

WRITING FOR TV FILM AND RADIO

WEEK 1

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THE SCENE

- Each scene is a specific unit of action – the place where something happens.
- A scene can be very fast – just a single shot of a car speeding down the highway.
- Or... it could be a three page dialogue.
- A scene contains two things: place and time:
 - INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT
 - EXT. STREET – DAY
- Every time you change place or time you create a new scene.
- Each scene requires a change of camera position either for light or location.
- A scene contains all the same ingredients of Syd Field's screenwriting diagram – just in miniature.

CREATING A SCENE

- Create a context – this will determine the content.
- What is the purpose of the scene? What happens? How does it move the story forward? (refer back to your beat sheet)
- Ask yourself what elements of the character's life – personal, professional, or private – are going to be revealed?
- Root your scene in a time and a place.

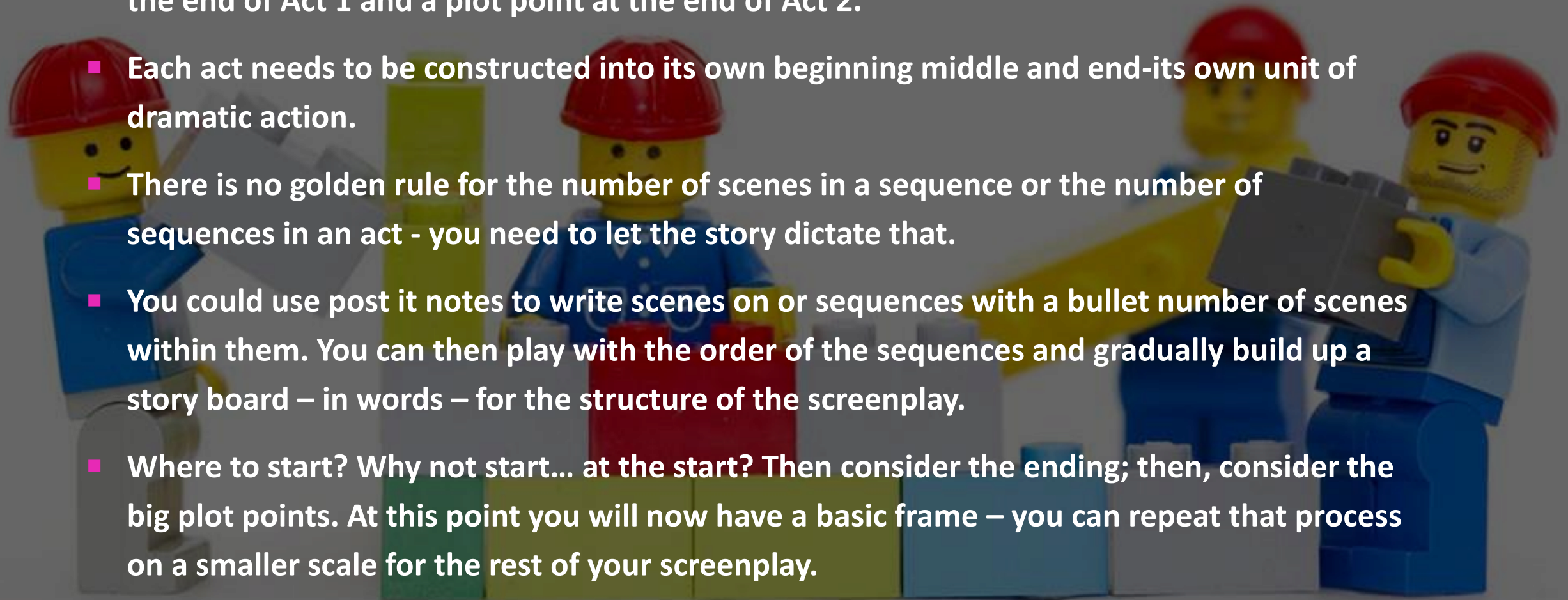


CREATING A SEQUENCE

- A sequence is a series of scenes joined together by a single idea.
- A unit / block of dramatic action e.g. a chase sequence, a fight sequence, a seduction sequence, a race, an election, a wedding, a funeral.
- The sequence is the skeleton of the screenplay because it holds everything in place – you can literally string a series of scenes together to create chunks of dramatic action.
- A sequence – just like a scene, contains all the same ingredients of Syd Field's screenwriting diagram – just in miniature. It has a beginning middle and end, a set up, an inciting incident, an action and a resolution.

