

Pennyweight Plays Preview

48 five and ten-minute plays ideal as warm-ups or for class, camp or concert

Very Short, Royalty-Free Plays by Cenarth Fox

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Many practical books. *Poetry in Motion* is a book of poems with actions. Great for class or concert items. *Play It Again, Ham* is a collection of music and drama games suitable for most ages. *Mini Musicals* is a collection of short [approx. 15 minutes] musicals ideal for students between the ages of 8 and 14. *Code Cracker* is a book of 43 codes including language codes, number codes, spy codes, international codes and many more. Both *Code Cracker* and *Music Puzzles* contain line masters i.e. pages which the purchaser may copy for class activities. So does *Ripper Recorder* - a fun text for learning descant recorder. With *Playalong Recorder* there are many melodies in various styles with a CD providing backing orchestra or band which makes the whole experience great fun for the recorder players.

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What Are Pennyweight Plays?

A pennyweight is 1/20th of an ounce or 1.55 grams. A pennyweight play too is light. By nature it is short and thus easy to learn and simple to stage.

Suggestions for the Teacher/Director

1. If you have only one copy of the text, sit your class in a semi-circle and allocate the parts. "*John, you're X, Tracey you're Y*" and so on. "*John, you say 'Blah, blah, blah'*". John repeats the line. Do the same for the next speaker until each character has said his/her line. After the first 5 speeches, have this group move to one side and rehearse. Start on another play with another group. If you have a class set, divide the class into groups according to which play they are performing. Let them rehearse by themselves. Once they know their lines, give them their directions. They may of course wish to design their own movements.
2. The plays should not be performed with the script. Because there are so few lines, it's possible to learn the lines in one lesson. This is a major benefit of a *pennyweight play*. Consequently you can polish the performances. Stage a play then invite constructive comments. Stage the play again and again. Make each performance more interesting than the one before.
3. You could have several groups perform the same play. This provides a wonderful example of how artistic interpretation works. Did the actors give a different interpretation? If so, how was it different?
4. Encourage your students to write their own *pennyweight plays*. Preferably use one idea or incident, build to a climax and use a good tag or ending. Something humorous, dramatic or surprising is usually good.
5. The gender of most characters is often not specific. Where a letter only is provided, the actor could invent a name starting with this letter.
6. There are suggestions for discussion and further activities. Consider them. Invent your own.
7. Few props and virtually no scenery is required. Use them/it if you like but mime is suggested. Make your audiences use their imagination.

Hawkers

Cast Oky, Naybee, Vizzy, Sticky

[In a street in front of a house owned by Oky. Oky and Vizzy are saying goodbye at the front gate. Naybee is doing some gardening next door but joins in the conversation]

Oky You know the one thing that drives me absolutely nuts.
Naybee Having people like Vizzy drop in?
Vizzy Oh ha ha.
Oky No it's those door-to-door salesmen.
Vizzy Oh yes, me too.
Naybee You're supposed to say salespersons. That is if you wish to be politically correct.
Oky I mean it's not that you don't want to donate or buy, it's just that they interrupt you at the wrong time.
Vizzy And they're uninvited. They never have an appointment.
Naybee Just like you.
Oky And then if you don't donate or buy something, they look at you as if you're the worst person on earth.
Vizzy I always ask for identification.
Naybee What, for yourself?
Oky I used to pretend there was nobody home but then you think they're burglars and if you don't answer, they'll break in and rob you.
Vizzy Oh look out, here comes that obnoxious neighbour.
[STICKY enters carrying shopping]
Naybee I thought I was the obnoxious neighbour.
Oky *[To STICKY]* Hello there. Been shopping?
Sticky Just the usual. I see your friend's been visiting again.
Vizzy Yes, that's what friends are for.
Sticky And your neighbour's doing some gardening.
Naybee I'm not really. I'm just pretending so I can eavesdrop on my neighbour's conversation. It's called being a sticky beak.
[STICKY Offended]
Oky We were just discussing door to door salespeople.
Sticky Oh yes. Aren't they the absolute pits.
Naybee They're almost as bad as nosy neighbours.
Vizzy They always interrupt your favourite TV show.
Oky Oh yes. Or just when you've started your evening meal.
Naybee You can get signs you know. *No hawkers* is a common one. You put the sign by your front gate or front door and that stops them dead.
Sticky Assuming they can read.

