



**ELEMENTS  
OF  
DRAMA  
AND THEATER**



# WHAT IS DRAMA?

- The word drama comes from the Greek word for “action.” **Drama** is written to be performed by actors and watched by an audience.
- Drama is a type of literature that is primarily written to be performed for an audience. When reading a play, it is important to keep certain features of drama in mind. Some of these features relate to drama as literature; others reflect its character as a performance.

# HISTORY

- Greek Drama 500-400 B.C.
- Medieval: The Middle Ages 1200-1500 AD
- Elizabethan & Jacobean 1500-1642
- Restoration & 18<sup>th</sup> Cent. Drama 1660-1800
- Romantic Era 1800-1880
- Modern Era 1850-Present

# DRAMA

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graph TD; A[DRAMA] --> B[Consists of two types of writing]; A --> C[Can be presented in two ways]; B --> D[The dialogue that the characters speak]; B --> E[The stage directions that tell the actors how to move and speak, describing the sets and props]; C --> F[As literature, the text of the play itself]; C --> G[As performance, the production of the play in a theater];
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# HOW IS A PLAY WRITTEN?

- The author of a play is called a ***playwright***. Everything a playwright writes must appear onstage.
- A play in written form is called a ***script***.
- The playwright writes the ***dialogue***, or what the characters say to each other in conversation, as well as the ***stage directions***, which tells how the play is to be performed.

# TWO TYPES OF DRAMA

## 1. TRAGEDY

- shows the downfall or death of a **tragic hero**, or main character. In ancient Greek plays, the hero was a good person brought down by a **tragic flaw**, or defect in character. In a modern plays, the hero can be an normal person destroyed by an evil in society.
- emphasizes human greatness.

## 2. COMEDY

- often shows a conflict between opposite age groups , genders, or personality types.
- typical comedies involve confusion, jokes, and a happy ending.
- stresses human weaknesses.

# ARISTOTLE'S SIX ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

1. **Diction:** Specific words the playwright chooses to use.
2. **Spectacle:** All the visuals represented in the play.  
Represents everything you see: set, costumes, lights, etc.
3. **Thought:** What the audience learns - the moral of the play, or the **theme**
4. **Characters:** The play must be about someone or something, can be human or non-human.
5. **Melody:** Everything you hear - music, sound effects, silence are all examples of this.
6. **Plot:** Show must have a beginning, middle and end.  
Something needs to happen and a character must be challenged.

# PLOT STRUCTURE

- **Exposition or Introduction**

This is the beginning of the story, where characters and **setting** are established. The **conflict** or main problem is introduced as well.

- **Rising Action**

Rising action which occurs when a series of events build up to the conflict. The main characters are established by the time the rising action of a plot occurs, and at the same time, events begin to get **complicated**. It is during this part of a story that excitement, tension, or crisis is encountered.



- **Climax**

In the climax, or the main point of the plot, there is a turning point of the story. This is meant to be the moment of **highest interest** and **emotion**, leaving the reader wondering what is going to happen next.

- **Falling Action**

Falling action, or the winding up of the story, occurs when events and complications **begin to resolve**. The result of the actions of the main characters are put forward.

- **Resolution**

Resolution, or the **conclusion**, is the end of a story, which may occur with either a happy or a tragic ending.

# LITERARY ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA

- **Character:** a person portrayed in a drama, novel, or other artistic piece.
- **Conflict:** the internal or external struggle between opposing forces, ideas, or interests that creates dramatic tension.
- **Suspense:** a feeling of uncertainty as to the outcome, used to build interest and excitement on the part of the audience.
- **Theme:** the basic idea of a play; the idea, point of view, or perception that binds together a work of art.

