

Analyzing the Structure of Drama

CCSS

RL.7.5: Analyze how a drama's . . . form or structure (e.g., soliloquy . . .) contributes to its meaning.

Theme: *Anne Frank: Diary to Drama*

There are many ways to tell a story. For example, a story can be told in a book, in a movie, or through a play. All of these forms contain characters, setting, and plot, but a play has some special characteristics. First of all, a play, or drama, relies on **dialogue**, the characters' words, to move the plot forward. Dramas also contain **stage directions**, which describe the setting and explain what the actors should do or how they should speak or behave. Dramas are organized into **scenes**, which are like chapters in a book, and scenes are grouped into **acts**.

Read the beginning of *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. The play is based on a young Jewish girl's diary, which details struggles endured by her family and friends when they had to go into hiding in an attic in Amsterdam during World War II.

Act 1, Scene 1

The curtain rises on an empty stage. It is late afternoon November, 1945. The rooms are dusty, the curtains in rags. Chairs and tables are overturned.

The door at the foot of the small stairwell swings open. Mr. FRANK comes up the steps into view. He stands looking slowly around, making a supreme effort at self-control. He is weak, ill. His eye is caught by something lying on the floor. It is a woman's white glove. He holds it in his hand and suddenly all of his self-control is gone. He breaks down, crying.

We hear footsteps on the stairs. MIEP GIES comes up, looking for Mr. FRANK. MIEP is a Dutch girl of about twenty-two. She is pregnant. Her attitude toward Mr. FRANK is protective, compassionate.

MIEP: Are you all right, Mr. FRANK?

Mr. FRANK: *(Quickly controlling himself.)* Yes, Miep, yes . . .

Underline details in the stage directions and dialogue that tell you something about the setting and characters. Compare what you learned to the information in the chart.

Setting	Characters	Plot
<ul style="list-style-type: none">November, 1945No one has lived in the rooms for a long time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Frank: ill, sadMiep: pregnant Dutch woman who is protective of Mr. Frank	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Finding the glove makes Mr. Frank cry. Something tragic must have happened here.

When you read a play, imagine it is being performed with actors on a stage. If you are not actually watching a play, the stage directions and the dialogue help you visualize what's going on, so be sure to read them both very carefully.



Read the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2, which introduces the Van Daan family.

Genre: Drama

The Diary of Anne Frank, Act 1, Scene 2

by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett

It is early morning, July, 1942. The rooms are bare, as before, but they are now clean and orderly.

MR. VAN DAAN, a tall, portly man in his late forties, is in the main room, pacing up and down, nervous. . . . His clothes and overcoat are expensive and well cut.

MRS. VAN DAAN sits on the couch, clutching her possessions, a hatbox, bags, etc. She is a pretty woman in her early forties. She wears a fur coat over her other clothes.

PETER VAN DAAN is standing at the window of the room on the right, looking down at the street below. He is a shy, awkward boy of sixteen. At his feet is a black case, a carrier for his cat. The yellow Star of David is conspicuous on all of their clothes.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: “What do these stage directions tell you about the setting and characters in the play?”

The stage directions introduce new characters and give information about a change to the setting. Note that Scene 2 is set at an earlier time than Scene 1.

Think about what the stage directions tell you about the setting and characters. Study the chart below and fill in the missing information.

Describe the Setting	Describe the Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">July 1942, during World War IIThe rooms:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Van Daan: tall, portly, nervousMrs. Van Daan:Peter:

Compare your notes about setting and characters with a partner. Discuss any differences in the meaning you identified from details revealed by the stage directions.



Close Reading

Underline details in the dialogue and stage directions on this page that tell you what is happening at this point in the play. How does this scene create a feeling of tension?

Hint

Note the characters' words and actions. What tells you this is not an everyday situation?

Continue reading Act 1, Scene 2. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to answer the question.

(continued from page 146)

MRS. VAN DAAN: *(Rising, nervous, excited.)* Something's happened to them! I know it! MR. FRANK said they'd be here at seven o'clock. He said . . .

MR. VAN DAAN: They have two miles to walk. You can't expect . . .