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Vizzy What's a hawker?
Oky It's another word for door to door salesperson.
Sticky The problem is though there might be one hawker who has just what you're after. I mean what's the one thing you'd love to buy right now?
Naybee Sticky, sticky.
Oky Well, I'm not sure.
Vizzy There needs to be a sign that stops the ones you don't want but allows entry to the ones you do want.
Naybee You need a sentry.
Sticky I used to have a sign saying *No hawkers* but now I've taken it down.
Vizzy That's because you never have any real visitors.
Oky Well I wish I knew what to do. I always get lots of hawkers.

PREVIEW BREAK

Naybee It reads, "*My neighbours are very friendly. They will buy anything*". See ya.
[NAYBEE exits as OTHERS fume. If used, lights dim, curtain falls]

Discussion Points & Follow-up Activities

1. Describe your neighbours. Are they friendly, helpful and talkative?
2. Once upon a time, people used to know their neighbours very well and would often pop in for a chat. In many cities today, residents don't pop in for a chat and in many cases never speak to their neighbours. Is this true? If it's true, why is it so?
3. What are some signs which people put on the gate, door or letter-box? Why do they put these signs there? Are the signs effective?
4. What sort of things do hawkers sell?
5. What do you think of hawkers? Do you listen to what they have to say or do you simply say "Not interested" or something like that?
6. Do you think hawkers make a lot of money?
7. In the old days in times of economic depression, many people became hawkers selling simple things like matches and pencils. Why did they do this? And why things like matches and pencils?
8. Would you like to be a hawker? Why?
9. If you were a hawker, what would you choose to sell? Why?

How To Get A Pay Rise

Cast doctor, receptionist, patient

[Doctor's surgery, couch centre-stage. Doctor standing upstage reading a book. Knock on door]

DOCTOR Come in.
[Receptionist enters followed by patient]

RECEP'IST Your next patient, Doctor.

DOCTOR Ah, splendid. Thank you, Ms. *[or Mr.]* Receptionist. *[To patient indicating couch]* Please, make yourself comfortable. *[Patient lies on couch. To Receptionist]* And see we're not disturbed.

RECEP'IST Of course, Doctor but ... you know we have to do the usual in about ten minutes.

DOCTOR What's the usual? Oh that. Well okay, but not before then.

RECEP'IST Very well, Doctor. *[Receptionist exits]*

DOCTOR Now who have we here? Ah, now I remember. You were here last week complaining about a lack of respect from your fellow workers.

PATIENT That's right, Doc.

DOCTOR And don't call me Doc.

PATIENT My boss looks down on me, never recognises the valuable contribution I make to the business.

DOCTOR I see. And what line of business are you in?

PATIENT Ah, well let's call it, a sort of make-believe.

DOCTOR *[Taking notes]* I see. And you're not appreciated. Is that it?

PATIENT Not appreciated, not recognised, not allowed to be who I want to be. Can you help me, Doc?

DOCTOR Don't call me Doc.

PATIENT There's got to be a way I can make my boss know exactly how I feel.

DOCTOR Have you tried telling your boss?

PATIENT Have I ever? I've tried the subtle approach, I've tried the plain-speaking approach and I've even whipped in the odd veiled threat.

DOCTOR I see. And there's still been no change?

PATIENT Zero, zilch and nothing. It's affecting my work. I have low self-esteem and that can't be good for my health. What should I do?

RECEP'IST Do? Who knows? Why ask me?

PATIENT But you're the doctor, Doctor.

DOCTOR Doctors don't know everything. Don't make the mistake of thinking a trained specialist has all the answers.

PATIENT Well if you can't help me, who can?

