

# Bloomington Playwrights Project Mini Play Contest Newspaper in Education Curriculum

## “How to Use the Newspaper to Write a Play”

Want to write a play? Get a newspaper.

A what?

A newspaper. A newspaper is a vital source of information that connects us to our community and the world around us. Our local newspaper *The Herald Times* tells us stories about local and national events, politics, business, sports, and much more. But newspapers do more than report the news. They can be a source of creative inspiration as well. Some people don't know where to start when writing a play. Others have difficulty coming up with interesting characters. Some writers and would-be-writers have a beginning and an end to their story but no middle. A newspaper can be the perfect way to solve playwriting problems. *Notice certain words written in a different style or font. Pay attention to these words. They are included in a mini glossary at the end of this help guide that can assist you in writing a fantastic play.*

### THE “5 W’s” AND AN “H”

The newspaper is full of ideas for a play that are just sitting there. Pick a story, any story, and use the “5 W’s” and “H” Rule of newspaper writing to help discover characters, a plot, and a setting.

<b>Who</b>	=	Characters
<b>Where</b>	=	Setting
<b>When</b>	=	Setting
<b>What</b>	=	Plot
<b>Why</b>	=	Plot (Conflict)
<b>How</b>	=	Plot

For example, read the following article and look below for the “5 W’s” and an “H”

#### **Station reaches its goal: WFIU raises \$285,038**

Apparently, humor does help. During this year's annual fund drive, WFIU unveiled about two dozen comedic spots in an effort to lighten the tone - a move that seems to have worked for the public radio station.

The station not only met its \$265,000 goal: it exceeded it by about \$20,000. “They did it wonderfully,” station manager Christina Kuzmych said of the new, humorous spots. “They lifted our spirits and hopefully lifted the spirits of our audience as well.” After totaling figures late into the night Tuesday, Kuzmych said the station raised \$285,038 during its weeklong fund drive.

<b>WHO</b>	WFIU public radio station and station manager
<b>WHERE</b>	Radio station
<b>WHEN</b>	Last Tuesday night
<b>WHAT</b>	Annual fund drive
<b>WHY (CONFLICT)</b>	The radio station needed more money
<b>HOW</b>	The funny spots helped WFIU to make more money than they expected.

Based on the article above and using the “5 W’ s” and an “H” rule, you can write a play about a radio station and the kind of music it plays. What about a radio station run by a family or all kids? The “5 W’ s” and an “H” Rule is a good way to get prewriting ideas. Let your imagination take you from there. Don’t forget about quotes. These can be a good source from which to create dialogue.

Read the following sample article from the newspaper and see if you can find the “5 W’ s” and an “H”.

## Karst Dog Park opening Saturday

**Bloomington Herald Times | July 23, 2008**

A party to celebrate the grand opening of the Karst Dog Park will be from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

You’ll be able to register to win prizes, receive give-a-ways and socialize with other dog park members. Don’t forget to bring a camera for a photo op with the dog park mascot. And you don’t need a dog to join the party; Bloomington Animal Care & Control will have adoptable dogs on site.

While you and your pet can enter the park free during the party, you can also register your dog on site with a copy of the proper vet records. That includes vaccination expiration dates for Bordetella, rabies, DAPP and the animal must be spayed/neutered. The park’s annual fee is \$75 for the first dog and \$50 for additional dogs, which goes toward park maintenance.

All dog park rules apply during the festivities. Due to safety considerations, no children younger than 12 are permitted and youths aged 12-15 years old must be supervised by an adult.

See [www.karstfarmpark.com](http://www.karstfarmpark.com) for more about the Karst Dog Park or contact Kelli Witmer at 349-2800 at Monroe County Parks and Recreation Department.

In the following blanks write down the “5 W’ s” and “H” of the above story. There may be more than one answer to each.

**WHO**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**WHERE**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**WHEN**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**WHAT**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**WHY**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**HOW**

_____	_____
_____	_____

## **SECTIONS OF THE NEWSPAPER**

The sample articles above came from the Nation & World section of the newspaper. Other great sources of super play ideas from the newspaper can come from any section. Look on the front page of the newspaper to locate where these sections are. Try the Local section, Sports, Business, Opinion, Lifestyle, or even the Classifieds. The following classified announcements for a job can turn into wonderful plays. This section allows you more freedom to be inventive.

