

4

DRAMA

GENRES PORTFOLIO

Drama

'Anything connected to performance.'

What is drama

In English a work performed on stage is now generally called a **play**, which corresponds to the word 'commedia' in Italian, while the word **drama** refers to anything connected to performance, i.e. the writing, staging and acting of a play or work on stage or through other media, for example TV and radio. Drama dates back to primitive times and it has its origins in make-believe activities such as children's games or religious rituals. The word itself, 'drama', comes from Greek and means 'action'.

The origins of drama

In England, as in most European countries, dramatic performances originated from religious dramatisation. On certain occasions, such as Christmas and Easter, the priest, together with a 'chorus', would represent some scenes from the Bible. Up to the 13th century they were performed in churches; then, progressively they began to be performed outside. Actors aimed at entertaining and amusing their audiences and although the subject matter of the plays remained predominantly religious, realistic and farcical elements began to be introduced. These plays were called 'morality' and 'mystery plays'. The first public theatres were opened during the Elizabethan Age (1558-1603) which is also known as the age of the theatre. It is this age which saw the birth of the great playwrights; Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare.

! The development of the theatre in the Renaissance is extensively explained in Volume I, Module 2, pp. 82-87. Here you can read about the birth of the theatre and find passages from works of the great playwrights.

- Christopher Marlowe, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 92.
- William Shakespeare, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 98.

The similarities between drama and the novel

The difference between drama and the novel is that drama is enacted, making drama a **literary but also a representational art**. A play, in fact, can be read but it has been written essentially to be performed (by actors) and seen (by audiences). Since drama usually tells a story, it has many elements which are similar to the novel. Just as in the novel, then, a play will also have: a plot, characters and a theme (possibly more than one).

Plot

The plot refers to the chain of events that build up the story, as with the novel, it can be linear or complex. The plot can also have a **sub-plot**, which is a secondary story line, separate from the main plot but which develops alongside it, a parallel story in other words. Most plots follow the same pattern: the exposition, a rising/developing action, conflict and complications, a climax.

In modern times many playwrights have experimented with drama and created new forms, in which the plot is so simple that it almost doesn't exist as the main emphasis is placed on the characters or a certain situation.

The Theatre of the Absurd is the most evident example of an experimental theatre which lacks both structure and plot. The main representatives of this kind of theatre in English literature are Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard, all writing in the second part of the 20th century.

- ! - Samuel Beckett, Volume II, Module 7, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*, p. 324.
 - Harold Pinter, Volume II, Module 7, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*, p. 338.
 - Tom Stoppard, Volume II, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*.

Characters

They are the people who participate in the story. As for the novel the characters can take on different roles. The **protagonist** is the main character and the **antagonist** is the character with whom he/she is in conflict. The characters can be further broken down into: **round** characters and **flat** characters.

Drama may also expose ideas and issues, in this case the characters become interesting not only for their behaviour and qualities, but also because they become spokesmen and women for ideas and ideals as can be seen in the plays of George Bernard Shaw.

- ! You will find passages from G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* in Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p. 86.

Theme

This is the subject matter of the story. For example, to quote a play which everybody knows, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* the main theme is love.

- 1 **Read the short plots on the following pages and for each of them identify: a) if there is a clear plot, b) who the protagonist and antagonist are and c) what the main theme of the play might be. Here are some themes you can choose from:**

- social injustice
- the superficiality of society
- existential void
- jealousy
- love for power
- ambition

- ! All these passages are from works presented in the anthology.
- William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Volume I, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*.
 - Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p. 77.
 - Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Volume II, Module 7, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*, p. 324.

Othello (William Shakespeare)

Desdemona, daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian senator, secretly marries the Moor Othello, a brave and fortunate general who fights for the republic. When the announcement comes that the Turks are threatening Cyprus Othello is sent to defend the island.

Desdemona follows him. With them is Iago, jealous of the young Cassius whom Othello has promoted lieutenant. Iago manipulates Cassio into drinking too much while on guard and persuades him to ask for the intervention of Desdemona. Meanwhile he makes Othello believe that Cassius is Desdemona's lover. Othello, mad with jealousy, kills Desdemona. Only at the end does he discover that he had no reasons for jealousy as Desdemona was a faithful wife and for the tragic mistake he made he kills himself.

PLOT:

PROTAGONIST:

ANTAGONIST:

THEME:

The Importance of Being Earnest (Oscar Wilde)

Jack Worthing, a young man who divides his life between town and countryside, has invented a rakish brother whose name is Earnest and lives in London. By doing so Jack has given himself an excuse to travel to London periodically. Jack is known as Earnest by his friends in London and as Jack when he's in the countryside. Jack is in love with Gwendolen Fairfax, his friend Algernon's cousin, and the love is reciprocal but when Jack talks to Gwendolen's mother (Lady Bracknell), she objects to his marrying her daughter because of his obscure origins. Algernon soon discovers that Jack has a double life and he too goes to the countryside and there meets the pretty Cecily, Jack's young ward, and falls in love at first sight. After a series of misunderstandings and the discovery of Jack's origins everything becomes clear and the two couples, Jack and Gwendolen, Algernon and Cecily are finally married.

