



## 1 Elements of Drama

Drama is narrative, or storytelling, written for performance.

A **drama** is a play, a story written to be performed by actors on a stage or in a film. Sometimes, people use the word *drama* to refer to a work about a serious subject. However, the broad genre of drama includes every type of performed narrative work, whether lighthearted or serious.

Like other works of narrative literature, dramatic works feature **characters**, or personalities who take part in the action of the story. The main characters face a **conflict**, a struggle or problem that propels the sequence of events called the **plot**. The highest point of interest in the plot, the **climax**, occurs during the point of greatest tension between characters. As the story winds down, the **resolution** of the conflict leads to the conclusion of the play.

**Acts** are the basic units of organization in a drama. Acts are often further divided into **scenes**. A scene may move the action to a new setting or

time of day, it may introduce new characters, or it may shift a play's mood. For example, an evening scene may follow a daytime scene, or a comic scene may lighten the mood of a serious play.

The author of a play, called a **playwright** or **dramatist**, writes the **script**, or text of the story. The script contains **dialogue**, or the characters' spoken words. It also contains **stage directions**, which are instructions about how the play should be performed. In some plays, the playwright gives detailed stage directions, while in others he or she provides few or none at all.

All the elements of drama combine in performance to produce an illusion of reality known as **dramatic effect**. Dramatic effect allows viewers to believe in the events of the story, even though they know the play is artificial. Through this effect, the dramatist explores a **theme**—a deeper meaning or insight about life.

### The Elements of Drama

<b>Acts and Scenes</b>	Acts and scenes are the basic sections of drama. A drama may consist of one or more acts, each of which may contain any number of scenes.
<b>Stage Directions</b>	Stage directions are the playwright's instructions about how a play should be performed. They are usually set in italics and/or set off by brackets. They may include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background about the setting or characters</li> <li>• Abbreviations for where actors should move or say their lines—for example, <i>D.S.</i> means downstage, or closer to the audience, while <i>U.S.</i> means upstage, or farther from the audience</li> <li>• Details about physical elements of the performance, such as sets, lighting, and costumes</li> </ul>
<b>Sets</b>	Sets are constructions that define the area in which the play's action occurs. Sets may be realistic and look like actual places. They may also be abstract or minimalist and merely suggest real places.
<b>Props</b>	Props are movable objects, like swords or pens, that actors use on stage.

## 2 Forms of Drama

The ancient Greeks as an organized basic types of performance categories to describe

- A **tragedy** is a play with a main character who is a **hero**. In drama, a hero is always such as a general or an admirable but flawed—a minor character.
- A **comedy** is a play that shows events in which the world is restored or improved.

Comedies are not their defining distinction because it is how the story ends in wedding or other positive events.

**Dramatic Structure** such as most Greek and Roman plays follow the five acts and the acts follow the works: **Act 1** = rising action, **Act 2** = rising action, **Act 4** = falling action.

### Types of Drama

Type of Speech
Monologue
Soliloquy
Aside



## 1 Forms of Drama

The ancient Greeks, who developed drama as an organized literary form, created two basic types of plays. We still use these two categories to define dramatic forms.

- A **tragedy** traces the downfall of the main character, often called the **tragic hero**. In classical drama, the tragic hero is always an important person, such as a general or a king. The hero is admirable but is defeated by a **tragic flaw**—a mistake or a character defect.
- A **comedy** has a happy ending. Comedies usually feature a series of events in which the order or balance of the world is disrupted. A comic ending restores order and harmony.

Comedies are often funny, but humor is not their defining trait. The main distinction between tragedy and comedy is how the story ends: tragedies end in death, defeat, or exile, while comedies end in weddings, births, reunions, or other positive, joyful events.

**Dramatic Structures** Classical dramas, such as most works written by the ancient Greeks and by Shakespeare, take place in five acts and are called **five-act plays**. The acts follow the structure of most narrative works: **Act 1** = introduction/exposition; **Act 2** = rising action; **Act 3** = climax; **Act 4** = falling action; **Act 5** = resolution.

In some dramatic works, the five segments of plot are compressed into fewer acts. For example, many **screenplays**, or scripts written for films, occur in three acts. Act 1 introduces the main characters and the basic situation. Act 2 sets up a problem. Act 3 provides the resolution.