**Part-time office clerk needed for busy dermatology office.  
Mon- Fri around 20hrs/week.  
Must be flexible, detailed, team player.  
Send resume and cover letter to:  
1010 West Second St.,  
Bloomington, IN 47403.  
Attn: Office Manager.**

For this ad, ask yourself, what could name of the dermatology office be? Why would someone want to take this job? If the job is only 20 hours a week, what are they doing the rest of the day? Who are the other people who work at the office? What are they like? What are the patients like? How much does the job pay? What does the person who wants the job want to do with the money?

Take this next ad for example:

**PERFECT PART TIME JOB.  
Make over \$100/wk. in 8 hrs.  
at area restaurants--and its FUN!  
Call Ben X2X-9XX8.**

What in the world kind of job is this? And why is it so fun? You decide! Search the classifieds for a variety of announcements that may spark an idea. Try announcements for a lost pet or an apartment rental. Maybe someone is selling an old tractor or wishes someone a happy birthday or remembers someone on the anniversary of his or her death. What original play ideas can you think of from those announcements?

## **PICTURES**

Pictures in the newspaper can also be helpful for writing a play. Use the pictures that do not have an accompanying story, only captions to imagine what could be taking place. The “5 W’s” and an “H” Rule can be used here as well. Check out the picture on the next page.



Carol Rood, right, a nurse at Bloomington Hospital, and nurse Michael Graves discuss a patient while nursing technician Kathy Kelly helps patient Jim Hornocker walk off a bout with abdominal pain. Long hours and multiple tasks have become the norm for Indiana nurses. Staff photo by David Snodgrass.

## PLAYWRITING TECHNIQUES

Now that you have a great place to begin writing, remember these few tools.

1. Be selective in the ideas you include. You do not have to include everything that was in your prewriting. Pick your best topics.
2. **WRITE! WRITE! WRITE!** Do not stop once you start. Revising and editing come later. Just let the ideas flow.
3. When you are ready to revise, which is simply searching for things to fix, remember to **Add** (*What else does the reader need to know?*) **Rearrange** (*Is this information in the most logical and best order?*) **Remove** (*What extra details or bits of information are unnecessary?*) and finally **Replace** (*What words or fine points could be substituted for clearer or stronger expression?*)
4. Do not forget to edit. Editing is spelling, punctuation, grammar, and subject/verb agreement.
5. **MOST IMPORTANT RULE: *Every play has a beginning, middle, and an end.*** In the beginning the audience should say, “That’s interesting” and want to continue watching. By the end, the audience should say “Wow!”



The beginning introduces the characters, the conflict, why it is so important that the conflict is worked out and a ticking clock. A ticking clock means that the conflict must be resolved in some way before the end of the play.



The middle builds the conflict and explains the characters as they work to get what they want.



In the end, the characters either get what they want or don't.

## PLAYWRIGHT'S SPEAK

**ACT** A major division in the action of a play. Playwrights frequently use acts to illustrate changes in time, setting, characters onstage, or mood.

**CHARACTER** A character is a person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, and characterization is the process by which a writer makes that character seem real to the reader. A hero or heroine, often called the *protagonist*, is the central character gets the audience's interest and sympathy. The *antagonist* is the character, force, or collection of forces that stands directly opposed to the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story.

**CONFLICT** The struggle within the plot between opposing forces. The protagonist engages in the conflict with the antagonist, which may take the form of a character, society, nature, or something about the protagonist's personality.

**DIALOGUE** The spoken text of a play - conversations between characters is dialogue. This is how characters speak. Dialogue makes the characters seem real to the audience by revealing firsthand their thoughts, responses, and how they feel.

**PLOT** This is the arrangement of what happens in a story that shapes the action and gives the story a particular focus. Discussions of plot include not just what happens, but also how and why things happen the way they do.

**SETTING** The physical and social background in which the action of a story occurs. The major elements of setting are the time, the place, and the social environment that frames the characters.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS** A playwright's written instructions about how the actors are to move and behave in a play. They explain in which direction characters should move, what facial expressions they should assume, and so on.