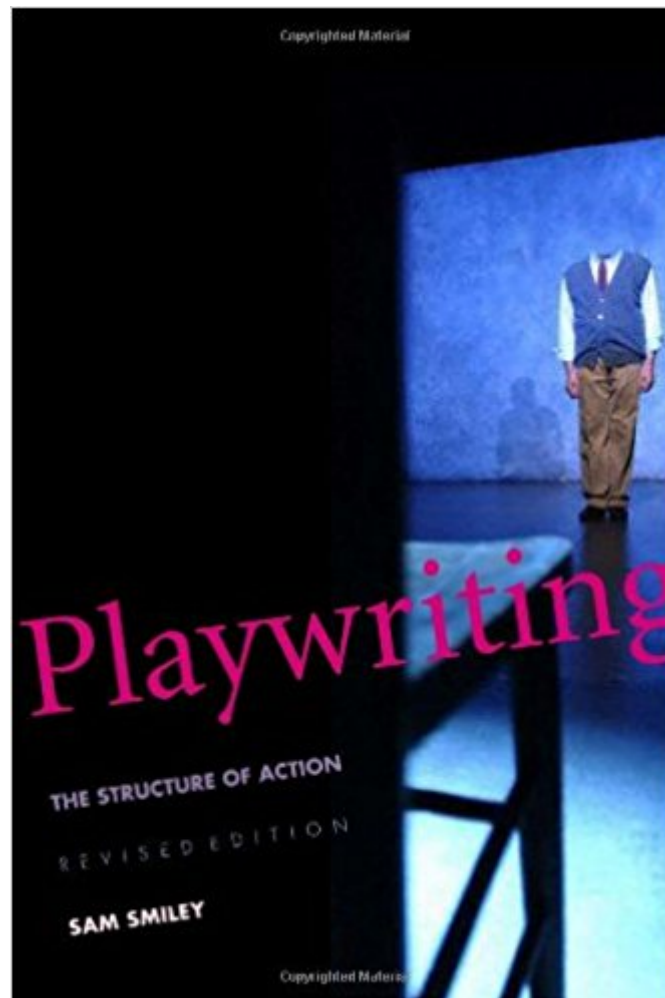




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# Playwriting: The Structure Of Action, Revised And Expanded Edition



## Synopsis

This practical guide provides the principles of dramatic writing. Playwrights and screenwriters will discover these essential principles and acquire the tools to put them to use. Sam Smiley incorporates extensive new material in *Playwriting: The Structure of Action*, a revised edition of the book that dramatists in theatre and film have relied on for more than twenty-five years. No writer, director, critic, or teacher concerned with dramatic writing should be without this intelligent and inspiring guide. Sam Smiley offers insights derived from a lifetime of writing, teaching, and consulting. While preserving the best of the earlier edition of the book, he offers new discussion on contemporary playwrights (Tony Kushner and Tom Stoppard), on copyright law, on new writing approaches, and on nontraditional dramatic forms. Reaching far beyond simplistic how-to instructions, the book focuses on identifying and explaining principles essential to creating dramas: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle. Smiley explains these classic topics and provides the modern keys for realizing each element in effective dramatic scripts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this book. Always a classic on the playwright’s bookshelf; now that it has been substantially reorganized, updated, and rewritten for contemporary playwrights, I believe it is a must-own text for the serious dramatist.” —David A. Crespy, Writing for Performance Program, University of Missouri-Columbia (David A. Crespy) “It’s great to see the granddaddy of all playwriting books back

in action, more vigorous than ever in this newly revised edition, ready to mentor and inspire a whole new generation of young playwrights." – Paul Stephen Lim, English Alternative Theatre, University of Kansas (Paul Stephen Lim)

Sam Smiley is a playwright, screenwriter, and former professor of theatre at the University of Arizona. Norman Bert is a playwright and professor of theatre at Texas Tech University.

Had the paperback for thirty years. Finally had to replace it.

Had to replace my earlier edition of this title from the 1970's. Wore the poor thing out. What Sam Smiley has to offer is hugely valuable to me. Playwrights and writers in general do get spanked occasionally. I get it. Gotta establish those chops!

Don't expect an easy read with this book but if you are really serious about the dramatic form make it your bible!

loved the book, more of a reference book but helps develop ideas and characters, great spring board type of tool, enjoyed the book

As Promised!

This book increased my enthusiasm for writing my first play and gave me solid instructions for getting started and structuring the play.

Dense, overly aesthetic, and downright wrong in many instances. This is the only playwriting text I have read that reverses the definitions of story and plot - which leads to confusion in the classroom. He is such a traditionalist, conservative Aristotelean that, aside from introductory classes, I would not recommend this book. It is seriously out of date. Though he wrote it 30-40 years ago, it reads like it was written 100 years ago. His analyses and perceptions upon avant-garde theatre are very questionable, at best. He says that there are three major forms of drama - mimetic, didactic and imagist. Totally arbitrary. His insistence upon aesthetics, and a very traditional definition of aesthetics (his world view does not have room for writers like Alfred Jarry or Sarah Kane), states that at the heart of experimental theatre lies very traditional aesthetics and ideas. Sounds to me like

a critic who sees only what he wants to see.

This is not a cookie-cutter how-to book on playwriting. Sam Smiley knows that great writing must be both well-crafted and inspired. In this text he presents the elements of story structure (adapted from Aristotle's elements of drama) needed to craft a strong storyline and build dramatic action from page one through the final resolution. It also illustrates these elements with examples from both classic and contemporary literature that will inspire even those with the most diverse tastes. Because the elements of dramatic action are core to every successful work of drama, this text is useful to both the beginning dramatist and the experienced writer. And the principles presented are equally useful to both playwrights and screenwriters. There are many texts out there that will hold your hand through a process of writing a play, but few that will give you as deep an understanding of the dramatic art as this book does. This is not a step by step guide to writing a play, but rather an intense analysis of the foundational elements of the dramatic arts. And for Smiley, drama is art, not merely entertainment. Hidden in his text is the assumption that the reader is an artist and poet, and hidden in this assumption is encouragement and inspiration. In addition, Dr. Smiley offers his understanding of these principles as tried and true rules, yet he always allows for the breaking of rules, the inspired departure from the traditional forms, and even wholly new writing approaches.

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