

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## Palm Beach Dramaworks Contact Information

**Name:** Gary Cadwallader, Director of Education and Community Engagement. Palm Beach Dramaworks

**Address:** 201 Clematis St., West Palm Beach, FL 33401

**Phone:** 561/512-4042, ext. 123

**E-mail:** [gcadwallader@palmbeachdramaworks.org](mailto:gcadwallader@palmbeachdramaworks.org)

## Lesson Plans: Playwriting

### PBD One-Minute Play Contest

**Created by:** Gary Cadwallader

**For students in grades:** 6 – 8

## Scope

**Number of Class Sessions:** 6+

**Time length of Sessions:** 45-60 minutes

**Suggested Timeline:** Five classes within a two-week to three-week period.

## Description

Writing a one-minute play offers a unique challenge to young theatre practitioners: how do we create a world in which characters tell a complete story in just 60 seconds? Open a world of self-expression and narrative storytelling by creating a one-minute play. The mission of PBD's Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Contest is to motivate young people to learn about themselves, their individuality and creativity, and inspires creativity by giving students a voice in creating their own unique story. Each play submitted to the Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Contest will be read and adjudicated by professional theatre practitioners using a carefully constructed rubric. Students progressing to the finals will be given constructive suggestions for strengthening and revising their plays, and up to 20 students will have their plays professionally developed and performed live onstage at PBD. We can't wait to read your students' plays!

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## Rationale

Palm Beach Dramaworks strives to enrich and profoundly impact the community in which we serve, and PBD does so with live, interactive experiences. This project supports our goal to introduce the transformative power of live theatre to a new, diverse generation. As the oldest professional theatre company in Palm Beach County, we continually seek thoughtful and powerful ways to expand and deepen our educational experiences with innovative, challenging plays and programming that supports our motto: "Theatre to Think About."

## Expected Results

### Benchmarks:

#### ELA.68.C.1.2

Write personal or fictional narratives using narrative techniques, precise words and phrases, and figurative language.

#### ELA.68.C.1.5

Improve writing by planning, revising, and editing, considering feedback from adults and peers.

#### TH.68.C.1.1

Devise an original work based on a community issue that explores various solutions to a problem.

#### TH.68.C.2

Assessing our own and others' artistic work, using critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, is central to artistic growth.

#### TH.68.F.1.2

Use vocal, physical, and imaginative ideas, through improvisation, as a foundation to create new characters and to write dialogue.

**The students will know** the basic tenets of active storytelling, including core literary terminology: protagonist, antagonist, conflict, introduction, inciting incident, rising action, climax, and resolution.

**The students will be able to** write and revise an original, individually written, one-minute play.

**The students will appreciate** the process and rigor necessary to write a short play, and the importance of working collaboratively to revise their own play.

## Supplies and Requirements

### The school should provide for students:

- Supporting documents mentioned and used in these plans, which are provided in hyperlinks
- Five strong one-minute plays to be used as a reading assignment. Examples provided in hyperlinks
- Photographs to support lessons. Examples provided in hyperlinks
- A stopwatch app for timed activities
- Ability to play music in the classroom during writing exercises (optional)

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## CONTENT KNOWLEDGE STUDENTS NEED BEFORE THESE LESSONS

- How is a play similar or different from any other form of literature or screenplays/teleplays? Stage plays are stories composed in verse or prose, usually for theatrical performance, and where conflict and emotion is expressed through active dialogue and action. Unlike screenplays/teleplays, stage plays are written to be performed in front of a live audience.
- A general idea of the parts of a story. Examples are provided in these plans to support your instruction.

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

SESSION	OVERVIEW
Classroom Session #1	<p><b>Materials:</b> paper and writing implement; <b>Character Conflict Worksheet;</b> <b>Historic Photographs</b> for writing exercise.</p> <p><b>Vocabulary for Word Wall:</b> Conflict; Character; Protagonist; Antagonist</p> <p><b>Smartboard:</b> Character Conflict Worksheet</p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> What is a One-Minute Play?</p> <p><b>Warm-up: Energizing exercise:</b> Shakeout; Beans; etc. (see page 26)</p> <p>⊙ <b>Bell Work:</b> Write the words <b>“One-Minute Play”</b> on the board. Invite students to brainstorm a large list of words, phrases, and ideas that come to mind when they see/hear these words. Note the differences between a short play, a scene or a skit. (See page 25)</p> <p>○ <b>Suggested reflection questions: (5-10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you see on the board?</li><li>• Based on our collective descriptions of a “one-minute play,” how would you define it?</li><li>• Inform students that they will be writing individual one-minute plays.</li><li>• <b>“What do you imagine will be one of the biggest challenges?”</b></li><li>• <b>“What do you think are the advantages of creating original stories and narratives in this format?”</b></li><li>• <b>“How might a one-minute play tell a story quickly and efficiently?”</b></li></ul> <p><b>Anticipated challenges:</b> Students may feel overwhelmed at writing a play for the first time, and writing character dialogue.</p> <p>⊙ <b>Activity #1: Imaginative Writing: Freestyle/Freethought (8 Minutes)</b></p> <p>○ Students should have a <b>notebook or loose paper, and a writing implement.</b> Set the timer for eight minutes, and explain the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write as quickly as you can</li><li>• The goal is quantity not quality</li><li>• Write without limitations</li><li>• Don’t stop to edit or revise anything</li><li>• Don’t stop to understand what you are writing; don’t analyze it</li><li>• Don’t attempt to think logically about your writing</li></ul>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- Don't pay attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation
- Don't pay attention to margins or lines on the page; write everywhere
- If you cannot think of something to write, write about that
- Don't cross out anything you write
- If something you are writing about is embarrassing, painful, or frightening, write about it

