

Name: _____

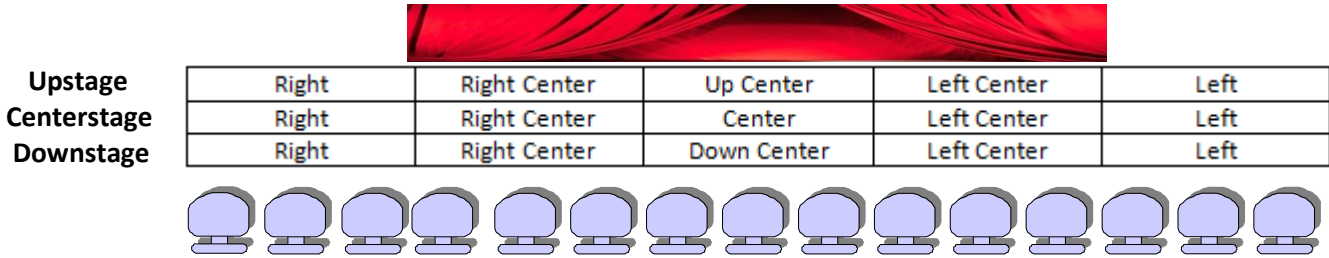
Homeroom: _____

Stage Directions

Directions: Because plays are meant to be seen *and* heard, not only heard like a normal text, there are instructions in most plays that show us what the characters should be doing and when. These directions are in parentheses. Let's start our stage direction practice with you playing the actors and actresses!

(Student looks down at the diagram of stage labels.)

In order to move efficiently, actors and actresses use these labels to communicate with one another.



Example: Typically stage directions tell actors or actresses to come on the stage, exit the stage, or manipulate a prop. However, playwrights are not limited to these directions. Take an example from Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*.

Act 3, Scene 3

Antigonus (*Downstage Center**):

...I never saw

The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!

Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:

I am gone for ever.


(*Enter bear downstage left**)

(*Exit Antigonus Downstage Right**, pursued by a bear)

*Italicized portions of the stage directions are not by Shakespeare.

Practice: Using arrows, a brown circle to represent the bear, and a blue circle to represent Antigonus, label the stage to represent the action in this scene.

Key:

 Brown Bear

 Antigonus

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Example: Although Shakespeare used few stage directions giving modern directors a lot of freedom when placing and moving actors and actresses around the stage, more modern playwrights are intentional about the directions they give. Below is an example of stage directions from Arthur Miller’s play *Death of a Salesman*.

(Light rises on the kitchen. Willy, talking, shuts the refrigerator door *upstage right center** and comes downstage *left center** to the kitchen table. He pours milk into a glass. He is totally immersed in himself, smiling faintly.)

**Italicized portions of the stage directions are not by Miller.*

Practice: Using the key below, add the refrigerator and kitchen table. Use arrows to show Willie’s movement according to the stage directions.

Key:

 Refrigerator

 Willie

 Kitchen Table

Example: Besides showing action, stage directions also give the reader an idea of the setting and how it influences the play. Below is the opening to Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible*.

(There is a narrow window at *upstage** left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams. A candle still burns near the bed, which is at *centerstage** right. A chest, a chair, and a small table are the other furnishings. *Upstage center** a door opens on the landing of the stairway to the ground floor. The room gives off an air of clean spareness. The roof rafters are exposed, and the wood colors are raw and unmellowed.

As the curtain rises, Reverend Parris is discovered kneeling be-side the bed, evidently in prayer. His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.)

**Italicized portions of the stage directions are not by Miller.*

Practice: Using the key below, add the furniture and characters where appropriate.

Key:

 Window

 Bed

 Door

 Reverend Parris

 Betty