PLOT:**PROTAGONIST:****ANTAGONIST:****THEME:*****Waiting for Godot*** (Samuel Beckett)

Two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting, at the side of a road, for the arrival of a certain character, Godot, an enigmatic figure they have never met before. They don't know if he will come, they don't even know who he is, but they keep waiting. Meanwhile they pass the time talking about anything at all, from jokes to existential matters. They don't know why they are waiting, or even what else they could be doing. In the meantime, Pozzo, a land-owner, and his servant Lucky (tied to him by a rope) appear briefly. They stop and talk to them. They leave. Vladimir and Estragon keep waiting. Evening falls and Godot still hasn't arrived. In Act II, Vladimir and Estragon are still waiting, but Godot sends a promising message. He says that he cannot come tonight but will definitely arrive tomorrow. The two men try to hang themselves out of desperation but fail as they don't have enough energy. Godot never appears and the two protagonists just keep on waiting.

PLOT:**PROTAGONIST:****ANTAGONIST:****THEME:****Features of drama**

Here we list the main features of drama and examine each one of them separately in the pages that follow.

1 Structure (dividend into acts and scene)*how the performance is presented (number of acts, scenes etc.)***2 Verbal expression***the basis of drama, it consists of dialogues, monologues, asides***3 Script***the text of a play***4 Conventions***various devices, typical of the theatre*

1 Structure (acts and scenes)

'How the performance is presented.'

Acts and scenes

Dramas are traditionally divided into parts, called **acts**, which are usually from one to five. Each act can be further divided into **scenes**. Modern drama can have three, two or even a single act.

The three unities

For many years the concept of the three unities, **unity of plot**, **unity of place** and **unity of time** was adhered to in drama. It meant that a play had to have only one plot, which developed in one environment and all the events had to take place in one day. They were first proposed by **Aristotle** in his *Poetics* and expanded by Italian critics of the 16th century. In English literature some great playwrights adopted the three unities in their plays. One of the most famous is Ben Johnson, a contemporary of William Shakespeare. However Shakespeare himself never adhered to the three unities in which modern times have lost their value altogether.

! You can find a description of Ben Johnson's work in Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 85.

1 Look at the structures of the three plays presented previously and answer the questions.

1. Which seems the most structured?
.....
2. Which provides the least information?
.....
3. Which play seems to have a poor plot?
.....
4. Do any of the three adopt the principle of the three unities?
.....

Othello (William Shakespeare)

Act 1, Scene 1: Venice. A street.

Act 1, Scene 2: Another street.

Act 1, Scene 3: A council-chamber.

Act 2, Scene 1: A Sea-port in Cyprus. An open place near the quay.

Act 2, Scene 2: A street.

Act 2, Scene 3: A hall in the castle.

Act 3, Scene 1: Before the castle.

Act 3, Scene 2: A room in the castle.

Act 3, Scene 3: The garden of the castle.

Act 3, Scene 4: Before the castle.

Act 4, Scene 1: Cyprus. Before the castle.

Act 4, Scene 2: A room in the castle.

Act 4, Scene 3: Another room In the castle.

Act 5, Scene 1: Cyprus. A street.

Act 5, Scene 2: A bedchamber in the castle.

The Importance of Being Earnest (Oscar Wilde)

Act 1: Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, London.

Act 2: The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.

Act 3: The Drawing-Room at the Manor House, Woolton.

Waiting for Godot (Samuel Beckett)

Act 1: A country road. A tree. Evening.

Act 2: Next day. Same time. Same place.

2

Verbal expression

'The basis of drama – dialogues, monologues/ soliloquies, asides.'

Dialogue

In drama the plot is almost entirely based on the verbal expression of the characters and their interaction. The story being enacted is conveyed through dialogue, in this way the actors also become the narrators who, with their speech, also create the setting and circumstances. Verbal expression can essentially be divided into dialogue and monologue (or soliloquy).

The **dialogue** has the function of conveying useful information about the characters, the setting, the time. Usually (and in particular in modern drama) it follows the model of real life conversation, though it can also take on rhetorical and poetic features.

It is important to focus on the kind of theatre a play was written for. For example, in Shakespeare's time, theatres were open buildings without lighting and with very little scenery, very different from the modern stage of today, equipped with all forms of special effects. In plays performed in Shakespeare's time, then, dialogue also had the function of providing information about setting and time and creating the right atmosphere for the audience.

