

Lecture Four: Drama

*Lesson Plan

- 1-Introduction
- 2-Is Drama Literature?
- 3-Devices of Drama
- 4-What Makes Drama so specific?
- 5-Traditional and Modern Tragedy
- 6-Speech Devices in Drama
- 7-Evaluation

*Lesson Objectives:

- To Define the term *drama* and identify its origin distinguishing it from other literary genres.
- To identify and sequence the five main stages of the dramatic plot (exposition, rising action, climax, ...) correctly.
- To Differentiate between traditional tragedy and modern tragedy.
- To Classify dramatic speech devices (dialogue, monologue, aside, soliloquy) based on short textual examples
- To Analyze the specific elements of drama (theme, characters, setting, spectacle, tone, mood, ...) by applying them to a short dramatic extracts.

*Keywords

Drama, Dramatic Plot, Theater, Music, Personae, Costumes

1-Introduction

Different types of drama have existed since the ages from Greek classical theatre to the present times. The previous section explores poetry as a literary genre and its types and techniques. The present lesson introduces the second genre named drama with its characteristics and elements. Some people do not consider dramatic texts as literature because it goes beyond the paper to the stage; it is a performed text. However, drama is basically a text that is written for the sake of performance; the text itself is part of literature though.

2-Is Drama Literature?

The Greek word "dran," which means "to do, to act," is the source of the term. Drama is the performance of plays on stage by actors in front of an audience in a theater. Dramatic texts are structured differently than other types of literature. The text is divided into acts and scenes.

The drama is composed of a part literature and a part of theater. Literary history and theatre history share a portion Words only play a minor role in some plays. Also, not every line in a poetic drama has obvious literary quality. In his final scene, King Lear states: "Ask you fix that

button.” An action is prompted by the request; releasing the button, Lear responds, "Thank you, sir." Three dramatic gestures are created by eight words. The words are accurate, but the power of the actions and the play as a whole comes from them.

Therefore, only the literary aspect of drama appears here. Because the literary component of English drama decreases after Shakespeare, this is a part that decreases. Today, only prose plays from the 18th century are read; They are clever and plotful .Poetic drama was overly poetic in the 19th century, when theater was primarily a form of entertainment. English literature offers Shakespeare and the stage, but after 1660, Irishmen produced the best English-language drama: Wilde, Beckett, Congreve, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and Shaw

3-Devices of Drama:

a- Plot: ‘Dramatic Plot’

*Exposition = Gives audience information about earlier events + the present situation + the characters.

*Rising Events = Question of potential conflict + complication + discoveries + decisions = Change the course of action.

*Climax = Crisis = Turning point. Concealed information is partly revealed and answers the dramatic question.

*Falling events = possible solutions + Release of tension.

*Denouement = Disengage = Resolution = Final part of the play to satisfy the expectations of the audience.

b- Theme: it is the central topic a play treats.

c- Characters: (Personae): They are the people presented in a play.

d- Setting: it refers to the time and place in which a story takes place. The scene displays the setting in terms of time and place of the action.

e- Spectacle: it involves the visual aspects of a play: scenery, costumes...

f- Language: it stands for the word choices made by the playwright and the enunciation of the actors of the language.

g- Point of View: pertains to who tells the story and how it is told, i.e. first/second/third-person or omniscient point of view.

h- Music: it encompasses the rhythm of dialog and speeches in a play. It also means the aspects of the melody and music compositions as with musical theater.

i- Symbolism: the use of symbols in a play. Many of the following can be understood as symbols:

-Props (e.g. a torn wedding photograph to represent a divorce)

-Gestures (e.g. finger on lips as a symbol of silence)

-Expressions (e.g. open mouth to represent surprise)

-Costumes (e.g. white costume as a symbol of innocence)

- Lighting (e.g. blue lighting to represent night- time)

-Setting (e.g. dry ice vapor to represent a snowy wood)

j- Tone: it is the playwright's attitude toward the subject or reader.

k-Mood: the feeling a play is intended to create in a reader.

l-Figures of Speech: metaphor, simile, personification...

4-What Makes Drama so specific?

