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Introduction

Throughout the years I've collected and developed the ideas included in this book both through my own writing and in various classes, seminars and workshops I've conducted for colleges, writing groups and a professional theatre.

Because of this, I've seen time and again that if a person follows the suggestions included in the first few chapters, it is a painless process to come up with ideas that can be developed into a play.

It is developing the ideas into a one-act or full-length play that is the more difficult task. However, even that is not so difficult if a writer keeps in mind that the two most important aspects of a script are character and conflict.

A writer also needs to remember that a play lacks meaning unless it is given focus, a reason for being, beyond that of entertainment. So even if it is begun in an artificial way, somewhere early on in its development, the playwright needs to examine why he or she is writing, and what the play means.

Although, of course, entertainment is the primary function of most drama, I feel a play should communicate something important to an audience. It should be more than "fluff." That is why the first section of the book talks about background in a person's life that may serve as a basis for a play, and why later there is a section on developing theme or central idea.

No playwright should attempt to write for the theatre without knowing about the theatre—that is, without having practical experience in as many areas as possible and direct observation in others.

It is also important to think of the audience, and to think of the reasons for wanting to write. That is why I have included sections both on analyzing an audience and on the various genres of theatre.

I believe too that except as an exercise for a beginning playwright and for practice in learning to develop characters, ideas, conflict and scenes, there is no good reason for writing without a market or audience in mind. So the final chapter provides information on ways you can go about having your play produced or published.

If you are serious about writing plays, read widely in all genres of literature, including drama. Read, read, read. See all sorts of plays from those presented by high schools and colleges to community theatre to regional to all the various types of professional theatre you can find.

Work in theatre as often and as much as you can. Work on productions of various sorts. Then find some good playwriting workshops or seminars and attend them.