

# WALT identify the features of a playscript.

## WILF:

- Highlight the different features of a play.
- Label the features (scene heading, character names, lines, stage directions, setting...)
- Identify the purpose of each feature.
- + Select vocabulary you find interesting to use in the future.



# "SPAG-tacular" Semicolons

*What is a semicolon? What are they used for?*

*Give two examples, including descriptive language.*

*Unsure? Watch the video.*



## What is a playscript?

A playscript is a piece of writing that is written to be performed on stage. It is usually to perform a story.

How do we find the features? Take a quick look at this video:



The image is a composite of two parts. On the left, a red-bordered box contains a white lined area representing a playscript. The text in the playscript is as follows:

**Scene 1:**  
Busy building site

**Characters:**  
Mick  
Jed

Mick: (whispers) I want to be a dancer!

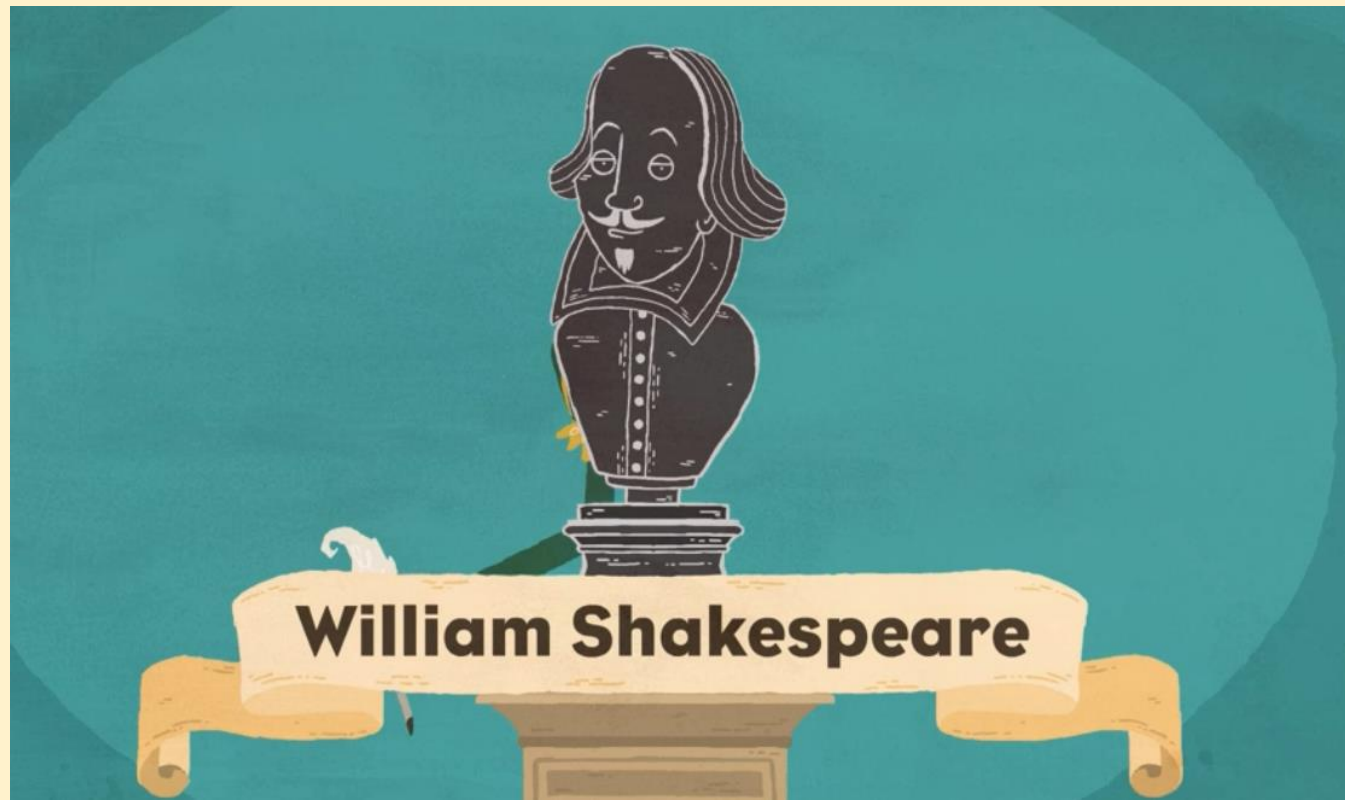
Mick dances like a chicken.

On the right, an orange-bordered box shows a stage scene. A construction worker wearing a yellow hard hat, a white shirt, and a yellow safety vest is walking. Above him is a blue sign with the word "MICK" in white, dotted letters. The background features faint outlines of buildings and construction elements like brick walls and scaffolding.

