

Introduction to the Course

Elements of Drama

1. Character

Character is revealed primarily by what a character does. To find out character, examine **motivation**, **obstacle**, and what the person does or will do to get around the obstacle. Remember though, that the best characters remain somewhat of a mystery. A character laid out clearly, rationally, and fully explained is not only impossible, but dull and implausible.

2. Plot

The plot is usually structured with acts and scenes. Open conflict plays: rely on the suspense of a struggle in which the hero, through perhaps fight against all odds, is not doomed. Dramatic thesis: foreshadowing, in the form of ominous hints or symbolic incidents, conditions the audience to expect certain logical developments. Coincidence: sudden reversal of fortune plays depict climatic ironies or misunderstandings. Dramatic irony: the fulfillment of a plan, action, or expectation in a surprising way, often opposite of what was intended.

3. Theme

The theme of the play is the general idea which the play is >about=. The theme is not necessarily what the play >means=. A play does not mean anything. It *is*. If anything the theme is a result of the play; it emerges from the overall components of the play: character, action, images etc.

4. Dialogue

Dialogue provides the substance of a play. Each word uttered by the character furthers the business of the play, contributes to its effect as a whole. What is said is appropriate to the role and situation of a character. Also the exposition of the play often falls on the dialogue of the characters. Remember exposition establishes the relationships, tensions or conflicts from which later plot developments derive.

5. Convention

6. Genre

7. Audience

8. Stagecraft