## ○ **Benefits of freewriting**

- Frees the imagination
  - Removes the self-censoring 'switch' in a writer's creativity
  - Allows writers to work through and shift fears and anxieties
  - Relieves the anxiety of working under pressure
- **Reflection:** "What did you experience? Was it easy or difficult?"
- **Suggestion:** In order to free creativity and reduce the stress of writing, inform students they can ceremoniously crumple up what they wrote and throw it in the trash (if they so choose).

**Anticipated challenges:** Students often, at first, feel they have nothing to write about. For this session, it's best to stay actively engaged while students free write for the first time, and privately suggest ideas to students who are not writing. Additional suggestions for students unsure of what to write include writing about the classroom; writing about their favorite color; writing about a friend, family member or teacher; etc.

## ◎ **Activity #2: Spontaneous Monologue (10 Minutes)**

### ○ **A one-minute spontaneous "lecture" improvisation**

- Invite one student to the front of the classroom to be the storyteller
- Assign another student to be the timekeeper
- Ask the class for a story topic that they think the storyteller knows absolutely nothing about. The topic should be absurd, peculiar, imaginative, and out of the ordinary. Examples: "The abundance of rainbow-colored fish in Norwegian country lakes" or "The daily habits of Zulu warriors"
- Explain to the storyteller that they have one minute to teach the class or talk in-depth about the topic. The storyteller will have to use their imagination to discuss all aspects of the topic
- There are no restrictions, except classroom rules
- They may not stop talking until "time" is called. (Side coaching from the teacher is encouraged at first. Remind the storyteller to stay on topic or keep speaking about any or all aspects of the topic for a full 60 seconds)

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- Set the timer for one minute, and announce that time starts when you say “Begin”
- **Invite as many students to be the storyteller as time allows**

**Benefits of Spontaneous Monologue:** Unlocking creativity to write character dialogue and mentally moving through “stumbling blocks” or self-censorship is essential in playwriting. The playwright must give their characters a voice. This exercise frees the imagination by “forcing” a storyteller to improvise details while teaching others about a subject they know nothing about.

○ **Activity extension (optional). Multiple One-Minute Stories – Concentration and Clarity**

- Invite two storytellers to the front of the classroom
- Give each student a topic for which they know nothing about
- Have one student speak directly to the class, and have the second student slightly behind and to one side of the first student. The second student does not shout or try to thwart the first student, but calmly speaks their topic “into the ear” of the first student.
- Set the timer for one minute, and announce that time starts when you say “Begin.”

◎ **Activity #3: Finding Inspiration:**

- **Compelling characters (10 minutes).** Display [Historic Photographs](#) on board  
Distribute [Character Investigation Worksheet](#)

- **Listen to your characters.** After viewing the photographs provided, have students choose one photograph and imagine a profile for the main or only character in the photograph. Be as creative as possible. Complete the **Character Investigation Worksheet**.

**Anticipated challenges:** Students may think there is a “right” or “wrong” answer in determining the character’s circumstances. Encourage students to think creatively to individually imagine all aspects of the photo character’s life.

◎ **Sharing Your Work (5-8 minutes)**

Ask various students to share all or portions of their character profiles. What is the character’s name? What is happening to them in the photo? Where are they from? What is taking place in their life that led them to this moment captured in the photo, etc.? Give other students an opportunity to share what they liked about the other students’ character profiles.

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- ⦿ **Exit Slip Activities and Reflection:** If time allows, play an improvisational game such as “**Why Are You Late?**” or an ensemble building game such as “**The Machine.**” Leave time at the end of class to allow each student to share one word or phrase that comes to mind when they hear the term, “One-Minute Play.” It’s alright to repeat!

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

SESSION	OVERVIEW
<p>Classroom Session #2</p>	<p><b>Materials:</b> paper and writing implement</p> <p><b>Vocabulary for Word Wall:</b> Dramatic Action; Introduction; Exposition; Inciting Incident; Rising Action; Conflict, Climax, Falling Action; Resolution; Objectives; Obstacles</p> <p><b>Smartboard:</b> <a href="#">Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play</a>; <a href="#">Conflict Photographs</a></p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> What is a One-Minute Play?</p> <p><b>Warm-up: Energizing Exercise:</b> Shakeout; Beans; etc. (see page 26)</p> <p>⊙ <b>Bell Work: Write the words “Well-Made Play” on the board</b>          Invite students to brainstorm a large list of words, phrases, and ideas that come to mind when they hear the term.</p> <p>○ <b>Suggested reflection questions: (5-10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see on the board?</li> <li>• What do you think are the components of a strong, effective play? <b>Example: Strong conflict; clear character traits; clear beginning, middle and end; catchy first and last line; impactful climax, etc.</b></li> <li>• Based on our collective descriptions of a “well-made play,” how would you define it?</li> <li>• Inform students that the goal is to write well-made, one-minute plays.</li> </ul> <p>⊙ <b>Icebreaker: What’s in a Name? (7 Minutes)</b></p> <p>○ Playwright create strong, clear names for their characters; names which typically inform the traits, behavior or objectives of that character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students divide into groups of two</li> <li>• Give each student one minute to tell the other student the reason they were given their first name. (If they do not know the answer, it is alright)</li> <li>• After one minute, switch and have the second student share the reason they were given their first name</li> <li>• After both students have an answer, have each share the other’s story with the full class</li> </ul> <p><b>Anticipated challenges:</b> Students not listening carefully to their colleague’s naming story may not be able to share with the class the full information. Encourage students to listen carefully in order to share the story with the class</p>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## ⊙ **Activity #1: Cluster Writing. Imagining All Aspects of an Idea (7 Minutes)**

