

Learning About Types of Plays

Name:

Directions:

1. Read the information on styles of drama.
2. Search the Internet for definitions of all of the terms under types of plays.
3. Record the definitions on this sheet
4. Categorize each type of play by its style (example: realistic/representational) and hand in your page.

Styles

Realistic/Nonrealistic – *Realism* creates the illusion of real life. Sets look like common places and characters behave like “real” people. *Non-Realistic* plays are exaggerated to the point that they are imaginative or nightmarish. Animals may talk or people may fly.

Representational/Presentation – *Representational* plays have the imaginary “forth wall”, and the audience is separated from the action by that invisible wall. No reference is made to the audience. *Presentation* style recognizes the audience and the characters may speak to the audience directly.

Types of plays

Tragedy

Greek Tragedy

Shakespearian Tragedy

Modern Tragedy

Related Terms

Catharsis

Tragic Flaw

Foil

Comedy

Low Comedy (Slapstick)

Farce

High Comedy/Satire

Light Comedy (Situational)

Related Terms

Comic timing

Clowning

Serious or Social Drama

Melodrama

Type of Drama

Style

Greek Tragedy

Shakespearian Tragedy

Modern Tragedy

Low Comedy (Slapstick)

Farce

High Comedy/Satire

Light Comedy (Situational)

Serious or Social Drama

Melodrama

Tragedy

- considered the highest form of drama
- shows strong emotion, humans trying to rise above their instincts
- protagonist always suffers and is defeated because a flaw in his or her personality
- audience feels intense emotion and is left with a feeling of calm
- the purpose is to teach us improve our instinctual responses to “better” or more civilized ones

Greek Tragedy

- original form
- introduced Catharsis
- contained a chorus that instructs and narrates
- lots of graphic offstage violence

Shakespearian Tragedy

- 5 acts, with the highest point in the middle of act three
- contains a foil for the tragic hero

Modern Tragedy

- society forces the tragic hero into failure
- audience knows the error of the hero from the start

Related Terms

Catharsis – a feeling of purged emotion and calmness following the tragic end to a hero

Tragic Flaw – a character trait possessed by the tragic hero (causes his/her misfortune)

Foil – a character who provides the opposing force to the tragic hero, demonstrates what the tragic hero should do

Comedy

- emotionally simplistic, but amusing or funny
- minor catastrophes, coincidental problems
- happy endings
- wide range of types

Low Comedy (Slapstick)

- physical humor (pie in the face)
- characters struggle against a situation or each other
- people are hurt, but never seriously or permanently

Farce

- makes fun of a common situation
- over-exaggerated/ridiculous (Monty Python)

High Comedy/Satire

- intellectual or drawing room comedy

- makes fun of societal/cultural or literary issues
- intended to encourage audience to change accepted behaviors that look stupid in the playwright's portrayal

Light Comedy (Situational)

- characters are recognizable types (dumb blond, nerd)
- characters behave as we would expect, but bizarre situations force them into funny behavior
- characters work to solve the problem and succeed by the end of the play
- the audience recognizes the situation as plausible
- theme applies to specific situations and circumstances

Related Terms

Comic timing – the art of doing or saying a funny thing at just the right moment, then pausing while the audience laughs

Serious or Social Drama

- subject of the play is treated seriously
- theme of the play deals with issues that the playwright's society is facing
- problems may or may not be solved by the end, but some resolution of the conflict is attained
- actions of the characters are realistic, given their circumstances
- audience is intended to think about issues and relate emotionally to the characters

Melodrama

- characters are stereotypes (evil villain, damsel in distress)
- a hero "saves the day" by the end
- intended to entertain and demonstrate virtuous behavior
- villain is brought to justice
- themes always that justice triumphs in the end
- audience "roots" for the hero