

**READING
REP
THEATRE**

PLAY PACK

How to create your own piece of theatre

INTRODUCTION

*STORIES ARE AN ESSENTIAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION. A PLAY IS A STORY BROUGHT TO LIFE.
THIS ONLINE PACK IS DESIGNED TO GUIDE YOU STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE PROCESS OF WRITING YOUR OWN PLAY.*

There are five main sections:

1. **Act 1:** Getting started - you will learn everything you need to begin to create your play
2. **Act 2:** You will explore the importance of character(s).
3. **Act 3:** You will learn some of the techniques used when playwrights/writers begin writing plays/stories.
4. **Act 4:** You will be able to delve into the world of staging and make decisions thinking as a playwright and director.
5. **Act 5:** Review, no piece of theatre is ever perfect. This is an opportunity to look at what worked well for your play, and what could you do better next time.

THESE FIVE SIMPLE SECTIONS WILL HELP YOU WRITE A PLAY.

When you've finished the pack, we would love to see your fantastic ideas! Maybe you set up your own stage in your living room, or drew an outstanding costume – whatever it is, please send them to christie@readingrep.com or riley@readingrep.com and we'll be sure to post them on our social media platforms!



@READINGREP

ACT 1 - GETTING STARTED

Theatre and Playwriting Glossary



PLAYWRIGHT

A person who writes plays.



COSTUME

A set of clothes in a style typical of a country or historical period.



PERFORMANCE

An act of presenting a play, concert, or other form of entertainment.



THEATRICAL MAKE UP

Theatrical makeup is makeup that is used to assist in creating the appearance of the characters that actors portray during a theatre production.



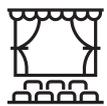
ACTOR

A person whose profession is acting on the stage, in films, or on television.



STAGE DIRECTIONS

An instruction in the text of a play indicating the movement, position, or tone of an actor, or the sound effects and lighting.



STAGE

A raised floor or platform, typically in a theatre, on which actors, entertainers, or speakers perform



STAGE LIGHTING

Stage lighting is the craft of lighting as it applies to the production of theatre, dance, opera, and other performance arts.



THEATRE

A building or outdoor area in which plays and other dramatic performances are given.



PROTAGONIST

The leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc.



ENSEMBLE

A group of musicians, actors, or dancers who perform together.



CHARACTERS

A person in a novel, play, or film



AUDIENCE

The assembled spectators or listeners at a public event such as a play, film, concert, or meeting.



DIRECTOR

A person who supervises the actors and other staff in a film, play, or similar production



PRODUCER

A person responsible for the financial and managerial aspects of the making of a film or broadcast or for staging a play, opera, etc.



THEATRE TECHNICIAN

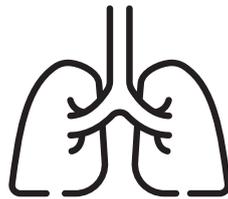
A theatrical technician, (variably known as a tech, technician, theatre tech or theatre technician) is a person who operates technical equipment and systems in the performing arts and entertainment industry.

ACT 1 - GETTING STARTED

Warm-Up Exercises

BEFORE WE START ANY WORKSHOP OR CLASS, MAKING SURE WE'RE WARMED UP IS VERY IMPORTANT!

Professional actors will use a variety of warm up exercises in order to ensure they do not injure themselves physically or strain their vocal cords before a big performance or a performance, class or workshop. Follow the links below to see demonstrations of some simple warm up exercises:



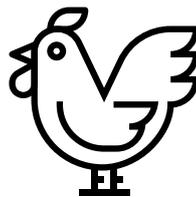
Breathing Exercises

<https://youtu.be/3WJdKu38rDs>



Gesture Walking

<https://youtu.be/k7UV6Z6Y9rw>



'Rubber Chicken'

<https://youtu.be/4BEdZNVc6Sw>

ACT 2 - CREATING YOUR CHARACTERS

YOUR CHARACTERS ARE A KEY PART OF YOUR STORY! THEY MUST BE INTERESTING AND ENGAGING AND YOU MUST HAVE A CLEAR IDEA IN YOUR HEAD OF WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO BE LIKE.