Monologue, soliloquy and aside

A **monologue** is an extended speech by one person. A soliloquy is a type of monologue in which a character directly addresses the audience while alone on stage or while the other actors keep silent. It is not meant to be heard by the other characters.

Both are used when the playwright needs to show the audience a character's inner thoughts and feelings.



Probably the most famous of all soliloquies is Hamlet's 'to be or not to be'. You can find this passage in Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 127.

Aside is used when a character makes a short, revealing comment to the audience. The words are not meant to be heard by the other actors.

1 Read the following passages (the first two by Shakespeare, the third by G.B. Shaw in 1903 and the fourth by John Osborne in 1956) and answer the following questions.

1. Is it a dialogue, a monologue, an aside?
2. Does it give any information about the place or time?
3. Does it follow a conversational tone or does it take on rhetorical or poetic features?

1. **daggers:** coltelli.
2. **deed:** il fatto.
3. **thou:** *you*.
4. **owl-scream and the cricket's cry:** grido del gufo e lo stridere dei grilli.
5. **as:** mentre.
6. **Ay:** sì.
7. **Hark:** ascolta.
8. **chamber:** stanza.
9. **sight:** vista.

TEXT 1

Macbeth has killed Duncan and now talks to his wife.

[Enter Macbeth, carrying two bloodstained daggers¹.]

LADY MACBETH. My husband!

MACBETH. I have done the deed². Didst thou³ not hear a noise?

5 LADY MACBETH. I heard the owl-scream and the cricket's cry⁴.
Did not you speak?

MACBETH. When?

LADY MACBETH. Now.

MACBETH. As⁵ I descended?

10 LADY MACBETH. Ay⁶.

MACBETH. Hark⁷! Who lies i' the second chamber⁸?

LADY MACBETH. Donalbain.

MACBETH. [*looks at his hands*] This is a sorry sight⁹.

(*Macbeth*, William Shakespeare)

TEXT 2

This is the balcony scene when Romeo first arrives in Juliet's garden and she doesn't notice that he's there.

[*Capulet's orchard.*]

ROMEO [*Coming forward.*]

5 But soft! What light through yonder¹ window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!

Arise², fair sun, and kill the envious moon

Who is already sick and pale with grief³

That thou her maid art⁴ far more fair than she.

10 Be not her maid, since she is envious.

Her vestal livery⁵ is but sick and green,

And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off⁶.

It is my lady! O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

15 She speaks, yet she says nothing.

What of that? Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold⁷; 'tis not to me she speaks.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare)

1. **yonder:** quella.
2. **arise:** sorgi.
3. **grief:** dolore.
4. **(thou) art:** *you are*.
5. **vestal livery:** il suo abito chiaro.
6. **cast it off:** togli via.
7. **bold:** ardito.

TEXT 3

TANNER. You, Tavy [*Tavy is a short form for Tanner*] are an artist: that is, you have a purpose as absorbing and as unscrupulous as a woman's purpose... The true artist will let his wife starve¹, his children go barefoot², his mother drudge³ for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but⁴ his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip⁵ the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse⁶ his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it.

(*Man and Superman*, George Bernard Shaw)

1. **starve:** morire di fame.
2. **barefoot:** a piedi nudi.
3. **drudge:** sgobbare.
4. **but:** che non sia.
5. **to strip:** strappare.
6. **to rouse:** far nascere.

TEXT 4

It is Sunday morning. Jimmy and his friend Cliff are reading the papers. Jimmy's wife, Alison, is ironing.

CLIFF. Oh, you're not going to start up that old pipe again, are you? It stinks¹ the place out. [*To Alison.*] Doesn't it smell awful?² [*Jimmy grabs³ the matches and lights up.*]

ALISON. I don't mind it. I've got used to it.

JIMMY. She's a great one for getting used to things. If she were to die and wake up in paradise - after the first five minutes, she'd have got used to it.

CLIFF. [*hands her the trousers.*] Thank you, lovely.

Give me a cigarette, will you?

JIMMY. Don't give him one.

CLIFF. I can't stand the stink of that old pipe any longer. I must have a cigarette.

(*Look back in Anger*, John Osborne)

1. **it stinks:** puzza.
2. **smell awful:** ha un odore terribile.
3. **grabs:** afferra.

3 Script

The text of the play!

The script is the text used by the director to enact the performance of a play and is made up of the dialogue, stage directions, the setting and time.

Stage directions are the lines in italics that precede or are interspersed with dialogue.

They are given by playwrights to indicate the way the actors are expected to perform and move about the stage.

More modern playwrights, such as the Irish writer G.B. Shaw or the American Tennessee Williams, provided extensive stage directions. They tended to give suggestions not only about the setting and the time, but also about the physical appearance of the characters, their clothes, their behaviour and their movements. Elizabethan playwrights, however, like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, provided very few stage directions. You can find examples in the anthology.