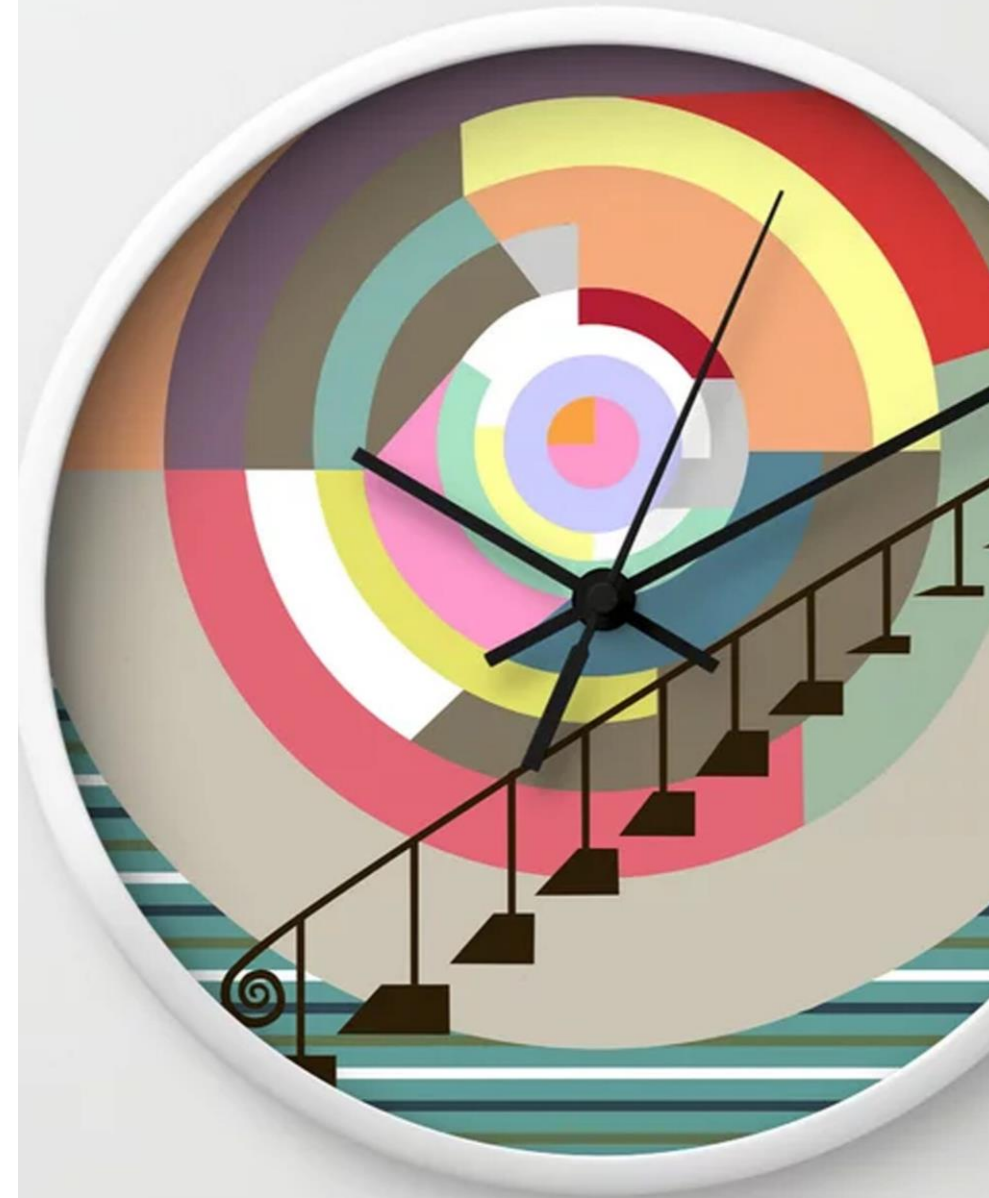
BUILDING THE SCREENPLAY

- Four basic elements needed to write a screenplay: a beginning, an ending, a plot point at the end of Act 1 and a plot point at the end of Act 2.
- Each act needs to be constructed into its own beginning middle and end-its own unit of dramatic action.
- There is no golden rule for the number of scenes in a sequence or the number of sequences in an act - you need to let the story dictate that.
- You could use post it notes to write scenes on or sequences with a bullet number of scenes within them. You can then play with the order of the sequences and gradually build up a story board – in words – for the structure of the screenplay.
- Where to start? Why not start... at the start? Then consider the ending; then, consider the big plot points. At this point you will now have a basic frame – you can repeat that process on a smaller scale for the rest of your screenplay.