Think about your favourite character in your favourite book or TV show. Now ask yourself; what makes them my favourite? Do they do anything funny? Do they cause trouble or are they good?

Whatever it is, jot down some ideas in the space below.

NOW YOU HAVE SOME IDEAS ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER FROM ANOTHER STORY, IT'S TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT YOUR OWN!

Protagonist

Your Protagonist will be the main character in your story (look back at your glossary if you're not sure what that means!) Think Cinderella, or Ben in Gangsta Granny or Greg Heffley in Diary of a Wimpy Kid...

Using the box below, jot down some facts about your protagonist.

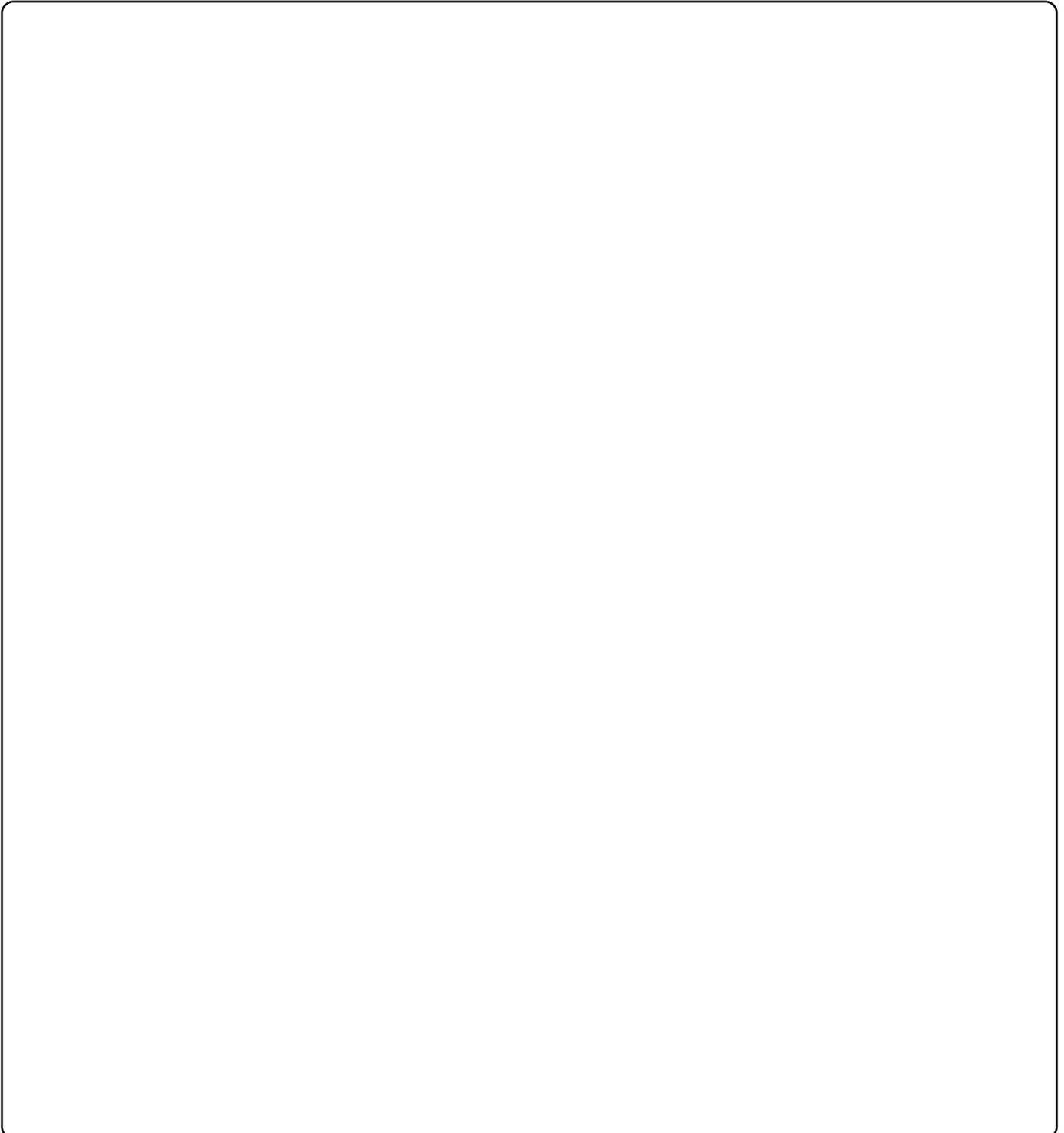
ACT 2 - CREATING YOUR CHARACTERS

NOW YOU HAVE YOUR KEY CHARACTERISTICS, IT'S TIME TO DESIGN YOUR CHARACTER!

Costume

Costumes are important in theatre, think about Cinderella's costume for example. She goes from rags and tatters to a glamorous ball gown, complete with glass slippers – without costume, how would we know that she's going to the ball?

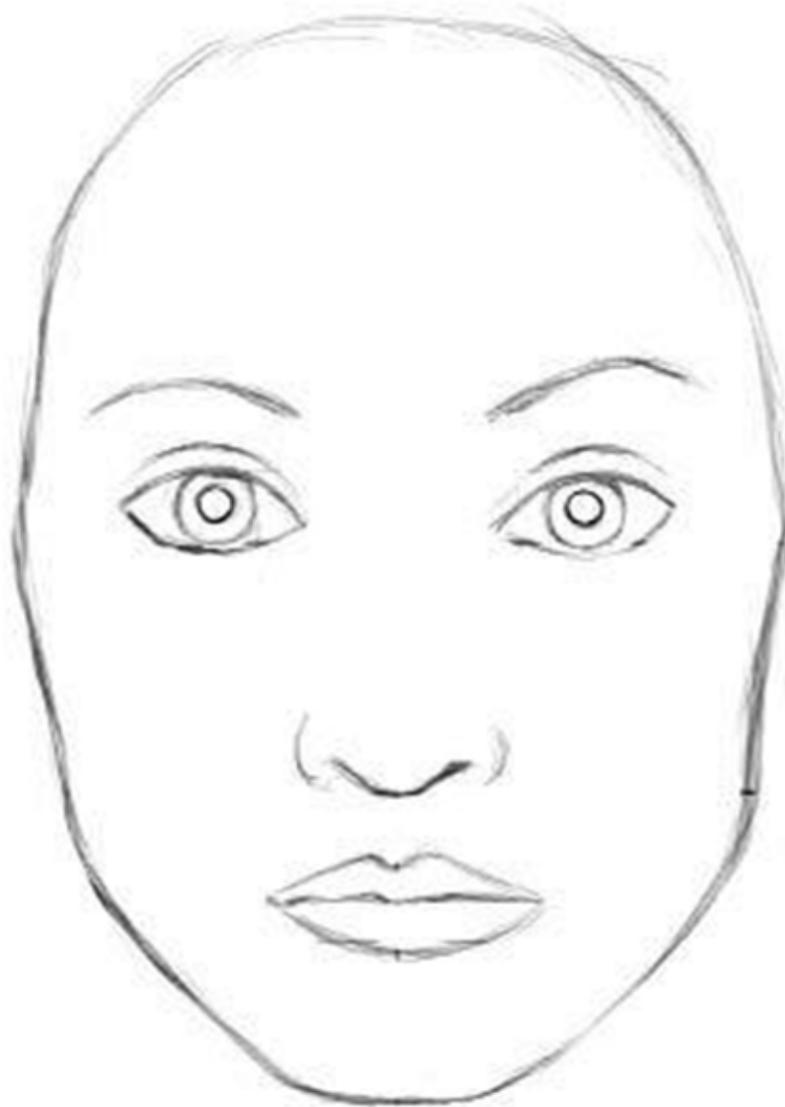
In the space below, draw your protagonist in full costume.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing a character in full costume. The box is currently blank.

