

<b>Introduction To English</b>  <b>Literature</b>  <b>Stage :First</b>  <b>L8 SS</b>		<b>Instructor :Dr. Mugdad</b>
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## What is Drama ?

In literature, a drama is the portrayal of fictional or non-fictional events through the performance of written dialog (either prose or poetry). Dramas can be performed on stage, on film, or the radio. Dramas are typically called *plays*, and their creators are known as “playwrights” or “dramatists.”

Performed since the days of Aristotle (c. 335 BCE), the term “drama” comes from the Greek words δράμα (an act, a play) and δράω (to act, to take action). The two iconic masks of drama—the laughing face and the crying face—are the symbols of two of the ancient Greek Muses: Thalia, the Muse of comedy and Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy.

## What Makes Drama so Dramatic?

To make their plays dramatic, playwrights strive to progressively build the audience’s feelings of tension and anticipation as the story develops. Dramatic tension builds as the audience keeps wondering “What happens next?” and anticipating the outcomes of those events. In a mystery, for example, dramatic tension builds throughout the plot until an exciting or unanticipated climax is revealed.

Dramatic tension is all about keeping the audience guessing. In the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus the King*, will Oedipus ever figure out that by killing his father and sleeping with his mother he had caused the plague that destroyed his city, and what will he do about it if he does? In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, will Prince Hamlet ever avenge his father's death and get rid of his pesky ghost and visions of floating daggers by murdering the play's antagonist Claudius?

Dramas depend heavily on spoken dialogue to keep the audience informed about the characters' feelings, personalities, motivations, and plans. Since the audience sees characters in a drama living out their experiences without any explanatory comments from the author, playwrights often create dramatic tension by having their characters deliver soliloquies and asides.

## Types of Drama

Dramatic performances are generally classified into specific categories according to the mood, tone, and actions depicted in the plot. Some popular types of drama include:

- **Comedy:** Lighter in tone, comedies are intended to make the audience laugh and usually come to a happy ending. Comedies place offbeat characters in unusual situations causing them to do and say funny things. Comedy can also be sarcastic in nature, poking fun at serious topics. There are also several sub-genres of comedy, including romantic comedy, sentimental comedy, a comedy of manners, and tragic comedy—plays in which the characters take on tragedy with humor in bringing serious situations to happy endings.
- **Tragedy:** Based on darker themes, tragedies portray serious subjects like death, disaster, and human suffering in a dignified and thought-provoking way. Rarely enjoying happy endings, characters in tragedies, like

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, are often burdened by tragic character flaws that ultimately lead to their demise.

- **Farce:** Featuring exaggerated or absurd forms of comedy, a farce is a nonsensical genre of drama in which characters intentionally overact and engage in slapstick or physical humor. Examples of farce include the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and the hit 1980 movie *Airplane!*, written by Jim Abrahams.
- **Melodrama:** An exaggerated form of drama, melodramas depict classic one-dimensional characters such as heroes, heroines, and villains dealing with sensational, romantic, and often perilous situations. Sometimes called “tearjerkers,” examples of melodramas include the play *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams and the classic movie of love during the Civil War, *Gone With the Wind*, based on Margaret Mitchell’s novel.
- **Opera:** This versatile genre of drama combines theater, dialogue, music, and dance to tell grand stories of tragedy or comedy. Since characters express their feelings and intentions through song rather than dialogue, performers must be both skilled actors and singers. The decidedly tragic *La Bohème*, by Giacomo Puccini, and the bawdy comedy *Falstaff*, by Giuseppe Verdi are classic examples of opera.
- **Docudrama:** A relatively new genre, docudramas are dramatic portrayals of historic events or non-fictional situations. More often presented in movies and television than in live theater, popular examples of docudramas include the movies *Apollo 13* and *12 Years a Slave*, based on the autobiography written by Solomon Northup.

## Classic Example of Comedy and Tragedy

Perhaps no two plays better illustrate the juxtaposition of the masks of drama—comedy and tragedy—than these two William Shakespeare classics.

## **Comedy:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In his romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare explores one of his favorite themes—"love conquers all"—with a humorous twist. Due to a series of comical and unpredictable situations, young couples keep falling in and out of love. As they struggle with the foibles of love, their equally amusing real-world problems are magically resolved by a mischievous sprite named Puck. In the very Shakespearian happy ending, old enemies become fast friends and the true lovers are united to live happily ever after.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is cited as an example of how playwrights utilize the ageless conflict between love and social convention as a source of humor.

