



Chapter 7

Varieties of Drama

Two Main Types of Drama

- Tragedy – a play in which the protagonist fails to achieve desired goals or is overcome by opposing forces.
- Comedy – a play that treats characters and situations in a humorous way and has a happy ending.

Tragedy

- Inevitable – there is no way to change or stop the outcome
- Universal theme or appeal
- Emotional
- Protagonist fails to achieve goals
- Protagonist alienated from society
- Protagonist average or better
- Protagonist falls from leadership, losing respect, dreams, position

Comedy

- Predictably unpredictable – you can expect the unlikely
- Often time and place oriented
- Intellectual, mental
- Protagonist achieves goals
- Protagonist Often becomes leader of new society; even villain is usually accepted
- Protagonist less than average
- Protagonist achieves success, often as a result of own mistakes or shortcomings

Tragedy

Five Characteristics Found in Tragic Characters

- They have a flaw or make an error that has serious consequences.
- They make no apology for their actions.
- They set goals based on unyielding beliefs.
- They know that almost everything worth having demands some sacrifice.
- They are willing to make the sacrifice themselves, never asking another to make sacrifices for them.

Pathos

An element in drama that arouses feelings of pity and compassion in an audience.

LEADS TO

Catharsis

The emotional release an audience feels after the downfall of a tragic character.

Comedy

Seven Common Causes of Laughter

1. Exaggeration – an overstatement; and enlargement of the truth
2. Incongruity – that which seems out of place, out of time, or out of character



3. Anticipation – when the audience is looking forward to something, i.e. a coming laugh

Techniques of Anticipation

- Plant – an idea, line or action emphasized early in the play – also known as foreshadowing.
- Running gag – three exposures to a plant
- Incompletion – a line or bit of action is started but never completed (completed with laughter)
- Anticlimax – a result much less important than what preceded it – building up and plummeting into a let down

- Ambiguity – double meaning – puns and word play
- Recognition – discovering hidden or obscure meanings
- Protection – a situation in which the audience laughs because it knows violent actions are not realistic
- Relief – an easing of pressure that results in laughter

Two Types of Comedy

Low Comedy – physical, sometimes vulgar and highly exaggerated in style and performance

Examples – *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Tom Jones*

- ❖ Farce – characterized by clowning, practical jokes and improbable characters and situations

Examples – *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Noises Off*

- ❖ Burlesque – mocks a broad topic (physical and exaggeration)

Example – *Saturday Night Live*

- ❖ Parody – mocks a certain work by imitating the author's style for comic effect

Examples – *Scary Movie*, *Date Movie*

High Comedy – Characterized by clever lines, word plays and allusions

Examples – *Pride and Prejudice*

- ❖ Comedy of Manners – shows the humorous traits of a particular segment of society, usually the upper class

Example – *Emma* (or anything else by Jane Austin)

- ❖ Satire – humorous attacks on accepted conventions of society, holding up human vices and follies to ridicule

Example – *Harrison Bergeron*, *Waiting for Godot*

Other Types of Drama

- Tragicomedies – both tragedy and comedy
- Drama – does not fit definition of tragedy but is serious in nature
 - Example – *The Crucible*
- Fantasy – a play that deals with unrealistic and fantastic characters
 - Example – *Wizard of Oz*
- Romantic Comedy – presents an idealized love affair
 - Example – *Much Ado About Nothing*
- Sentimental Comedy – Eighteenth Century genre that was a reaction to the immorality in Restoration drama; presents life as ideal
- Schmalz – extreme sentimentality
- Melodrama – serious plays with primary goal of keeping an audience involved using any means
 - Examples – *Ten Little Indians*, *Dial M for Murder*
- Play of Ideas – deals with social problems or ethical issues, sometimes presenting a solution
 - Example – *Baby With the Bath Water*

Styles of Drama

Style – the way in which a play is written, acted, and produced

Theatre Conventions – special or traditional ways of doing things to convey a particular interpretation

- Representational – audience watching the action through an imaginary fourth wall
- Presentational – audience is recognized as audience and play as a play – actors may speak directly to the audience
- Avant-garde – new or experimental styles of an art form.

Styles

- Romanticism – focuses on emotions and imagination
 - Example – *Cyrano de Bergerac*
- Realism – life as it actually is (unpleasant and unhappy)
Dominant style of the 20th century
 - Example – *A Doll's House*
- Naturalism – human beings have little self-determination but act in response to forces of nature and society
 - Example – *Death of a Salesman*
- Symbolism – use symbolic elements to represent emotions, ideals and values
 - Example – *The Glass Menagerie*
- Expressionism – characters are distorted, oversimplified and symbolism (uselessness of human hopes and dreams in the face of mechanistic forces)
 - Example – *Our Town*