- An activity similar to freestyle writing, this exercise gives students a word to spark ideas and creativity. You may assign a word by writing it on the board, or have students choose a word of their own. **Examples:** Respect; Change; Resiliency, Tenacity, Responsibility; Pride; Dignity; Fear; Future, etc.
- Students should have a notebook or loose paper, and a writing implement. Set the timer for five minutes, and explain the following guidelines:
  - Write one word in the center of a piece of paper and circle it
  - Cluster write for 5 minutes
  - Free associate words, phrases, sentences, images, and doodles that relate to that word
  - Write or draw without limitation or censorship
  - Don't stop to edit or revise anything
  - Don't stop to understand what you are creating; don't analyze it
  - Don't pay attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation
  - Don't cross out anything you write
- **Reflection:** "What did you experience? Was it easy or difficult?"
- **Suggestion:** In order to free creativity and reduce the stress of writing, inform students they can ceremoniously crumple up what they wrote and throw it in the trash (if they so choose).

**Anticipated challenges:** Students may not be used to writing so much so quickly. Encourage them to shake their hands every once in a while, if necessary. The more this exercise is utilized throughout the process, the easier it becomes.

## ⊙ **Discussion: The Parts of a Story (10 Minutes)**

- Review the definitions of "protagonist" and "antagonist." (see page 24)
- Define "objective." Example: **Each character has a driving intention that they MUST achieve**
- Define "conflict." Example: **Each character's driving intention conflicts with the other character(s)**
- Define the parts of a story with the [Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play \(Smartboard\)](#):
  - Introduction; Exposition; Inciting Incident; Rising Action (building conflict); Climax; Falling Action; Resolution
  - Suggestion: Use as an example a story your students know well, i.e. *Beauty and the Beast*, *Shrek*, *Harry Potter*, etc.
- **Further Discussion:** How does a playwright get all the parts of a story into a one-minute play? **Possible answers:** The

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

first line should include the major conflict; the main conflict should take place quickly. The story should have two characters, three at the most in order to focus on the main action.

## ⊙ **Discussion: The Three Unities (5 Minutes)** (see page 25)

- **Due to their length, it's important that one-minute plays be written with a unity of time, place, and action**
  - Unity of time: the play takes place in a one minute, continuous timeframe
  - Unity of place: the play takes place in one location
  - Unity of action: the action is continuous without scenic breaks

## ⊙ **Activity #2: Creating Character: Every person has a story to tell (15 minutes)**

- Conflict is the most important aspect of good storytelling
- Similar to the historic photos, this activity gives students a creative opportunity to create conflict as captured in a photo. A writer should fully know and understand the background and history of each character they write about or portray
  - Distribute or display [Character Conflict Photos](#) on the Smartboard
  - Students choose one photograph
  - Students choose one photograph and begin work on writing a character profile for the two main persons in the photograph
  - Think creatively! Explain that the characters in the photos may not necessarily be the most obvious choice. For example, perhaps what looks like a mother/daughter may be an aunt/niece or a nanny/charge or a kidnapper/prisoner, etc.
  - Write the character profiles on the [Character Investigation Worksheet](#)

## ⊙ **Homework**

- Complete the character profile questions (see Activity #2), if incomplete, for each person in the photo
- Then, write a one paragraph prose story about the conflict as seen in the photo. Use examples or character traits from the [Character Investigation Worksheet](#) to define the conflict
- Assignment due at the beginning of the next playwriting class
- Note: characters can be male, female or gender neutral

- ⊙ **Exit Slip Activities and Reflection:** If time allows, play an improvisational game such as “**Why are you late?**” or an ensemble building game such as “**The Machine.**” Leave time at the end of class to allow each student to share one word or phrase that comes to mind when they hear the word, “Conflict.” It’s alright to repeat!

