



# Literature in English

Welcome to your Literature in English guide! This section will cover the fundamental concepts of Drama, essential for understanding literary works.

## SECTION A [DRAMA]

Drama is a mode of fictional representation through performance. It is a composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue or pantomime a story involving conflict or contrast of character, especially one intended to be acted on the stage.

### 1. Standard Terms

- **Plot:** The sequence of events in a play. It is the careful arrangement of incidents and events that forms the story, driving the action forward. It includes exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
- **Theme:** The central idea or underlying message that the playwright intends to convey. It is the universal truth, moral, or insight about life or human nature explored in the play (e.g., love, justice, betrayal, power).
- **Setting:** The time and place in which the events of a play occur. It can include the geographical location, historical period, time of day, season, and social/cultural environment. Setting creates atmosphere and influences character actions.
- **Characterization:** The process by which the playwright creates and develops characters. This can be done through:
  - **Direct description:** The playwright or another character tells us about a character.
  - **Actions:** What the character does.
  - **Dialogue:** What the character says and how they say it, and what other characters say about them.
  - **Thoughts/Feelings:** (Less common in drama, more implied).
  - **Appearance:** How the character looks.
- **Conflict:** The struggle between opposing forces in a play. It is central to the plot and can be:
  - **Man vs. Man:** Between two or more characters.
  - **Man vs. Self:** An internal struggle within a character.
  - **Man vs. Society:** A character struggling against societal norms or institutions.
  - **Man vs. Nature:** A character struggling against natural forces.
  - **Man vs. Fate/Supernatural:** A character struggling against destiny or external, non-human forces.

## 2. Types of Drama

Plays are generally categorized by their tone and the nature of their ending.

- **Tragedy:**
  - **Definition:** A drama that presents a serious subject matter involving a protagonist (tragic hero) who is destined to suffer or die, often due to a tragic flaw (hamartia), fate, or a conflict that spirals out of control.
  - **Characteristics:** Explores human suffering, often evokes pity and fear in the audience, and typically ends unhappily, with the death or downfall of the protagonist.
  - **Example:** Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or *Othello*.
- **Comedy:**
  - **Definition:** A drama intended to amuse and entertain, usually with a lighthearted tone and a happy ending.
  - **Characteristics:** Focuses on humorous situations, misunderstandings, witty dialogue, and often resolves conflicts positively, often with a marriage or reconciliation.
  - **Example:** Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- **Tragi-comedy:**
  - **Definition:** A play that blends elements of both tragedy and comedy. It may begin with serious events but end happily, or contain a mix of humorous and serious scenes.
  - **Characteristics:** Often explores serious themes but avoids a tragic outcome, or uses comic relief to lighten tragic situations.
  - **Example:** Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.
- **Melodrama:**
  - **Definition:** A drama characterized by exaggerated emotions, stereotyped characters (clear-cut heroes and villains), and a focus on sensational plots rather than deep character development.
  - **Characteristics:** Often features a virtuous protagonist and a villain who threatens them, with a clear moral outcome where good triumphs over evil. Music is often used to heighten emotion.
- **Farce:**
  - **Definition:** A type of comedy that relies on exaggerated, improbable situations, physical humor (slapstick), and broad characterizations for comedic effect.
  - **Characteristics:** Plot is often absurd and frantic, with mistaken identities, rapid entrances and exits, and a focus on creating laughter through chaos.
- **Satire:**
  - **Definition:** A literary genre that uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize human folly or vice, particularly in politics and contemporary issues.
  - **Characteristics:** Aims to bring about social or political change by mocking societal problems. Can be gentle or biting.
- **Morality Play:**
  - **Definition:** An allegorical drama popular in the 15th and 16th centuries, presenting a lesson about good conduct and character.

- **Characteristics:** Characters often personify abstract qualities (e.g., Everyman, Good Deeds, Vice) and the plot illustrates the struggle between good and evil for the soul of humanity.

### 3. Dramatic Techniques

These are the methods and devices playwrights use to create their plays and convey meaning.

1. **Stage Direction:** Instructions in the script that tell actors where to move, how to speak, or what emotions to convey. They also describe the setting, props, and lighting.
2. **Dialogue:** The spoken words exchanged between characters in a play. It reveals character, advances the plot, and conveys themes.
3. **Aside:** A brief remark or passage by a character in a play, directed to the audience or another character, which is supposed to be unheard by the other characters on stage. It provides insight into the character's thoughts or intentions.
4. **Monologue:** A long speech by one character in a play, delivered to other characters on stage, but without interruption.
5. **Soliloquy:** A long speech delivered by a character alone on stage, revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings to the audience. It is not addressed to any other character.
6. **Pantomime:** A dramatic performance in which a story is told using only gestures, facial expressions, and body movements, without words.
7. **Mime:** Similar to pantomime, focusing on silent bodily movements and expressions to convey emotions and actions.
8. **Chorus:** In ancient Greek drama, a group of performers who comment on the main action of the play, often speaking in unison. In modern drama, it can refer to a narrator or group that provides commentary.
9. **Music/Dance:** Often incorporated into plays to enhance mood, symbolize themes, advance plot (e.g., ritualistic dances), or serve as entertainment.
10. **Costume/Make-up:** Used to define characters, indicate social status, historical period, and enhance visual appeal.
11. **Sound Effects/Lighting:** Used to create atmosphere, indicate time of day or location, emphasize dramatic moments, and focus the audience's attention.
12. **Props:** Objects used by actors on stage (e.g., a sword, a book, a chair) that are relevant to the plot or character.
13. **Set/Scenery:** The physical background or arrangement of the stage that represents the play's setting.
14. **Flashback:** A scene or sequence of events that interrupts the chronological flow of the story to show events that happened at an earlier time.
15. **Foreshadowing:** Hints or clues given early in the play about events that will happen later. It creates suspense and prepares the audience for future developments.
16. **Suspense:** The feeling of excitement or anxiety that the audience feels about what will happen next in the play.
17. **Conflict (as a technique):** The active use of opposing forces to create tension and drive the dramatic action.

18. **Irony:** A literary device where there is a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant, or between what appears to be and what actually is.
- **Verbal Irony:** Saying the opposite of what is meant.
  - **Situational Irony:** When the outcome of a situation is contrary to what was expected.
  - **Dramatic Irony:** When the audience knows something that the characters on stage do not.
19. **Symbolism:** The use of objects, characters, or ideas to represent something else, often a deeper, abstract meaning (e.g., a dove symbolizing peace).
20. **Allusion:** An indirect reference to a person, place, event, or literary work outside the play itself, which the audience is expected to recognize.
21. **Satire/Parody:** As types of drama, they also function as techniques to criticize or mock. Parody is a humorous imitation of a particular writer, artist, or genre.
22. **Catharsis:** (Primarily associated with tragedy) The purging of emotions (pity and fear) that an audience experiences after watching a tragedy.
23. **Deus ex Machina:** (Latin for "god from the machine") A plot device whereby a seemingly unsolvable problem is suddenly and abruptly resolved by an unexpected and unlikely intervention, often a character or event that appears out of nowhere.