We are going to look at snippets of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*.

At the beginning of lockdown, we looked at who Shakespeare is. He was an extremely important playwright (person who wrote plays) who made some of the most famous plays in history and many of the expressions we use today.

If you have forgotten about him, watch this video.



Shakespeare wrote in old English, which can be difficult to understand. This is an example from *The Tempest*:

Canst though remember  
A time before we came unto this cell?  
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not  
but three years old.

This roughly means: Can you remember when we were not in this prison cell? I don't think so, you were only three.

To save us a lot of translating, we are mostly going to use a modern version of *The Tempest*, which has been translated in to today's English.

We will look at snippets of Shakespeare's language sometimes, too.



Today we are going to find the features of a playscript.

This is a list of features to look for.

Please ignore the question marks.

Note: you may not want to use a narrator. The rest is needed.

In my boxing up today, I'll explain what each feature does.

You can write about why it is important in yours.

use act or scene numbers?

include a cast list of characters?

give a short description of each scene's setting?

use a narrator to briefly set the scene for the audience?

write the speaker's name on the left followed by a colon?

write dialogue without inverted commas?

put stage directions in brackets?

use the present tense?

start a new line for each speaker?

use standard and non-standard English to show the difference between formal and informal language?

## ACT I

### Scene I: A ship at sea

*Darkness. Lightning crashes. Wind howls. On board a ship during a tremendous storm. Sailors haul ropes, lanterns swing - chaos and fear. You have to shout to be heard...*

CAPTAIN: Bosun!

BOSUN: Aye aye captain!

CAPTAIN: Pull her about - or we're on the rocks!

BOSUN: Aye aye sir! (*Calling*) More hands on deck! To the ropes!

*More sailors rush on and grab ropes. Lightning and thunder crash.*

Heave! Heave! Or we're all dead men!

*Into the chaos on deck come the passengers: Alonso, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo plus Antonio's sidekicks.*

GONZALO: I say, bosun. His majesty wishes to know - is it serious?

BOSUN: Serious? We're all going to drown ya fat fool!

GONZALO: Oh dear. That is serious...

BOSUN: The foremast's smashed. The bilges are full. We're nearly on the rocks. And you lot are getting in the way - so clear off back to your cabins!

## Act number

The 'acts' split up the play into different sections. In the theatre, you could add an interval (or short break) at the end of an act.

## Scene number

There are multiple scenes in a play which separate the action. Scenes can be used to separate characters which are in different locations or events, as well as to signal time passing and new settings. Usually, the setting does change, so we need a setting description.

## Setting description

The setting description shows us where we are located as well as the mood of the scene.

*Antonio steps forward threatening, pulling out his sword...*

ANTONIO: You drunken dog! You'll pay for that -

*Antonio's 'muscle' joins him around the Bosun.*

GONZALO: Antonio! Let him save our lives first, before you kill him!

*Antonio weighs it up then backs off.*

ANTONIO: I shall look forward to it.

BOSUN: Me too, Sunshine. Right! You lot! Find a rope and heave on it!

### Character speaking

This is the character speaking. It is always the character's name in capital letters, with a colon at the end. Think of the colon as listing their lines.

### Stage directions

These are usually in brackets - they describe emotions and movements to tell the actors what to do.



*Another massive crack of lightning - and now Ariel and his sprites appear up in the rigging, conducting the storm like 70's rock idols.*

CAPTAIN: Look, bosun!  
FERDINAND: Devils! Devils in the rigging!  
ARIEL: Yeeee-haaaa!

*Ariel, sprites, sailors and passengers share the song. The sprites leap about with the fun, jeering and firing off lightning bolts. The sailors put their backs into it, terrified. Antonio and his muscle try and fight the sprites with swords to no avail. The other dignitaries cling to each other for dear life. The following lines over the last bars of the song:*

BOSUN: It's no use!  
SAILOR 1: She's splitting up!  
SAILOR 2: Farewell wife and children!  
CAPTAIN: She's going down!  
BOSUN: Jump for your lives boys!  
ALL: Aagghhhhh!

*Then, lights down.*

## Lines

This is what the character is saying. You do not need inverted commas. There is a new line for each new speaker.

There is a capital letter at the beginning of the line, unless it is being continued from earlier.

If it is continued, there will be a hyphen at the end of the character's last line, then a new one at the beginning of the next.

The lines and stage directions are in present tense, unless the characters are referring to the past.

Your activity:

Box up Scene II of The Tempest (William Shakespeare, Neil Richards' BBC adaption) the with the 'T6. Week 6. Day 2. Play Script Features'.

You should identify each feature, box it up and label it.

Then, describe the importance of the feature.

Extra: underline any vocabulary you may want to use in the future.