**One-act plays** are dramatic works that are organized in a single act. The one act may still contain multiple scenes.

## 3 Types of Dramatic Speeches

In most dramatic works, dialogue is the playwright's main tool for developing characters and furthering the plot. Ancient Greek playwrights also used the convention of the **chorus**, a group of observers who were part of the play but not part of the story. The chorus provided background information and reacted to the events that unfolded on stage.

In some modern dramas, a **narrator** replaces the chorus. The narrator is a personality or voice that comments on but does not participate in the story. In some films, for example, an unseen narrator may introduce the story as a whole, set up a scene, or tell viewers about a character.

Playwrights use other types of dramatic speeches to supplement dialogue and reveal the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters. The main types of dramatic speeches are explained in the chart below.

### Types of Dramatic Speeches

Type of Speech	Definition	Examples from <i>The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet</i>
Monologue	A long, uninterrupted speech delivered by a character to other characters on stage	Romeo speaks about love to Benvolio. (p. 813, line 171)
Soliloquy	A speech in which a character, alone on stage, reveals private thoughts that the audience is allowed to overhear	Juliet reveals her private thoughts. (p. 871, line 17)
Aside	A brief remark a character makes to the audience rather than to other characters	Juliet tells the audience that Romeo is no villain. (p. 885, line 83)

## 4 In This Section

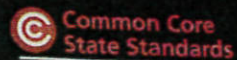
### Elements of Drama

#### Analyzing Character Development

#### Close Read: Character, Plot, and Theme

- Model Text
- Practice Text

#### After You Read



RL.9-10.3

[For the full wording of the standards, see the standards chart in the front of your textbook.]



# Analyzing Character Development

Common Core State Standards

## Reading Literature

3. Analyze how complex characters over the course of a text, and advance the theme.

**Characters'** reactions to conflict propel the plot and point to thematic meanings.

## Characters and Conflict

In both tragedies and comedies, characters face **conflicts**, or struggles between opposing forces. There are two main types of conflict: external and internal.

- **External Conflict:** a struggle against an outside force, such as an enemy, nature, or the pressures of society

### Example:

Romeo and Juliet struggle against pressures from their feuding families.

- **Internal Conflict:** a struggle posed by a character's own beliefs, thoughts, or feelings

### Example:

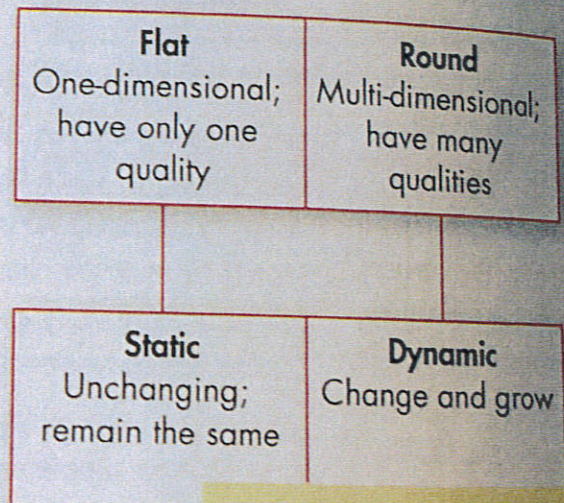
As she enacts the plan that will allow her to join Romeo, Juliet struggles with her fears.

The most interesting dramatic works feature important conflicts that engage the audience. For tragic characters, the conflict is often literally life threatening. For comic characters, the conflict is often symbolically life threatening. For example, the hero in a romantic comedy may not win the woman of his dreams. The quality of his life, if not its substance, is at risk.

**Protagonist and Antagonist** Most plays focus on a single main character—the protagonist. The character who opposes the main character and either creates or adds to the conflict is called the antagonist.

**Complex Characters** Great dramas present interesting characters, both protagonists and antagonists, whose stories are compelling to audiences. Such characters are complex, which means they have strengths and weaknesses and experience mixed emotions. Complex characters have multiple motivations, or a variety of reasons for feeling and behaving as they do. In literary terms, complex characters are round, rather than flat, and dynamic, rather than static.

## Character Types



Flat, static characters are often **stock figures**, or stereotypes, such as the villain or the damsel in distress.

A play is, in part, an exploration of a round, dynamic character's journey from one state of being to another. By dramatizing that journey, a playwright also explores insights into the human condition, or thematic meaning.



## Character Development

In any work of literature, a writer uses the tools of character development, or **characterization**, to show what characters are like. There are two general approaches available to a writer: direct and indirect characterization.

