

# Lecture One

## What is Drama? Definition, Examples of Drama as a Literary Term

**Drama definition in literature:** A drama is defined as a piece of literature of which the intended purpose is to be performed in front of an audience.

## What is Drama in Literature?

**Drama meaning:** A drama is a type of literature that is written for the purpose of being performed in front of an audience. This type of writing is written in the form of a script, and the story is told through the lines of the characters played by actors.  
Types of Drama in Literature

**Comedy:** A comedy is a type of drama that is written to be entertaining or amusing for the audience.

The television show *Seinfeld* is considered a comedy. This sitcom follows the lives of four friends and the humorous situations they encounter together.

**Tragedy:** A tragedy is a type of drama that can be described as serious in nature and often includes a catastrophic ending.  
William Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet* is an example of a tragedy. In this play, two young children fall in love and feel the need to hide this from their parents due to their feuding families. However, their rash thinking leads them to their ultimate deaths.

**Farce:** A farce is a subcategory of comedy. These low comedies include ridiculous and slapstick comedic situations in order to create humor for the audience.

The movie *Dumb and Dumber* is an example of a farce. This movie follows the story of two caricatures on a mission to return a briefcase to a beautiful lady. Throughout the film the two encounter several ridiculous and crude situations.

**Melodrama:** While it originally referred to dramas that included accompanying music, melodramas now refer to plays that include highly emotional situations in order to play on the feelings of the audience.

- The play *Les parents terribles* by Jean Cocteau is an example of a melodrama that involves several layers of over dramatic situations including cheating and suicide.

**Musical Drama:** Musical dramas refer to plays in which characters engage in dialogue but also include scenes in which the passion of the character is so great he expresses himself in song.

- Andrew Lloyd Weber's *The Phantom of the Opera* is a well-known example of a musical drama that tells the story of obsession.

## **What are the Elements of Drama?**

### **Plot**

A **plot** is a sequence of events within a play that tells a story. Essentially, a plot is what makes a story. Five components make up a plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution--conflict and theme help drive the plot forward. Although characters are introduced in the exposition part of the plot, a cast of characters is not a component of the overall structure.

- Exposition - Introduces the setting, characters, and the story's primary conflict.
- Rising Action - Begins after the introduction of the conflict and carries most of the story's details. It builds intensity as it progresses toward the climax.
- Climax - The most intense part of the plot. The conflict is at its most intense moment.
- Falling Action - After the conflict has reached its peak, the story begins to wrap up. Any other minor disputes are now resolved.
- Resolution - All loose ends of the story have been resolved. The story concludes.

### **Characters**

Aristotle referred to characters as a community. His description encompasses the entire cast of characters and how each character has its unique impact on the plot. A character in a play includes a particular personality, beliefs, and principles. The story's protagonist is the perspective from which the audience identifies and whom the conflict centers around. The antagonist directly opposes the protagonist. Often the antagonist is portrayed as a villain. Still, the antagonist could be an idea, nature, or even the protagonist against themselves. A conflict with the protagonist could be either internal or external. An internal conflict involves the character and themselves. An external conflict could involve one character vs. another, a character vs. nature, or a character vs. society. The major conflict of the story will always center around the protagonist. Still, minor conflicts can arise throughout the plot, either internal or external.

### **Thought**

Thought is the reason behind a character's actions; this is often referred to as the drama's theme. Thought is the message that the protagonist is trying to communicate to the audience. Each drama has at least one underlying idea carried throughout the

plot. These ideas are what motivates a character's actions or causes a character's reactions. A play may encompass more than one theme.

**Time:**

The fictional time in the narrative or setting; timing of one moment to the next contributing to the tension and rhythm of dramatic action.

**Language:**

Ideas and dramatic meaning: the choice of linguistic expression and ideas in drama used to create dramatic action.

**Symbol :**

Associations that occur when something is used to represent something else to reinforce or extend dramatic meaning.

**Audience :**

Individuals or groups of people who experience the arts in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement. The artist is audience to their own artwork.

**Mood and atmosphere:**

The feeling or tone of both the physical space and the dramatic action created by or emerging from the performance.

**Dramatic Action:**

The driving force and forward motion of drama to create dramatic meaning, tension, belief and audience engagement. The movement of the drama from the introduction, exposition of ideas and conflict to a resolution

**Second Stage**