DOCTOR Sometimes it's the simple and obvious solution. Sometimes the person with basic common sense has the right answer.

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PATIENT A person with common sense.
DOCTOR Yes, take my receptionist for instance.
PATIENT Has your receptionist got common sense?
DOCTOR Loads of it. Allow me to demonstrate.
[Rings small bell. Pause. Receptionist enters]
RECEP'IST You rang, Doctor.
DOCTOR We need your help. My patient doesn't believe me when I say that ordinary people, like you, have enough common sense to solve many of life's problems.
PATIENT I'd like to believe and I'd certainly like to be cured.
RECEP'IST Well I guess common sense can help some times. What exactly is the problem.
PATIENT I'm not appreciated by my boss.
RECEP'IST Oh dear.
PATIENT What should I do to fix the situation?
RECEP'IST Not appreciated by your boss you say? Well, how about you ask for a twenty per cent pay rise and if you don't get it, leave.
PATIENT Leave!?
RECEP'IST Are you worth a twenty per cent pay rise?
PATIENT Definitely.
RECEP'IST Then problem solved. I guarantee you'll get a response.
DOCTOR *[Handing note pad and stethoscope to Receptionist]* Okay Doc, I think that's enough for today. I just love pretending to be a doctor.
PATIENT *[Escorting doctor out]* I'll just my appointments' book for your next visit.
DOCTOR Same time next week suits me fine. I'd like to wear a white coat next week. *[They exit]*
RECEP'IST The things one does to be a doctor. *[Tidies desk, makes notes]*
PATIENT *[Enters]* Patient's gone, Doctor.

PREVIEW ENDS

[Lights dim and/or curtain closes]

Discussion Points & Follow-up Activities

1. What is role playing? Who uses it? Why? Does it help? How?
2. If you could pretend to be someone else, have a certain job, who or what would you be? Why?

The Auction

Cast auctioneer, 6 bidders, onlookers

(Large cast. Use as many as you can/like. Most are members of the public standing in front of a property which is being auctioned. The cast are in motley groups facing front, most speaking quietly in their groups. The auctioneer stands on a box or similar about centre and just behind the on-lookers. Everyone faces front)

Auctioneer Well ladies and gentlemen, what am I bid for this marvellous property? Who'll start me off?

Bidder 1 Two hundred thousand.

Auctioneer Thank you madam [or sir]. Two hundred thousand. *(Bidder 2 scratches her/his nose. Auctioneer points at 2)* Two hundred and ten.

Bidder 2 *(Distressed)* No. I didn't bid. I was scratching my nose.

Auctioneer *(Indicating 2)* Against you over here. *(Bidder 3 yawns, covers mouth and Auctioneer points at 3)* Two twenty. Thank you madam [or sir].

Bidder 3 *(Distressed)* Hang on! I was yawning!
(2 is relieved. Bidder 4 coughs, covers her/his mouth. Auctioneer points at 4)

Auctioneer Over here. Two hundred and thirty.

Bidder 4 *(Most upset)* That wasn't a bid. I only coughed.
(Bidder 3 relieved. Buzz/hubbub from the onlookers. Who is this auctioneer?)

Auctioneer *(To Bidder 4)* The bid's with you, madam [or sir]. *(Bidder 5 sneezes)* Ah. Over here. *(Points at 5)* Two hundred and forty.

Bidder 5 *(Incredulous)* Don't be ridiculous. I only sneezed!
(Auctioneer now into stride. S/He points at anything that speaks or moves. A lowered head, a brushing away of an insect, a whisper to a friend, anything)

Auctioneer *(Pointing at someone different each time)* Two fifty. Against you. Two sixty. Over here. Two seventy. Two eighty. Two ninety. Three hundred. Going once. Going twice. *(Slaps rolled paper into hand)* Sold for three hundred thousand.
(Crowd mutter/exit. Bidder 6 is successful bidder. Auctioneer approaches 6)

Auctioneer Congratulations madam [or sir]. A brilliant bid right at the very last.

Bidder 6 *(Angry)* Bozo.