ACT 2 - CREATING YOUR CHARACTERS

PLAYS ARE WRITTEN TO BE PERFORMED, SO NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT ON YOUR DIRECTOR'S HAT AND DECIDE ON YOUR CHARACTER'S FACE. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS ARE REALLY IMPORTANT WHEN YOU ARE ACTING, SO YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR PROTAGONIST'S FACE RIGHT.

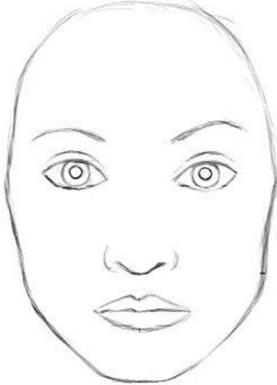
What facial features does your protagonist have? What colour are their eyes and hair? Do they have freckles or scars? What are their ears like? Use the template below to draw your ideas.

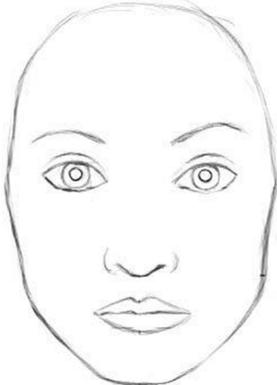


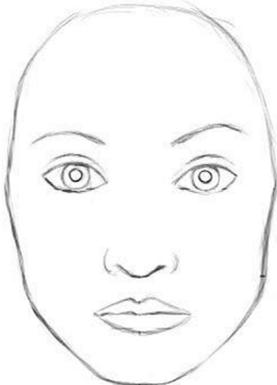
ACT 2 - CREATING YOUR CHARACTERS

NOW YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT YOUR PROTAGONIST WILL LOOK LIKE, IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR OTHER CHARACTERS.

Use the boxes and facial templates below to create your other characters.



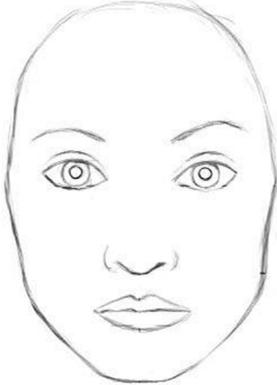


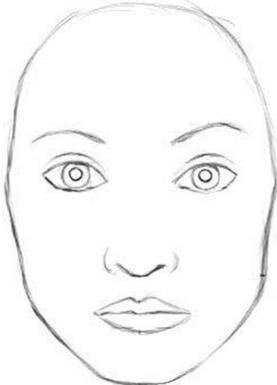


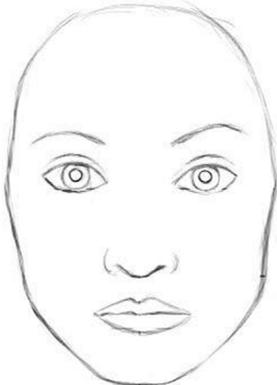
ACT 2 - CREATING YOUR CHARACTERS

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ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

PLAYS ARE WRITTEN DIFFERENTLY TO STORIES, AS THEY ARE WRITTEN TO BE PERFORMED. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PIECE OF SCRIPT, THIS IS TAKEN FROM A SHAKESPEARE PLAY (THE LANGUAGE IS TRICKY, SO DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT WHAT IS BEING SAID, JUST LOOK AT THE FORMAT). YOU CAN SEE THAT ON ONE SIDE OF THE PAGE IS THE NAME OF THE CHARACTER AND AFTER THEIR NAME, ARE THE WORDS THAT THEY ARE SAYING.

The words in italics are stage directions. They tell the director and the actor what is to happen on stage while the words are being said. Some writers use lots of stage directions and others don't use many at all. It's up to you how you want to write.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Act 1 Scene 2: The Mechanicals

(Enter Quince the carpenter, Snug the joiner, Bottom the weaver, Flute the bellows-mender, Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor.)

