



ELA Virtual Learning

Creative Writing

May 8, 2020



Creative Writing

Lesson: Fri., May 8

Objective/Learning Target: Students will study and begin to understand the format of a teleplay.



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“It may seem outwardly like the pen and the paper and the chair play a large role,
but they’re all somewhat incidental to the actual using of the brain.”

- Jerry Seinfeld

Warm-up: Yesterday, we watched Jerry and George think about an idea for a TV show pilot (the first episode of a series). [Watch this video](#) to see how their work is coming along...



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Lesson: A spec script is an episode written in the *speculative* sense--one that's not meant to be made but shows the skills of the writer (as well as her understanding of the show, its style, characters, and so on). You may find it easier than writing a pilot... ([Elaine tried it!](#))



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Practice: Before putting pen to paper, though, you'll want to familiarize yourself with both the television show's style (which we've done by watching and deconstructing a couple of episodes) and *reading* a couple of scripts to get a sense of how a teleplay is formatted. (For a Google Docs add-on for screenwriting, see the resources at the end of this presentation.)



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Practice (cont'd): Find a script [using this database](#) and read it in its entirety. You may find it instructive to watch that particular episode as you do, making note of any changes that were made by the time it aired. (There are multiple, sometimes dozens, of drafts before an episode goes into production! The script you've selected likely indicates which draft you're reading...)



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Additional Practice: Try your hand at writing a scene. Start at the beginning, which is typically called a “cold open,” as in the gags at the beginning of each episode of *The Office* (think Dwight and Jim’s pranks). Looking at your sample script, how many pages does a scene last? How many “jokes” are there per page? Write a “cold open” aiming to imitate the style of the show you’ve selected.



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Additional Practice/Resources:

[How to Become a Television Comedy Writer](#)

[Screenwriting Glossary](#)

[Screenplay Formatter Add-On for Google Docs](#)