

SECTION

5

DRAMATIC
ELEMENTS



DRAMA

Knowing Your Dramatic Elements

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this section. This section marks a shift from Prose to Drama. Most of the elements you have learned about will be important in studying drama. At the Junior High School, you studied drama as part of your reading of *Cockcrow*. You will remember the drama text you read. You will recall that you studied Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. This section introduces you to the key elements of drama as a genre of literature. Through the exploration of various dramatic elements, you will develop the skills to develop characterisation with suggested guidelines to gain mastery over drama texts and ultimately create meaningful connections among literature, text and life.

By the end of the section, you will be able to:

- Review knowledge in elements of prose and apply them in your discussions of elements of drama.
- Identify and explain the significance of the plot.
- Identify the various conflicts in dramatic texts and explain how these move the plot forward.
- Discuss the significance of setting to the development of selected dramatic texts.

Key Ideas

- Elements of prose narrative include plot, setting, theme, and characters.
- The plot ensures that every important element of the story is in place. The plot contains the conflict which the main character must resolve.
- Conflict in drama involves disagreement between opposing characters. The two main types of conflict are internal and external conflicts.
- Setting tells the time, place and socio-cultural background of a story or a drama piece.

Elements of Drama



Fig. 5.1: An image showing a theatre and actors performing

What is drama?

Based on the images above, drama can be described as a genre of literature that tells a story through performances. Drama shows human experiences through characters (who are either human or not), who interact with each other on stage. These interactions that happen through drama texts or performances can be either verbal (through talking) or non-verbal (through actions). Drama is designed to make the audience feel emotions, understand the plot better and relate well with it.

Elements of Drama

In drama, there are various elements. The following are some of the elements of drama:

1. **Theme:** The theme is the main or central idea of the play. A theme can be clear (explicit) or suggested (implicit). Identifying the theme in drama is not difficult. By watching, reading or listening to what the characters do and say, the audience/readers can figure out the theme.

An example of both an explicit theme and an implicit theme are shown in the extracts below.

A True Family

In a small village, people believed in helping each other. Every day, the villagers would gather in the market square and share what had. If someone was in need, the whole village would come together to support them. They believed that unity and kindness made their community strong. As the elder always said, “Helping one another is what makes us a true family.”

In the above extract, the themes “unity” and “kindness” have been stated clearly (explicit).

LENA

Lena watched as the new student, Mark, sat alone during lunch. She noticed how he nervously picked at his food, avoiding eye contact with anyone. Without saying a word, Lena stood up, took her tray, and joined him. She smiled and started a conversation about their favourite books. Soon, others followed her lead, and Mark was no longer sitting alone. Day by day, Lena continued to show small acts of kindness, slowly changing the atmosphere in the cafeteria.

In the above extract, the themes “inclusion” and “kindness” are implied. They have not been stated in the extract.

2. **Plot:** This is basically the order in which the drama/story has been arranged. E.g. How the drama/story begins, what follows after that, what comes next, all the way to the very end of the drama. When the plot is clear, the audience or readers are able to follow the story smoothly. This helps them to understand and react appropriately to the performance/text.
3. **Characterisation in Drama:** Characterisation is how the characters are created and developed. The way the characters are portrayed in drama helps the audience to understand their personalities and roles in the drama.



Fig. 5.2: An image showing a Nigerian actress

The image above is a merger of two different pictures of actress Bimbo Ademoye. To your left, she plays the role of an uneducated therapist in a comedy skit while the picture on the right-hand side could pass for her everyday look or another character in a different movie.

4. **Setting:** the setting is where and when the play takes place. This can be in multiple locations or just a single location. The setting does not only include the place and time but the social and historical context of the story as well.



Fig. 5.3: An image showing different settings

Activity 5.1

Brainstorming Elements of Drama.

1. Form a mixed-ability group of five.
2. In your group, brainstorm the elements of drama such as theme, plot, characterisation and setting.
3. Present your findings to the whole class.

Activity 5.2

Connecting Prose Elements to Drama

1. In mixed-ability groups of three, make a list of the elements of prose.
2. In your group, discuss which of the elements of prose you just listed can be applied to drama texts.
3. Pick and read portions of your prescribed drama texts.
4. Identify the elements of drama in the portion of the text you just read.
5. Using literary terminology, discuss the elements of drama found in the extract you read with your peers.
6. Present your findings to the whole class as a way of developing your presentation skills.

Activity 5.3

Discussing more complex texts

1. Select a more complex drama text (e.g. Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare). Your teacher can help you with some complex drama texts which are appropriate for this activity.
2. Read a selected extract from the complex drama text or the whole text
3. Follow these steps to help you discuss more complex drama texts
4. Identify the key elements in the plot.
5. Identify the elements of drama used in the drama text.
6. Explain how these elements add depth to the story.
7. Discuss examples from the text where this device is used.

Significance of Plot in Drama

If you ever watched a movie and narrated the story to someone from the beginning to the end, then, what you did was that you narrated the plot to that person.

As discussed above, the plot is the sequence of events in a story. It is basically how the story unfolds. The plot makes sure everything happens in a logical order which then makes sense to the reader or audience. If a play/story will be interesting or sustain your interest to the end, the plot plays a key role in that.

The plot usually contains the conflict. This conflict is usually resolved by the main character at the end of the play/story.

Parts of a plot

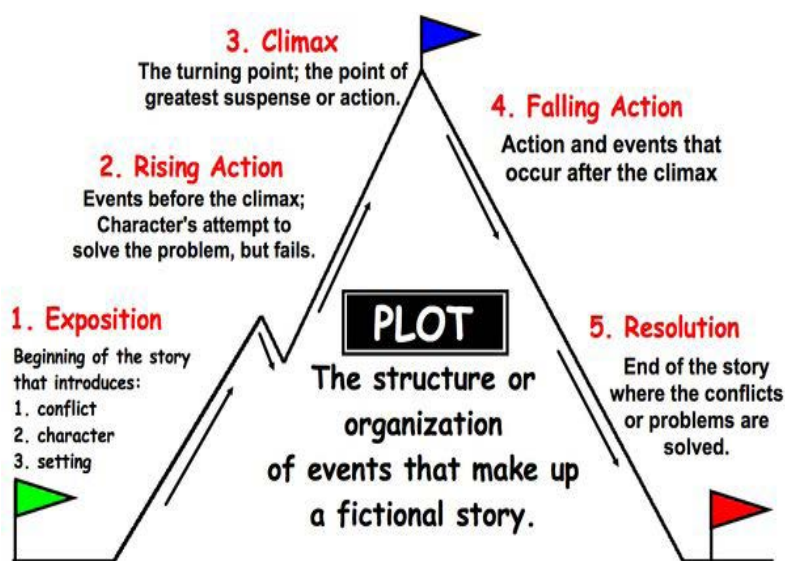


Fig. 5.4: An image illustrating the plot structure

The plot usually contains the following

1. **Exposition:** This is usually the beginning of a story. The exposition introduces the characters and setting. The exposition sets up the conflict or the main problem.
 In *The Marriage of Anansewa* for instance, the exposition introduces Ananse, his daughter Anansewa and other characters such as Players and Property man. The exposition sets up the story's main problem: Ananse's scheme to marry off his daughter Anansewa for wealth. The setting is established in a Ghanaian village.
 Ananse writes letters to multiple suitors promising each of them the chance to marry his daughter, Anansewa
2. **Rising Action:** Rising action is a series of events that create tension and build up the story. Rising action leads to the climax of the story.
 In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Ananse begins to accept gifts from the suitors he promises to give his daughter to. Here, readers can sense the calamity/trouble that await Ananse.
3. **Climax:** Climax is the most interesting/intense part of the plot. It is also known as the highest point of the story/plot. Usually, the climax is the point where the main character faces his/her biggest challenge and/or makes a crucial decision that affects the plot.
 In *The marriage of Anansewa*, the climax is the point where Ananse announces the death of his daughter, as a way to escape from the trouble he has put himself into. This creates a moment of high tension.
4. **Falling Action:** These are the events that happen after the climax. They start to resolve the conflict. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the falling action is the point where the truth about Ananse's deception is revealed, and the suitors realise that Anansewa is alive and well.
5. **Resolution:** This is the part of the plot where the conflicts are resolved, and the drama ends. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the resolution happens when Ananse is forgiven by the suitors after the deception.

Activity 5.4

Structure of plot of a movie

Form a group of five and do the following activities:

1. Scan the QR Code below to watch this short film.



2. In your group, examine the structure of the plot in the film.
3. Discuss how the plot contributes to the development of the story. The following questions can help you:
4. How does the story begin?
5. What happening(s)/events lead to the climax of the story?
6. Which part constitutes the climax?
7. How does the climax affect the outcome of the story?
8. How is the conflict resolved?
9. How does this end?
10. How does the plot structure of the video affect the outcome of the story?

Activity 5.5

Breaking plot elements into smaller components

In groups, break down the elements of plot into smaller components or parts.

Using a story map, highlight the significance of the elements of plot you discussed above. Be willing to help your friends who may struggle to understand so they can contribute to the discussions. Use academic and ethical language that will not hurt anyone's feelings.

Various Conflicts in Drama Texts

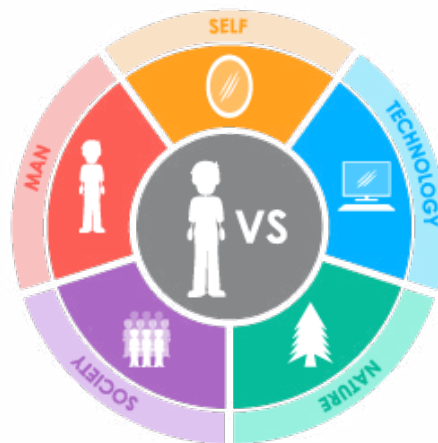


Fig. 5.5: An image showing the types of conflict

Have you ever faced a tough decision where no matter what you chose, it felt like the wrong choice? Or struggled against something bigger than yourself, like rules you could not change or events you could not control? Conflict, like these experiences, is at the heart of every great story. It is what makes us connect with the characters and keeps us curious about how their struggles will end.

We learned in the previous section that; conflict happens when there are two opposing forces or ideas within a character or between characters. It is what makes a story interesting and keeps the audience engaged. Conflict helps to:

1. Move the story forward.
2. Show us the characters' thoughts, values and weaknesses.
3. Reveal the deeper meaning of the story.

There are **two main types** of conflict in drama:

1. **Internal Conflict** This happens inside a character's mind. A character may feel torn between two opposing thoughts, feelings, or goals.

Example: In *Ama Ata Aidoo's Dilemma of a Ghost*, Ato is torn between his family and his wife, showing his inner struggle.

2. **External Conflict** This happens when a character struggles with something outside themselves, like another person, society, nature or even fate.

Examples:

- i. **Man against man:** In *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, characters struggle against each other during the Salem witch trials.
- ii. **Man against society:** In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Okonkwo struggles with the changing ways of his society.
- iii. **Man against nature or fate:** In *The Gods Are Not to Blame* by Ola Rotimi, the characters face challenges controlled by fate.

By understanding conflict, you can better appreciate the themes and lessons in stories.

Activity 5.6

Reviewing Knowledge on conflict through film

Click the link below and watch a film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QpIjpeD9p8&t=30s>

Use the following steps to guide you in your revision on your knowledge on conflict in texts:

- Step 1: Identify at least three instances of conflict in the story. Write them down or record them in a preferred format (e.g., notes, audio recording).
- Step 2: Think about who is involved in each conflict. Is it between characters, a character and society, or a character and their inner thoughts?
- Step 3: Write down how the conflict affects the story or changes the characters.

For instance, *The Lion King*: Conflict between Simba and Scar. This conflict shows Scar's jealousy and Simba's journey to overcome fear and take his rightful place.

Activity 5.7

Brainstorming the Concept and Types of Conflict

1. Create a group of five members with your friends and take turns to share ideas on the meaning of conflict and its types. The following discussion points could guide you:
 - a. Discuss what conflict means. Contribute at least one idea.
 - b. Use examples to identify the types of conflict:
 - i. Character vs. Character
 - ii. Character vs. Society
 - iii. Character vs. Self
2. Write the types of conflict and examples on a shared chart.
3. Among your friends, debate on the topic “which type of conflict is more difficult to resolve in drama”

Activity 5.8

Explaining How Conflict Moves the Plot Forward

1. In your group, agree and pick any of your prescribed drama texts, or use your phone or tablet to search for a short story online.
2. Scan the text or read the short story and choose one conflict from the text (The Crucible or any other story).
3. Classify the selected conflict under the types of conflicts.
4. Explain how the conflict begins, develops and resolves in the story. Use the table below to guide you.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSE AND EVIDENCE
Which conflict is identified?	
What type of conflict is identified?	
How does the conflict develop? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How does the conflict affect the actions of the characters? b. What does the conflict teach us about the characters? 	
How is the conflict resolved?	

5. Discuss as a group how the story would change without this conflict. This question could guide you: Would the story still be interesting without this conflict? Why or why not?

Activity 5.9

Group Presentations and Peer Critique

1. As a group, present your findings to the class. Each member should have a role (e.g., speaker, slide designer, or note-taker).
2. After your presentation, take feedback from your friends and teacher.

Activity 5.10

Project on the Effect of Plot on Conflict

1. In your group, discuss how plot influences conflicts in the text. The following questions could guide you:
 - a. What major events create conflict?
 - b. How does each event connect to the next?
 - c. Do the conflicts get resolved? How?
2. In your group, write a short report showing how the plot shapes the conflicts in texts.

The Significance of Setting in Drama

What is Setting in a Story?

Setting is the **time, place and social background** where a story happens. It helps to create the **mood or atmosphere** of the story and shows how characters behave. The setting also influences the **language** used in the story.



Fig. 5.6: An image showing different settings

For example:

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the setting includes a Ghanaian community, where the customs, traditions, and language reflect the culture of the people. In *The Crucible*, the setting is a Puritan town in America, which shapes the strict rules and tense mood of the story.

Why is Setting Important?

The setting is not just where a story takes place, it does many things to make the story more interesting!

1. **Makes the story engaging:** A good setting matches the events of the story, keeping readers interested.
2. **Feels real to readers:** When the setting feels like the real world, it makes readers feel connected.
3. **Creates clear pictures:** Using sensory details (like sights, smells, and sounds) helps readers imagine the story clearly.
4. **Supports the theme:** The setting can highlight the main ideas or lessons in the story.
5. **Helps readers connect:** Settings like schools, villages, and cities feel familiar, making the story more relatable.
6. **Shapes characters' actions:** The environment influences how characters behave and make.

Think of the setting as the “stage” where everything happens. It helps you understand the story better and makes it more enjoyable to read.

Activity 5.11

Brainstorming the Importance of Setting in Drama Texts

1. Form a group of five members with your classmates.
2. Think about what setting means in drama. Use examples from everyday life (e.g., a classroom, a market).
3. Discuss why the setting is important in a story. Each group member should contribute an idea. You could be guided by these questions:
 - i. What does the setting tell us about the story or characters?
 - ii. Can the story happen in a different setting? Why or why not?
 - iii. How does the setting make the story more interesting?
4. Write or record your group's ideas to share with the class.