QUINCE	Is all our company here? Is all our company here?	
BOTTOM	You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the script.	
QUINCE	Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit through all Athens to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess on his wedding day at night.	5
BOTTOM	First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow on to a point.	
QUINCE	Marry, our play is 'The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.'	
BOTTOM	A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.	10
QUINCE	Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.	
BOTTOM	Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.	
QUINCE	You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.	
BOTTOM	What is Pyramus, a lover or a tyrant?	15
QUINCE	A lover that kills himself most gallantly for love.	
BOTTOM	That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes: I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest — yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.	20
	<i>The raging rocks And shivering shocks Shall break the locks Of prison gates. And Phibbus' car Shall shine from far And make and mar The foolish Fates.</i>	25
	This was lofty. Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein: a lover is more condoling.	30
QUINCE	Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.	
FLUTE	Here, Peter Quince.	
QUINCE	You must take Thisbe on you.	
FLUTE	What is Thisbe? A wand'ring knight?	
QUINCE	It is the lady that Pyramus must love.	35
FLUTE	Nay, faith, let not me play a woman: I have a beard coming.	
QUINCE	That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.	
BOTTOM	An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. 'Thisne, Thisne!' 'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! Thy Thisbe dear and lady dear!'	40
QUINCE	No, no, you must play Pyramus.— And, Flute, you Thisbe.	
BOTTOM	Well, proceed.	
QUINCE		

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

MOST STORIES/PLAYS ARE MADE UP OF 5 DIFFERENT PARTS

1. The beginning, this is where the scene is set and characters are introduced
2. The first turning point, something happens which starts to disrupt everyday normal life. This could be someone new arriving, someone hearing some news or a situation changing
3. Into action, the main drama happens here. This might be the longest part of your story. How do people react to the change? How does that make them act or behave? How do they think or feel now?
4. The second turning point, the drama from before gets fixed or people start to get used to what happens. If people have fallen out they might start to become friends again
5. The end! The final part of the story, everything is now back in place and lessons have been learnt from what happened.

An example of a story using these 5 different parts

CINDERELLA

1. We are introduced to Cinderella and her family, we learn that she is not treated well by her Stepmother and Stepsisters
2. The invitation to the ball arrives and everyone gets excited. Cinderella's invitation is destroyed and she is told that she can't go.
3. Cinderella's Fairy Godmother arrives and helps her go to the ball. She meets the Prince, runs away at midnight and leaves her glass slipper.
4. The Prince finds the slipper and goes around all the houses in the town to find who it belongs to. He arrives at Cinderella's house and the slipper fits her!
5. Cinderella marries the Prince and is saved from living with her Step Mother and Step Sisters. She lives happily ever after.

All Shakespeare's plays are written in this way as well, which is why his plays are 5 Acts long.

Try using this structure to create your own play. If you want to, you can start from the end and work your way back. This is a good way to create twists that your audience won't be expecting.

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

1. THE BEGINNING

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

2. THE FIRST TURNING POINT

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

3. INTO ACTION

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

4. THE SECOND TURNING POINT

ACT 3 - TELLING THE STORY

5. END

ACT 4 - STAGING THE STORY

NOT ALL THEATRES HAVE THE SAME TYPE OF STAGE. THE MOST COMMON ONES ARE;



PROSCENIUM ARCH

The stage is up high and the seats slope. The stage may also be on a slope. This is called a rake and is to make sure that everyone can see what's happening on the stage.



IN THE ROUND

The audience sit around the stage. This allows the audience to be very close to the action and feel like they are part of the play. Actors will have their backs to some of the audience all the time, but that's okay as the audience are so close. You have to be clever when designing a set for this type of stage.



TRAVERSE

The audience sits on two sides, a bit like a catwalk. The audience are also often able to see how each other react, which is great for performances that have big twists in them.



END ON

This is what Reading Rep's theatre is like. The audience sits on a slope (rake) and the performance happens on the ground. This is great for smaller theatres. The audience are able to see everything clearly and the actors can get close to the audience.



