

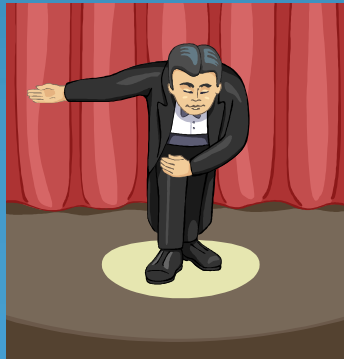


Introduction to Drama



What is drama?

The word drama comes from the Greek word for “action.” Drama is written to be performed by actors and watched by an audience.



DRAMA

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graph TD; A[DRAMA] --> B[Consists of two types of writing]; A --> C[Can be presented in two ways]; B --> D[The dialogue that the characters speak]; B --> E[The stage directions that tell the actors how to move and speak, describing the sets and props]; C --> F[As literature, the text of the play itself]; C --> G[As performance, the production of the play in a theater];
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The stage directions that tell the actors how to move and speak, describing the sets and props

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Two Types of Drama

1. Tragedy

- shows the downfall or death of a *tragic hero*, or main character. In ancient Greek plays, the hero was a good person brought down by a *tragic flaw*, or defect in character. In a modern plays, the hero can be a normal person destroyed by an evil in society.
- emphasizes human greatness.

2. Comedy

- often shows a conflict between opposite age groups , genders, or personality types.
- typical comedies involve confusion, jokes, and a happy ending.
- stresses human weaknesses.



A drama or play is a form of storytelling in which actors make the characters come alive through speech (dialogue) and action (stage directions).

- Every performance of a play is different, even if the same actors perform the same play many times.
- Performances are influenced by the audience. To be a part of an audience is different than reading a play alone. The response of the audience will also affect our own response. For example, we laugh louder when the rest of the audience is laughing, too.



Kinds of Plays

Quick Check

1. A young woman wants to marry her love, but her mother disapproves of him. After many setbacks, the suitor wins the mother's approval and the lovers marry.
2. A young man, blinded by passion, worsens a feud between his family and his lover's. The play ends with the deaths of the two lovers.

Which plot would be a tragedy, and which would be a comedy?

Answer

Kinds of Plays

Quick Check

1. A young woman wants to marry her love, but her mother disapproves of him. After many setbacks, the suitor wins the mother's approval and the lovers marry.

Comedy

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Tragedy

Which plot would be a tragedy, and which would be a comedy?

Back

Structure of a Drama

Like the plot of a story, the plot of a drama follows a rising-and-falling structure. ▼



[End of Section]

Dramatic Structure

Conflict is a struggle or clash between opposing characters or forces. A conflict may develop . . .

- ❑ between characters who want different things or the same thing
- ❑ between a character and his or her circumstances
- ❑ within a character who is torn by competing desires

❑ WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF CONFLICT?



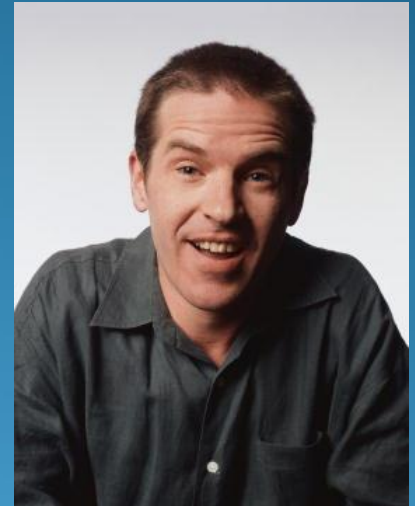
How is a play written?

- The author of a play is called a playwright. Everything a playwright writes must appear onstage.
- A play in written form is called a script.
- The playwright must write the dialogue, or what the characters say to each other in conversation, as well as the stage directions, which tells how the play is to be performed.

The Characters

Characters' speech takes the form of

- **Dialogue**—conversation between characters
- **Monologue**—a long speech by one character to one or more other characters
- **Soliloquy**—a speech by a character alone onstage, speaking to himself or herself or to the audience
- **Aside** - remarks made to the audience or to one character; the other characters onstage do not hear an aside



Dialogue

- Dialogue is what the characters say, and it is used to reveal their personalities = Character Traits.
- The name of the character who is to speak is listed usually in bold at the start of a line, followed by a colon.
- Every time the speaker changes, a new line is started.
Dialogue is necessary in order to develop conflict and advance the plot.



Staging a play

- Drama is more than just the words on a page. The production of a play involves directing the way the characters move, what they wear, the lighting, and the scenery.
- **Staging** is the practice of putting on the play. Some of the details of staging may be included in the stage directions, however, the director and the producer take what the playwright has described and bring it to life with their own ideas.