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

SESSION	OVERVIEW
Classroom Session #3	<p><b>Materials:</b> paper and writing implement; five published one-minute plays for the reading assignment</p> <p><b>Vocabulary for Word Wall:</b> Tragedy; Comedy; Farce; Surreal/Fantasy; Musical; Tragic Flaw, Catharsis</p> <p><b>Smartboard:</b> <a href="#">Play Treatment Worksheet</a>; <a href="#">Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play</a>; <a href="#">Conflict Photographs</a></p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> What are theatre styles?</p> <p><b>Energizing Warm-up:</b> Shakeout; Beans; or Freestyle Writing or Cluster Writing</p> <p>⊙ <b>Icebreaker: Pass the Story (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>This is an improvisation exercise to create and “rehearse” the parts of a story</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suggest creating a maximum of two to three characters, including a protagonist and an antagonist</li><li>• Suggest that students create an inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and a resolution</li><li>• Seat or stand students in a circle (as close as safety allows)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ One student begins the story with an opening sentence</li><li>▪ Moving clockwise, each student contributes just one sentence to the story</li><li>▪ The students should create as much conflict as possible</li><li>▪ If the class is large, the story should end after one revolution of the circle. In a small class, set the number of rotations as two, three, or four</li><li>▪ At first, side coaching may be necessary to keep the story on track, and to complete a full story by the end of the circle</li><li>▪ Students not currently speaking should not suggest ideas or try to influence the direction of the story</li><li>▪ Repeat the exercise several times, starting with a different student each time and beginning a completely new story</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul> <p>→ <b>Note:</b> eventually, the goal is to tell a story with no pauses between sentences</p> <p><b>Anticipated trouble:</b> Students sometimes have difficulty or anxiety at first speaking in a group setting. Prior to the exercise, stress that the story has no right or wrong direction. You may also allow students to pass if they would prefer not to be in the ‘spotlight’.</p> <p>⊙ <b>Sharing Your Work (5-8 minutes)</b></p>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

Ask various students to share all or portions of their character profiles from the homework assignment. What are the characters' names? What is the conflict in the photo? Where are they from? What is taking place in their life that led them to this moment captured in the photograph, etc.? Give other students an opportunity to share what they liked about the other students' character profiles.

## ⊙ **Discussion: Theatre Styles (10 minutes)**

**Understanding the core theatre styles gives students ideas for choosing a style when they write their play**

- **Tragedy/Drama essentials:**
  - The condition of the protagonist's life progresses from good to bad
  - A 'tragic flaw,' according to Aristotle, brings about a protagonist's downfall
  - The fate of many people are tied to the protagonist. Therefore, his or her downfall is a catastrophic event
  - The purpose of tragedy or drama is 'catharsis,' which "cleanses the soul of fear and pity."
  - In a tragedy, there is typically a death at the climax
- **Comedy essentials:**
  - The condition of the protagonist's life progresses from bad to good
  - Comedy is usually about 'common' people who are living a dramatic situation, but the story is treated humorously
  - Types of comedy include romantic comedy, satirical comedy, and black comedy, in which humor is found in the gloomy or macabre
- **Farce essentials:**
  - The protagonist's life progresses from bad to good
  - The protagonist is in a serious situation that is highly improbable and extremely dire. The situation usually includes pratfalls and slapstick
  - The protagonist has an even more rewarding conclusion at the climax
- **Surreal/Fantasy essentials:**
  - The story can be either a drama or a comedy
  - The story is typically otherworldly and includes human, non-human or unusual characters
  - The setting does not necessary take place on Earth or in a typical location
- **Musical Theatre essentials:**
  - The story can be a drama, comedy, farce, or surreal/fantasy
  - The story includes songs. Songs are sung when the emotion becomes so strong speaking words is no longer sufficient to tell the story
  - Musicals can have text and songs, or be completely sung-through. Sung-through musicals contain no or very little

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

spoken text

## ⊙ **Discussion: Define a play's setting (2 minutes)**

- Briefly discuss that the setting for the play is very important. The setting should support the dramatic action and support the protagonist's objectives
- **The setting for a one-minute play should be in one location.** A short play must be told as quickly and efficiently as possible, without constant shift in locations. (Location changes deflate or diminish conflict)

## ⊙ **Activity #1: Writing a Flash Play (15 minutes)**

- This activity gives students a "test-run" in writing a one-minute, one page play. It's an opportunity to familiarize themselves with format and building conflict
  - Return to the [Conflict Photographs](#) (Smartboard)
  - Using the character investigations students created based on the conflict photographs, write a one-page play using simple dialogue from the conflict you see in the photograph
  - The story should have a beginning, middle, and end, and fit on **one side of one page of paper**
  - The one-minute play should have a strong opening line, conflict, climax, and a resolution
  - Suggest that editing and changes may occur at any time while writing
  - **Formatting Note:** at the left margin, write the character name followed by a colon. For example:  
**Charlotte:** You won't believe what just happened...  
**Tom:** What happened? Etc.

**Optional:** You may also decide to complete this activity as a **homework** assignment, due the next playwriting period

**Anticipated challenges:** Students may not be sure how to begin. It's important to stress that one character is in conflict with the other. How does that conflict begin? The first character could say something "mean" or "unkind" about the situation/person, and the other character should then respond, etc.

**Anticipated challenges:** Students sometimes think cinematically or are influenced by animated films, which can move from one location to another quickly. Remind students that this play should have a continuity of time, place, and action. Scene shifts to multiple locations or multiple periods of time do not work for one minute plays.

## ⊙ **Sharing Your Work: Peer to Peer Feedback (8-10 minutes)**

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

Ask students to read their flash plays for the class. Give students an opportunity to tell other writers what they liked about the plays and where they still had questions (not what they didn't like about the play). Ensure students understand how to give feedback that is positive and encouraging.