## **Tragedy:** *Romeo and Juliet*

Young lovers live anything but happily ever after in Shakespeare's unforgettable tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. In what is still one of the most-performed plays in history, the love between Romeo and Juliet is doomed by the raging feud between their families, the Montagues and the Capulets. The night before the star-crossed lovers are secretly married, Romeo kills Juliet's cousin in a duel, and Juliet fakes her own death to avoid being forced by her parents to marry a family friend. Unaware of Juliet's plan, Romeo visits her grave and, believing she is dead, kills himself. When she learns of Romeo's death, Juliet truly does kill herself.

Through the technique of switching moods between hope and despair, Shakespeare creates heartbreaking dramatic tension in *Romeo and Juliet*.

What is dialogue? Here's a quick and simple definition:

Dialogue is the exchange of spoken words between two or more characters in a book, play, or other written work. In prose writing, lines of dialogue are typically identified by the use of quotation marks and a

dialogue tag, such as "she said." In plays, lines of dialogue are preceded by the name of the person speaking. Here's a bit of dialogue from [\*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland\*](#):

- "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'
- "How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
- "You must be," said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'

Some additional key details about dialogue:

- Dialogue is defined in contrast to monologue, when only one person is speaking.
- Dialogue is often critical for moving the plot of a story forward, and can be a great way of conveying key information about characters and the plot.
- Dialogue is also a specific and ancient genre of writing, which often takes the form of a philosophical investigation carried out by two people in conversation, as in the works of Plato. This entry, however, deals with dialogue as a narrative element, not as a genre.

## Elements of Drama

Drama is created and shaped by the elements of drama which, for the Drama ATAR course, are listed as: role, character and relationships, situation, voice, movement, space and time, language and texts, symbol and metaphor, mood and atmosphere, audience and dramatic tension.

- atmosphere: the interaction between the audience and the mood of a drama performance.
- character: a person or individual in the drama that may have defined personal qualities and/or histories. Flat characters (or two dimensional characters) demonstrate a lack of depth or change in the course of a drama event. Rounded characters (or three dimensional characters) feature more elaborate and complex traits and histories and are changed by dramatic action in the drama event.

- dramatic tension: drives the drama and keeps an audience interested. The tension comes when opposing characters, dramatic action, ideas, attitudes, values, emotions and desires are in conflict creating a problem that needs to be resolved (or unresolved) through drama.
- language and texts: referring to the use of spoken or written words that observe particular conventions and language registers that communicate ideas, feelings and other associations. Texts refer to the use of published texts, online materials and other compositions the reference of which adds meaning to the drama.
- metaphor: creating an image or idea of one thing by saying it is something else. For example, 'He is a lion of a man.' In drama, the use of metaphor can be more subtle such as a metaphor of a mouse created through a character having a squeaky voice and small darting movements. Design and stylistic elements can also be metaphors for characterisation or provide meaning in terms of theme.
- mood: describes the feelings and attitudes, often combined of the roles or characters involved in dramatic action often supported by other Elements of Drama as well as design elements. The mood is the emotional impact intended by the playwright, director and/or other members of the creative team.
- relationships: refers to the qualities of the connection between two or more characters or roles. That relationship may be fixed (largely unchanged by the dramatic action) or variable (challenged or changed by the dramatic action). The relationship may be cooperative (as in a friendship), adversarial (as in enemies), neutral (neither positive nor negative) or non-existent (as in total strangers). Those relationships will be defined by shared interests, common objectives, cultural values and/or human need.
- role: a performer can present in performance a role that represents an abstract concept, stereotyped figure, or person reduced to a particular dominant trait (occupation, human condition or social vocation) that lacks depth or a backstory normally present in a 'Character'.
- situation: the condition or circumstances in which a character or characters are presented often at the opening of a performance.
- space: the place where dramatic action is situated and the qualities of that place including temperature, features, light levels, population levels and other environmental factors that may be presented to or imagined by the characters/audience.
- symbol: symbolic parts of the scenography or design represent and add further meaning to themes, narrative, emotion, mood and atmosphere. Different colours are symbolic. Other symbols might be found in a sound effect, music, style, images. Some symbols are literal while others infer meaning.
- time: both the time of day, time of the year and time in history or the future. Time also reflects changes in time within a scene or drama event. Time also refers to the flow of time over the length of a drama event: fragmented time, cyclical time, linear time and so forth.