Auctioneer A snip at three hundred.

Bidder 6 *(Furious)* I was wiping my nose.

Auctioneer *(Slightly less enthusiastic)* Say, you look familiar. Have we met before?

Bidder 6 *[Furious]* This morning Twit-Features. I'm the \$#@!^&* owner!
(Storms off leaving the auctioneer with a look of amazement and horror)

Auctioneer *(Exits after 6)* Excuse me. What about *next* Saturday? Hello?

(Curtain falls as despairing owner pursues furious estate agent)

Pig Out

Cast Marshall, 6 diners, onlookers

(The diners are seated at a long table facing front. They are competitors in a spaghetti-eating race. Each diner wears a huge serviette around their neck or tucked into their clothing. The onlookers are at either side and/or behind the diners. The Marshall stands to one side. NOTE: You can have actual props or mime the whole thing. Actual props i.e. bowls of steaming spaghetti, forks, etc are costly and time-consuming but also add a touch of realism and a fair bit of fun. The Marshall addresses everyone)

Marshall Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to witness an attempt on the world's fastest spaghetti eating record. Each competitor must consume all their spaghetti. Diners, are your forks in position?

Diners Yes!

Marshall *(With flourish of a serviette)* Then go!

(Each diner except 6 attacks their food. Diner 6 sits motionless. S/He is hardly noticed as the others cause sauce and pasta to fly about and the onlookers point, cheer, laugh and enjoy themselves. The actual eating lasts for about 30 seconds. Time the finale as Diner 2 is the winner. Increase the onlookers' "urging" as Diner 2 approaches an empty plate. Diner 2 stands and raises her/his hands in triumph. The others stop eating and the onlookers applaud)

Diner 2 *(Triumphant)* Me! It's me! I've done it!

Marshall *(Checking stop-watch)* And it's a new world record!
(Much clapping, cheering and congratulating)

Diner 1 *(Exiting clutching stomach)* I feel sick! *(Onlookers cheer)*

Marshall An excellent spot of pigging-out.

Diner 2 Right, where's me prize-money?

Marshall *(Produces envelope)* Right here. One thousand dollars! Well done.
(More applause as Diner 2 takes envelope and acknowledges plaudits of crowd)

Diner 2 Thank you. Thank you. *(Silence)* I'd just like to thank me Mum for letting me practise on her cookin' an', phew, I couldn't eat another thing!
(Laughter, applause. Diner 2 waves and starts to leave. Diner 6 calls loudly)

Diner 6 Stop! *(Everyone stops)* S/He cheated!
(Hubbub. Diner 2 furious)

Diner 2 Who are you callin' a cheat?

Marshall *(Intervening)* Just a minute. I timed the event and it was fair.

Diner 6 Did you measure the bowls?

Marshall We used them last year.

Diner 6 They're one millimetre short. The contest must be held again.
(Big hubbub from crowd. Diner 2 fuming. Marshall measures a bowl)

Diner 2 Who cares. We all had the same bowl. I won fair 'n square.

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(Onlookers agree)

Marshall I'm sorry. The bowls are a fraction too small. No matter. Let's do it again. Now, competitors, take your places!

(Marshall takes envelope from Diner 2. Competitors shake their heads and exit. No way. Diner 2 is mortified)

Diner 2 Again? Eat all that stuff again?

Marshall They are the rules. I'll get some new bowls.

Diner 2 *(Storming off)* Forget it. I'm bustin'!

(Diner 2 exits as do most of onlookers. It's a fizzer. Diner 6 is ready to eat)

Diner 6 I'm ready.

PREVIEW ENDS

(Curtain falls and/or lights come down)

Discussion Points & Follow-up Activities

1. Eating competitions. Are they safe? Sensible? What are the possible side-effects?
2. What is a "sting"? How did this one work?
3. What other records could your class attempt to break?
4. Mime eating various foods e.g. very runny food, very hot and spicy food, very sticky hard to chew food, food you really hate, food you adore, etc
5. You're playing or watching a game. A trivial offence occurs i.e. a minor breaking of the rules e.g. as in this pennyweight play. Should the rules always be followed to the letter of the law? Did Diner 2 win fair 'n square? Would you have awarded the prize to Diner 2?