- ! - Christopher Marlowe, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 92.
- William Shakespeare, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 98.
- G.B. Shaw, Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p. 84.
- Tennessee Williams, Volume II, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*.

- 1 Read the following stage directions then write if they are limited and interspersed with dialogue or if they are detailed and specific. In both cases try to explain their function and the kind of information they give. You can follow the example given for *Doctor Faustus*.

TEXT 5

[*The clock strikes¹ twelve.*]

It strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,

Or Lucifer will bear² thee³ quick to hell!

O soul, be chang'd into small water-drops,

5 And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!

Thunder. Enter DEVILS.

O, mercy⁴, heaven! look not so fierce⁵ on me!

Adders⁶ and serpents, let me breathe a while!

Ugly hell, gape not⁷! come not, Lucifer!

10 I'll burn my books!— O Mephistophilis!

[*Exeunt DEVILS with FAUSTUS.*]

(*Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe)

1. **strikes:** batte.
2. **will bear:** porterà.
3. **thee:** you.
4. **mercy:** misericordia.
5. **fierce:** feroce(mente).
6. **adders:** vipere.
7. **gape not:** non spalancare.

Example: Here the stage directions are very limited and interspersed in the dialogue.
Their function is to accompany the dialogue. They give very simple and essential information.

TEXT 6

ELIZA. [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*]
How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful*]. Mr Higgins told me I might come.

MRS HIGGINS. [*cordially*] Quite right: I'm very glad indeed to see you.

5 PICKERING. How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

ELIZA. [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

(*Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw)

TEXT 7

The Ghost of Lady Anne rises.

GHOST. [*to King Richard*] Richard thy¹ wife, that wretched²
Anne thy wife,

That never slept a quiet hour with thee,

5 Now fills³ thy sleep with perturbations:

To-morrow in the battle think of me,

And fall thy edgeless sword⁴. Despair and die!

[*to RICHMOND*] Thou⁵, quiet soul, sleep thou a quiet sleep;

Dream of success and happy victory!

10 Thy adversary's wife doth pray⁶ for thee⁷.

(*Richard III*, William Shakespeare)

1. **Thy:** *your*.
2. **wretched:** *miserabile*.
3. **fills:** *riempie*.
4. **thy edgeless sword:** *la tua spada smussata*.
5. **Thou:** *you*.
6. **doth pray:** *prega*.
7. **thee:** *you*.

4 Conventions

'Various stylistic devices, typical of the theatre.'

One of the most frequent forms of convention is **proposition** or **prologue**: it is presented at the beginning of the play and its function is to explain the action which will take place on stage, the relationship between the characters and everything the audience needs to know in order to be able to understand and follow the story.

In some plays (for example Shakespeare's) the prologue is recited by the chorus and sets the scene. Its function is also to comment on the characters and their action. The formal chorus, however, has disappeared from modern plays, and its role and function has been taken on by minor characters, such as servants or messengers.

Through **retrospection** characters may remember significant events which took place before the actual beginning of the play.

Flashbacks often replace narration. In modern theatre especially many playwrights have abandoned a precise, chronological sequence and use flashbacks to relate an incident or a series of incidents that happened earlier.

For example *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) is skilfully constructed by Tennessee Williams through a series of flashbacks and for this reason it has been called a memory play.

! Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, Volume II, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*.

1 Read the following passages and describe the kind of information these prologues provide. You can follow the example given for *Romeo and Juliet*.

TEXT 8

Chorus

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge¹ break to new mutiny²,

5 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

From forth the fatal loins³ of these two foes⁴

A pair of star-cross'd⁵ lovers take their life;

Whole misadventured piteous overthrows⁶

Do with their death bury⁷ their parents' strife⁸.

10 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,

And the continuance of their parents' rage⁹,

Which, but their children's end, nought¹⁰ could remove,

Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;

The which if you with patient ears attend,

What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend¹¹.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare)

1. **grudge**: astio.
2. **mutiny**: faida.
3. **loins**: discendenza.
4. **foes**: nemici.
5. **star-crossed**: avversati dalle stelle.
6. **overthrows**: vicende.
7. **bury**: seppelliranno.
8. **strife**: odio, lotta.
9. **rage**: rabbia.
10. **nought**: niente.
11. **our toil shall strive to mend**: il nostro zelo cercherà di riparare.

Example: This prologue from *Romeo and Juliet* is in the form of a chorus and gives information about where the play takes place, about its principal characters and also says quite specifically what is going to happen during the play.

TEXT 9

This is the last part of the sinister and ironic prologue spoken by Machevill (Machiavelli).

THE PROLOGUE

Enter Machevill.

MACHEVILL

- 5 But whither am I bound¹? I come not, I,
To read a lecture² here in Britanie,
But to present the tragedy of a Jew
Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed³,
Which money was not got without my means.
- 10 I crave⁴ but this. Grace him as he deserves,
And let him not be entertained the worse
Because he favours me.