MRS. VAN DAAN: They've been picked up. That's what's happened. They've been taken . . .

(MR. VAN DAAN indicates that he hears someone coming.)

MR. VAN DAAN: You see?

Circle the correct answer.

Which statement best describes this plot event based on the dialogue and stage directions in this scene?

- A** People the Van Daans know may be in danger.
- B** Mrs. Van Daan is a nervous and excitable person.
- C** The Van Daans are waiting to have dinner with friends.
- D** Mr. Frank called to say he would be running late.



Show Your Thinking

Look back at the answers you did not choose. Which ones do not fit the details in the scene? Which one tells about a character instead of a plot event?



Discuss with a partner other details that tell you about the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan.



Read part of Act 1, Scene 2 below. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

Genre: Drama



Sometimes people's actions tell as much about them as what they say. As I read, I'm going to look for examples of stage directions that tell me more about the play's characters.

Close Reading

What does Anne's reaction to her father's monologue, or speech, reveal about her character? **Circle** the stage directions that answer the question.

Underline the benefits of being in hiding that Mr. Frank lists in his monologue. Then draw a **box** around earlier stage directions that show he knows his family is in danger despite his reassurances.

The Diary of Anne Frank, Act 1, Scene 2

by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett

MR. FRANK: Anneke, there's a box there. Will you open it?
(He indicates a carton on the couch. Anne brings it to the center table.)

ANNE: (pulling out a pasteboard-bound book). A diary! (She throws her arms around her father.) I've never had a diary. And I've always longed for one. (She looks around the room.) Pencil, pencil, pencil, pencil. (She starts down the stairs.) I'm going down to the office to get a pencil.

MR. FRANK: Anne! No! (He goes after her, catching her by the arm and pulling her back.)

ANNE: (Startled.) But there's no one in the building now.

MR. FRANK: It doesn't matter. I don't want you ever to go beyond that door.

ANNE: (Sobered.) Never . . . ? Not even at nighttime, when everyone is gone? Or on Sundays? Can't I go down to listen to the radio?

MR. FRANK: Never. I am sorry, Anneke. It isn't safe. No, you must never go beyond that door.

(For the first time ANNE realizes what "going into hiding" means.)

ANNE: I see.

MR. FRANK: It'll be hard, I know. But always remember this, Anneke. There are no walls, there are no bolts, no locks that anyone can put on your mind. Miep will bring us books. We will read history, poetry, mythology. (With his arm about her, they go over to the couch, sitting down side by side.) As a matter of fact, between us, Anne, being here has certain advantages for you. For instance, you remember the battle you had with your mother the other day on the subject of overshoes? You said you'd rather die than wear overshoes. But in the end you had to wear them? Well now, you see, for as long as we are here you will never have to wear overshoes! Isn't that good? And the piano! You won't have to practice on the piano. I tell you, this is going to be a fine life for you! (ANNE's panic is gone.)



Hints

Which stage direction appears after the father's monologue?

How does Anne react when she opens the carton?

How do the stage directions in the middle of Mr. Frank's monologue differ from those before his speech?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which stage direction shows that Mr. Frank's speech has calmed his daughter?
 - A "(She starts down the stairs.)"
 - B "(. . . ANNE realizes what 'going into hiding' means.)"
 - C "(She throws her arms around her father.)"
 - D "(ANNE's panic is gone.)"
- 2 What can you tell about Anne's relationship with her father from the dialogue and stage directions?
 - A She is angry at her father for grabbing her arm.
 - B She has a close relationship with her father.
 - C She doesn't respect her father's decisions.
 - D She wishes her father would treat her like an adult.
- 3 Explain how Mr. Frank's actions and words show that he wants to comfort his daughter but is also afraid for her. Use at least three details from the text to support your answer.



Read part of Act 2, Scene 4. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Diary of Anne Frank, Act 2, Scene 4

by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett

From 1942–1944, Anne kept a detailed diary of her life. Her family continued to hide, fearing the real possibility of being caught and removed to a Nazi concentration camp. Anne’s words are a testimony to the courage of families like hers and the brave citizens who risked their safety to protect innocent lives.

