



NEW WRITING  
NORTH  
YOUNG WRITERS



## Writing a Scene

You'll need:

Something to write with

Something to write on

Resource sheet: Play Extracts (found at the end of this PDF)

Note: This workshop uses the word 'dialogue' a lot. Dialogue really just means speech – it's what people say in a book, film or play etc.

### Warm Up:

#### Language gathering

In this workshop we're thinking about dialogue so your warm-up is a listing exercise connected to this. On a piece of paper, make a list of as many of the following as you can (all on the same list or with separate headings, it's up to you).

- slang terms – e.g. 'obvs' or 'lol'
- local phrases – e.g. 'I divvent kna' or 'gan hyem'
- 'in-jokes' or words that mean something to you that might mean something different to someone else. These could even be made up words that your family or friends use.

### Get Inspired:

#### Dialogue clues

#### Resource: Play Extracts

Have a look at each of the extracts on the Play Extracts sheet. For each one, make a note of what the dialogue tells you about the characters. This is not about the content of the play (e.g. what's happening in the scene) but about the characters themselves; less about what they say and more about how they say it and the language they use.

For example:

Does it give you a clue about where they're from in the country?

Can you guess how old they might be by the words they use?

Does the way they speak tell you anything about their mood in the moment? Are they confident or anxious? Funny or serious?

# Give it a Try:

## Writing a Scene

For this exercise, we're going to be using what we learnt about in the last exercise about dialogue and character and writing a scene. We're then going to re-write the scene a couple of times to see how the dialogue can change the action of a scene. So don't worry too much about getting it right first time round as we're going to keep on editing and changing as we go.

Note: If you have previously completed the 'Creating a character workshop' you could use the character you created in that workshop in this scene.

### Part 1

Write a scene in which Character A (you can name them if you want) is asking Character B for a box that Character B is holding. It doesn't need to be more than a few lines each; this first version should be very straightforward.

However, you do need to think about the type of dialogue you want to use. For example, do you want to use 'local' words that tell us where they're from (Scouse, Geordie, Scottish etc.). What words might they use that give us an idea of how old they are? Or how educated? How are they feeling?

Think of the different way your first line could tell us things about the characters, both as individuals and thinking about the relationship between the two characters.

Have a look at the following examples of opening lines for ideas.

Character A: Oi you!

Character A: Whatsup bruv?

Character A: Excuse me madam,

Character A: Wahey pet

Character A: Erm, sorry, I mean-, would you, could I?

Character A: Darling, would you mind?

### Part 2

Now we're going to rewrite the scene. This time, imagine that B doesn't want A to have the box because it has something personal inside it that they don't want A to see.

How does this change the way they might talk?

And how does it change the scene?

### Part 3

We're going to rewrite the scene one more time. This time, A knows that B will not want them to have the box so they have to find a way to get it off B. They might 'trick' B into putting it down and take it or they might just be very persuasive. They might pretend they already know what's in the box or try to confuse B into thinking they have the wrong box.

Again, think about how the language of the two characters might change. And how the flow of the scene is different with these layers underneath it.

Look back over the three scenes and see the difference. Think about, if you were an audience member watching the scene in a play, how much more interesting the last scene is and why.

## Challenge Yourself:

If you've enjoyed this exercise, there's lots of things you could do next:

- \* See what happens in the last scene if you change the dialogue style of one of the characters. If they talked in a nervous way before, what happens if you make them more confident, talking in short, sharp sentences for example.
- \* Have a go at writing the scene before or after the one you've written. For example, is there a scene in which a different character gives B something to put in the box? What is it and how do they persuade B to do it? If character A gets the box from B, what do they do in the scene afterwards? What do they do with the box? Or what do they say to B about what's inside?
- \* Watch a scene from your favourite TV show or film and pay particular attention to the dialogue. How is this connected to each character and what does it tell you about them? What would it look like if they spoke in a different way? Or used different words? You might even want to try rewriting one of the scenes, to see what happens if you change the dialogue the characters use.
- \* Have a go at connected workshops: Creating a Character, Plot and Structure and Exploring a Theme.

This workshop was devised by Becci Sharrock for New Writing North Young Writers.