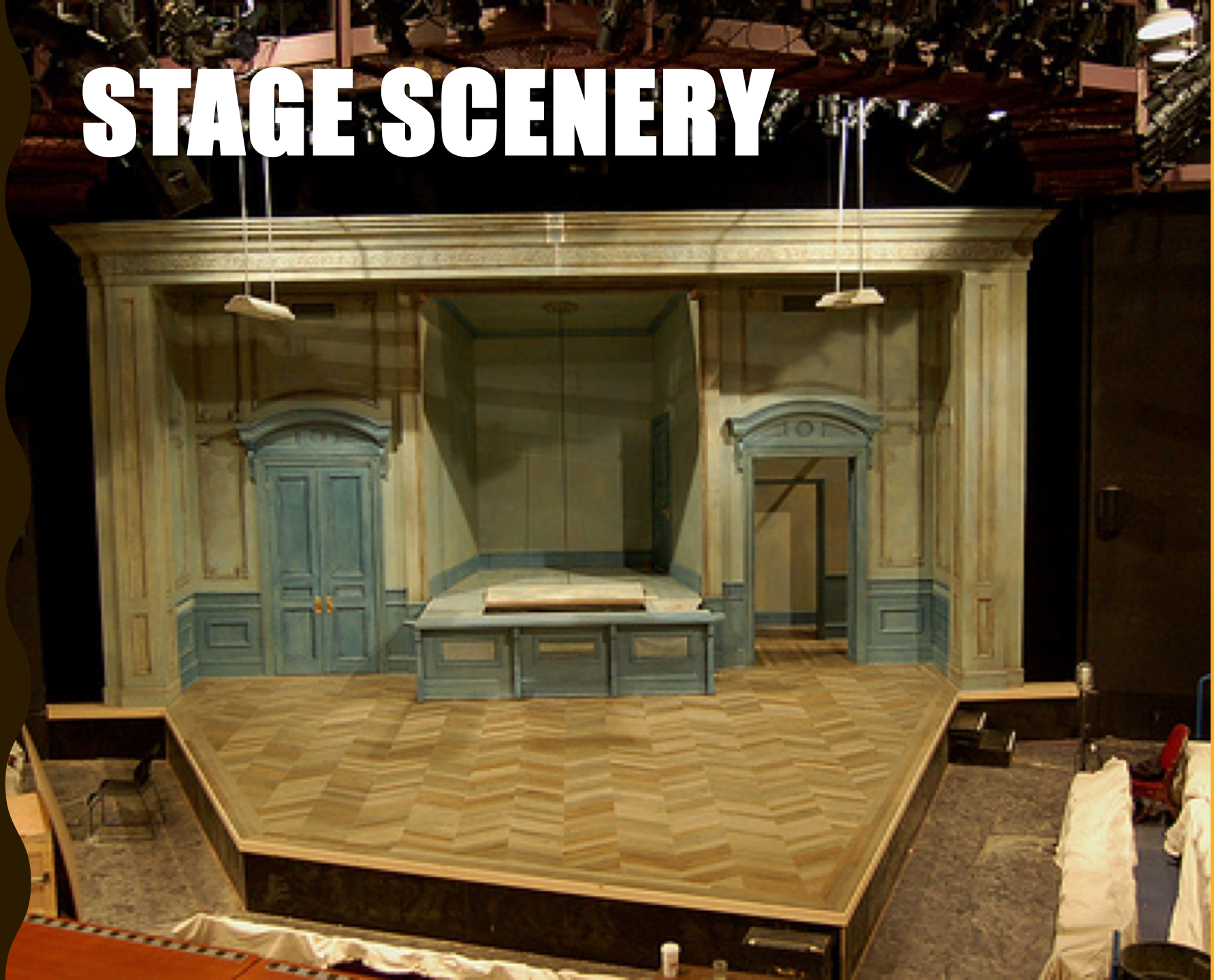
# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA

- **Act:** a major division in a play
- **Scene:** a real or fictional episode; a division of an act in a play.
- **Lighting:** the arrangement of lights to achieve particular effects in order to help create mood or tone in a play.
- **Sound:** the effects an audience hears during a performance to communicate character, context, or environment.
- **Set Design:** everything on the stage including furniture and props, and environment in which the action of a play occurs.
- **Costumes:** the clothing worn by the actors who play the characters. Oftentimes, these help to establish characterizations, mood, and tone.

# THE DIVISION OF PLAY

- **A play is largely divided up into parts, or *acts*.** The number of acts in a production can range from one to five, depending on how a writer structures the outline of the story. The length of time for an act to be performed can range from 30 to 90 minutes.
- Acts may be further divided into ***scenes***; in classical theatre each regrouping between entrances and exits of actors is a scene, while today **it describes a quick change of setting.**

# STAGE SCENERY





# SCENERY/PROPS



# LIGHTING





# COSTUMES/MAKE-UP





# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA: PERFORMANCE

- **Acting:** use of face, body, and voice to portray character.
- **Character Motivation:** the reason or reasons for a character's behavior; an incentive or inducement for further action for a character.
- **Empathy:** the ability to relate to the feelings of another.

# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA: PERFORMANCE

- **Breath Control:** proper use of the lungs and diaphragm muscle for maximum capacity and efficiency of breath for speaking.
- **Inflection:** change in pitch or loudness of the voice.
- **Projection:** how well the voice carries to the audience.
- **Facial Expression:** physical and vocal aspects used by an actors face to convey mood, feeling, or personality.

# TYPES OF UTTERANCE

- **Monologue** is a long speech made by one actor; may be delivered alone or in the presence of others.
- **Aside** is when a character in a play speaks to the audience though there are other characters on stage.
- **Soliloquy** is used in to reveal the innermost thoughts of a character. It is a great technique used to convey the progress of action of the play , by means of expressing a character's thoughts about a certain character or past, present, or upcoming event, while talking to himself without acknowledging the presence of any other person.

