

Drama Curriculum Glossary

Action	The action of a play refers to the sequence of events and actions taken by characters in a play that move the narration forward from beginning to end.
Actor	A performing artist portraying a dramatic role in a theatrical setting.
Antagonist	A character opposing the protagonist of a play, creating conflict for the protagonist.
Archetype	In theater, archetype refers to characters which are fundamental in nature, found throughout dramatic writing. For example, the hero, the villain, the monster, or the wise fool.
Audition	An event during which an actor tries out for a theatrical production or other dramatic presentation, usually overseen by the Director, sometimes by a casting director.
Backstage	Stage area behind the front curtain, also the areas beyond the setting, including wings and dressing rooms.
Blocking	Arrangement of actors' movements onstage with respect to each other and the stage space.
Body Alignment	The way in which an actor aligns his or her body when at rest or in motion; posture. An actor may make character development choices in regard to body alignment in creating a role. For example, a hero may lead with his heart forward, standing and in motion.
Caricature	A character or interpretation of a character which greatly exaggerates the traits and flaws of a person.
Center Stage	The geographic center of the stage.
Character	A character written in a scripted drama, to be portrayed by an actor.
Character Development	Refers to the development of a particular character within a given script, from beginning to end. Sometimes also called a character's "story arc." Also, the way in which an actor approaches and develops a character in a script into a role onstage; characterization.
Comedy	Category of drama that is generally light in tone; it is concerned with issues that are not serious, has a happy ending, and is designed to amuse and provoke laughter. Examples of comedy are "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Importance of Being Earnest."
Conflict	Refers to the relationship between opposing characters in a play, which also defines the choices of actors as they develop their characters for performance, and helps to move the action of a play forward.
Costume	The clothing and other accoutrement worn by a performer in the presentation of a role, or part, in a staged production.
Creative Drama	An informal, improvisational, non-exhibition, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experiences through role-play, improvisation, pantomime, movement, or sound.

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Cue	A signal for action within the context of a theatrical production or other dramatic presentation. For example, one actor provides the “cue” for another actor to speak a line. Also, lighting, rigging, and sound cues are often written into a prompt book which allows a stage manager to direct the technical aspects of a production. i.e., a stage manager will call for a curtain to fly or a lighting blackout at the end of a scene.
Designer	As in costume, scenic, or lighting design applied to a theatrical production. The designer works with the director to define the world of the production and how each element of design supports the overall interpretation of the script. Designers often oversee a variety of other theater technicians including builders, operators, electricians, and crew members in the implementation of the production design.
Dialogue	Lines in a script or improvisation between two or more characters. A conversation between two or more characters.
Diction	The intonation, inflection, and articulation with which an individual speaks words. Usually, the quality of diction will be evaluated as good or poor, based on criteria of the resulting clarity and engaging manner of speech.
Director	In American usage, the person who is responsible for the overall unity of a production, coordinating the efforts of the contributing artists. The director is in charge of rehearsals and supervises the actors in the preparation of their parts.
Downstage	Front of the stage toward the audience.
Drama	Drama is a literary form meant specifically to be performed, and including parts written for actors.
Drama Experience	A leader guides participants during a process drama, story drama, or creative drama experience through side-coaching, narration, and prompting; the action of the drama does not stop in order for the leader to support the students; the facilitator may guide participants in or out of role
Dramatic Play	Make-believe where children naturally assign and accept roles, then act them out.
Dynamics	Dynamics in the performing arts, refers to the relative energy between two performers. May refer to a relationship between two characters in a play.
Ensemble	A group of performers working together, with an emphasis on the performance of the group rather than on individual performances.
Enunciation	Refers to the ability to pronounce or articulate words.
Gesture	The use of body movement and facial expression to add meaning to the words spoken by an actor onstage.
Given Circumstances	The underlying actions and events that have happened before the play, story, or devised piece begins.
Imagined Worlds	An imaginary world created collectively by participants in a drama experience.
Improvisation	A form of unscripted drama where the actor is required to create dialogue and a character in the moment of performance.

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Inner Thoughts	The underlying and implied meaning or intentions in the characters dialogue or actions (also known as subtext).
Lighting	Theatrical lighting helps to define mood, time of day, and other environmental factors within the context of a production design. Theatrical lighting often incorporates area lighting, color, and timed lighting cues.
Lines	Lines of text in a script that are designated to a specific character, to be portrayed by an actor.
Locomotor Movement	Refers to movement that takes a student from one place to another, e.g., skipping, running, and hopping.
Monologue	Lines in a script or improvisation spoken by only one character, sometimes spoken directly to the audience.
Musical Theater	Broad category which includes operas, operetta, musical comedy, and other musical plays. It includes any dramatic entertainment in which music and lyrics (and sometimes dance) are integral and necessary.
Nonlocomotor/Axial Movement	Refers to movement performed without moving from one place to another, e.g., bending, stretching, and swinging.
Objective	Goals, both large and small, which help an actor develop a role for theatrical performance. i.e., “What would I do if I were that character in that situation?”
Offstage	Areas of the stage, usually in the wings, which are not in view of the audience.
Pantomime	A style of performance in which the actor relates a narrative through body movement, gesture, and facial expression, without the use of vocal elements.
Performance	Refers to the presentation of a dramatic event specifically involving a relationship between the performers onstage and a live audience.
Physical Warm-up	A series of physical exercises meant to precede a dramatic activity, to prevent injury and help prepare actors for physical work.
Pitch	Tone of a speaking or singing voice relative to its height or depth. i.e., expression of character or emotion by raising or lowering the pitch of one’s voice.
Playwright	The author of a play.
Plot	As distinct from story, a patterned arrangement of events and characters for a drama. The incidents are selected and arranged for maximum dramatic impact. A narrative as revealed through the action and/or dialogue; traditionally a plot has the elements of exposition, inciting incident, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution or falling action.
Process Drama	A non-linear, episodic, process centered, improvised form of drama in which teacher and students are in-role exploring and reflecting on an issue, story, theme, problem, or idea in a non-exhibitional format that is intended to benefit the performers themselves.
Producer	In American usage, the person responsible for the business side of a production, including raising money.