Becci is a writer, theatre maker and creative producer. She's toured theatre shows across the UK and been the writer in residence at Beamish Museum. Her work has been commissioned by Tidy Carnage, Made in Corby and Queen's Hall Arts, amongst others. Her site specific piece Night Trade, commissioned by Alphabetti Theatre, was joint winner of the North East Theatre Guide's Best New Writing.

She is currently working on a an adaption of The Secret Garden, an interactive theatre piece set in the Mariana Trench and a play about a conflict journalist.

New Writing North Young Writers is a programme for young people aged 12-19. We run creative writing groups, masterclasses and programmes in schools across the North East. We support young people to express their ideas, to work with professional writers and artists, to create and share new work, and to meet other young writers.

We would love to read your writing! Share it with us on social media using #writingfromhome or by emailing [youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com). Search for New Writing North Young Writers on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, where we will also be sharing regular writing prompts. Each week we will select a Young Writer of the Week whose work will be shared on our channels.

Find other writing workshops and much more on our website [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

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NORTH**



Supported using public funding by  
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# Play Extracts

## The Pitmen Painters by Lee Hall

Lyon: Well, I don't mean to be rude in any way, but may I ask – why have you chosen to do Art Appreciation?

*Pause*

George: To appreciate art.

Jimmy: What's wrong with us wanting to appreciate art, like?

Lyon: Nothing at all

Oliver: Most of us left school when we were eleven, so there's a lot of things we didn't know – but that's why we come here – to find out about the world.

George: We're not thick, you know – well apart from Jimmy. We've just finished Evolutionary Biology.

Lyon: Well – look – I think we should battle on.

*He shows a slide.*

Lyon: Ah, yes, here we have a typical example of the Florence School – around 1560 – the relationship between the Cupid and the Virgin Mary is a standard tableau...

Harry: 'Scuse me. Can I stop you a second?

Lyon: Of course

Harry: I don't mean to be controversial, but I really don't think this is what we had in mind.

Lyon: I'm sorry?

Harry: Looking at paintings of cherubs and all that.

Lyon: You don't want to look at paintings?

Harry: No, we just want to know about proper art.

### **Overspill by Ali Taylor**

- Finch: They all think it us
- Potts: Nah, not serious
- Finch: Yeah, serious
- Baron: Mate, they were chasing us.
- Potts: I can't be arrested boys. My Sports Direct... they'll... I need that job yeah. Got all them debts yeah. I gotta get out me house, get a flat. You, you ain't gonna be a lawyer if you locked up. Won't get in the army with a criminal record. This is Bromlet innit. Bromley man! They've lost their heads. But it only for a minute.

### **Compromise by John Woods**

*Applause. It is a few minutes later. Dr Hazard is shaking the hand of James.*

- Dr Hazard: Well done, James, what a marvellous debut. And just what we need, to put some fire in our belly. Quite frankly the Institute has been in the doldrums. Attacks from the media have produced a slump in our confidence. You represent the vitality that has been lacking.
- James: Well, thanks, but of course we'd be nowhere without the old guard, - if you don't mind me putting it that way... I mean that we have all learned such a lot...
- Dr Hazard: We are always looking for suitable people to take up the torch. We must meet up for coffee, I gather your consulting room is just around the corner from me. Oh, I heard that your clinical paper has been accepted for publication. That's marvellous!

### **93.2 FM by Levi David Addai**

*On-air.*

- Coach: It's Sunday, it's twenty-two hundred hours and the Coach is back on the shizzle-dizzle! The Bossman is here also and yes – we – are – live!
- Bossman: You're damn right we're live!
- Coach: The dynamic duo...
- Bossman: The rulers of the radio!
- Coach: Trust me – this is the BIGGEST station in the endz!
- Bossman: The biggest!
- Coach: The station that's truly REPRESENTING the endz!
- Bossman: Ain't nobody coming to take our crown cos ain't nobody do how we do!

**Blackbird by David Harrower**

Una: Shock.

Ray: Of course.  
Yes.  
Now

*Pause*

Una: And

Ray: Wait

*Pause. He goes to the closed door, opens it a small way.*

Una: You were busy.

Ray: Yes.

Una: They

Ray: I still am busy.  
I was with one of the  
Our managers.  
We're in the middle of something.  
They.  
So I might  
I will be sent for.  
I will get called away.  
I'm still needed.