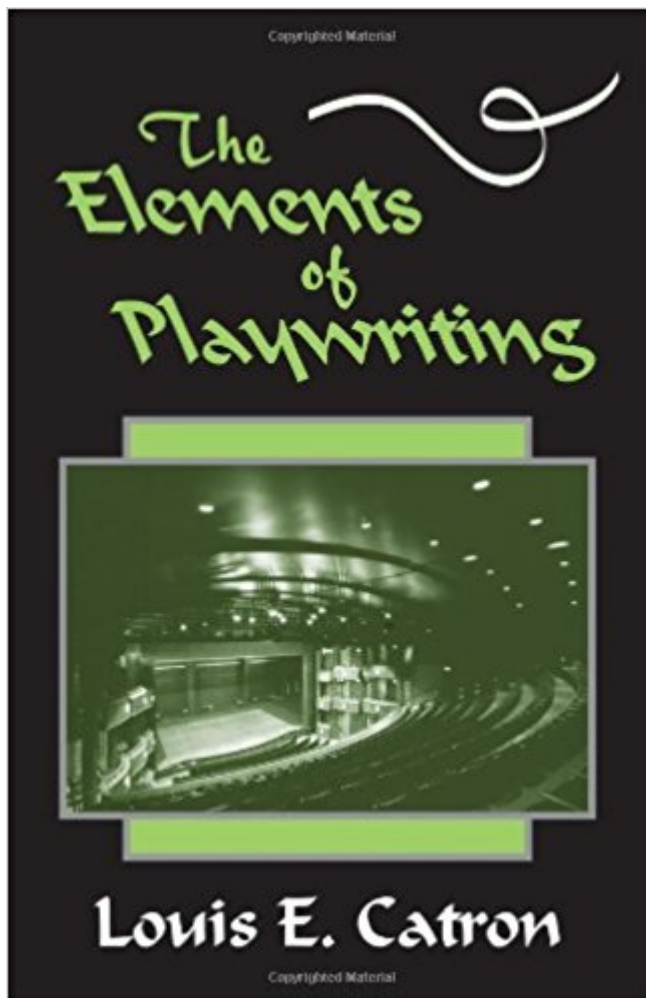




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The Elements Of Playwriting



Synopsis

For those interested in learning and honing the art and craft of creative playwriting! With an infectious enthusiasm for the theater, Catron presents the basic principles of playwriting, including plot, dialogue, and character development, as well as the more complex issues of creating multi-dimensional characters and writing stageworthy plays that will attract producers, directors, actors, and audiences. Throughout, he sprinkles examples from classical and modern plays, provides exercises for sharpening and developing skills, and offers practical guidelines on working with actors and directors, getting produced and published, and finding an agent. Favoring concrete advice over theory, *The Elements of Playwriting* is an invaluable resource for both beginning and advanced playwrights and for anyone involved in the art and craft of theater. Special features: 1) provides step-by-step techniques for improving a play; 2) includes information about copyright, agents, organizations, and references; and 3) offers end-of-chapter exercises for fine-tuning creative application of topics discussed.

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Customer Reviews

Also by Louis Catron and available from Waveland Press: *The Director's Vision: Play Direction from Analysis to Production* (ISBN 9781577666769); *Playwriting: Writing, Producing, and Selling Your Play* (ISBN 9780881335644); and *The Power of One: The Solo Play for Playwrights, Actors, and Directors* (ISBN 9781577666202). Title of related interest also available from Waveland Press: *McCloskey, Economical Writing, Second Edition* (ISBN 9781577660637).

One of America's leading authors of books and articles for playwrights, Professor Catron's writing reflects his years of teaching playwriting as well as his extensive experience directing modern and classical plays and musicals. He shares this accumulated practical knowledge with his readers as he guides them in a friendly, personal way through the process of creating stageworthy scripts.

As a songwriter and composer, I wanted to find a book to help me write the play part of my new musical theater work. I was delighted when my search led me to this book. I found Mr. Canton's book to be clear, concise, and inspiring. I now have what I need to turn my music into a musical play.

Really insightful and helpful. Doesn't lace the books with examples of plays you've never seen, but rather gives broader strokes ideas on how to get started, how to structure, etc. The writing is lovely.

