

TEACH BIG • A MUSICAL PLAY FOR THIRD GRADE

The Three Doors of the Writing Center

*Three real rooms, three kinds of writing, and a young writer who learns
she can do them all*

A musical play for the third grade to perform

Nine roles, a narrator, and a singing class

Featuring two songs from the Teach BIG catalogue

A true to life story, no magic, just three doors and three kinds of writing

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The Cast

NARRATOR, our friendly guide, who speaks to the audience.

ALYSSA, a third grader who is nervous about writing three different ways.

MR. LEE, Alyssa's encouraging teacher.

MS. BROOKS, who runs the school Writing Center and opens each door.

SOFIA, the host of the Story Room, who loves a good tale.

RAJ, the host of the Fact Room, who loves to explain how things work.

OLIVIA, the host of the Opinion Room, who loves to share what she believes.

BEN, Alyssa's classmate and friend.

LUCY, another classmate, always ready to try.

THE CLASS, an ensemble of students who visit the rooms and sing.

A note on staging. The set is the school Writing Center, a friendly room with three real doors, each with a sign, the Story Room, the Fact Room, and the Opinion Room. There is no magic here and no dream, just a class field trip and three doors that each open on a different kind of writing. Stage directions are in brackets, and the whole class, and the audience, sing along.

Act One

Scene One • Three Kinds of Writing

[Lights up on a third grade classroom. MR. LEE stands before THE CLASS. ALYSSA sits with BEN and LUCY. The NARRATOR steps into a spotlight.]

NARRATOR. Good morning, and welcome. This is a story about a girl named Alyssa, and three doors at her school. Alyssa likes writing just fine, until the morning her teacher said five little words that made her worry.

MR. LEE. This year, class, you will learn to write three different ways.

ALYSSA. [to Ben, worried] Three ways? I can barely do one way!

BEN. Three whole kinds? What even are they?

LUCY. And how are we supposed to remember which is which?

MR. LEE. Good questions, all of them. There are three. Narrative, which tells a story. Informative, which explains and gives facts. And argumentative, which shares an opinion and backs it up. They may sound alike now, but by this afternoon you will know each one cold.

ALYSSA. How can you be so sure?

MR. LEE. Because we are not going to just talk about writing today. We are going to go see it. The best way to learn the three kinds is to step right into them. Line up, everyone. We are taking a trip to the Writing Center.

LUCY. The Writing Center? I have never even been.

BEN. [whispering] Is it far?

MR. LEE. Just down the hall, and worth every step. Come along.

NARRATOR. So down the hall they went, past the library and the art room, to a friendly room with three real doors, each with its own sign. And at the doors stood Ms. Brooks.

Scene Two • The Three Doors

[THE CLASS enters the Writing Center. Three doors stand across the back, labeled STORY ROOM, FACT ROOM, and OPINION ROOM. MS. BROOKS welcomes them warmly.]

MS. BROOKS. Welcome to the Writing Center! Three doors, three kinds of writing. Behind each one is a real writer who will show you how it works. You will not just hear about writing today. You will step right into it.

ALYSSA. Do we have to go in all three?

MS. BROOKS. You do. And I will make you a promise, Alyssa. By the time you come out of that third door, you will not be nervous anymore. You will know exactly which kind of writing is which, and you will know that you can do every one.

ALYSSA. [uncertain] That is a big promise.

MS. BROOKS. Then let us get started and see if I can keep it. Shall we open the Story Room first?

THE CLASS. [together] Yes!

[MS. BROOKS opens the first door. Warm light spills out. Act One ends.]

Act Two

Scene One · The Story Room (Narrative)

[The class steps into the Story Room, which is cozy, with a reading chair and shelves of books. SOFIA greets them with a storybook in hand.]

SOFIA. Welcome, welcome! I am Sofia, and in here we write narratives. That is a big word for a simple thing. A story. Every story I have ever loved has three things. Characters, who it happens to. A setting, where and when it happens. And a plot, what happens, from the beginning, to the middle, to the end.

ALYSSA. So a narrative is just telling what happened, like a story?

SOFIA. Exactly that. And the best stories have one more thing, a problem, and a way it gets solved. Shall we build one together? Give me a character.

BEN. A lost puppy!

SOFIA. A lost puppy. Wonderful. Now a setting. Where and when?

LUCY. In a big city, late at night!

SOFIA. Ooh, a big city at night. Now we need a problem. What goes wrong for our puppy?

ALYSSA. The puppy is lost and cannot find its way home, and it is getting scared.

SOFIA. My heart! Now the best part. How does it end? How is the problem solved?

ALYSSA. The puppy smells its favorite bakery, and follows the smell all the way back to its own front porch.

SOFIA. Character, setting, a problem, and an ending that solves it. Alyssa, that is a narrative, beginning, middle, and end. You just told a story, and a good one.

ALYSSA. [surprised] I guess I did. That was not scary at all.

BEN. One door down, two to go.

Scene Two · The Fact Room (Informative)

[MS. BROOKS opens the second door. The class enters the Fact Room, bright and tidy, with a big labeled poster of a plant. RAJ stands beside it.]

RAJ. Step right in! I am Raj, and in the Fact Room we write informative. That means we explain, and we teach. There are no opinions in this room. Just true facts, in the right order, so a reader understands how something works.