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Production	An interpretation of a drama involving all the elements of theater, both technical and artistic.
Projection	The level at which an actor is able to project his or her voice into the audience. Refers to the overall volume, quality, and clarity with which an actor speaks the lines of the play.
Props (Properties)	Objects that are used by performers onstage or are necessary to complete a set, e.g., a hairbrush, or a chair.
Protagonist	Principal character in a play, the one whom the drama is about.
Rehearsal	The process by which actors and other theater personnel learn their parts over a period of time. At different points in the rehearsal process, a director will focus on different elements of the production, leading to the performance of a production.
Role	A character in a scripted drama as portrayed by an actor in a theatrical setting. The conflicting forces faced by characters in a play, i.e., other characters, personal limitations.
Scene	Stage setting, one of the structural units into which a play or an act of a play is divided, and the location of a play's action.
Script	Written or printed text of a play or some other theatrical representation; a script consists of dialogue, stage directions, descriptions of characters, and the likes.
Scripted Drama	A piece of writing for the theater that includes a description of the setting, a list of the characters, the dialogue, and the action of the characters.
Set	Scenery, taken as a whole, for a scene or an entire production.
Skit	A brief dramatic sketch often performed in informal settings such as a classroom or community event.
Sound	The elements of sound usually referred to within the context of a sound design, which support the production of a play or other dramatic presentation. i.e., music, ambient sounds, sound cues designated by the stage directions in a script.
Stage Directions	Geographic locations on the stage, i.e., downstage, upstage, stage left, stage right. Also, text in a script suggesting action of the players, often written parenthetically, or in italics.
Stage Left/Stage Right	The sides of the stage from the perspective of the actor, facing the audience. Stage left and stage right are in the same place on stage whether the actor is facing the audience or facing away from the stage.
Stage Manager	The Stage Manager coordinates and oversees all aspects of a production that relate to the development of a performance, including scheduling, documentation, and sometimes dramaturgical research for the rehearsal process, and managing all the elements of a theatrical production in progress, including personnel and time management, directing the staging elements, and facilitating communication.

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Stagecraft	Skills used in the development of a theatrical production, e.g., understanding of stage directions, ability to construct scenery.
Staging	Patterns of movement in a scene or play including, for example, stage crosses, entrances, and exits which help to convey meaning.
Story Drama	Episodic, process centered, improvised form of drama that uses existing literature as a starting point for drama exploration. The drama explores implied moments (before, after, or within) that may not exist in the story and is presented in a non-exhibitional format that is intended to benefit the performers themselves.
Story Elements	Characters, setting, dialogue, and plot that create a story.
Storytelling (Storyteller)	Storytelling is the practice of sharing events through words, images, and sounds, often including improvisation and embellishment that originate from the storyteller. The narrative of a story, though perhaps familiar, will be influenced by the style and personal experience of the storyteller.
Suspension of Disbelief	The ability of both the actors and the audience to “suspend disbelief” in regard to the world of the play. The unspoken agreement that the audience will believe that an actor dressed in a costume is a dragon or a historical character, for example.
Technical Elements	The elements of spectacle such as sets, sound, costumes, lights, music, props, and makeup used to create a unified and meaningful design for a theatrical production.
Tempo	Refers to the speed or pacing in the performance of a given piece of music, dance, or text.
Tension	The dynamic created in a script between characters pursuing opposing objectives, facing limitations of the world of the play, and other obstacles. This dynamic helps to create a sense of urgency, time, and energy within a production of a dramatic work, and also may draw the audience further into the world of the play.
Theatre (Theater)	A theater is the building in which a dramatic performance takes place, may also refer to a theatrical company or ensemble. Also, theatre is defined as a branch of the performing arts, the product of which is a performance of a dramatic event in which speech, gesture, dance, music, spectacle, and design combine into a single artistic form.
Theatre Games	Creative dramatic play in the form of group activities, meant to develop specific expressive and dramatic performance skills.
Theme	The aspect of the human condition under investigation in the drama; it can be drawn from unifying topics or questions across content areas
Timbre	The quality of vocal speech or singing, not relative to pitch or volume, sometimes referred to as tone quality or color. In music, defines the tonal quality of various instruments.

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Tragedy	Tragedy involves a serious action of universal significance and has important moral and philosophical implications. Following Aristotle, most critics agree that a tragic hero or heroine should be an essentially admirable person whose downfall elicits our sympathy while leaving us with a feeling that there has in some way been a triumph of the moral and cosmic order which transcends the fate of any individual. The disastrous outcome of a tragedy should be seen as the inevitable result of the character and his or her situation, including forces beyond the character's control. Examples of tragedy are "Antigone," and "Hamlet."
Upstage	Back of the stage away from the audience.
Vocal Warm-up	A series of vocal exercises meant to precede a dramatic activity, to prevent injury and help prepare actors for vocal work.
Volume	The relative loudness of a speaking voice or other sound.