Reading Drama and Play Scripts

KS3 English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

What does the opening stage direction tell us about the setting and mood?

Step 1 · List the details

Bus shelter, night, rain, a flickering light, a girl alone with her hood up.

Step 2 · What mood do they create?

Lonely and uneasy: the flickering light suggests something is not quite right.

Step 3 · Why does a playwright include this?

So the designer and director can create the same mood for the audience with set, light and sound.

Answer: The night-time, rainy bus shelter with a flickering light creates a lonely, uneasy mood, which the designer would recreate for the audience.

Check: Every detail chosen is linked to the mood.

2. Now try one with the steps

What do we learn about Maya from the way she speaks?

Step 1 · Look at her first lines

Step 2 · What do the short lines suggest?

Step 3 · Find the turning point

Step 4 · Sum up

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. In the extract, how old are Maya and Dev? Write the number. [1]

2. Which bus has Dev missed? Write the number. [1]

3. How many minutes ago did the bus leave? Write the number. [1]

4. Name two features you would find in a play script but not in a novel. [2]

5. Why are stage directions written in the present tense? [1]

6. What time is it in the scene? [1]

7. What is the difference between a monologue and a duologue? [2]

8. What does the stage direction '(He grips the carrier bag tighter.)' suggest about Dev? [1]

9. Why does Maya repeat 'At eleven o'clock.' without a question mark? [2]

10. What is the effect of the flickering light in the opening stage direction? [2]

11. Explain the subtext of Dev's question 'Why are you?' [2]

12. How does the final line 'That's not the bus.' create a cliffhanger? [2]

13. How does the playwright show that Maya's attitude to Dev changes during the extract? [3]

14. Why might a playwright leave many things unexplained in an opening scene? [2]

4. Before you hand it in

Ignoring stage directions and only quoting dialogue.
Quote them too: '(He grips the carrier bag tighter.)' tells us more than his words.

Writing 'the reader can see...'
Write 'the audience sees/hears...' and think about the performance.

Taking every line at face value.
Ask what the character wants, and whether their words and actions match (subtext).

Retelling the plot of the scene.
Focus on how the playwright creates character, tension or mood through dialogue, directions and structure.