LUCY. So informative writing gives facts and answers how?

RAJ. Precisely. Watch. If someone asks how a seed becomes a plant, I do not say I think seeds are great. I tell them, step by step. First, the seed drinks water. Then it grows a root down into the soil. Then a tiny green stem pushes up toward the sun. Facts, in order, explained clearly.

ALYSSA. That is different from the Story Room. A story tells what happened to someone. This tells how something works.

RAJ. Now you are thinking like a writer, Alyssa. And informative writing has helpers too. Headings that tell you what is coming, and pictures with labels, like my plant poster, so the facts are easy to follow. Try one. How do you brush your teeth? Give me the steps.

BEN. First you put toothpaste on the brush. Then you brush in little circles. Then you rinse.

RAJ. Clear, true, and in order. That is informative writing, and you have got it.

Scene Three • The Opinion Room (Argumentative)

[MS. BROOKS opens the third door. The class enters the Opinion Room, which has a small podium and a banner that reads WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE? OLIVIA stands ready.]

OLIVIA. Come in, come in! I am Olivia, and this is the Opinion Room, where we write argumentative. That means you share what you believe, and then, this is the important part, you back it up with reasons. Not just, I like recess. But, I believe recess is important, because it helps us focus, and here is why.

BEN. So this one is what you think, plus reasons?

OLIVIA. Yes. An opinion with no reasons is just a wish. An opinion with strong reasons is an argument. Alyssa, tell me something you believe about our school.

ALYSSA. I believe our school should have a reading garden outside.

OLIVIA. A fine opinion! Now back it up. Give me a reason why.

ALYSSA. Because reading outside in the fresh air would help us focus. And a second reason, it would give the whole school a calm, happy place to be.

OLIVIA. An opinion and two strong reasons. That, my friends, is argumentative writing. Now, here is the trick for telling my room apart from Raj's. Listen to the question. If the prompt asks why, it wants reasons, and that is an opinion. If it asks how, it wants ways, and that is informative. Let me show you all how it goes.

🎵 **SONG: REASONS OR WAYS**

When you read a prompt, what do you do?

Spot the clue! Know what to do!

If it asks WHY? Reasons! If it asks HOW? Ways!

WHY, WHY, WHY? Give me reasons, tell me why!

HOW, HOW, HOW? Show the ways, tell me how!

WHY means REASONS! HOW means WAYS!

[OLIVIA and RAJ stand on opposite sides of the stage. THE CLASS turns to WHY for reasons and to HOW for ways as they sing. ALYSSA sings along, delighted that she can tell them apart.]

Scene Four • Which Door? (A Game)

[MS. BROOKS gathers the class back in the center of the Writing Center, the three doors behind them. She holds up cards, each with a writing prompt.]

MS. BROOKS. Now let us play a game. I will read a prompt, and you tell me which door it belongs to. Story Room, Fact Room, or Opinion Room. Ready? First one. Tell about the time you lost a tooth.

THE CLASS. Story Room!

SOFIA. A narrative, because it tells what happened. Come to my room!

MS. BROOKS. Next. Explain how a bicycle works.

THE CLASS. Fact Room!

RAJ. Informative, because it explains the how. Mine!

MS. BROOKS. And last. Should our school start a recycling club?

THE CLASS. Opinion Room!

OLIVIA. Argumentative, because it asks what you believe and why. Right again!

ALYSSA. [amazed] We got every single one.

MS. BROOKS. You did. And do you know what that means? You can already tell the three kinds of writing apart. The hard part is over.

Act Three

Scene One • Back in Class, and Finale

[The class returns to the classroom. MR. LEE welcomes them back. ALYSSA is standing taller, excited.]

MR. LEE. So, writers. Three doors, three kinds of writing. Alyssa, how do you feel about writing three ways now?

ALYSSA. This morning three kinds sounded scary. But now I know them. A narrative tells a story, with characters, a setting, and a problem that gets solved. Informative explains the facts and the how, clear and in order. And argumentative shares my opinion with reasons, the why. I can do all three!

BEN. And we can tell them apart. Why means reasons, how means ways.

LUCY. Three doors, and we can walk through any of them now.

MR. LEE. Then here is your first assignment, and you get to choose. Pick any of the three kinds, and write. A story, an explanation, or an opinion. Whichever door you like best.

ALYSSA. Can I do all three?

MR. LEE. [smiling] Now that is the spirit of a real writer.

NARRATOR. And that is how Alyssa learned that three kinds of writing were not three things to fear. They were three doors, each one open to her. A story to tell, facts to explain, and an opinion to stand up for. And the girl who walked in nervous that morning walked out a writer who could open any door she chose.

[The whole class gathers for the finale. MS. BROOKS, SOFIA, RAJ, and OLIVIA join them. The audience is invited to sing.]

🎵 **FINALE SONG: EVERY GREAT ESSAY**

Say it! Show it! Make it clear!

Give your reader something to hear!

Think it! Link it! Make it strong!

Every little piece belongs!

Thesis! Evidence! Explain away!

Every kind of writing has something to say!

[The whole cast sings. On the last line, ALYSSA holds up three pages, one for each kind of writing, and the lights blaze bright.]

[Everyone holds the last note. Blackout. The end.]