



Worksheet: Scriptwriting

Writing from Life on Screen with Nikita Lalwani

What makes a true story interesting?

Writing a script gives you lots of different opportunities to explore your characters' lives through dialogue, to use suspense and dramatic tension, and to bring words to life.

Get writing:

Write a scene from one of your previous birthdays, inventing at least one thing that didn't happen. (10:32)

Write a scene between two characters in which one character is trying to get another to tell them a secret. How much either person knows is up to you. (13:57)

Think of a secret. It could be a real secret of your own, one that you know from your family or a friend, or something you've heard on the radio or read a report of online or in the newspaper.

The secret needs to be something that someone doesn't want shared - it doesn't matter what it is or who it belongs to, it just needs to be **true**.

Once you've decided on your secret, you need a location for the two characters to be talking in:

Make the location a café of some sort. Your characters can be eating or drinking whatever you want them to, but detail will make your scene more compelling.

Remember: secrets make your characters interesting. Ask yourself questions about your characters – get to know them so you can know which of their secrets you want to keep:

- **Why do they want to hide that particular fact, story or insight?**
- **How does it affect their behaviour?**
- **What kind of power does the secret have?** What potential does the secret have to disrupt people's lives?
- **What is the emotion that makes your character keep their secret?** Is it a secret that can't be revealed due to embarrassment, or due to the confusion it might cause if it gets out?

When you're writing your scene, think about:

- **Dilemma** - what's the question that the characters are trying to work through in their conversation? Is it whether to reveal the secret or not? What is going on that should make the audience care about what happens over the course of the conversation?
- **Tension** - what is going to capture your audience's attention? Is there a fight or negotiation? What is at stake in the discussion?
- **Outcome** - what is happening as a result of the conversation? Is it what we imagined, or is it something surprising and unexpected? What is happening as a result of the discussion?

Bonus challenge:

Once you've finished writing your script, can you pick out your plot and write it in one of the other forms you've explored through Write Around the World?

- What difference does writing it in another way make?
- Do you pay attention to different elements of your writing, like dialogue or plot?
- Does the story itself feel different when you write it in another form?

You can make notes about what you enjoy and what you find challenging in writing in different ways. This will help you to find the forms you prefer writing in, but will also show you how you can stretch yourself by writing beyond your comfort zone.

Your workshop today was led by **Nikita Lalwani**, who has also designed your takeaway writing challenge too.

About Nikita:

Nikita Lalwani is an award-winning screenwriter and novelist. Her work explores themes of family and migration. Her first novel was called *Gifted* and told the story of a child prodigy of Indian origin growing up in Wales; her second novel was called *The Village* and was modelled on a real life 'prison village' in northern India. Her third novel, published in 2020, is *You People* and follows Tuli (an owner of an Italian restaurant) and his employee Shan who, having fled the Sri Lankan civil war, is desperate to find his family. Nikita is working on script adaptations of all her novels for television and film.

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