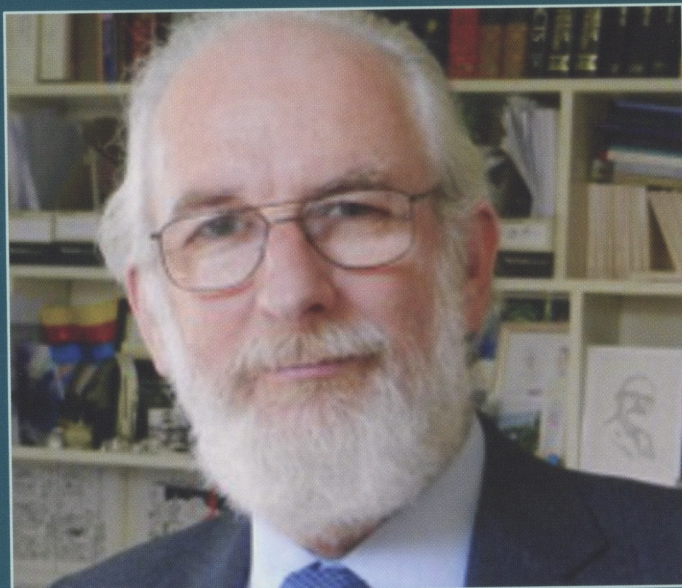


# Doing Remote Theatre



by **Nick Bilbrough**

Including 28 plays written especially for remote performance by leading names in the fields of literature, theatre and English language teaching.



## How do we write a play?

By David Crystal

David Crystal works from his home in Holyhead, North Wales, as a writer, editor, lecturer and broadcaster. The author of many books on the English language and linguistics, he is honorary professor of linguistics at the University of Bangor, and lives on line at: [www.davidcrystal.com](http://www.davidcrystal.com).

Photocopy



5 students



# How do we write a play? | by David Crystal

*Four students in a school playground.*

**Student 1:** We've got to write a five-minute play for our teacher.

**Student 2:** That's impossible. You can't write a play that's only five minutes long. There's not enough time for anything to happen.

**Student 3:** Yes you can. All you've got to do is think of a nice idea and make people talk about it.

**Student 4:** Or an interesting character.

*(Pause)*

**Student 2:** I can't think of any ideas at all.

**Student 1:** Or any characters.

*(They wonder what to do. Student 5 arrives.)*

**Student 5:** Can I help?

**Student 3:** Sure. But who are you? We haven't seen you in school before.

**Student 5:** My names Nita. I'm just visiting friends. I'm not from round here. What's your problem?

**Student 1:** We've got to write a five-minute play for our teacher, and we can't think of anything to write about.

**Student 5:** What about aliens?

**Others:** Aliens?

**Student 5:** Sure. Everyone's interested in whether there's life on other planets, and what alien beings would look like.

*(They have a think)*

**Student 2:** I suppose we could do something on that. What do you think they'd look like?

**Student 5:** Well, not like in science fiction films.

**Student 3:** All looking like monsters.

**Student 4:** With lots of eyes.

**Student 2:** And tentacles.

**Student 1:** And they usually want to fight.

**Student 3:** Not ET, though.

**Student 4:** No, he was cute.

**Student 1:** *(to 5)* What do you think they'd look like?

**Student 5:** Well, if they're really clever, they could take on all sorts of shapes.

**Student 1:** Like what?

Student 5: Like a... like a tree. Or a dog.

Student 2: Or a person.

Student 5: Sure. Like a person. An alien who was really interested in our world wouldn't want to stand out. He'd want to fit in.

Student 2: Or she.

Student 4: Or it.

*(They all laugh.)*

Student 2: It's a great idea. Let's write about an alien who nobody would recognize.

Student 5: And he'd just appear one day -

Student 2: Or she.

Student 4: Or it.

Student 5: *(laughs)* OK. And when he or she or it had finished studying us, he or she or it would just - disappear.

Student 3: And nobody would know they'd been observed.

Student 4: No, that's no good. He or she or it would have to leave a message of some kind. At least, for a play. Otherwise there's no point.

Student 1: Let's write some of these ideas down.

*(Students 1,2,3,4 gather round 1's computer. 5 is out of shot.)*

Student 1: OK. A group of students are talking about aliens.

Student 2: And one of them says she thinks she met one the other day.

Student 3: Would he or she or it be dressed in the same way?

Student 4: I don't know. Let's ask Nita.

*(They look around)*

Student 1: Nita? ... Nita?

*(They look around again)*

Student 2: Where's Nita gone?

Student 4: Look.

*(They see a piece of paper on the ground. Student 3 picks it up.)*

Student 2: What is it?

Student 3: There's a message.

Student 1: What does it say?

Student 3: It says... Thank you. Have a great play. And it's signed Nita.

*The students look up at each other and then, slowly, up at the sky.*