STORY-TELLING TIME

- There are three kinds of time in a film story: real time; screen time and time frame.
- Real time: the amount of time an action actually takes e.g. the four minutes it would take for a world-class runner to run a mile.
- Screen time: the time the depiction of an action takes up on screen e.g. the first thirty seconds, another ten seconds in the middle of the race and then the final fifteen seconds of the race.
- Time frame: a deadline or an end to an action that the audience can anticipate e.g. the end of the race at the finish line.

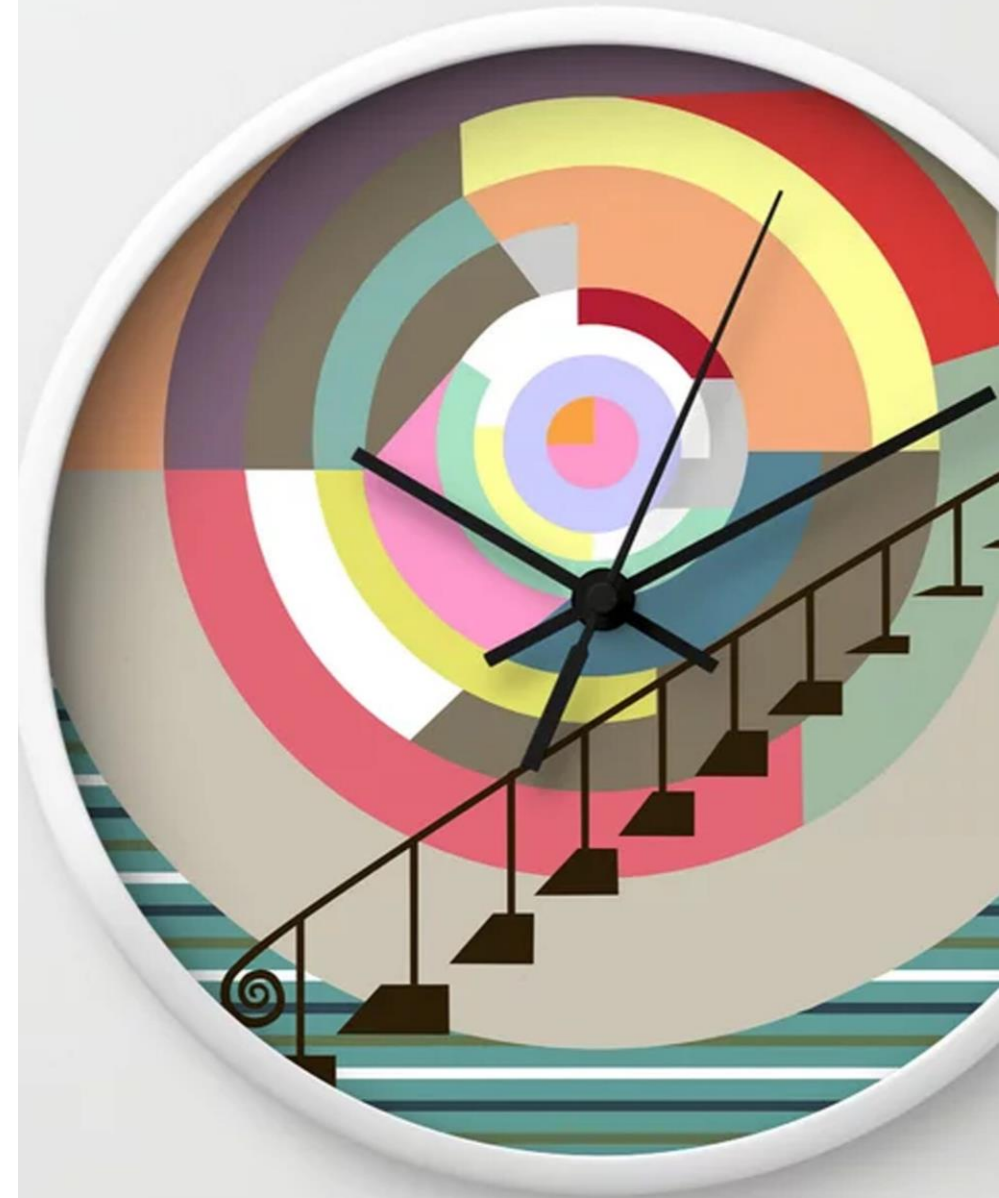


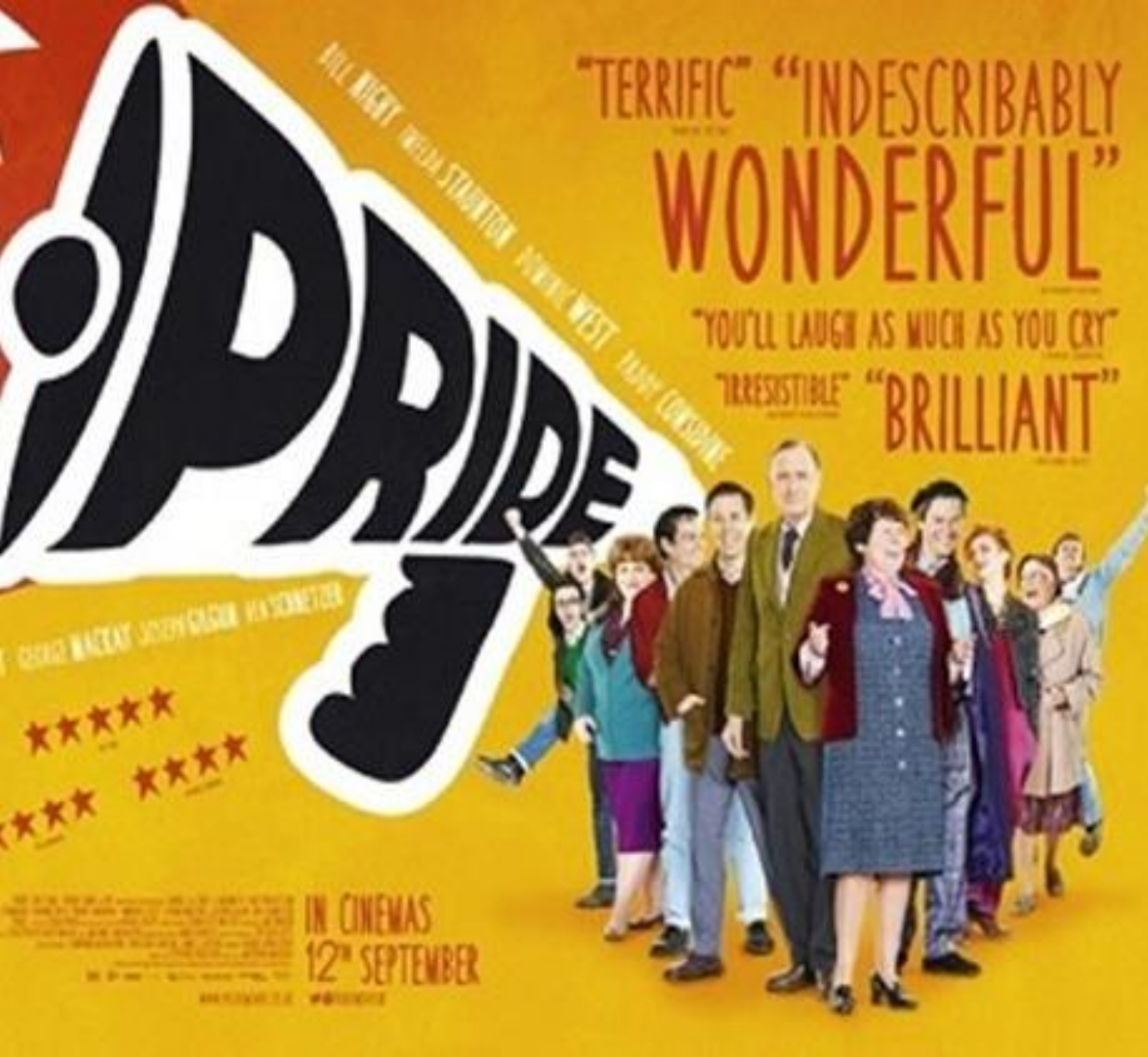
“Try to make the time frame the minimum the story will permit.”

Ring Larnder, Jr

“Don’t have too much story for the time you have.”

Tom Rickman





CREATIVE EXERCISE 1

As a group, we're going to read the first ten pages of the screenplay, *Pride* by Stephen Beresford.



CREATIVE EXERCISE 2

- Write a scene for two characters from your treatment / beat sheet.
- The scene should be two or three pages long and formatted according to the template provided.
- Remember to include scene headings, time of day, location etc.



CREATIVE EXERCISE 3

- Build upon the scene you wrote earlier to create two new scenes that will become part of a sequence.
- If we have time, we'll come together to perform and workshop some of these.