2 In **direct characterization**, a writer simply tells the audience about a character. In dramatic works, direct characterization may appear in stage directions. Alternatively, the chorus, a narrator, or another character might tell the audience what a character is like. For example, in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Caesar describes the suspicious character of Cassius:

*He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men.*

In **indirect characterization**, the writer shows the audience what a character is like in any of the following ways:

- Descriptions of a character's physical appearance
- The character's own words
- The character's actions and behavior
- Other characters' reactions to the character

An actor brings a character to life on the stage or in a movie by using his or her voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body language, as well as the pitch and phrasing of his or her speech. Costumes and sets then help to emphasize elements of a character's personality. However, when you read a drama, you must use textual clues to understand characters' motivations, feelings, actions, and thoughts.

**Clues to Characterization When Reading Drama** Playwrights help readers understand complex characters by using dialogue, stage directions, punctuation, and word choice to show emotions, relationships, and differences in characters' status, education, and environment. As you read drama, look for these clues to complex characters.

**Examples: Characterization in Drama**  
**Punctuation Showing Emotion:** That's unbelievable! You mean—the bank will give us the loan?

**Stage Directions Showing Attitude:** [Stanley runs to Anna, arms outstretched.]

**Dialogue Suggesting Social Class:** Really, Madam. I don't see why we can't just enjoy our tea!

**Word Choice Showing Relationships:** You're fantastic, sweet pea! You rustled up my favorite meal!

**Dramatic Speeches** The different types of dramatic speeches, described on page 781, also provide critical clues to characters' motivations and actions. For example, in a monologue or soliloquy, a character can explain what he or she thinks and feels. The audience learns about the character's conflicts and even his or her secrets. Such speeches help propel the plot because they explain why characters do what they do. Often, these types of speeches also express ideas that are key to the play's theme.

**Characters and Theme** There are many ways in which characters provide clues to a play's theme. To determine and analyze the theme of a drama, pay attention to characters' words, motivations, actions, and reactions. Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- How do the characters respond to conflicts?
- What are their reasons for responding as they do?
- What change or growth do characters undergo as a result of their experiences?
- What central ideas are emphasized throughout the drama through the words and actions of the characters?
- What insights about life or the human condition do these ideas convey?



**SESTET** See *Stanza*.

**SETTING** The *setting* of a literary work is the time and place of the action. Time can include not only the historical period—past, present, or future—but also a specific year, season, or time of day. Place may involve not only the geographical place—a region, country, state, or town—but also the social, economic, or cultural environment. In some stories, setting serves merely as a backdrop for action, a context in which the characters move and speak. In others, however, setting is a crucial element. See also *Mood*.

**SHORT STORY** A *short story* is a brief work of fiction. In most short stories, one main character faces a conflict that is resolved in the plot of the story. Great craftsmanship must go into the writing of a good story, for it has to accomplish its purpose in relatively few words. See also *Fiction* and *Genre*.

**SIMILE** A *simile* is a figure of speech in which the words *like* or *as* are used to compare two apparently dissimilar items. The comparison, however, surprises the reader into a fresh perception by finding an unexpected likeness. In “Dream Deferred” (p. 620), Langston Hughes uses the simile “Does it dry up/like a raisin in the sun?” to discuss a dream deferred.

**SOLILOQUY** A *soliloquy* is a long speech expressing the thoughts of a character alone on stage. In William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), Romeo gives a soliloquy after the servant has fled and Paris has died (Act V, Scene iii, lines 74–120). See also *Monologue*.

**SONNET** A *sonnet* is a fourteen-line lyric poem, usually written in rhymed iambic pentameter. The *English*, or *Shakespearean*, sonnet consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a couplet (two lines), usually rhyming *abab cdcd efef gg*. The couplet usually comments on the ideas contained in the preceding twelve lines. The sonnet is usually not printed with the stanzas divided, but a reader can see distinct ideas in each. See the Sonnet 30 by William Shakespeare on page 754.

The *Italian*, or *Petrarchan*, sonnet consists of an octave (eight-line stanza) and a sestet (six-line stanza). Often, the octave rhymes *abbaabba* and the sestet rhymes *cdecde*. The octave states a theme or asks a question. The sestet comments on or answers the question.

See also *Lyric Poem*, *Meter*, and *Stanza*.

**SOUND DEVICES** A *sound device* is a technique used by a poet to emphasize the sound relationships among words in order to create musical and emotional effects and emphasize a poem’s meaning. These devices include *alliteration*, *consonance*, *assonance*, *onomatopoeia*, and *rhyme*.

