

THE PLAYSCRIPT

Chapter 3

What is a play?

A series of incidents organized to accomplish a purpose

Reading A Play

- The playscript is a blueprint.
- Assume that what is written IS what the author wished to say.
- Reader must be sensitive to nuances in the playscript.

Dramatic Action

is both what the characters do and why the characters do it.

- Builds through three steps
 - **Purpose**: awareness of desire or goal
 - **Passion**: strength of desire or suffering making characters act to fulfill goals
 - **Perception**: the understanding that eventually comes from the struggle
- Because of the range of human behavior & motivation, NO play can present the totality.

A Dramatic Action Must Be

- Complete and self-contained
- Deliberately shaped (for purpose/goal)
- Able to engage and maintain interest
- Internally consistent

METHODS OF ORGANIZING DRAMATIC ACTION

- **Cause-to-Effect** [most commonly used]
- **Character**: all events focus on one person (might be a biography)
- **Thought**: scenes linked through a central theme or set of ideas

THE PARTS OF DRAMA

- Plot
- Character
- Thought
- Diction
- Music
- Spectacle

PLOT = Overall Structure of Play

Like an essay, there is a Beginning, a Middle and an End.

The Beginning establishes

- The place
- The occasion
- The characters
- The mood
- The theme
- The internal logic (rules of the game)

The Beginning provides the previous information in an ***exposition***. In addition, the Beginning may include an ***inciting incident***.

The Middle is normally composed of a series of ***complications*** [anything which changes the direction of the action].

The series of complications leads to the ***Climax***, often accompanied by a ***Crisis*** [discovery or event that determines the outcome of the action].

The End will include the ***resolution*** or ***denouement*** [day nu mah']. It ties loose strands and restores balance.

Character & Characterization

- **Character** is the primary material for creation of plots. **Characterization** delineates one person from another
- Levels of characterization
 - Physical/biological
 - Societal
 - Psychological
 - moral

The playwright emphasizes one or more level of characterization, depending upon what the character does or how she/he functions in the play.

The character is revealed through

- Descriptions in stage directions or NON dialogue material
- What the character says
- What others say about the character
- What the character does

THOUGHT

Includes the themes, arguments, and overall meaning of the action.

The ways of projecting thought are

- Chorus
 - Soliloquies
 - Asides
 - Allegory – the entire piece suggests something else
 - Symbolism suggests a concept or set of relationships
- In these, the audience is directly addressed and provided with information

DICTION

- It is the language of the characters
- May serve to
 - Impart information
 - Characterize
 - Direct attention to important plot elements
 - Reveal themes or ideas
 - Establishes tone/mood and internal logic
 - Established tempo or rhythm

Diction in a play is judged by appropriateness to

- Characters
- Situation
- Internal logic
- Type of play

MUSIC

- **May be incidental** to the play, background , **or**
- **Integral** as in operas or musicals
- Helps to
 - Establish moods
 - Characterize
 - Suggest ideas or presage events
 - Lend variety
 - Simply give pleasure

SPECTACLE

- It encompasses all visual elements of the production: movement & spatial relations, lighting, set, costumes, and props.
- May be little or a lot; suggestive or definite
- Evaluated on *appropriateness* and *distinctiveness*

FORMS OF DRAMA

- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Tragicomedy
- Farce
- Melodrama
- History

STYLE IN DRAMA

- Results from a distinctive mode of expression or method of presentation
- Results from 3 influences
 - Grounded in what is believed to be truthful & valuable
 - Manner in which playwright manipulates the means of expression
 - Manner in which play is presented in theatre.