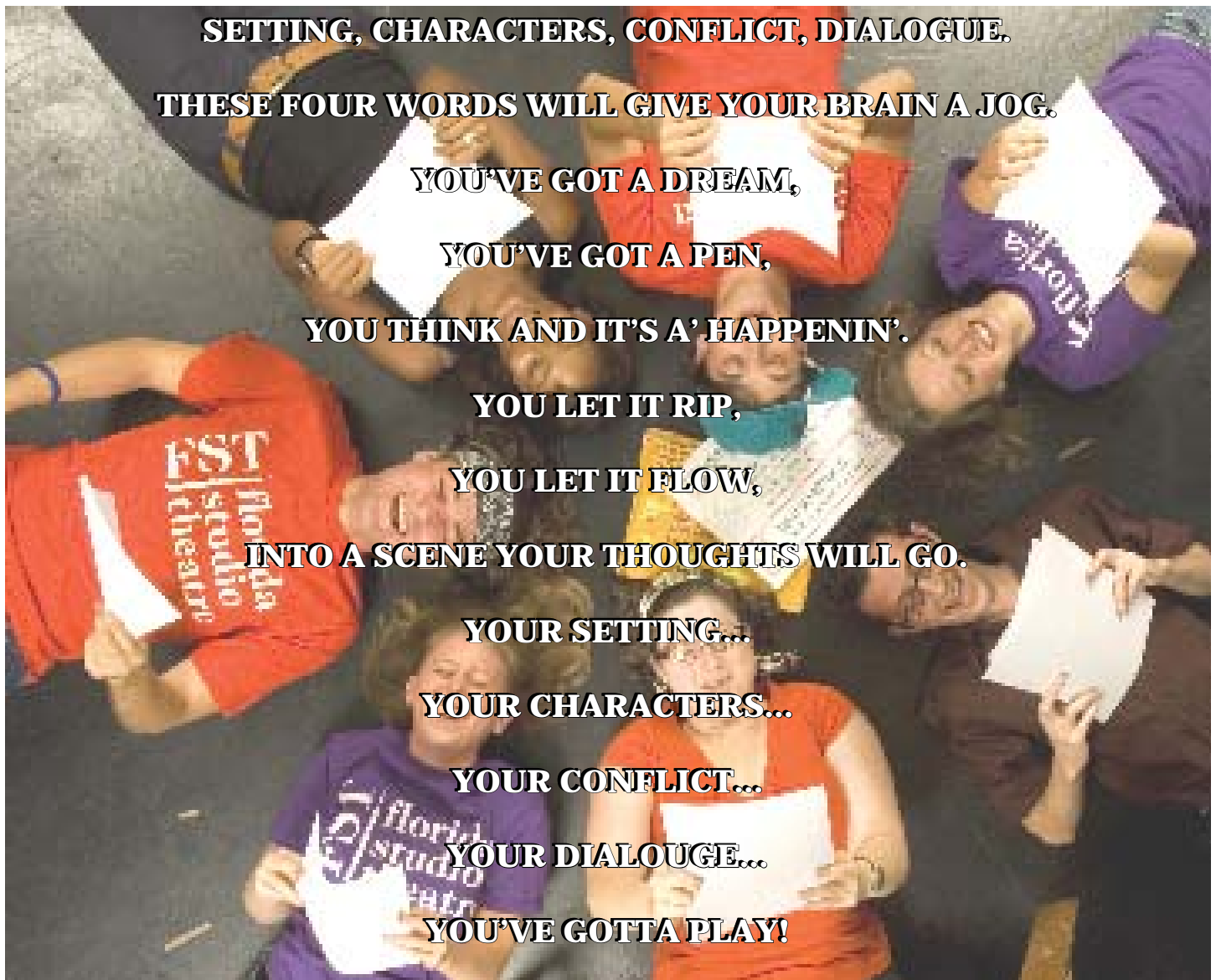
Create a Dialogue game by having two students team up. From the list below, have each student in the team choose a Character and begin a conversation. The students can take turns talking in ways they imagine their Character would speak. Then they can record the Dialogue and include it in their play.

- A basketball coach advising his star player before the big game.
- A teenager getting a driving lesson from their parent.
- A piece of chocolate cake talking to a glass of milk.

# THE PLAYMAKERS RAP & RHYME

Now that you're familiar with the Essential Elements of playwriting, here's a way to inspire your class and keep the fun of writing alive. The PLAYMAKERS use this awesome beat everyday and thought it would be great to give you the lyrics. Your class will never forget the elements needed to WRITE A PLAY!

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# CREATIVE ZONE: Young Playwright Notebook

Now it's your turn to write! Use the notebook below to start writing your play, and remember to include the Four Essential Elements: Setting, Character, Conflict, and Dialogue. Most importantly, have fun and let your imagination guide you!

TITLE OF PLAY:

SETTING:

CHARACTERS:

CONFLICT:

Scene 1

DIALOGUE: Who Speaks Next and What do they say?

Character 1:

Character 2:

Character 1:

Character 2:

Character 1:

Character 2: