



Drama as a literary genre

The features of a dramatic text

Compact Performer - Culture & Literature

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1. The structure

A play consists of a **number of acts** divided into **scenes**.
All Shakespearian plays are made up of five acts:

- Act 1: **introduction**
- Act 2: **development**
- Act 3: **crisis or turning point**
- Act 4: **complications**
- Act 5: **denouement = the resolving of all difficulties**



1. The structure

Elizabethan tragedies:

- are generally introduced by a **prologue**, spoken by the **chorus**



provides information about the main character / the subject of the play

- often end with an **epilogue**



- requests applause
- is usually played by a central character



2. Stage directions

- Stage directions are the instructions a playwright gives to the director and the actors about how a play should be staged.
- They provide information about
 1. the setting;
 2. the characters' actions and movements;
 3. the style of acting.

Exeunt all but TITANIA [and the sentinel]. Enter Oberon. He drops the juice on TITANIA's eyelids.

(W. Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 2, Sc II)



3. Characters

The number of characters, which in the past were called *Drámatís Personae*, may vary but always includes:

- a *hero*, the protagonist of the play who is not necessarily “heroic”, noble and brave;
- a *heroine*, the play’s main female character;
- an *antagonist*, who is the hero’s main opponent, usually the play’s *villain*.

Characters can be divided into *main* or *minor* according to how important they are for the story.



3. Characters

The character can be introduced through

- ***dialogue***, that is, his interaction with other characters;
- ***Soliloquies and monologues***, which reveal his thoughts, feelings and personality;
- ***Asides*** (short comments made to the audience);
- ***stage directions***



4. Dramatic techniques

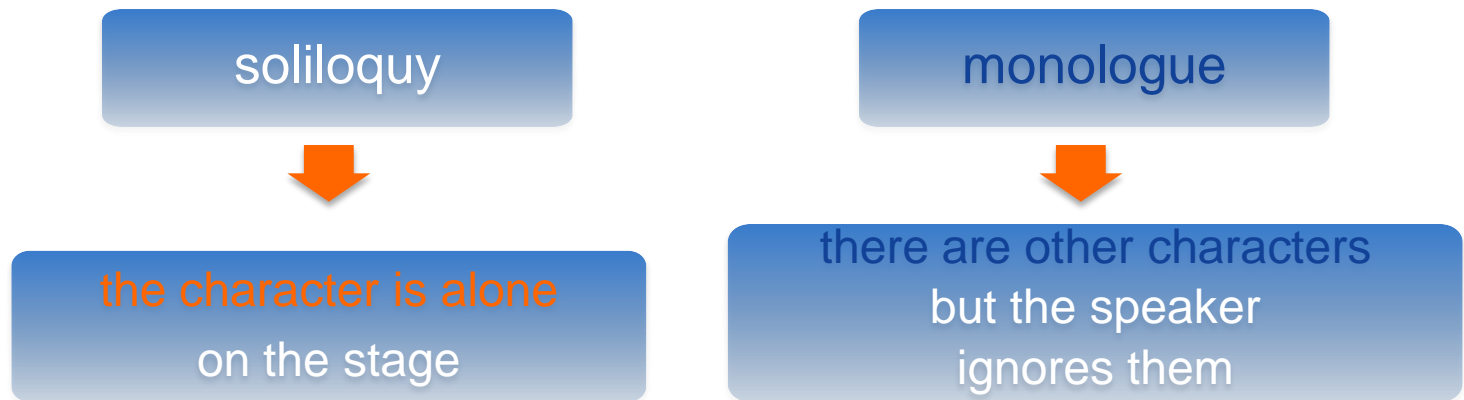
Dialogue is the main support of drama since:

- it creates the action;
- it provides details about the characters and their relationships;
- it contributes to theme development;
- it gives information about the past;
- it can foreshadow subsequent events;
- it may be built to cause specific reactions in the audience.



4. Dramatic techniques

Soliloquy and **monologue** are special conventions of Elizabethan drama.



- These devices enable the playwright to let the audience know:
- the character's thoughts about a specific problem;
 - the character's plans for the future;
 - the character's feelings and reactions;
 - the character's explanation of what happens between scenes.



4. Dramatic techniques

Asides are short comments made by a character for the audience alone, usually occurring in or between speeches.

Their purposes are:

- to reveal the nature of the speaker,
- to draw the attention of the audience to the importance of what has been said;
- to explain developments;
- to create humour by introducing the unexpected.