- ⦿ **Exit Slip Activities and Reflection:** If time allows, play an improvisational game such as “**Why are you late?**” or an ensemble building game such as “**The Machine.**”

SESSION

OVERVIEW

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

Classroom  
Session  
#4

**Materials:** paper and writing implement

**Vocabulary for Word Wall:** Exposition, Active Voice, Passive Voice, Narrator

**Smartboard:** [Play Treatment Worksheet](#); [YouTube Videos/Music](#) (See Below); [Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play](#); [Conflict Photographs](#)

**Essential Question:** What is an Active Voice in Playwriting?

**Energizing Warm-up:** Shakeout; Beans; or Freestyle Writing or Cluster Writing

## ⦿ **Activity #1: Freewriting + Music (optional) (8 Minutes)**

- Repeat the freewriting exercise, but this time include music, if possible
- Instrumental music of any kind may inspire students to write creatively. Music can be played from your own source, or from YouTube. Suggestions included classical, New Age, meditation, instrumental pop or jazz, etc. Links to several options are below.
- **Explain the guidelines:**
  - The goal is quantity not quality
  - Write as quickly as you can
  - Write without limitations
  - Don't stop to edit or revise anything
  - Don't stop to understand what you are writing; don't analyze it
  - Don't attempt to think logically about your writing
  - Don't pay attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation
  - Don't pay attention to margins or lines on the page; write everywhere
  - If you cannot think of something to write, write about that
  - Don't cross out anything you write
  - If something you are writing about is embarrassing, painful, or frightening, write about it

→ **Youtube music options for classroom writing activities** (note: these links may leave YouTube periodically):

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxEj6m\\_7Qfk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxEj6m_7Qfk)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaVDSUURx08>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnTbgByYZWA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jlot3wVuxk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wELOA2U7FPQ&t=2571s>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## ⦿ Activity #2: Read five one-minute plays (15 minutes)

- Read five published one-minute plays. Examples of appropriate one-minute plays provided [HERE](#).
- After reading the plays individually, cast the plays, and have students read them aloud in class
- Assessment: Have students share what they like about the plays: the characters, the conflict and the dialogue
  - Can you identify the narrative arc in the play? The beginning, middle, and end of the story?
  - What is the main conflict?
  - Describe the author's point of view. What was the author trying to say or express?
  - Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist, and why?
  - What did you learn about short plays by reading this play?
  - What emotions did you experience or see reflected in the story?

## Writing Your One-Minute Play

## ⦿ Activity #3: Finding Your Inspiration (5 minutes)

- **Option 1: Five Things:** On a piece of paper or on a computer, have students brainstorm five things they would most like to change in the/their world? Note: the brainstorm can include changes globally, nationally, locally, at home, at school, or in their own lives.
- **Option 2: Prompts:** Write a prompt on the board that sparks creativity: "What's important to me is...." or "The truth about me is..." or "I stand for..." or "I fight for," etc.
- **Use the preceding prompts to inspire students to discover their own voice and point of view**
  - Inform students that writing a one-minute play is best when choosing a topic or conflict that is REALLY important to them; it's a subject for which they are passionate.
  - **Tell a story that you NEED to tell.**

## ⦿ Activity #4: Your One-Minute Play Treatment (10 minutes)

- Display the [Play Treatment Worksheet](#) (Smartboard)
- Based on the inspiration found in the preceding activity, have students choose a topic for which they are passionate, and create a one-minute play
- After choosing their idea for a play, students should brainstorm and create a summary for their play that includes:
  - The inspiration for the story

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- What is the style of the play?
- Information about two or three characters maximum (recommended)
- The main conflict
- The connection between the characters and the conflict
- A summary of the introduction, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution
- Who is the protagonist and what is their main objective?
- Who is the antagonist and what is their main objective?
- Where is the play set?
- Ideas can change throughout the process. Allow the story to evolve with new ideas

**Note on Setting:** Discuss with students the unique differences of a play set in the middle of the day or at noon. How might the day and time in which their play takes place be different from any other day in their characters' lives? Why is this day different than other days?

## ⊙ Homework

- Complete the Play Treatment Worksheet
- Assignment due at the beginning of the next playwriting class

⊙ **Exit Slip Activities and Reflection:** If time allows, play an improvisational game such as “**Why are you late?**” or an ensemble building game such as “**The Machine.**”

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

SESSION	OVERVIEW
Classroom Session #5	<p> <b>Materials:</b> <a href="#">Play Formatting Guide</a>, <a href="#">One-Minute Play Template</a>  <b>Vocabulary for Word Wall:</b> Archetype (Optional)  <b>Smartboard:</b> <a href="#">Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play</a>; <a href="#">Play Formatting Guide</a>  <b>Essential Question:</b> What is a One-Minute Play?         </p> <p> <b>Warm-up: Energizing:</b> Shakeout or Beans, etc.         </p> <p>           ☉ <b>Icebreaker: What is your favorite stage play or musical? (5 minutes)</b>            Each student should name their favorite stage play or musical         </p> <p>           ☉ <b>Activity #1: Party Quirks (Optional) (10 minutes)</b>  <b>This advanced exercise is for developing characters using an archetype and a human “quirk.”</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a party “host” and send them out of the room or to a corner of the classroom where they cannot hear the following instructions</li> <li>• Choose three students and take them out of the room or to a corner where your discussion is private. Have students brainstorm a unique archetype and quirk for each person. They should be unique, absurd, but not overtly difficult. The archetype and quirk will influence the way each person walks, talks and interacts with the “host” and other guests. <b>For examples of archetypes and quirks, see below</b></li> <li>• The party “host” begins by improvising setting up their home for a party, and perhaps speaking aloud to themselves while they “work.” No scenery or props are needed; everything should be mimed</li> <li>• Each guest should ring a “doorbell” or knock on “the door” to the host’s “home.” Be sure that the guests arrive at 60-second intervals rather than all at once.</li> <li>• The host answers the door for each guest. The guest and host immediately interact and speak, improvising dialogue. The guest embodies their archetype and party quirk constantly while the host suggests they help themselves to the food or participate in party activities. The guests should always interact with their host and other guests inhabiting their archetype and quirk.</li> <li>• Once the second guest has arrived the host is allowed to start guessing what the guests' archetypes and quirks are, but must do so while in character. For example, the host may guess by saying "Please help yourself to chips and dip, cowboy who thinks he’s the smartest person in the room," or "Have a seat and rest those feet, football player who is terrified of spiders."</li> </ul> </p>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- Once a player's archetype and quirk are determined by the host, they leave "the party." After the host guesses everyone's archetype and quirk, the game is over and a new group of players is chosen