(The Jew of Malta, Christopher Marlowe)

1. **am I bound:** sono destinato.
2. **lecture:** conferenza.
3. **crammed:** stipate.
4. **I crave:** desidero ardentemente.

TEXT 10

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes. He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from.

(The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee Williams)

1 Now read this passage from the play *Chicken Soup with Barley* which is part OOof a trilogy by Arnold Wesker. This is the plot of the play, which was first performed in 1957.

The play is set in a poor, working class area of London and covers the period from 1936-1956. The characters of the play, the Khans, are a Jewish family and very politically involved. They have been influenced by the recent events of the period, especially the Spanish Civil War and the Hungarian uprising. The play shows how the young revolutionaries of the family, especially by the end of the trilogy and by now middle-aged, have become disillusioned and even apathetic towards politics. Only the old mother, Sarah, remains faithful to her ideals.

The play reflects the author's views on politics and the contrasts which often exist between the theory and practice of ideals. It belongs to the drama of the 1950s known as 'kitchen-sink' drama as it is set in the home of a working class family and focuses on their lives.

This scene is from Act I after the family has just taken part in a street fight to prevent a Fascist demonstration in the city of London. Sarah's brother, Hymie, has been injured during the fight and his head is bleeding.

PRINCE: There's no turning back now — nothing can stop the workers now.

MONTY: I bet we have a revolution soon. Hitler won't stop at Spain, you know. You watch him go and you watch the British Government lick his arse¹ until he spits in their eye. Then well move in.

5 HYMIE: I'm not so sure, Monty. We won today but the same taste doesn't stay long. Mosley² was turned back at Aldgate pump and everyone shouted hurrah. But I wonder how many of the people at Gardiner's Corner were just sightseers. You know, in every political movement there are just sightseers.

MONTY: Ten thousand bloody sightseers? Do me a favour, it wasn't a bank
10 holiday³.

(Sarah goes to kitchen to pour the water into the bowl. Cissie appears.)

HYMIE: Any big excitement can be a bank holiday for a worker, believe me. *(Enter Cissie. Woman of about 33. She is a trade-union organizer⁴ — precise in her manner, dry sense of humour.)*

15 CISSIE: Ointment, lint, bandage and plaster⁵. Let's have a look at him.

SARAH: *(entering with bowl of water)*. I'm coming, it's all right, I can manage. *(Cissie makes way and Sarah begins to sponge her brother's face and then puts a bandage round his head.)*

PRINCE: Where were you, Cis?

20 CISSIE: Gardiner's Corner holding a banner. The union ban-Ner⁶. And you?

MONTY: Digging up the paving stones⁷ in Cable Street.

CISSIE: Paving stones? *(She hoists⁸ the back of her skirt to warm her behind⁹ in front of the fire.)*

MONTY: We pulled out the railings¹⁰ from a near-by church and the stones from
25 the gutter¹¹. I'll get some more coal for the fire. *(Goes to kitchen, pinching Cissie's behind on the way.)* We turned over a lorry.

SARAH: A lorry?

HYMIE: But it was the wrong one. The lorry we'd laid on was in a near-by yard and when the call went up to bring the lorry the boys, if you don't mind,
30 grabbed one at the top of the street. I ask you!

SARAH: Keep still. There, you look more respectable now.

1. **Lick his arse:** leccare il sedere (slang, volgare).
2. **Sir Oswald Mosley:** capo del partito Fascista inglese negli anni 30.
3. **bank holiday:** giorno di festa.
4. **trade union organizer:** sindacalista.
5. **ointment, lint, bandage and plaster:** pomate, bende, cerotti (per la ferita di Hymie).
6. **union banner:** la bandiera del sindaco di Cissie.
7. **paving stones:** lastre di pietra dal marciapiede.
8. **hoists:** tira su.
9. **behind:** sedere.
10. **railings:** ringhiere.
11. **gutter:** cunetta (del marciapiede).

(Monty re-enters with coal and on his way to the fire takes a feather from a hat near by and plants¹² it among Hymie's bandages.)

HYMIE: Anyone get hurt your way, Cissie ?

35 CISSIE: Some of the boys from my union got arrested.

SARAH: I'll go and make some tea now.

CISSIE: Mick and Sammy and Dave Goldman — and that bloody fool, if you'll excuse the expression, Sonny Becks. Everybody is standing behind the barricades waiting for the blackshirts¹³ to appear. The place is swarming with¹⁴ policemen

40 waiting, just waiting, for an opportunity to lay their hands on some of us. So

look what he does: not content with just standing there — and Sonny knew perfectly well that the orders were for the strictest discipline — not content with just standing he chose that moment to get up on Mrs O'Laoghaire's vegetable

45 barrow¹⁵ and make a political speech. 'Let us now remember the lessons of the

Russian revolution,' he starts like he was quoting Genesis, the nitwit¹⁶. And then he finds that the barrow isn't safe so he steps over to an iron bedstead¹⁷ and put his foot through the springs¹⁸ just as he was quoting Lenin's letter to the toiling masses¹⁹!