**SPEAKER** The *speaker* is the imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem. In many poems, the speaker is not identified by name. When reading a poem, remember that the speaker within the poem may be a person, an animal, a thing, or an abstraction. The speaker in the following stanza by Emily Dickinson is a person who has died:

Because I could not stop for Death—  
He kindly stopped for me—  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—  
And Immortality.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS** *Stage directions* are notes included in a drama to describe how the work is to be performed or staged. These instructions are printed in italics and are not spoken aloud. They are used to describe sets, lighting, sound effects, and the appearance, personalities, and movements of characters. See also *Drama*.

**STANZA** A *stanza* is a repeated grouping of two or more lines in a poem that often share a pattern of rhythm and rhyme. Stanzas are sometimes named according to the number of lines they have—for example, a *couplet*, two lines; a *quatrain*, four lines; a *sestet*, six lines; and an *octave*, eight lines.

**STATIC CHARACTER** See *Character*.

**STYLE** *Style* refers to an author’s unique way of writing. Elements determining style include diction; tone; characteristic use of figurative language, dialect, or rhythmic devices; and syntax, or typical grammatical structures and patterns. See also *Diction* and *Tone*.

**SURPRISE ENDING** A *surprise ending* is a conclusion that violates the expectations of the reader but in a way that is both logical and believable. O. Henry’s “The Gift of the Magi” (p. 260) and Guy de Maupassant’s “The Necklace” (p. 332) have surprise endings. Both authors were masters of this form.



## 2 Literary Analysis: Dialogue and Stage Directions

**Dialogue** is conversation between characters. In prose, dialogue is usually set off with quotation marks. In drama, it generally follows the name of the speaker, as in this example:

**BENVOLIO.** My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

**MONTAGUE.** I neither know it nor can learn of him.

Dialogue reveals the personalities and relationships of the characters and advances the action of the play. Dialogue captures the language of the time in which a play is set. As you read, note the words characters use to express themselves.

**Stage directions** are notes in a play that describe how the work should be performed, or staged. They describe scenes, lighting, sound effects, and character actions. They are usually set in italics and are sometimes set off in brackets or parentheses, as in this example:

**Scene iii.** FRIAR LAWRENCE's cell.

*[Enter FRIAR LAWRENCE alone, with a basket.]*

As you read, notice how the dialogue and stage directions work together to help you "see" and "hear" the play in your mind.

## 3 Reading Skill: Summarize

**Summarizing** is briefly stating the main ideas in a piece of writing. Pausing to summarize as you read helps you check your comprehension before you read further. To be sure that you understand Shakespeare's language before you summarize, **use text aids**—the numbered explanations that appear with the text.

- If you are confused by a passage, check to see if there is a footnote or side note and read the corresponding explanation.
- **Reread** the passage, using the information from the note to be sure you grasp the meaning of the passage.

## 4 Using the Strategy: Summarizing Chart

As you read, use a chart like this one to summarize each scene.

Act I	
Scene	Summary of Action



When family differences stand between two people, it can be destructive because \_\_\_\_\_.

**While You Read** Look for ways in which family background influences the love between Romeo and Juliet.

## 2 Vocabulary

Read each word and its definition. Decide whether you know the word well, know it a little bit, or do not know it at all. After you read, see how your knowledge of each word has increased.

- **pernicious** (pər nish' əs) *adj.* causing great injury or ruin (p. 811) *The spy's activities had a pernicious effect on the top-secret project. perniciously *adv.**
- **adversary** (əd' vər ser' ē) *n.* a person who opposes or fights against another (p. 811) *Standing tall and trying to look brave, Pam faced her adversary in fencing. adverse *adj.* adversarial *adj.**
- **augmenting** (ôg ment' in) *v.* increasing; enlarging (p. 812) *With small deposits each week, our family is augmenting its savings. augmentable *adj.* augmentation *n.**
- **grievance** (grēv' əns) *n.* injustice; complaint (p. 813) *The board investigated the worker's grievance against his supervisor.*
- **oppression** (ə presh' ən) *n.* feeling of being weighed down with worries or problems (p. 813) *He could not pay all of his bills, and this caused a feeling of oppression. oppress *v.* oppressive *adj.**
- **transgression** (trans gresh' ən) *n.* wrong-doing; sin (p. 813) *Stealing from the poor is a transgression against humanity. transgress *v.* transgressor *n.**