

A World from Music

Building Characters into a Play



You will need...

- Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Music-Playing Device
- Speakers or Headphones

- 1) Begin playing a piece of music. If your device has a “shuffle” function, you may want to use this so that the music that plays is a surprise. You may also click [here](#) to try using music we’ve selected for this activity.
- 2) As you listen to the first song, ask yourself what kind of person the music makes you think of. Are they young or old? Energetic or laid-back? Lazy or hard-working?
- 3) Listen to a second piece of music and ask yourself the same questions. This time imagine the person you’ve created **doing** something. What are they doing? **Where** are they as they do this activity? It can be quite simple, such as “*an old woman rolling out dough in her kitchen.*” Once you decide, write this idea down.
- 4) You may continue doing this with new songs until you have two characters you are interested in working with further. Listen to the two pieces of music that inspired these two characters again. As you listen, develop a four sentence plot summary:
 - **First** - Character A is **where** doing **what**?
 - **Next** - Character B enters bringing what problem (**conflict**) with him or her?
 - **Then** - Character A **reacts** to that conflict in what way?
 - **Last** - Character A or B makes what decision? How does this change or resolve the conflict?
- 5) Create the details of your story by developing the following information:
 - **Develop your characters: Who** are your characters? Give each character a name and write down what each **wants** most and **fears** most. How long have they known each other? What is their relationship?
 - **Develop your conflict: What** is your conflict? How did it start? What do each of your characters want and what prevents them from getting what they want?
 - **Develop your setting: Where** are they and what does this location mean for each of them? Is it a public place or a private place? Does the place belong to Character A or Character B? Have these two characters ever been in this place together before? **When** is this happening? What is special about this time of day or time of year for your characters?
 - **Raise the stakes:** The more important and difficult the conflict is for your characters, the more interesting your play will be. In order to make the conflict more urgent, add a time limit. When does this problem have to be solved by and why? If it isn’t solved, what will happen? We call this “raising the stakes.”
When did this conflict begin and why must it be addressed **right now** for your characters?
- 6) Now that you have a summary to work with you can begin writing your play. You may want to try writing at least one page of **monologue** or **dialogue** around each of these four plot points. Continue listening to music if you find that it inspires you.