

The elements of drama:

- Plots, characters, settings, dialogues, movement and themes are basic elements which all plays share. (Costumes, lighting and props are also among the elements to which modern plays pay close attention)
- The elements of drama are to be observed in action together , which makes the experience in total rich, complex and subtle.
- It is rare to respond to one individual element (theme/characterization)
- Our awareness of the elements of drama is useful when we approach a play analytically and think about the ways it affect us.

Plot:

- It is a term for **the action** of drama= - the sequence of events or incidents of which the story/narrative is composed.
- It implies that **the action has a shape and a form.**
- A carefully plotted play begins with **exposition, and explanation of what happened before the play began and** of how the characters arrived at their present situation.
- Using **suspense** is also part of the plot to build tension in the audience and in the characters in developing further the pattern of **rising action**.
- Conflict is a clash of actions, ideas, desires or wills.
- a. person against person.
b. person against environment - external force, physical nature, society, or "fate."
c. person against herself/himself - conflict with some element in her/his own nature; maybe physical, mental, emotional, or moral.
- **Artistic Unity** - essential to a good plot; nothing irrelevant; good arrangement.
Plot Manipulation - a good plot should not have any unjustified or unexpected turns or twists; no false leads; no deliberate and misleading information.
→there are questions on the part of the audience about **what is going to happen, see the characters in motion, watches the questions implied by the drama answered one by one.**
- the **action reaches its greatest tension** as it moves to a point of **climax** when a **revelation** is experienced by **the chief characters**.
- **once the climax is reached, the plot continues in a pattern of falling action as the drama's conclusion is reached and the characters understand their circumstance better than they did at the beginning of the play.**

Characters:

- Protagonist: the central character, sympathetic or unsympathetic.
- Antagonist - The forces working against her/him, whether persons, things, conventions of society, or traits of their own character.

- **Direct Presentation:**

The author tells us straight out, by exposition or analysis, or through another character.

- **Indirect Presentation:**

- The author shows us the character in action; the reader infers what a character is like from what she/he thinks, or says, or does. These are also called dramatized characters and they are generally consistent (in behavior), motivated(convincing), and plausible (life-like)

- **Character Types :**

- A **flat character** is known by one or two traits.
- A **round character** is complex and many-sided.
- A **stock** character is a stereotyped character (a mad scientist, the absent-minded professor, the cruel mother-in-law).
- A **static** character remains the same from the beginning of the plot to the end.
- A **dynamic** (developing) character undergoes permanent change. This change must be :
 - a. within the possibilities of the character.
 - b. sufficiently motivated.
 - c. allowed sufficient time for change.

Examples:

In tragedies, characters are highly complex following the demands of the genre. (Oedipus, Antigone, Hamlet, and Willy Loman...)

We come to know them through their own words, their interaction with other characters, their expressions and feelings and through their presence on stage expressed in movement and gesture.

In tragicomedies, characters are individualized and complexly portrayed such as Nora Helmer in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Maurya in Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.

In certain kinds of drama, there are characters who are drawn as types and are especially effective in satires and comedies of manners. (Alceste in the misanthrope in Moliere's play, Everyman in medieval drama....)

- In many plays, the entire shape of action derives from characters, from their strength and weakness. The audience senses that the characters must live through an arbitrary sequence of events creating their own opportunities and problems.

- **The setting:**

- The setting of a play refers mainly to the time and place in which the action occurs. It also refers to the scenery , the physical elements that appear on stage

The setting influences the action and the emotional reaction of the audience.

- **Dialogue:**

- **Plays depend for their unfolding on dialogue.**

- It is the speeches that the characters use to advance the action. The dialogue must tell the whole story since there is no description or commentary on the action.
- Fine playwrights have developed ways of revealing characters, advancing action and introducing themes by a highly efficient use of dialogue.
- **Theme :**
 - The play's theme is its message, its central concerns, the controlling idea or central insight.
 - It is not a simple thing to decide what the play's theme is. (Many plays contain several rather than one single theme)
 - A theme can be:
 1. a revelation of human character.
 2. may be stated briefly or at great length.
 3. a theme is not the "moral" of the story.
 - A theme must be expressible in the form of a statement - not "motherhood" but "Motherhood sometimes has more frustration than reward."
 - A theme must be stated as a generalization about life; names of characters or specific situations in the plot are not to be used when stating a theme.
 - A theme must not be a generalization larger than is justified by the terms of the story.
 - A theme is the central and unifying concept of the story. It must adhere to the following requirements:
 1. It must account for all the major details of the story.
 2. It must not be contradicted by any detail of the story.
 3. It must not rely on supposed facts - facts not actually stated or clearly implied by the story.
 - There is no one way of stating the theme of a story.
 - Any statement that reduces a theme to some familiar saying, aphorism, or cliché should be avoided : "A stitch in time saves nine," "You can't judge a book by its cover, " "Fish and guests smell in three days," and so on.
- **Symbol :**
 - a literary symbol means more than what it is. It has layers of meanings. Whereas an image has one meaning, a symbol has many.
 - A. Names used as symbols.
 - B. Use of objects as symbols.
 - C. Use of actions as symbols.
 - The ability to recognize and interpret symbols requires experience in literary readings, perception, and tact. It is easy to "run wild" with symbols - to find symbols everywhere. The ability to interpret symbols is essential to the full understanding and enjoyment of literature. Given below are helpful suggestions for identifying literary symbols:
 1. The story itself must furnish a clue that a detail is to be taken symbolically - symbols nearly always signal their existence by emphasis, repetition, or position.
 2. The meaning of a literary symbol must be established and supported by the entire context of the story. A symbol has its meaning inside not outside a story.

- 3. To be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different in kind from its literal meaning.
- 4. A symbol has a cluster of meanings.
- Irony :
- a term with a range of meanings, all of them involving some sort of discrepancy or incongruity. It should not be confused with sarcasm which is simply language designed to cause pain. Irony is used to suggest the difference between appearance and reality, between expectation and fulfillment, the complexity of experience, to furnish indirectly an evaluation of the author's material, and at the same time to achieve compression.
- A. Verbal irony - the opposite is said from what is intended.
- B. Dramatic irony - the contrast between what a character says and what the reader knows to be true.
- C. Irony of situation - discrepancy between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate.

→In every play, the elements of drama will work differently sometimes giving us the feeling that character is dominant over theme , or plot over character, or setting over both.

Ordinarily, character, theme , and plot are considered the most important elements of drama by critics, while, setting, music and movement come next, but each has its importance and each balances the others.

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