



Redrafting Materials

Tips!

Start big and perfect the finer details later. There's no point in spending hours editing dialogue if you then realise you need to re-configure your structure.

Revisit #WrAP2023 - the prompts will help you to redraft!

Don't be afraid to make big changes - nothing is ever wasted!

It's a marathon not a sprint, don't be tempted to submit your script too early!

Exercise

Read your play through a stranger's eyes.

Ok, so this is pretty impossible but start your redrafting process by reading your play, in full, as though you've never set eyes on it before. Don't even think about making edits at this stage! This will give you an idea of where you are at and help you to see the bigger picture.

Exercise

Questions (to answer honestly)

- ★ What work do you feel (instinctively) needs to be done on your play?
- ★ How long is your play? Does it fit with a standard format (short play, one-act)
- ★ Why are you writing this play? What's motivating you?
- ★ What's your message? What would you like to convey to an audience through your play?
- ★ How do you want the audience to think or feel after watching your play? What discussions would you like to provoke/ perceptions to challenge?
- ★ Do you need to do any further research in order to re-draft? If so, what? How much time will this take? And where will you start?

Pitching

We explored pitching during #WrAP2023 as a way to pin down your ideas.

You can also use pitching to help you to redraft - summarising your ideas can help you to figure out what's important to you as a writer and to flag up any parts of your idea which need more development.

Exercise 3: Try rewriting your...

- ★ 1-3 sentence summary.
- ★ One page outline.

Pay attention to any areas you find hard to articulate and consider whether these are indicative of holes in your plot or aspects of your story which need to be developed further.

Tip: don't stop pitching! Keep rewriting your pitch throughout the redrafting process to help keep you focused (and help you deliver a great pitch further down the line if you need to!).

Structure

The 5-Act Structure can be a useful redrafting tool, not least because it gives you 5 sections to work with. It can also help

you to make sure you are telling the most interesting version of events and that your story ties together.

Reminder: The 5 Act Structure summarised (you can find more on this in your #WrAP2023 emails).

- The main character (who is essentially an avatar for 'you') is presented with a problem
- They go on a journey to solve the problem and are faced with many obstacles
- All hope seems lost
- Until, there is a final battle - against all odds.
- And then, victory or defeat!

(this is essentially the 5 - Act structure)

How can a knowledge of the 5 act structure help you to redraft?

- Gives you manageable chunks to work with at a time
- Provides a benchmark for you to check in with your story: for example, does nothing happen for 60 pages in the middle of your play?
- Helps you to build tension and tell the most dramatic/exciting version of events.
- Keeps you focused.
- Ensures your story is satisfying for an audience and takes them on a coherent journey.
- Gives you a basis from which to experiment if you want to 'break the rules'.

Things to think about...

- Are there any areas of your story that do not break down easily into the 5 act structure? Is this because of a clear creative decision or an indication that your idea needs more development?
 - Are the areas of your story where the structure seems to go off on a tangent? Do you follow through with each strand of the story?
 - Is there anything you could tighten up? Or cut out?
 - Are you pushing things far enough? Is there enough tension? Are the stakes high?
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Exercises

Structure check-in!

Map out your current structure and think about how it is currently working. Do the answers to your questions above need some attention? Is your story dramatic and exciting enough? Can you push it further?

Map it out again!

Now map out your structure again - making note of any changes you are going to need to make to your script. Interrogate your creative choices - ask yourself why, and consider the effect your decisions will have on an audience. If you want to break the rules, that's fine - just make sure you're doing it for a creative reason which will have your intended effect on those watching! *Really interrogate your creative decisions!*

Resource: 5-Act Structure: Breakdown Sheet

ACT 1

SET UP (STATUS QUO/ WORLD) - *what's the norm for your main character(s) and how do we see this in your opening scene(s)?*

PROTAGONIST: FLAW/ NEED - *what does your main character **need**, is it a flaw they have to overcome?*

INCITING INCIDENT - *something happens to them which changes their path. This usually provokes the 'want'!*

ACT 2

PROTAGONIST **OVERCOMES DOUBT** AND ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE!

ACT 3

MID-POINT (THE TWIST)- *the protagonist gains key knowledge; there is no turning back now!*

ACT 4

THINGS START TO GO WRONG

WORST POINT - *all seems lost, it seems like there is no hope of winning the final battle.*

ACT 5

OBLIGATORY ACT – FINAL BATTLE - *victory or defeat for your protagonist.*

RESOLUTION - *what is the outcome?*

Character Work

Fine tuning your characters can help you to redraft and even make structuring your story easier. Now that you've taken a look at your structure, examine your characters and make sure everything ties in - after all, your characters are the vehicles for telling your story.

Every character in your play needs to have:

An Objective

This tends to take the form of a want or a need – and very often, both!