MONTY: You can never stop Sonny making a speech.

12. **plants:** mette la piuma fra le bende sulla testa di Hymie.
13. **blackshirts:** camicie nere (fascisti).
14. **swarming with:** piena di.
15. **barrow:** carrettino.
16. **nitwit:** scemo.
17. **iron bedstead:** lettiera di ferro (usato come barricata durante la manifestazione).
18. **springs:** le molle della lettiera.
19. **toiling masses:** lavoratori.

The Plot

- 2 In drama the plot is generally conveyed through language/dialogue. Does the dialogue in this scene clearly convey what has just happened and what is happening?

The characters

- 3 In this scene: Choose.

- a) there is one main protagonist
- b) there is no real protagonist

- 4 Through the interaction of the characters what have we learnt about them? Choose.

- they are not very expressive
 they are lively
 they know each other very well
 they are not very communicative with each other

Verbal expression

- 5 Tick what you can find in this extract:

- monologue asides soliloquy dialogue

- 6 Would you describe the dialogue as:

- a) rhetorical b) poetic c) life-like

- 7 There is also humour in this scene. Find three examples.

- 1) 2) 3)

Stage directions

- 8 Are they detailed or vague?

- 9 What information do they convey?

Types of Drama

- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Comedy of manners
- Black comedy
- Farce
- Closet drama
- The history play

Tragedy

Tragedy, as the word suggests, focuses on the tragic aspects of life. The main character will meet some form of tragic end, either through death, suffering or destitution. Traditionally the main character was a noble person and his/her downfall was usually the result of his/her actions and not brought about by another person or some power beyond human control, such as fate or misfortune. It was, rather, the result of an 'error of judgement' on the part of hero. His/her error turns out to be tragic, and the unhappy ending will give rise to the audience's judgement but also admiration and sympathy. Tragedy was first defined by Aristotle (384-322 a. C.). His theories, set down in the treatise *The Poetics*, have influenced dramatists and critics and are still the main point of reference as to the nature of tragedy. The philosopher considered the plot the most important element of tragedy. The design of the plot is therefore essential for the success of a tragedy, and it must have precise qualities that contribute to its effect. It also refers to the three unities. The most famous examples of tragedies over the past centuries have been offered by William Shakespeare with works such as, *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. Typically the heroes of these tragedies are noblemen: in *Hamlet* we have a prince, in *Macbeth* a general. In contemporary drama the hero no longer has to be outstanding or noble as the emphasis has now turned towards the common man, seen as the best representative of social and personal conflict. An example can be found in Tennessee Williams' plays, such as *The Glass Menagerie*, which focuses on the life of a cripple, Laura, and also in the plays of Arthur Miller, such as *Death of a Salesman* which focuses on one of life's losers.



You can find example in the Anthology:

- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 125.
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Volume I, Module 2, *The Renaissance and the Puritan Age*, p. 132.
- Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Volume II, Module 7, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*, p. 360.
- Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, Volume II, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*.

Comedy

The word comes from the Greek 'komos' which means merrymaking (rendere allegri) because these plays usually have a happy ending. The comic plot usually focuses on conflicts (not serious) among the characters, who may embody opposing values or beliefs. These conflicts are then resolved by a happy turn of events for the hero or heroine.

The characters are funny and often involved in trying to solve some kind of problem. A comedy may take on elements of satire, ridiculing human defects and follies.

There are many types of comedies: romantic comedies, dark comedies, the comedy of manners of the Restoration Period, situational comedies (the basis of television sitcoms) and finally pure farce.

The comedy of manners

Popular during the Restoration Period (1660-1702) it portrayed the upper-class society in an extremely satirical and humorous way. It often focused on extra-marital relationships and affairs.

The most famous examples of the comedy of manners can be found in the plays of William Congreve (1670-1729). The characteristics of this type of comedy were revived by George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

- ! - William Congreve, Volume I, Extra Material on CD-ROM, *The Restoration and the Augustan Age*.
- George Bernard Shaw, Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p. 84.
- Oscar Wilde, Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p.72.

Black comedy

In dark or black comedies topics and events which we would not normally regard as appropriate for writing material (perhaps even taboos!) are treated in a satirical and humorous manner.

Samuel Beckett's work, *Waiting for Godot* is a good example of a black comedy. In it there is the scene, for example, in which a character takes off his belt and threatens to kill himself, but the only thing that happens is that his trousers fall down. Here an attempt at suicide becomes a subject for humour. The plays title itself seems to be making fun of religion - a real taboo!

- ! Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Volume II, Module 7, *The Twentieth Century - Part II*, p. 324.