**Side coaching may be required at first to ensure that the guests are communicating in character, and that the host continually communicates with the guests.**

## Examples of Archetypes

Superheroes  
Soccer Moms  
Grandfathers  
Clowns, etc.

## Examples of Quirks

Wooden (peg) leg  
Can read minds  
Is really a frog  
Terrified of vegetables, etc.

**Anticipated Challenges:** Students may feel overwhelmed at first at embodying both an archetype and a quirk. In that case, choose either the archetype or the quirk while they grow comfortable with this improvisational exercise.

## ⊙ **Discussion: Final Review of Character, Story Arc, Style and Setting (15 minutes)**

### ○ **Story Arc (Display [Freytag Pyramid: Elements of a Play](#) document)**

- Review: A play begins with an introduction, followed by the inciting incident, rising action with conflict, the climax, falling action, and a resolution
- In a one-minute play, the inciting incident typically happens at the first line
- There must be a protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist "drives" the action with an objective. The antagonist directly conflicts with the protagonist and has their own objective.
- Unity: a one-minute play should have a unity of time, place and action.
- This play is being written for the stage. Avoid special effects employed in films or television

### ⊙ **Character**

- All characters should be believable and have strong, complex emotions, thoughts, and lives
- A writer should know their characters inside and out: their personality, history, and flaws
- Each character's name should support the character's traits. Be creative and thoughtful

### ⊙ **Conflict**

- The main conflict is between the protagonist and the antagonist
- A protagonist should have something serious at stake, and a consequence if they don't get it
- Time is important for the protagonist. There should be pressure to reach their objective

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

- The protagonist and antagonist have a driving objective that they must achieve
- Obstacles. The protagonist and antagonist have objectives that clash, creating obstacles for one another
- There are two major types of conflict:
  - External conflict: a protagonist or antagonist struggles with an outside person or force. Characters may oppose one another physically or philosophically, or natural forces such as earthquakes or poverty may be the main struggle
  - Internal conflict: a protagonist or an antagonist struggles with inner anxieties or with making a decision that may impact themselves or others. A character may struggle with saving themselves or saving their child, or with whom they would like to ask out for a date.
- A protagonist doesn't always win their objective at the end

## ⊙ **Setting**

- A setting informs the action.
- The time of day informs the action.

## ⊙ **Theatre Styles**

- In tragedy or drama, the condition of the protagonist's life progresses from good to bad
- In comedy the condition of the protagonist's life progresses from bad to good
- Types of comedy include romantic comedy, satirical comedy, and black comedy, in which humor is found in the gloomy or macabre
- In farce, the protagonist's life progresses from bad to good
- The protagonist is in a serious situation that is highly improbable and extremely dire. The situation usually includes pratfalls and slapstick
- In a surreal/fantasy plays, the story can be either a drama or a comedy
- The story is typically otherworldly and includes human, non-human or unusual characters
- In musical theatre, the story can be a drama, comedy, farce, or surreal/fantasy
- The story includes songs. Songs are sung when the emotion becomes so great, speaking words is no longer sufficient to tell the story

## ⊙ **Activity #2: Transforming the Play Treatment into a Play (20 minutes)**

Students should review their **Play Treatment** document. Encourage revisions or changes. Begin writing a one-minute, one page, play.

**Anticipated challenges:** "Texting" grammar and punctuation instead of conversational text may appear. In order for

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

a play to be performed aloud, rather than read silently, the grammar and punctuation must be accurate dialogue. The text should not have abbreviations nor shortcuts such as “hahaha,” or other text abbreviations.

⊙ **Exit Slip Activities and Reflection:** If time allows, play an improvisational game such as “**Why are you late?**” or an ensemble building game such as “**The Machine.**”

⊙ **Homework: Finish your One-Minute Play**

- Using the treatment and the work begun in class, write a one-minute play
- The play should be in the proper play format, including character names followed by a colon.