I have read a lot of books on screenwriting, but only one on writing plays, well, at least only one all the way through. I borrowed this book from the library and had to have a copy of my own. It's the first book that's actually made me feel like the author could really send me in the right direction, Although it's specifically for the playwright, it has a lot to say on structure that screenwriters and novelists would be wise to heed.

I bought this book b/c at the time I was teaching a high school theater class and did not know how to teach play writing. (I'm a music person.) This fit the bill. I needed something VERY basic. I felt like I could write a play after I read this book and more importantly, could guide students to write a play. At the end of each chapter it had "exercises" that would have been great for theater students to put in their journals each day to build up to writing a script.

I am a Midwestern physician by day and fledgling playwright by night. One year ago I decided to take an idea to paper and wrote my first play. The story was clear in my mind so the writing went easy. Within six weeks I had completed a rough first draft. At this point I ventured over to the local bookstore to see what books they had on playwriting. There were several, but Louis Catron's The Elements of Playwriting caught my immediate attention. Standing there, I skimmed the contents then read a few pages. The book was full of pearls gleaned obviously from a lifetime of experience in the theater. I bought the book and ordered a coffee to read more, (isn't that the way it always

happens?) Catron goads our left and right brains into action in ten chapters that range from how to get the play started, formatting the text and incorporating Aristotle's six elements of live theater into the work, to suggestions on getting your work published and performed. Various exercises to get the point across are used along the way. The book is a joy to read; a superb "nuts and bolts" treatise for the novice and veteran writer alike. I pick up something new each time I read it. I particularly enjoyed the discussion on how to be a playwright, involving as much with how one "thinks" as what ones "does." In my opinion, Louis Catron's *The Elements of Playwriting* is the best book on the subject out there. It helped me complete my play and make it a more polished work. The book would be perfect as the main textbook in any college playwriting class. Louis Catron's "Elements" certainly "plays in the heartland!"

I only have one negative thing to say about Louis E. Catron's *"The Elements of Playwriting,"* so I'll get it out of the way right off. In various spots in the book, he makes critical remarks about both soap operas and the "Perry Mason" TV series that make me wonder if he's ever actually watched them. The writing cautions he connects with the remarks (respectively, always make sure your characters' emotions are motivated, and avoid a "deus ex machina" ending) are absolutely legitimate, but using these as illustrations are simply untrue. In most other books such false reporting would seriously damage the writer's credibility in my view, and indeed it's the one thing that keeps me from awarding a full 5 stars. The one saving grace in Catron's case is that every other piece of advice is illustrated accurately, if not explicitly in the text. He shows quite well how to make your story appeal to directors, actors, and audiences, not only explaining what they look for but illustrating how to achieve it. As with any book on writing, this is meant to be a book of ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to empower us as writers rather than restrain us. Where an accepted "rule" goes against the story we want to tell, we're expected to be true to the story rather than the rule. Every other book on this topic has taken this attitude, but Catron consistently takes the next step and cites plays that illustrate how nearly every rule has been broken by a successful play, and why that play succeeded in spite of breaking that rule. Catron is a completist in other ways as well, taking the reader from the conception of a story all the way to a list of playwright's resources (such as directories of literary agents). Whether your playwriting is a hobby, a sideline, or a prospective career - or even an established one - I highly recommend this book.

I completed the first draft of my play "American Brass" back in 1999. It was pretty awful. Then, I found this wonderful book by Prof. Catron. Following the guidelines and inspiration contained in his

book I eventually transformed the draft into a stageworthy script. Before reading his up front advice "Don't show anyone your first draft", I had given a reader a look at the play. The reader, an experienced theater person, tried to be helpful with constructive comments, which I came to understand after reading Catron's book meant - I had no plot, my characters were flat and I was writing narratives rather than dialogue. This book provides a clear understandable guide to the structure and dynamics of a successful play and how to write one. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite.. and before each rewrite review Caron's book for insight and inspiration. There's also practical advice - look to get your play on stage not necessarily on Broadway. So I had a high school do a reading and then a church group and now I have the area community theater interested in a full production. Thank you Prof. Catron

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