- -Rise of a curtain instead of music in Greek tragedies, given by a choral.
- -Use of dialogues.
- -Characters are the principal material.
- Ordinary language in modern plays as opposed to dignified and formal language in traditional ones.
- -Ideas and emotions are directly implied by the characters.
- -Visual aspect of the play is for the spectacle in scenery, costumes, make up, and stage lighting.

The Musical Theatre: A form of theatre where there are actors, drama, music, dance, spoken dialogues, heavy lights and costumes. A lyric is one of the most important part of the musical theatre as it consists of songs and choreographed dance. It started in the early 20th century, where they were simply called as 'musicals'.

5-Traditional and Modern Tragedy

Traditional Tragedy	Modern Tragedy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technique of 5 act form. • Elaborating flowery language. • Theme of revenge. • Use of magic and ghosts • Device of the confidant, a trusted companion in whom the leading character confides. • The use of masks to depict the personality of the characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibsen from Norway is considered to be the founder of modern drama. Only 2 acts. • The hero as a layman. • Committing suicide. • Modern aspect of life. • Gas tube. • Car crash. • Life insurance.

6-Speech Devices in Drama

***Dialogue:** The words uttered by characters in a play forms a dialogue. The dialogue reveals the plot and characters of the play. What is spoken must be suitable to the situation and the role of the character. Good dialogue sheds light on the character speaking and the one spoken about, and aids in the furtherance of the plot.

***Monologue** is a longer speech that one character says directly to the other characters onstage. All the others onstage can hear a monologue. The monologue is intended to communicate directly to them. The prefix “mono” means “one”- i.e. one character speaks.

***Aside:** This is spoken by a character to another character or to the audience but is not heard by the other characters on stage. Asides reveal what a character is thinking or feeling.

***Soliloquy:** A character that is typically alone on stage delivers a long speech which is called a soliloquy. Emotions and innermost thoughts of the character are revealed in a soliloquy.

7-Evaluation

-Short Test

a-Complete the following sentences using appropriate words or phrases from the lesson.

1. The term “drama” comes from the Greek wordwhich means “to act.”

2. Dramatic texts are divided into and
3. Drama is composed of both and
4. In a dramatic plot, the introduces background information and the present situation.
5. The turning point of a play is called the
6. The final resolution of a play that satisfies the audience is known as the
7. The visual elements of a play, including scenery and costumes, are referred to as
8. In modern plays, language is commonly used instead of formal and dignified language.
9. A long speech delivered by a character alone on stage that reveals inner thoughts is called a
10. In musical theatre, a is one of the most important elements because it includes songs and choreographed dance.

b-Choose the correct answer.

- ✓ Drama differs from other literary genres because it is primarily
 - a) narrated by a single speaker
 - b) performed on stage before an audience
 - c) written only in poetic form
 - d) limited to five acts
- ✓ The rising events in a dramatic plot mainly involve
 - a) background information
 - b) final resolution
 - c) complications and conflicts
 - d) the author's biography
- ✓ The central topic a play treats is called the
 - a) setting
 - b) theme
 - c) mood
 - d) spectacle
- ✓ An aside is a speech that
 - a) is heard by all characters
 - b) reveals past events
 - c) is not heard by other characters on stage
 - d) is delivered by the narrator
- ✓ Which of the following is a characteristic of traditional tragedy?
 - a) Two-act structure
 - b) Hero as an ordinary layman
 - c) Use of masks
 - d) Car crashes and life insurance
- ✓ Modern tragedy is associated with
 - a) revenge themes and ghosts
 - b) five-act structure
 - c) everyday life situations
 - d) exclusively poetic language

- ✓ Musical theatre combines
 - a) narration and epic poetry
 - b) drama, music, dance, and dialogue
 - c) silent performance and masks
 - d) only spoken dialogue
- ✓ The “exposition” in a dramatic plot provides
 - a) the turning point
 - b) the resolution
 - c) background information
 - d) the final catastrophe

b-Global Task

1-Define the following terms:

Dramatic plot, Scene, Theater, Musical Theater, Tragedy, Gestures, Costumes, Tone

2-What are the important devices of drama?

3-Does Drama implement ordinary or figurative languages?

4-Why is William Shakespeare so important in the English Dramatic scope?

5-Compare between The dialogue and the monologue, then between the aside and the soliloquy