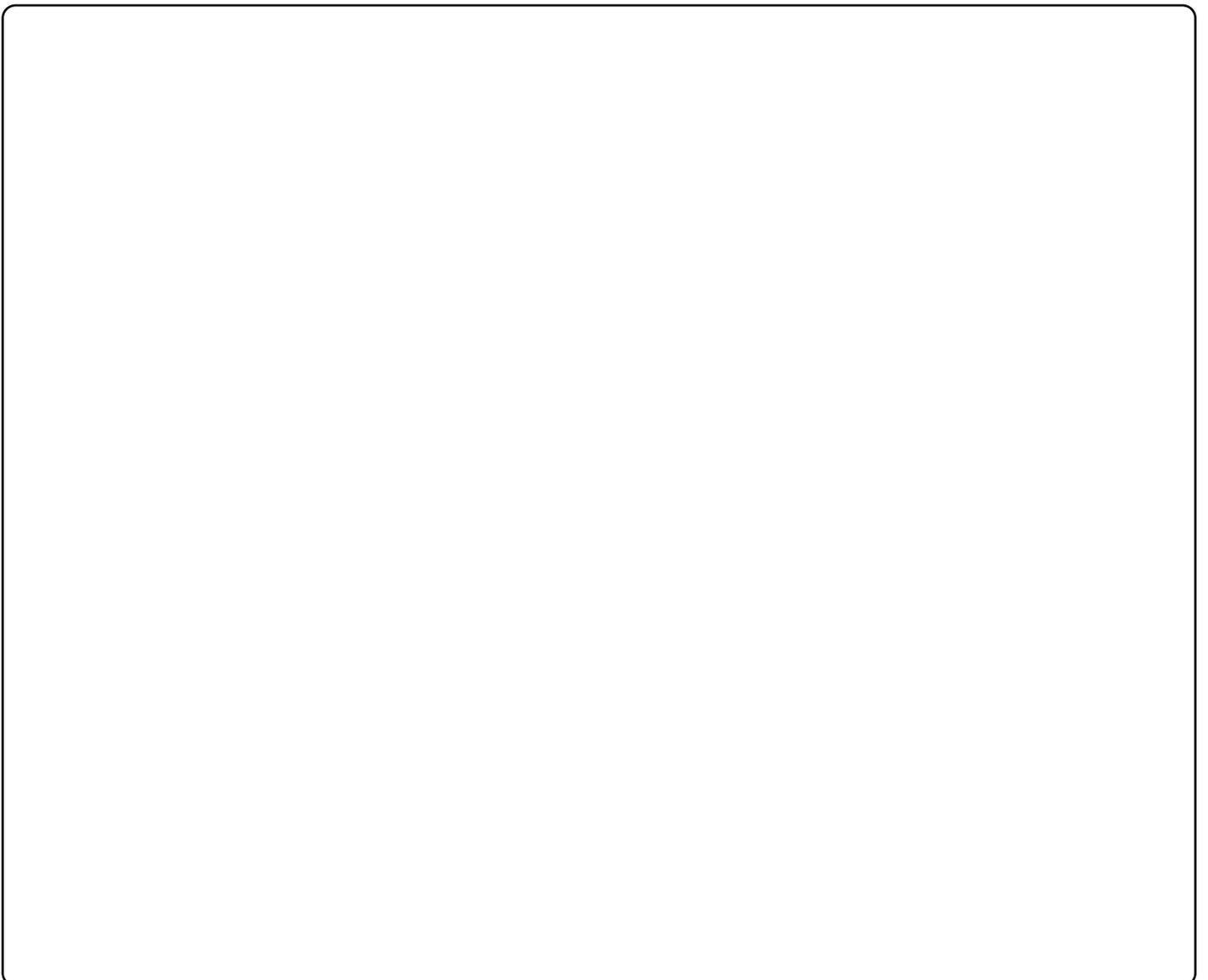
THRUST

The audience is on 3 sides, a cross between In The Round and End On. Again, this helps the audience feel like they are a part of the play, but there is a back wall.

ACT 4 - STAGING THE STORY

WHAT STAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE YOUR PLAY PERFORMED ON AND WHY?

NOW YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE TYPE OF STAGE YOU WANT, DRAW YOUR SET IN THE BOX BELOW



ACT 5 - REVIEW



What went well?

What could be better?

If I was really putting on this play, what would I have to think about? Staging ideas, which actors would I use (they can be famous!), what music choices would I make and anything else.

Ideas for my next play