- Example of monologue:

“But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east and Juliet is the sun!

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief ...

O that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!”... (from Romeo & Juliet)

- Example of Aside:

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.--will you walk out of the air, my lord? (from Hamlet)

- Example of Soliloquy:

“To be, or not to be? That is the question—

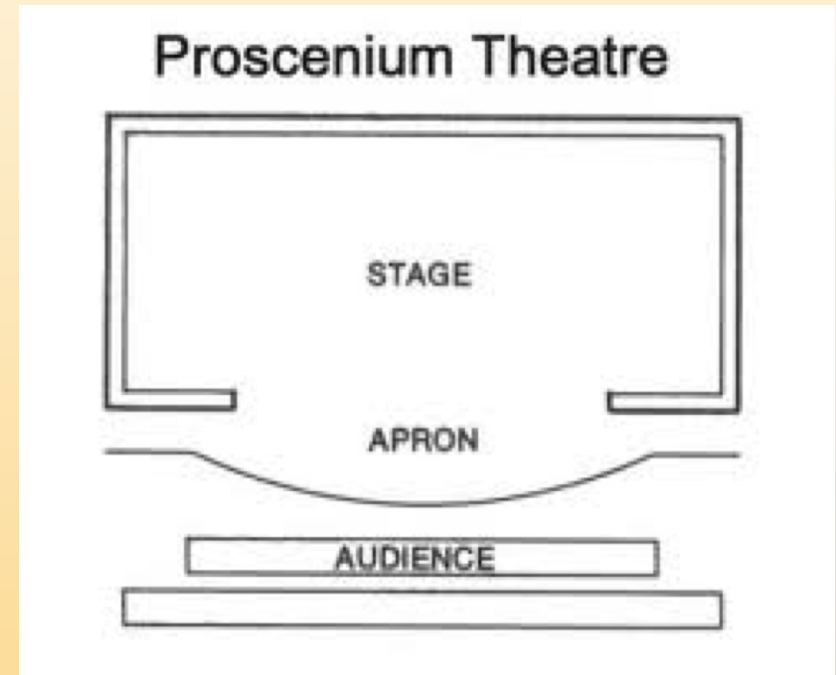
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune...” (from Hamlet)

# TYPES OF PERFORMANCE STAGES:

- **Proscenium Stage:**

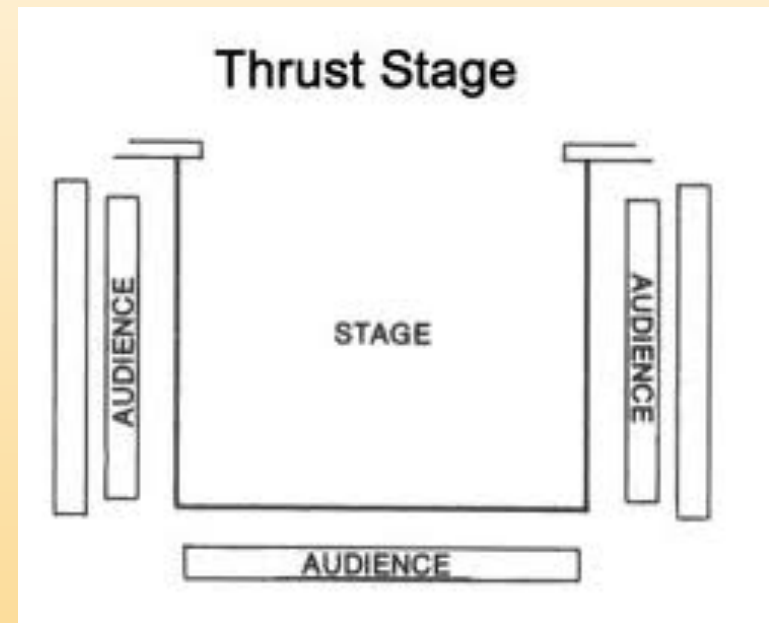
A performance space in which the audience sits in front of the stage and views as if through a picture frame



# TYPES OF PERFORMANCE STAGES:

- **Thrust Stage:**

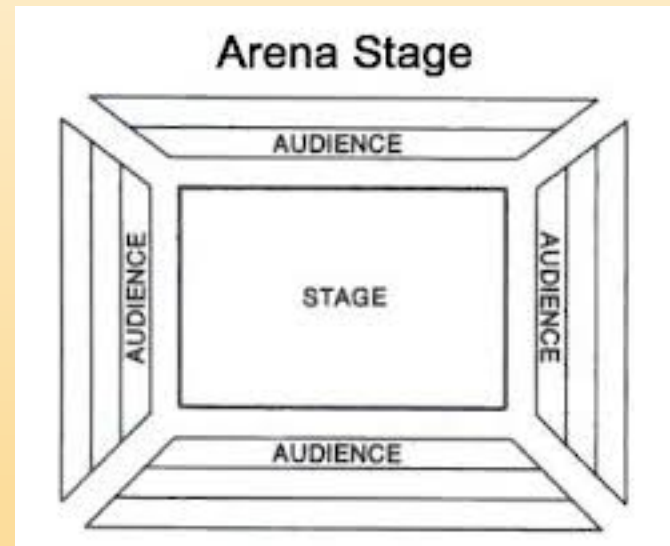
a theater stage that extends out into the audience's part of a theater and has seats on three sides.