Performance of a Play

Plays are meant to be performed. A play comes to life in each unique performance. ▼

Stage Directions

Playwright describes setting and actions ▼

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graph TD; A[Stage Directions] --> B[Interpretation]; B --> C[Performance];
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Interpretation

Actors, directors, and designers interpret these directions creatively ▼

Performance

Audience experiences the story through the actors' speech and actions

[End of Section]

The Stage

A **stage** is like a small world unto itself. A stage ▼

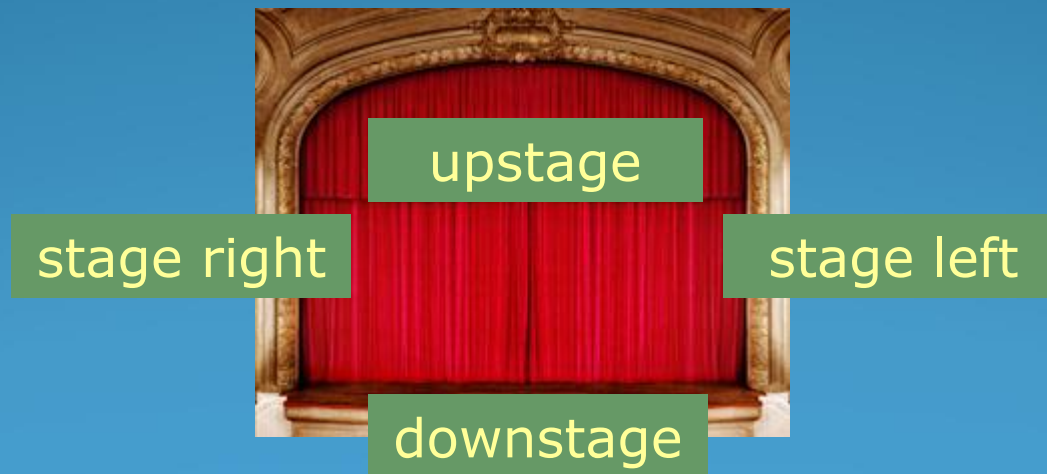
- can be grand or intimate ▼
- has its own coordinates



Setting the Stage

Proscenium stage

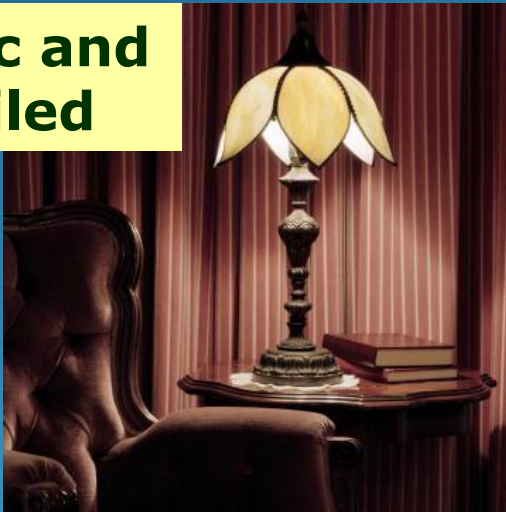
- The playing area extends behind an opening called a “proscenium arch.”
- The audience sits on one side looking into the action.
- This is like our auditorium.



The Stage

The stage's **set** might be ▼

realistic and detailed



abstract or minimal

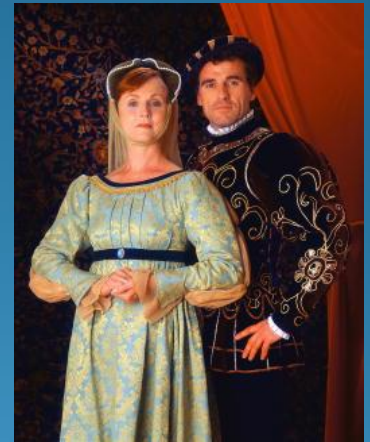


A set can be changed from scene to scene—sometimes with machinery and sometimes with just a change in **lighting**. ▼

The Stage

Other important elements of set design are costumes and props. ▼

- **Costumes** tell us about the characters and the time and place. They can be elaborate or minimal. ▼



- **Props** are items that the characters carry or handle onstage.

Sets

- Sets are the scenery, backdrops, and furniture that create the setting.
- A production may have different sets for different scenes. For example, some scenes may take place outside in the street, while others may take place in a character's living room. Some scenes may take place during the day, while others may take place at night.



Props

- Props are things like books, telephones, dishes, and other items that actors use onstage during the performance to support the action.



Stage directions

- Stage directions are notes in the script *usually written in italics and enclosed in parentheses or brackets*. They usually describe where and when a scene takes place (setting), how the characters should say their lines, and how the characters should move onstage. They may explain the character's mood or how the character is feeling.
 - Stage directions may also describe sets, costumes, props, lighting, and sound effects.
 - Stage directions use certain terms to describe the stage. Look at the following slide and see how.

Dramatization

- A *dramatization* is a play that was once a novel, short story, folk tale, biography, or other type of writing. Some plays are completely new works. Other plays are *adapted* from novels, short stories, or even from nonfiction. A playwright takes scenes, characters, and action from an existing work and turns them into a play, or dramatizes them.



How is a play divided?

- A play is largely divided up into parts, or acts. The number of acts in a production can range from one to five, depending on how a writer structures the outline of the story. The length of time for an act to be performed can range from 30 to 90 minutes.
- Acts may be further divided into scenes; in classical theatre each regrouping between entrances and exits of actors is a scene, while today it describes a quick change of setting.



Remember-People Produce Plays

- The actors and actresses who **perform the play** are known as the *cast*.
- The people who build sets, manage lighting, or work backstage are called the *crew*.



Review

Quick Check

[Gwendolen and Cecily are at the window, looking out into the garden.]

Gwendolen. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house . . . seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

Cecily. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

Gwendolen. [After a pause.] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

from *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde

What are the stage directions in this passage?

Answer

Is this more likely to be a comedy or a tragedy? Why?

Answer

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Is this more likely to be a comedy or a tragedy? Why?

Comedy—it describes a silly situation in a humorous tone.

Back



Enjoy the Show!

(Whether you are reading drama or watching a performance)