ANNE: (*Looking up through skylight.*) Look, Peter, the sky. What a lovely day. Aren’t the clouds beautiful? You know what I do when it seems as if I couldn’t stand being cooped up for one more minute? I think myself out. I think myself on a walk in the park where I used to go with Pim. Where the daffodils and the crocus and the violets grow down the slopes. You know the most wonderful thing about *thinking* yourself out? You can have it any way you like. You can have roses and violets and chrysanthemums all blooming at the same time. . . . It’s funny . . . I used to take it all for granted . . . and now I’ve gone crazy about everything to do with nature. Haven’t you?

PETER: (*Barely lifting his face.*) I’ve just gone crazy. I think if something doesn’t happen soon . . . if we don’t get out of here . . . I can’t stand much more of it!

ANNE: (*Softly.*) I wish you had a religion, Peter.

PETER: (*Bitterly, as he rolls over.*) No, thanks. Not me.

ANNE: Oh, I don’t mean you have to be Orthodox . . . or believe in heaven and hell and purgatory and things . . . I just mean some religion . . . it doesn’t matter what. Just to believe in something! When I think of all that’s out there . . . the trees . . . and flowers . . . and seagulls . . . when I think of the dearness of you, Peter . . . and the goodness of the people we know . . . Mr. Kraler, Miep, Dirk, the vegetable man, all risking their lives for us every day . . . When I think of these good things, I’m not afraid any more . . . I find myself, and God, and I . . .

PETER: (*Impatiently, as he gets to his feet.*) That’s fine! But when I begin to think, I get mad! Look at us, hiding out for two years. Not able to move! Caught here like . . . waiting for them to come and get us . . . and all for what?

ANNE: (*Rises and goes to him.*) We’re not the only people that’ve had to suffer. There’ve always been people that’ve had to . . . sometimes one race . . . sometimes another . . . and yet . . .

PETER: (*Sitting on upstage end of bed.*) That doesn’t make me feel any better!

ANNE: I know it’s terrible, trying to have any faith . . . when people are doing such horrible . . . (*Gently lifting his face.*) but you know what I sometimes think? I think the world may be going through a phase, the way I was with Mother. It’ll pass, maybe not for hundreds of years, but some day . . . I will believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart.

PETER: (*Rising, going to the windowseat.*) I want to see something now . . . Not a thousand years from now.



ANNE: (*As she comes to him.*) But, Peter, if you'd only look at it as part of a great pattern . . . that we're just a little minute in life . . . (*She breaks off.*) Listen to us, going at each other like a couple of stupid grownups! (*She holds out her hand to him. He takes it.*) Look at the sky now. Isn't it lovely? (*Sits as PETER puts his hands on ANNE'S shoulders. PETER rises, stands behind her with arms around her. They look out at the sky.*) Someday, when we're outside again I'm going to . . . (*She breaks off as she hears the sound of a car outside, its brakes squealing as it comes to a sudden stop. The people in the other rooms also become aware of the sound. They listen tensely. Another car outside comes to a sudden stop.*)

Answer the questions. Mark your answers to questions 1–3 on the Answer Form to the right.

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number
Correct****3**

1 What does the dialogue between Anne and Peter at the beginning of the scene reveal?

- A** Peter thinks Anne is courageous.
- B** Anne thinks Peter is unreasonable.
- C** Peter's situation is much worse than Anne's.
- D** Anne's imagination is more vivid than Peter's.

2 What does Anne's monologue, beginning with "I know it's terrible . . .", contribute to the meaning of the play?

- A** It expresses Anne's innocence about the world she lives in.
- B** It allows Anne to speak to the audience about her mother.
- C** It conveys the playwrights' beliefs about people during wartime.
- D** It provides background information about the story itself.



3 What do the final stage directions **most likely** indicate about the setting of the play?

- A** The war in Europe has suddenly ended.
- B** The people in the attic have been rescued.
- C** The house in Amsterdam has been bombed.
- D** The hiding place in the attic has been discovered.

4 Write a paragraph explaining how Anne’s statement that “people are really good at heart” creates irony in the scene. Use at least **two** details from the text to support your response.



Self Check

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 119.