The Art Gallery

Cast: 5 characters [H,J,L,A and B], an art expert, the public [2 - 222]

[A large frame dominates the stage. Five people are the characters inside the frame which should be raised so that visitors look up slightly. The painting can be from any period and in any setting e.g. rural, interior. When the play begins the painting is very still, the characters frozen. Pause]

H *[Without moving]* Is that it? Have they gone?
J *[Without moving]* All clear. We can move.
[All 5 characters stretch and move about within the frame. They could sit, recline, etc]
L Did you hear that guide telling the school kids about us?
A Wrong. As usual.
L I get so annoyed when people get their facts wrong.
H I'm not annoyed, just bored. *[Others agree]*
J Well prepare yourselves. There are two more groups this afternoon. *[Groans]*
B We could fight back you know.
A Oh ha ha. We're two-dimensional, frozen, inanimate objects.
B To them, yes. But to ourselves, we're alive and kicking.
L So how do we fight back? How do we relieve this crushing boredom?
B A few subtle changes. Hop into position and I'll show you.
[They all move to their opening position and freeze]
J Now what?
B Everyone makes a slight change. *Slight* change.
[Pause. Everyone makes a slight change e.g. head turns, hand on/off hip, other foot on stool, etc. These should be well rehearsed. All freeze]
H Well I'll say this. It's definitely killed my boredom.
A Look out! Gallery sticky-beaks!
B Freeze!
[Characters freeze as one or more art-lovers wander in, admire the painting briefly then exit]
J *[Pause. Without moving]* All clear. We can move. *[Characters come alive]*
L *[Excited]* That was brilliant. I feel all tingly and excited.
H You're right. It got the oil pumping through my canvas veins!
A Can we do it again? Something *really* different?
B Well okay but don't go overboard. Subtle changes only.
H Another change. Come on. Live dangerously.
[All five take up another position. This is more radical, not profoundly different but a greater variation than the first "new pose". Pause. Another art-lover/s enter, admire the painting and exit. The characters come alive even more excited than before]
L Unbelievable! We've done it again.
H This is the best. Let's try another pose.
A Hang on. What about integrity? What about the artist's intentions.
J Don't worry about the artist, they only create the stuff. Anyway, he's dead.

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- B** I say we take risks. Put a bit of danger, some excitement in our lives. We've got nothing to lose.
- H** Except our boredom. *[Others laugh]*
- A** You're right. *[Senses people nearby]* Quickly! Someone's coming!
[Group move quickly to third "new pose". Again it's different without being sensational]
- L** *[Settling into position]* Oh no! It's the gallery director!

PREVIEW ENDS

Discussion Points & Follow-up Activities

1. Visit an art-gallery. How many "styles" of art are on display? Are the exhibits for sale? How easy is it for artists to make a living from their work? Invite an artist to speak to your class.
2. Why are some paintings worth millions and others can't be given away?
3. How important is the artist in the world of art?
4. What would be a good moral for the characters in this play?
5. What does the expression "too clever by half" mean?
6. What do you think eventually happened to the painting in the play?

Forty Love

Cast Several. Umpire, 2 tennis players, 2 ballboys/girls, 2 linespersons and a packed crowd if you like

[Two tennis players face each other at either side of the performing area. An umpire sits on a raised chair facing the audience who are upstage facing front. There is no ball, everything is mimed. The umpire is more downstage than upstage. The players are hitting an imaginary ball with the umpire literally in the middle of the court. This is simply to get the actors closer to the real audience. The officials react accordingly signalling wide balls or running to collect balls]

UMPIRE Linespersons ready? Ballpersons ready? Players ready? Play.
[AGGRO serves]

LINES 1 *[Extending hand]* Fault!

AGGRO *[Angry]* What!? That wasn't a fault. *[Heads to UMPIRE]*

UMPIRE I'm sorry, Aggro. The ball was definitely wide.