Activity 5.12

Exploring Different Settings Using Visual Aids

1. In your group, observe the pictures provided below. Think about what kind of stories could happen in each setting.

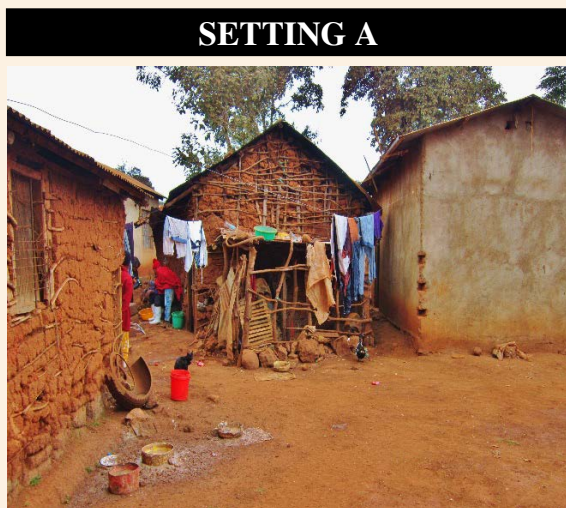


Fig. 5.7: An image showing a village

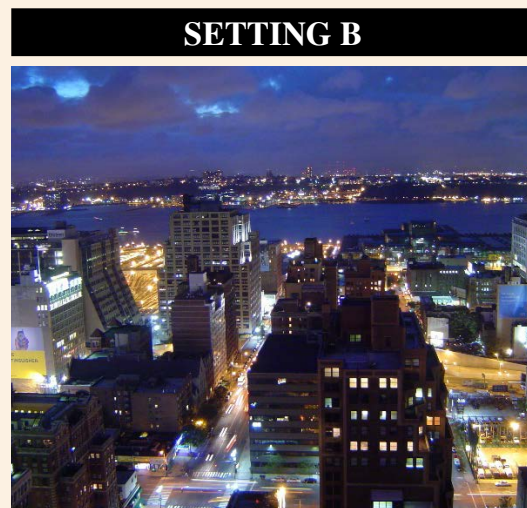


Fig. 5.8: An image showing a city

SETTING C**Fig. 5.9:** An image showing a beach**SETTING D****Fig. 5.10:** An image showing the forest

2. Pair up with a partner to share your ideas. Use these guiding questions:
 - i. What type of characters would live in this setting?
 - ii. What kind of problems could happen here?
 - iii. How would the setting change the mood of the story?
3. After discussing, as a group, create a short description or draw a story idea based on one setting.

Activity 5.13**Identifying Settings in Drama Texts**

1. As a group, select any of your prescribed drama texts
2. Read the first scene of the drama text. Identify where and when the story happens.
3. Write down clues about the setting (e.g., descriptions of places, mentions of time, or dialogue between characters). These questions could guide you:
 - i. What clues help you figure out the setting?
 - ii. How does the setting influence the characters or the story?
4. In your group, Identify the setting in your assigned text.
5. Discuss as a group why the setting is important. Use examples from the text
6. Write down how the setting: affects the characters, shapes the conflict., influences the mood or tone of the story.
7. Present your findings to the class and take feedback.

References

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Review Questions

1. List and explain 4 key elements of prose
2. Unscramble the following elements of plot
 - a. Nsoleotuir
 - b. lisingr ctiona
 - c. Ositxeonpi
 - d. Nlflaig tcoian
 - e. Macixl
3. What are the two main types of conflict in drama?
4. What is the setting of a story?
5. Give examples of the elements of prose you listed above that have been used in your prescribed drama text.
6. Write a one-page plot your favourite story and point out the elements of plot in the order in which they appear.
7. How does conflict help move a story forward?
8. How does the setting help create a clear picture in the reader's mind?
9. How is characterisation different in prose and drama?
10. Re-arrange/re-create the plot of your prescribed drama text beginning with the resolution.
11. How does external conflict reflect larger themes in a story?
12. How does the setting influence the actions of the characters in the story?
13. Using at least four of the elements of drama, pair with a friend and create your own drama.
14. Create a drama with all five elements of plot. The drama should begin with the climax, followed by resolution, the rising action, then falling action and finally the exposition.
15. How do internal and external conflicts work together to reveal the deeper meaning of a story?
16. In what ways can the setting support or enhance the theme of a story, and why is it important for readers to connect with the setting?

Acknowledgements



Ghana Education Service (GES)



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