**Discussion: Final words of encouragement**

- Your one-minute Play topic should be REALLY important to you, and a story that you NEED to tell
- Write what you know; research what you don’t know. If there is a reference, world event, etc. in your story, research it
- Be original and true to your voice as an individual artist. Do not try to emulate someone else’s work
- A one-minute play is one page of dialogue. If dialogue is very short and quick, the text may be one and a half pages
- The play must be in the proper format, and have correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

SESSION	DESCRIPTION
<p>#6 Review, Reading, and Revision</p>	<p><b>Materials:</b> None  <b>Vocabulary for Word Wall:</b> Peer Review  <b>Smartboard:</b> None  <b>Essential Question:</b> How do we respond respectfully to another person’s work?</p> <p><b>Warm-up: Energizing:</b> Shakeout or Beans, etc.</p> <p>⊙ <b>Activity #1: Peer Review (Full Period)</b></p> <p><b>Tactic 1: Small group peer mentorship to share and reflect on one another’s work.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide the class into groups of three or four</li> <li>• Give each small group an opportunity to cast and read aloud their one-minute play to one another</li> <li>• Group members should listen for and give feedback on the conflict, character objectives, the style (drama, farce, etc.), the setting and time of day, and their overall impressions of the story.</li> <li>• <b>The goal is to share observations not criticism</b></li> <li>• Encourage each group to start with positive feedback and follow-up with constructive feedback</li> <li>• The goal is to encourage each playwright to effectively strengthen their one-minute play</li> </ul> <p><b>Tactic 2: Full class peer mentorship to share and reflect on one another’s work.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give each student an opportunity to have their play cast and read aloud to the full class</li> <li>• After reading, use a “popcorn” strategy, and have students throw out a word or short phrase about something in the play that resonated with them</li> <li>• Next, have students respond more in-depth about conflict, character objectives, the style (drama, farce, etc.), the setting and time of day, and their overall impressions of the story.</li> <li>• <b>The goal is share observations not criticism</b></li> <li>• As an example, ask “What did you like about the play?”</li> <li>• Rather than asking students to give examples of something in the play that “doesn’t work,” seek feedback that is framed as student questions. For example: “What questions do you still have about the story, conflict, characters, or setting? Was there anything confusing or something you didn’t understand?” etc.</li> </ul>

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## ⊙ Homework: Revisions!

- Using the feedback and questions asked by students and the teacher, assign a due date for the revised plays.
- Consider reading the newly revised plays in class for additional feedback, and assign a second revision.
- After completing the assigned revisions, cast the plays and read them in class. Have student actors stand in front of the class and either read or perform the plays after several rehearsal periods. Playwrights often make revisions after every reading!
- After completing the assignment, consider programming an evening of short plays for an audience.

## ⊙ The PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Contest

- Give your students an opportunity to see their plays developed and performed at Palm Beach Dramaworks!
- Submit their completed plays to the PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Contest
- Up to 20 winning plays will be developed by PBD professionals for a live reading onstage at PBD in Spring 2023
- Winning playwrights will receive a cash prize and a published anthology of their play

Deadline for Submission: Monday, February 27, 2023 at 5pm

Performance: Sunday, April 30, 2023

Good luck!

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## What do I need to know about One-Minute Plays?

### Definition: One-Minute Play

A one-minute play is a play with at least two characters. It is not a scene, skit or sketch. Structurally, it should have a beginning, middle and end, just as any good one-act or full-length play. Reaching beyond the surface, the text should be enriched with subtext. Since there is only one minute to bring the story full circle, a dramatic conflict should be posed as quickly as possible. The resolution of that conflict is what occurs by the end of the page. The true success of a one-minute play is reliant on the writer's ability to bring an audience through the same cathartic/entertaining experience that a good one-act or full-length play accomplishes; i.e., sympathetic characters with recognizable needs encompassed within a resolvable dramatic conflict.

### Vocabulary/Terms in Alphabetical Order:

- **Antagonist:** The antagonist is a character or a small group of characters whose objectives directly oppose the objectives of the protagonist. The antagonist has a major change at the climax of the story.
- **Archetype:** An archetype is a universally understood representation or idealization of a profession or group, and a perfect, synthesized example of that profession or group.
- **Character:** Characters are fully formed personalities actively participating in telling a story. Characters should have a strong point of view
- **Conflict:** Conflict is tension and competing objectives between the protagonist and other forces in a story. Conflict can come from other characters, from external sources such as nature or machinery, or internal struggles. Conflict is necessary to drive the story forward.
- **Dramatic Action:** The dramatic action is a series of events and motivations propelled by characters in conflict. While most plays utilize this structure, some plays, such as absurdist plays, are written to oppose this structure:
  - **Introduction:** The beginning of the play starts with **Exposition**, in which background information about the story or characters is discussed, presented or disseminated. In one-minute plays, exposition should be dispensed with completely, or incorporated in the action
  - **Inciting Incident:** The inciting incident occurs when the protagonist and an opposing force come into conflict, setting the main encounter of the story into action. In a one-minute play, the inciting incident should occur on the first or second line.
  - **Rising Action:** In the rising action, complications, crises, or discoveries create tension and suspense, and increase **Conflict**, propelling the protagonist and the antagonist toward a transformation.
  - **Climax:** The climax of a story is the moment in the story that contains the greatest tension, and a major change in the

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

fate of both the protagonist and antagonist. At this turning point, there is no going back.