Farce

Farce combines exaggeration with an improbable plot and stereotypical characters to produce immediate comic effects.

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is a good example of a farce in which Wilde makes fun of the characters; elite, stereotypical, upper-class English people.

- ! Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Volume II, Module 5, *The Victorian Age*, p. 77.

Closet drama

This is an exception in drama as it is destined for a reading public, therefore not to be performed. There are two famous examples of this kind of drama in English literature belonging to two completely different periods. Lord Byron's *Manfred* of the beginning of the 19th century (The Romantic period) and T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, (1935). Both works were written in verse.

The history plays

These are plays based on historical events and famous people. The most famous history plays date back to the Elizabethan Age, their main authors being Christopher Marlowe (*Edward II*) and William Shakespeare (*Richard III* among others).

Glossary of Literary Terms

A

Allegory: a poem, play, painting, etc. in which the apparent meaning symbolises a more deeper meaning, e.g. George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*.

Alliteration: the repetition of the same or similar sounds, usually consonants, e.g. 'He clasps the crag with crooked hands' (Tennyson).

Analogy: a comparison made to show the similarities of two things.

Anaphora: the repetition of the same word or expression at the beginning of successive sentences or verses.

Antagonist: the character(s) in conflict with the protagonist.

Aside: in a play, a character's short, revealing comment made to the audience and not meant to be heard by the other characters.

Assonance: a form of rhyme with the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, e.g. 'Thou still unravished bride of quietness, Thou foster child of silence and slow time.' (John Keats).

B

Ballad: a narrative poem, usually describing a tragedy, meant to be sung and transmitted orally, often containing a recurrent refrain.

Blank verse: the use of unrhymed iambic pentameter (a ten-syllable line with 5 stressed and 5 unstressed syllables) traditionally used in epic poetry and then used extensively by Shakespeare.

C

Caesura: a pause in a line of verse, e.g. 'To err is human; to forgive divine' (Alexander Pope)

Character: the person or people who are part of a work (novel, play, etc.)

Climax: the most important, intense and decisive moment in a work which normally marks a turning point in the plot to lead to a resolution or finale.

Closet drama: a form of drama, usually written in verse, meant to be read and not performed.

Comedy: the opposite of a tragedy, the work is humorous the characters are funny and the ending is usually happy.

Comedy of manners: plays which were popular during the Restoration (1660-1702). Portrayed the upper classes in a humorous and satirical way.

Consonance: the repetition of the same consonant(s) in a poem.

Couplet: two consecutive lines of poetry which share the same rhyme scheme.

D

Drama: any work that is meant to be performed before an audience. It also refers to the literary genre represented by these works (plays).

Dramatic poetry: drama written in verse.

E

Elegy: a mournful poem which speaks about death in general or the death of a specific person or people.

Enjambement: when the sense or meaning of a line in poetry follows on to the consecutive line. Also known as run-on line.

Epic poetry: a very long narrative poem with mythical or religious themes speaking of the heroic actions of one or more individuals.

Epigram: a very short, concise and witty poem generally conveying a paradox or irony of human nature.

F

Fiction: any work which is not based on fact but is the product of the writer's own imagination and creativity.

Figurative language: a language rich in metaphors, personification, hyperbole, etc.

Foot (metric): in poetry it is a series of stressed and unstressed syllables which form the rhythm of a poem and are the basic element of verse.

Free verse: a poem without any regular metre or rhyme.

Full-rhyme: (also known as perfect rhyme) lines in poetry which have the same final vowel or consonant sounds.

G

Genre: from the French word meaning *genere* it refers to the different categories of literature and their subgenres, e.g. poetry, novels science-fiction novels, adventure novels, etc.

H

Haiku: a popular form of unrhymed Japanese poetry. Characterised by its brevity.

Half-rhyme: (also known as slant, sprung or near rhyme) lines in poetry which have the same final consonant sounds.

Hyperbole: a deliberate exaggeration used to gain effect.

I

Iambic pentameter: a line in poetry composed of five feet (1 foot = 1 stressed and 1 unstressed syllable).

Internal rhyme: a rhyme which does not fall at the end of a line but in the middle, e.g. 'Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary' (Edgar Allan Poe)

Interior monologue: this is a style or technique of writing widely used by Modernist authors at the beginning of the 20th century and aims at presenting a character's most inner thoughts as they occur. In direct interior monologue there is no intervention from the narrator but inverted commas may be used to indicate the thought process. With indirect interior monologue the narrator may intervene to guide the reader or make comments about the character and/or events.

Intrusive narrator: a narrator who intervenes in the narrative with comments on the characters and their actions and motives.

K

Kenning: a figurative use of nouns common in Old English poetry, e.g. mead-benches = chairs, swanroad = the sea.

L

Layout: the visual form of a poem. How it is presented on the page.

