

Stage Directions

Stage directions are how playwrights give instructions to directors and actors. They can offer vital clues to a drama in that they provide the 'unsaid' elements of a play: sometimes a look or a movement can reveal much more about characters and their feelings than words can.

Look at the stage directions below and see if you can work out whereabouts in the play they come from, what is happening, and any significance they may have. The first one has been done as an example. Find three more important stage directions to include in the blank spaces at the end of the table.

Stage direction	Scene and what is happening	Significance of the instruction
<p><i>There is a moment's hesitation before the floodgates are opened. Animals appear from every conceivable hiding-place. The coach becomes a menagerie. MRS KAY raises her eyebrows to heaven. The KEEPERS collect the animals. BRIGGS stares icily.</i></p>	<p>Scene 29 – the zoo keepers come to take the small animals back from the children who are already on the coach. The teacher knew nothing about the animals until the zoo keepers arrive.</p>	<p>The 'moment's hesitation' suggest the children make a decision about whether or not they should surrender the animals. It also creates a comic pause in the play after the coach is heard. Mrs Kay's reaction suggests she is resigned to what happens: it is as if she was expecting it. Mr Briggs's reaction implies anger and as if he is shocked by the children's behaviour. The audience see the contrast between Mrs Kay's and Mr Briggs's attitude to the children.</p>
<p><i>In another part of the castle, KIDS are rushing about playing medieval cowboys and Indians. MRS KAY sits on a bench overlooking the estuary. CAROL and ANDREWS are with her. In a secluded passage of the castle, REILLY and DIGGA are smoking; they are concealed in an alcove.</i></p>		
<p><i>At the front of the coach, BRIGGS is climbing aboard. He stands at the front and stares and glares. The KIDS sigh – he is a cloud on the blue horizon.</i></p>		
<p><i>She turns and looks down. She drop then back at BRIGGS'S outstretched arm. CAROL lifts her hand to his. She slips. BRIGGS grabs out quickly and manages to pull her to him. BRIGGS wraps his arm around her.</i></p>		

Stage direction	Scene and what is happening	Significance of the instruction
<i>It is approaching 9 am ... CAROL rushes along the street wearing a school uniform which doubles as a street outfit and her Sunday best. She is eating half a sandwich and clutching a supermarket carrier bag.</i>		
<i>A game of football is in progress. MRS KAY is in goal. She makes a clumsy save and the KIDS cheer. BRIGGS watches from a distance. MRS KAY leaves the game and goes to meet COLIN and SUSAN who are approaching.</i>		
<i>A coach. Various groups of KIDS are scattered nearby. One group surrounds a teacher, MRS KAY, all of them after her attention. Cries of, 'Miss, miss, miss, me mum said I could go, miss,' and, 'Miss, can I come if I haven't got enough money?' and, 'Miss, can I come, miss?'</i>		