- **Falling Action:** The falling action holds moments in the story that may contain conflict and tension yet to be resolved. In a one-minute play, the climax may end the play.
  - **Resolution:** The resolution of the story occurs when the main conflicts of the dramatic action are resolved, and the questions in the play are answered. In a one-minute play there may be no resolution, or it may be the last line of the play.
- 
- **Narrator:** A narrator delivers expositional commentary outside of the dramatic action, usually directly to the audience.
  - **Objectives:** An objective is a goal or intention that characters are actively and strategically attempting to achieve. Characters usually have multiple objectives to pursue.
  - **Obstacle:** An obstacle is a barrier that hinders characters from easily achieving their objectives. Obstacles can be external forces, or internal, psychological barriers.
  - **Protagonist:** The protagonist is the main character in a story, and drives the dramatic action with their objectives. They have a major change at the climax. The protagonist, whether a hero or a villain, should always be empathetic to the audience.

## The Three Unities

When writing a short play, it is important to fully develop the dramatic action and characters without breaks. Scenic and other breaks dissipate the forward action of the play to release tension. Short plays, especially one-minute plays, require conflict or tension to remain in place until the end of the play. Therefore, the Aristotelian concept of the three unities is important.

- Unity of Time – the dramatic action should be continuous without breaks
- Unity of Place – the dramatic action should remain in one location without change
- Unity of Action – the story should one principal dramatic action (plot) without subplots

## Positive Feedback Ideas

There are several excellent peer-to-peer feedback strategies to use in the classroom. Here is a primer of the SPARK technique with a few excellent suggestions for leading feedback: [Edutopia: Teaching Children to Give and Receive Quality Peer Feedback](#)

## Appendix

Difference between a short play, skit, or scene

While plays, scenes, and skits are all meant to be performed live in front of an audience, there are a few differences that may help distinguish a fully formed play with other performance pieces. A short play is similar to a longer or full-length play in that the characters and dramatic action should be well defined. The play should have a strong beginning, middle, and end, and tell a

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

complete story. A scene is only one portion of a play's dramatic arc and doesn't complete the protagonist's journey. While the story should be developed, it is only a portion of the full story. A skit is typically a short sketch employed as one section in a full-length entertainment. It does not typically have the literary structure of telling a complete story, and can include all elements of the performing arts, including music, dance, stand-up comedy, speech, etc.

## Warm-ups

### Shakeout

#### Procedure

1. Have students stand in a circle with a bit of room between each person.
2. Explain that we will shake out our right hand, left hand, right leg, and left leg on different counts.
3. First, shake 16 times with each body part in succession
4. Then, shake 8 times with each body part in succession
5. Then reduce to 4 times, 2 times, and finally 1.
6. Each time, everyone counts aloud from "1" to the full number with each body part.

#### Notes:

The game is fast and can be used as both a warm-up to prepare for work, or as cool off to end work

The 1-1-1-1 sequence can be repeated (say, 4 times), or a mutually decided upon word or phrase can be spoken unanimously. Another option is to take a long, deep inhale as a group, and then slowly exhale

### Beans

#### Procedure

1. Have each student find their own space in the room
2. Explain that when the caller announces a type of bean, every student will imitate that bean
3. The type of beans are:
  - a. Broad bean: Stretch out wide as far as possible
  - b. String bean: Reach as tall and high as possible
  - c. Runner bean: Jog vigorously in place
  - d. Jelly bean: Wobble the entire body
  - e. Jumping bean: jump up and down in your space
  - f. French bean: Say "ooh, la, la" and create a French gesture/physicality
  - g. Frozen bean: Freeze like a statue
4. Call out the beans randomly as quickly or slowly as desired (Create other types of beans, as needed)
5. Ending on Frozen bean is an excellent way to return the room to focus

# PBD Young Playwrights One-Minute Play Lesson Plans

## Theatre games

### Why Are You Late?!

#### Procedure:

1. Ask six+ players to take the stage. Choose four+ of the players to be “officer workers,” one player to be the “boss,” and one player to be the “late worker.”
2. The “officer workers” sit facing the audience, miming typing on a computer.
3. The “boss” and “late worker” leave the room while the “officer workers” come up with a reason why the “late worker” is late. (i.e. *Her hair got caught in the dishwasher!, Her car got crushed by a dinosaur!, etc.*)
4. Once the “officer workers” have decided, they return to typing at their computers. The “boss” enters and stands with his back to the office workers so that he can’t see them. Then the “late worker” enters and faces the boss. The “late worker” can see the “officer workers,” but the “boss” can’t.
5. The “boss” asks the “late worker” ‘*So, why are you late?!*’
6. The “officer workers” mime out the reason for lateness behind the “boss”’ back and the “late worker” has to guess what it is.
7. At any time, the “boss” can turn around to face the “officer workers” – if he catches one of them not typing, that “officer worker” is fired and must leave the office.
8. The game ends when the “late worker” guesses the correct reason for lateness, or the “boss” fires all the “office workers.”

#### Notes:

The more silly the reason for lateness, the better!

The number of “office workers” can vary.

### Drama Game: The Machine

**Purpose:** Develops creativity, concentration, and group cooperation.

#### Procedure:

1. Start with one student making a noise and a simple repeatable gesture. It must be something they can repeat constantly for quite some time.
2. When the student has a rhythm and another student has an idea for a movement which connects to the first gesture, that student joins the first student by making a new noise and movement that connects to the original gesture.
3. Each student joins in with a new noise and gesture and connects to the others in some way until all students are involved in creating the machine.
4. Once the entire class is involved with the machine, give commands for the noises to get louder or softer. Also give commands to “freeze” and then “resume.”

#### Notes:

Freeze and Resume commands can be given over a long period of time, or can be given in quick succession.