



Hello! Thank you so much for tuning in to Beckett's Babies. We are so happy that you joined us! Every episode, we love to attach a playwriting exercise that we think might be helpful so that you can go forth and start writing your own play! Below is a playwriting exercise for our most recent episode.. Grab a notebook and pen! Let's write!

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### 10 Seconds / 1,000 Years

You can use this exercise as a prompt to begin a new play, or as a way into a revision of a draft you've already written.

First, consider the story you're telling, or would like to tell. What's the beginning? What's the ending? (Aristotle says: a beginning is something before which there is nothing; an ending is something after which there is nothing.) It might be helpful to think about the stasis at the beginning and the stasis at the end. How are they different? Whatever happens in the middle has to move us from the original stasis to the new stasis.

Now, considering the general shape of this story, write a ten-second version of the play. In other words, using the **same** beginning, and the **same** ending, see if you can compress the middle into just ten seconds of action and dialogue to get us from one to the other. Some writers approach this by making everything super-fast and fitting in as much as they can. Others create a line or two of dialogue, or a set of images, that move us simply from beginning to ending. Either approach is great, and I encourage you to try more than one to see what works best for your story.

Next, write a version of the play that takes place over 1,000 years. Keep the same beginning and ending, but stretch the middle out. Stretch it drastically, excessively. Does a character cry in your story? Perhaps in this version, they cry for a hundred years. It might take a whole year for someone to walk across a

room, and only a day to say goodbye. This exercise allows you to really play with proportions. Once you let go of the restrictions of realistic time, you can look at how important each action in your play is, and give it more or less time in your play depending on its significance.

A note: in standard play format, a page takes about a minute to perform. When you write a ten-second play, you're probably going to write something that's rather short on the page and takes about ten seconds to perform. But when you write the 1,000 year play, you can experiment with how this looks on the page. Is one page a hundred years? It depends. I've read 1,000 year plays that were less than a page long. They might take only moments to perform, but last a thousand years to the characters. But there are other possibilities. Feel free to explore.

Once you've written the super-compressed version and the super-long version of your story, go back to the story in real time. What have you learned about the events of your play? How can you apply them to the next draft? You may decide to use some of the same moments. Let the work surprise you!

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