Want

- This is something external (*such as to find a boyfriend, to escape from jail, to make their first million!*)

Need

- This is something internal (*such as to take responsibility for their own life, to conquer their past*)

Obstacles

- Physical (*such as a snowstorm when climbing a mountain, lack of money*)
- Internal/ flaws (*such as lack of self-belief, self-destruction, selfishness*)
- ****The forces of antagonism should always equal the forces of the protagonist for the drama to be the most effective**.**

Empathy

What makes us empathise with the character?

- This is often in direct relation to the wants/ needs and obstacles (*for example, we empathise because we can relate to lack of money standing in someone's way, or the need to protect our children*)

Journey

What journey does the character go on throughout the course of the play?

- Example: *from a man to a boy. From a criminal to an upstanding member of society?*

Function

What is the function of the character within your play?

- To highlight a political message you want to convey within the play?
- To show the opposite viewpoint?

Exercise

Go through each character using the list above and make sure they have each element.

Do you need all of your characters?

Consider your answers to the exercise above carefully, are there any characters which just do not seem to have a clear purpose, function or journey?

If there is a character (or characters) in your play which does not seem to have a clear purpose, ask yourself if they really need to be in your play? Could you incorporate aspects of them into another character? Could you cut them out altogether?

Ensuring every character absolutely needs to be in the play makes the drama more interesting (and makes your roles more appealing to actors!). This will also save you time when redrafting!

Tip: pay particular attention to your protagonist and examine how their objectives and their journey fits in with your structure. If it doesn't seem to match up, you may need a different protagonist to tell your story.

Now that you've considered the bigger picture, you might want to do an initial redraft - especially if some reconfiguring is needed! Then you can move on to fine tuning and polishing!

The microstructure of scenes

Each scene has a micro-structure of its own and examining this in more detail can help you to ensure each scene is working hard to push your story forward.

Tip: make sure every scene works towards a moment of change!

Resource: The Microstructure of scenes

Scenes are the moments you choose to tell your story in the best way possible.

Dramatic structure is built on **change**

STORY

(broken down in to acts which are MAJOR moments of change)

ACT / ACT / ACT / ACT / ACT

(broken down in to scenes which are MINOR moments of change)

SCENES/ SCENES / SCENES/ SCENES/
SCENES

Internal structure of a scene:

- Set-up
- Conflict
- Crisis
- Climax
- Resolution

MIMICS THE 5 ACT

STRUCTURE OF A SCENE

STRUCTURE

PROTAGONIST

1. Has an objective
2. Is confronted with an equal and opposite desire (forces of antagonism)
3. This causes conflict
4. They have to make a choice...
5. They win or lose (turning point)

All scenes must result in CHANGE or, in other words, a TURNING POINT.

Scene checklist

- Whose scene is it?
- What is their objective?
- What or who are the forces of antagonism/obstacles?
- Who are the other characters in the scene and do they all have clear objectives? *Do their objectives relate in some way to the protagonist of the scene?*
- Where is the conflict in the scene?
- What happens – in terms of action?

- What changes? *What is the turning point?*
- Where do you 'come in and get out'? *Does the scene start unnecessarily early? Do you end the scene before the turning point? Do you end on a cliff-hanger or continue the scene?*
- What is the purpose of the scene in terms of moving the plot forward?
- Where is the scene placed in the play? *Is the level of tension appropriate for where it is placed?*
- Does the scene subvert expectation or surprise us?
- What would the play be like without this scene? *Would it work?*
- How much information do you need to get across in the scene? *Is there a lot of exposition? Could you get the vital information across in a creative way, through action?*
- How long is the scene? *Does the length reflect the significance of the scene within the play? Could you cut the scene down?*

Exercise

Go through each scene and consider the questions above and the microstructure. Then go through and

make any cuts you need or further developments. This might take a while, but it's worth looking at each scene in detail - every moment counts.

Dialogue

Looking at your dialogue in detail can take your play to the next level. Go through your dialogue with a fine-tooth comb to make sure you are showing off your unique writing voice.

Exercises

'Dissecting the text'

*For these exercises, you might find it useful to first break the scene down into **units** so that you can work with smaller sections of the text at a time. A new unit begins after a small moment of change.*

ACTIONING

Take each line and replace it with the appropriate verb (see *suggested verb list*)

Are there any lines which don't seem to have an 'action'? Should you consider cutting these?

SUB-TEXT

Go through each line and write down what the sub-text is.

What are your characters *really* saying? If you find that the sub-text matches your dialogue most of the time then perhaps your dialogue is too 'on the nose'. Can you come up with other

ways to show what your characters are trying to say, without them saying so explicitly?

What can be left unsaid? For example, a character diverting a question with a pause or change of subject can be more interesting than a straightforward answer; or someone saying that they are feeling sad is a lot less interesting than them pretending to be happy but showing us they are sad.

EXPOSITION

Do any of your lines exist purely to give us information?

Highlight these lines.

Is the information absolutely necessary? If so, can you include this information without being explicit?

Is the information expressed in a way that sounds natural? Is the character providing information that either the audience or the person they are talking to already knows?