# TYPES OF PERFORMANCE STAGES:

- **Arena Stage** :

a stage constructed so that the audience can sit on all sides; also known as "theatre-in-the-round".



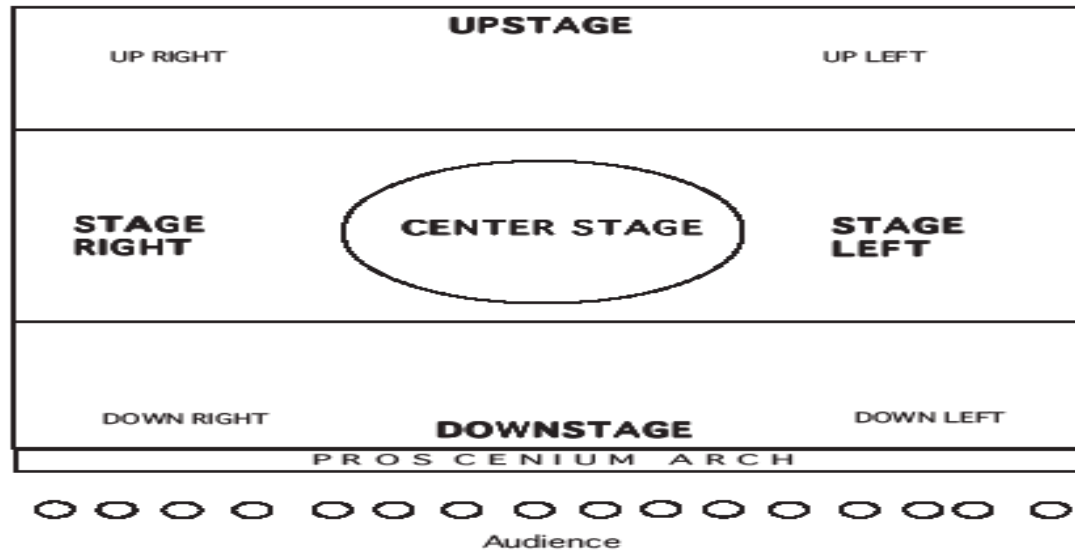
# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA: STAGE DIRECTIONS

- **Apron:** the front area of the stage extending past the main act curtain.
- **Wings:** the offstage areas directly to the right and left of the performance space.
- **Center Stage:** the middle point of the performance space.
- **Upstage:** the area of the performance space that is farthest away from the audience.
- **Downstage:** the area of the stage that is nearest to the audience.
- **Cue:** a signal or line that prompts the next action of stage business during a performance.
- **Blocking:** the path formed by the actor's movement on stage, usually determined by the director, playwright, and/or actor.



# TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATER/DRAMA: STAGE DIRECTIONS

Parts of a Stage



Areas of the stage are named from the actor's point of view. If you are standing on stage looking out at the audience, stage right will be to your right and stage left to your left. Upstage is towards the back wall and downstage is closest to the audience. This terminology comes from the days when stages were raked, or angled down, towards the audience so that everyone standing on the ground could see (now our theater seating is usually raked instead). The proscenium arch is the vertical frame around the stage.

# THEATER ETIQUETTE

- All of the people involved in the production, both cast and crew, work very hard to be sure they give a great performance.
- It is the job of the audience members to help the performers give their best performance possible. The audience can do this by practicing the rules of *theater etiquette*, which is **how the audience should behave when watching a play.**

# RULES OF THEATER ETIQUETTE

- Be on time to the theater. Turn off cell phones upon arrival.
- Be quiet so others around you can hear the performance.
- You should use the restroom before the show begins, and not get out of your seat while the show is being performed.
- You should not eat, chew gum, or drink any beverages while watching the show.
- While it is appropriate to respond to funny, shocking, or entertaining moments out loud, you should respect others around you and their enjoyment of the play by not responding with loud, inappropriate reactions.

# WHEN SHOULD YOU APPLAUD?

- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great. That is called a ***standing ovation***, and it honors the actors who worked so hard to give a great performance.
- It is customary to applaud at the end of songs, and at the ***curtain call***, when the actors come out to take their final bows. Throughout the show, audience members may choose to applaud when something particularly Outstanding has just been performed. Do not whistle or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo.



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