AGGRO You have to be joking. You need your eyes tested.

SOFTIE Excuse me. *[Is ignored]* May I say something? *[Ignored]*

UMPIRE The ball was wide, now please continue the match.

[AGGRO points finger at UMPIRE, shakes head then returns fuming to serve position. AGGRO serves, the ball is good and a rally begins ending with AGGRO hitting the ball wide. Crowd applaud]

LINES 2 *[Extending hand]* Out!

AGGRO *[Furious]* Out!? That was on the line, you short-sighted idiot!

UMPIRE The ball was out, just out. I think.

AGGRO You think!? You're not paid to think, you moron, you're paid to call correctly and to overrule where necessary.

SOFTIE Excuse me. Could I ask a question, please? *[Is ignored]*

AGGRO I want the match referee. *[Pause]* Come on. I demand to see the match referee.

[Some in crowd start to heckle. "Get on with it ... You're a bully, Aggro" etc]

UMPIRE Actually I do think the ball was just on the line. Fifteen love.

AGGRO *[Furious]* Fifteen love?

UMPIRE *[Flustered]* Ah, sorry. Forty love.

SOFTIE Could I interrupt for just a minute?

AGGRO That's delaying tactics. *[To UMPIRE]* He's using delaying tactics.

UMPIRE Yes, that's right. Code violation, Player Softie. Game and first set to Aggro.

[Hostile reaction from crowd. AGGRO delighted. Players cross ends. SOFTIE serves. Rally develops and SOFTIE has AGGRO on the run. This side of the court, back to the other. Finally SOFTIE puts away the winner and AGGRO collapses having been well beaten. Crowd applauds. AGGRO rises and approaches umpire]

AGGRO Hey! Are you from another planet or what?

UMPIRE Your shot went into the net. It was clearly a point to your opponent. Fifteen love.

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- AGGRO** Oh, so foot faults don't count anymore.
- UMPIRE** Foot faults?
- SOFTIE** I really do have something to say.
- AGGRO** Delaying tactics again. And a foot fault. What are you going to do about it, you turkey! *[Crowd react]*
- UMPIRE** Yes, that's right. I forgot the foot fault. Love fifteen. *[Crowd react]*
- AGGRO** And the delaying tactics. *[Mimics]* I really do have something to say.
- UMPIRE** Yes, delaying tactics, code violation, player Softie.
- AGGRO** That's the second offence. I demand appropriate justice. Get the match referee.
- UMPIRE** No, that won't be necessary. I declare the match over and won by Aggro. *[Crowd reaction is strong]* Player Softie disqualified for frivolous complaints and blatant disregard of the rules by serving one foot fault and not owning up.
[More hostile crowd reaction. AGGRO raises arms and wanders about accepting the boos and cheers of the crowd. SOFTIE approaches AGGRO and extends hand. AGGRO refuses to shake hands, brushes past SOFTIE and throws wrist bands into crowd. SOFTIE approaches UMPIRE and hands over slip of paper]
- SOFTIE** I'm terribly sorry. I've been trying to tell you this from the very beginning.
- UMPIRE** *[Clears throat]* Ah special announcement. Quiet please.
[Crowd noises stop and AGGRO is furious]

PREVIEW ENDS

[Crowd erupt with applause and AGGRO is speechless as curtain falls]

Discussion Points & Follow-up Activities

1. Sport today is big business. Discuss. How much money is involved in sport today? Where is the money? Is it prize money? Sponsorship? TV rights?
2. In tennis there are or have been some players who have challenged the authority of the umpire and officials. How do some players challenge the officials? Is this fair? Do players have the right to query decisions? If so, is there a right and wrong way to go about it?
3. How difficult is it to be a referee or umpire? Do you think mechanical aids should be used to assist officials? Why?
4. Someone said "Winning isn't everything". Someone replied saying, "Winning isn't everything, it's the *only* thing". What do these sayings mean? Do you agree with them? Why?

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