Lyric poetry: a poem which expresses the feelings and state of mind of the poet.

M

Metaphor: substituting a word or expression with others which would not normally be used in that context to gain an original effect, e.g. 'Life is a walking shadow' (*Macbeth* William Shakespeare).

Metre: the rhythm created by the specific arrangement of syllables in a line of verse according to the number and kind of feet in a line.

Modernism: a literary and artistic movement which developed at the beginning of the 20th century as a reaction against old values and styles. Modernist writers adopted experimental and often complex techniques, such as the stream of consciousness. Among their best representatives are James Joyce, T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf.

Monologue: an extended speech said by one speaker, either to others or as if alone.

Morality play: an allegorical play from the 15th-16th centuries with a strongly Christian moral tone, concentrating on the conflict between the virtues and vices which are personified in different characters.

Mystery play: from the 13th century onwards they were plays originally performed in churches and later outside in market places dramatizing episodes from the Bible.

N

Narrative poem: a poem which tells a story; epics and ballads were narrative poems.

Narrative technique: the style used by the narrator to communicate with his/her reader.

Narrator: the person or voice of a piece of literature who is telling the story to the reader. Not to be confused with the writer/author.

Novel: a literary genre of prose narrative, quite long (which distinguishes it from the short story or 'novella') presenting an imaginary series of events generally around characters and in a particular setting.

O

Octave: a verse or stanza of eight lines.

Ode: a lyric poem (see above) written in praise of a person, object or particular occasion. It is generally characterized by a serious and elevated language.

Omniscient narrator: the narrator in a narrative who knows everything about the events and characters. He/she interacts with the reader supplying information, opinions and making comments on the characters and events.

Onomatopoeia: the formation of a word or words whose sound expresses its meaning e.g. hum, buzz, crackle.

P

- Personification:** when animals, nature or abstract ideas and objects are given human qualities, e.g. 'Death, Be Not Proud', the title of a poem by John Donne.
- Play:** a work written for performance in front of an audience.
- Plot:** a sequence of events which are presented in a certain way in a novel or dramatic work to make up a story. The story is what happens, the plot says how it happens - the events may not necessarily be presented in chronological order.
- Poetry:** a literary genre in which the writing is presented in verse form, not prose, and which generally has a specific metrical form and often a rhyme scheme.
- Point of view:** one character's perspective from which a story or scene is described.
- Prologue:** similar to a preface, found at the beginning of plays, speeches or other literary works.
- Protagonist:** the principle character/characters of a literary work.

Q

- Quatrain:** it is a four-lined stanza in a verse or poem, it is the most common stanza form in English poetry.

R

- Rhyme:** similar sounds usually at the end of verse lines e.g. glare/stare, wise/cries.
- Rhythm:** the arrangement of certain syllables, stressed and unstressed, which create a repetitive sequence.
- Run-on-line:** see enjambement.

S

- Scene:** in theatrical works plays are generally divided into acts and each act may then be divided into scenes. Each scene may denote a change in setting or characters.
- Sestet:** a six-line stanza in a poem. A Petrarchan sonnet ends in a sestet.
- Setting:** when and where a story takes place.
- Simile:** similar to a metaphor in comparing two different concepts but a simile makes the comparison obvious by using words such as 'like' and 'as.'
- Soliloquy:** a long speech, normally used in the theatre, in which a character expresses his thoughts, feelings and emotions to the audience while alone on the stage.
- Sonnet:** a fourteen-line poem, each line containing ten syllables. The Elizabethan sonnet is made up of a twelve-line stanza finishing with a conclusive rhyming couplet while the Petrarchan sonnet has an eight-line stanza concluding in a six-line stanza.
- Stanza:** a fixed number of verse lines which form a unit in a poem, each with a definite metrical pattern. The most common form in English poetry is the quatrain of four lines.
- Style:** refers to the literary form a writer adopts in his work. Style includes the language register used, the choice of words, the use of metaphors, similes, etc. A style may be described as simple, complex, romantic, figurative, experimental, etc. depending on the authors choices.
- Sub-plot:** in a novel, a secondary story(ies) which develops parallel to the main story and may have connections with it.
- Symbol:** generally a material object which is used to represent something abstract, e.g. we use symbols to represent the different religions in the world like the cross for Christianity, the heart is often used as a symbol for love, etc.
- Synaesthesia:** describing one experience or sensation with word normally used to describe another.

T

Tercet: a stanza made up of three lines.

Theme: the main argument or topic developed in a literary work. Works can have more than one theme.

Tragedy: a serious play ending in death or disaster.

U

Utopian fiction: from Sir Thomas More's work, *Utopia* (1516), it is the term used for any work which describes a perfect world. The word 'utopia' actually means 'nowhere'.

V

Verse: a word meaning either part of a poem or more generally used as a synonym for poetry.