Tip: Trust the audience/ reader to connect the dots and make sense of things - you don't need to explain everything.

Read/ watch plays or TV and films to get a sense of what works dialogue-wise - steal the tricks of the trade to help you to write better dialogue.

Focus on your opening scene

Why is your opening scene so important:

- You only have a small amount of time to hook your reader.
- Many open script calls have a first 10 pages policy.
- Most script readers don't have the time to give you the benefit of the doubt and read your entire play if the first few pages aren't strong.
- If your play is produced...you'll need a strong opening scene to grab the attention of the audience.
- In terms of television: if your opening scene isn't strong, your audience will change the channel!
- Your opening scene is your chance to show off your skills!!

What are the elements of a 'good' opening scene?

- 'Hook' the audience.
- Give a flavour of the style of the piece.
- Provide some vital information.
- But, most of all: provoke questions so the reader/audience wants to know more.

Tips:

Don't be mistaken in thinking your opening scene is all about 'set-up'. Whilst some giving *some* information is necessary, it's more interesting to fuel intrigue! Information can be filtered through later.

You don't need to ease your audience in gently: **hit the ground running!**

Things to consider:

- What information do we get in the scene about the characters and their world?
- Whose scene is it? Who is the protagonist? What is their flaw? What will they need to overcome in the final battle?
- What questions do we have after reading this scene?
- Are there any moments where the writer over explains things? Could anything be cut?
- How does the scene set the tone for the piece?
- How effective is the dialogue? What interesting moments come out of subtext?

Practical considerations

Make sure your opening scene is perfectly presented and typo free! (of course, this is a good tip for your whole play, but you are more likely to be forgiven for the odd error later on, once the reader is immersed in your wonderful writing!)

Get to the writing quickly! Whilst it's tempting to describe every last detail of the set, don't block up the first few pages with lengthy stage directions. The reader wants to know what happens in the play and how good the writing is, plus they are likely to be strapped for time - so work on the assumption that descriptions and directions will be skimmed (at best!) and keep them to a minimum.

Think about how many characters you have in your opening scene. Too many can be confusing for the reader (there's nothing more distracting than having to keep referring back to the character breakdown sheet to keep up with who's who!)

Exercise

Look at your first 10 pages in detail and make it the best it can be.

Experiment

Could another moment in your play make for a better opening? Don't be afraid to make some bold changes if you need to!

The ending of your play

Like the opening pages, your ending is important. The way you choose to end the play determines what the audience thinks and feels when they leave - it's a big responsibility, you've got the power to move the audience here, and quite possibly change the world!

*"Words are sacred. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones, in the right order, you can **nudge** the world a little." Tom Stoppard*

Writing the most powerful ending can be a challenge, sometimes it's easier to wrap things up neatly and allow your characters to run

off happily into the sunset! What if you pushed yourself further?
Cut away before things are neatly wrapped up?

What do you want the audience to talk about in the bar afterwards?

What is your message?

Exercise

Alternative endings - write down a few possible endings for your piece. What kind of feelings does each ending provoke? Which ending most conveys your message?

Stage directions

- Lengthy stage directions are somewhat out of fashion.
- Some readers might even skip them in the initial stages, so don't rely too heavily on them.
- Make sure they make sense
- Avoid lengthy prose but consider the style to some extent
- Make sure stage directions are distinct from other text
- Don't direct from the page. The stage directions should convey necessary information but you don't need to tell the actors how to act!
- Read lots of plays for examples (note how much longer stage directions are in older plays)

Submitting your work - checklist

- Number all pages.
- Make sure your name and contact details are clearly displayed on the front of the script.
- Include a character list.
- Include notes on any specific setting instructions but avoid lengthy description or directing from the page.
- Proofread your work for typos or mistakes.
- Make sure your play is correctly and consistently formatted (you can find examples at BBC Writersroom or you might wish to use software such as Final Draft).
- Perfect your pitch (whether it be a cover letter or an introductory email).
- **Above all, make sure your script is the best it can be. Don't rush to get your script out there, perfect it first!**

What to do with your script

Send it to agents:

- Find agents who represent writers you like/ feel aligned with creatively)
- Examples: Casarotto Ramsay, Troika Talent, Curtis Brown, The Agency
- Send an intro email first
- Don't be surprised if they tell you they are too busy!

- DO invite them to readings

Submit to theatres with open submission policies/ regular script windows

- Do your research first
- Make sure your script is at its' best!
- Don't send it out to everyone all at once (in case you receive feedback)
- Examples: The Bush, The Royal Court, The Hampstead, The Yard
- Check the websites of theatres you want to submit to to check if they accept unsolicited scripts.

Opportunities/ Competitions

- Find them on LPB, BBC Writersroom, Arts Jobs, Playwriting UK
- Examples: Papatango, The Bruntwood, Verity Bargate
- Apply for scratch nights and showcases

Self producing

- You could self produce - check out our blog for more details/ self-producing handbook
- You could also organise an informal reading