

# What's the Point of a Dramaturg?

## A Guide for Playwrights

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### **What is dramaturgy?**

Dramaturgy refers to the composition of all the elements that go into a work of theatre (e.g. the words spoken, the movement, the design, the performance context, etc.) and how they relate to one another, the internal logic of the piece.

Broadly speaking, a dramaturg is responsible for ensuring that the dramaturgy of a piece is coherent, for keeping sight of the whole and how the elements fit together, rather than working on one particular element. They help directors and writers to conceptualise and articulate what that internal logic is.

### **What does a dramaturg actually do?**

Most of the time, my main purpose will be to help you develop your script to make it as strong as possible.

I don't tell you what to write or how to write; rather I help you figure out what the story is that you want to tell, and how to tell it most effectively.

Some of the main things dramaturgs do are:

- provide honest and constructive feedback on aspects such as premise, theme, character, plot, structure, dialogue, and dramaturgy
- act as a sounding board for you to discuss ideas you have for writing or developing a script, helping you clarify what you're thinking and decide where to go from there
- provide a detached, objective perspective or "outside eye" – in this sense a dramaturg acts as a first audience or in-house critic, and looks at how the piece will appear to an audience and whether it will come across as you intend
- ask questions in order to better understand your vision and help you clarify your thoughts, as well as to spark further ideas
- bring a different perspective

If a dramaturg is continuing with a project after the script development and into rehearsals, they will often represent the playwright in the rehearsal room and mediate between the director and playwright.

### **What's the process like?**

How I work depends on you and the nature of your piece and the stage it is at in its development. I'm adaptable.

In general, I find it helpful to read the script before meeting, and without being told anything about your intentions. I make notes on what I see. The next step would probably be to meet up in person, if possible, and talk about what your aims are and what I took from reading it. I will probably have questions for you.

Where we go from there really depends on what the script's particular needs are. I might suggest exercises for you in order to help you think through a certain aspect that requires development, or you may decide you can finish the next draft on your own. It's important that you let me know how much support you feel you need.