

THEATRE GLOSSARY

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| Acting technique | specific skills, pedagogies, theories, or methods of investigation used by an actor to prepare for a theatre performance |
| Actor | a performer in a play, devised piece, or improvisation who strives to portray a deep understanding of a character through the use of body, voice, imagination, and emotion |
| Adaptation | already existing ideas, text, or work and modifying it to meet the needs of the drama or theatre piece |
| Aesthetic | a guiding principal of creating artwork concerned with visual and emotional experience rather than construction of the work itself |
| Artistic choices | aesthetic decisions made by a theatre artist about a situation, action, direction, and design in order to convey meaning and purpose |
| Audience | observers of or participants in a piece of work, either presented informally or formally |
| Backstory | underlying actions and events that have happened to the characters before the play, story, or devised piece begins |
| Beat | the smallest unit of related actions associated to a specific character objective; a change in the relationship between two or more characters such as power or status; an emotional shift within a scene or a shift from status quo |
| Believability | authentic and relevant characters and/or theatrical choices thought to be “true” based upon an understanding of any given fictional moment, interpretation of text, and/or human interaction |
| Business/Stage business | small movements created by an actor that indicate lifelike behaviors of a character, usually incidental related to the world of the play, character, and plot; used by directors and actors to create and give nuances and details to a performance |
| Character | a person, animal, or entity in a story, scene, process drama, or play |
| Character analysis | the study, investigation and research used to examine a character in a piece of theatrical text by an actor, director, designer, or dramaturg; character analysis includes identifying the given circumstances, spine/super-objective, motivation, objectives, obstacles, tactics, arc, urgency, etc. |

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| Character traits | observable embodied actions that illustrate a character's personality, values, beliefs, and history |
| Characterization | embodiment of the physical, vocal, social, and/or psychological attributes of a character |
| Climax | the moment of greatest dramatic tension or turning point |
| Collaborators | the personnel required to realize a production, improvisation, or devised piece including the lighting, set, costumes, props, sound, and makeup designers, dramaturgs, managers, directors, actors, musicians, and playwrights |
| Commitment | engagement in a role, with focus that is central to the character's needs and intentions |
| Conflict | the problem, confrontation, or struggle in a scene or play; conflict may include a character against him or herself, a character in opposition to another character, a character against nature, a character against society, or a character against the supernatural |
| Costumes | clothing, accessories, or materials worn by an actor which can express the personality or status of the character, the time period, and the style of the play |
| Conventions | practices and/or devices that the audience and actors accept in the world of the play even when it is not realistic, such as a narrator, flashback, or an aside |
| Creative drama | a process-centered, non-exhibitional approach to drama intended to benefit the performers themselves; story drama and process drama are two types of creative drama |
| Cultural context | specific details and authentic representation of a culture that shape the drama/theatre work |
| Design | the creative process of envisioning, developing, and executing aesthetic or functional choices about the visual or aural world of the play |
| Designer | the individual(s) responsible for developing the physical and aural atmosphere (set, lighting, sound) and visual qualities (costumes, props) associated with a particular production of a play or devised piece |
| Design elements | the elements of spectacle such as sets, sound, costume, lights, music, props, and makeup used to create a unified and meaningful design |
| Devise | creation of an original performance piece by an ensemble |
| Dialogue | a conversation between two or more characters |

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| Director | the individual responsible for developing and carrying out the overarching artistic vision and interpretation of a particular production of a play or devised piece |
| Directing | the act of making artistic choices and conveying these ideas to the performers |
| Drama | an art form that uses the body, voice, and imagination, as well as an educational approach to explore pre-text strategies; a drama may or may not lead to a performance |
| Drama work | improvisational process-centered work in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experiences |
| Dramatic play | make-believe where children naturally assign and accept roles, then act them out |
| Dramatic structure | construction of a dramatic or theatrical piece that includes exposition, inciting incident, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution/denouement; also known as story or plot structure |
| Dramaturg | the individual charged with studying, researching, and explaining the background, customs of the time period, and language of a play to the actors, designers, and director; dramaturgy is the act of doing this work |
| Ensemble | a group of theatre artists working together to create drama or theatre work |
| Exposition | dialogue that explains the background of the story and may set up the action of the plot in a scene or play |
| Extended dramatization | acting out the story, theme, scene, or scripted play over a period of time |
| Flexibility | awareness of and consideration for other people and objects in the theatrical space and the ability to adapt to meet new needs |
| Focus | a. the act of drawing attention to a moment or space for the audience; b. commitment by a participant (an actor, technician, director) to remain in the scope of the project or to stay within the world of the play; c. the act of diffusing or sharpening the beam of lighting instrument |
| Frame | a point of view from which one enters into the drama and informs the role being played as each perspective results in a different action or response |
| Genre | relating to a specific kind or type of drama and theatre such as a tragedy, drama, melodrama, comedy, or farce |
| Gesture | an expressive and planned movement of the body or limbs |

Given circumstances

the underlying actions and events that have happened before the play, story, or devised piece begins

Guided drama experience

a leader guides participants during the drama through side-coaching, narration, and prompting; the action of the drama does not stop in order for the leader to support the students; facilitator may guide participants in or out of role

Improvise

the spontaneous, intuitive, and immediate response of movement and speech; a distinction could be made between spontaneous improvisation, which is immediate and unrehearsed, and prepared improvisation, which is shaped and rehearsed

Historical context

the influence of the time period on the characters, plot, or setting in a play or scene; in scripted theatre, the time period in which the play was written is also an important consideration for actors, technicians, and directors

Imaginary elsewhere

an imagined location which can be historical, fictional, or realistic

Imagined worlds

an imaginary world created collectively by participants in a guided drama experience

In-role

teacher and/or students engaging with others who are serving or acting as characters

Inciting incident

the first event in the plot that begins to move the dramatic action forward

Inner thoughts

the underlying and implied meaning or intentions in the character's dialogue or actions (also known as subtext)

Mantle of the expert

a dramatic inquiry methodology in which students are in-role as characters and possess special knowledge relevant to the situation in which they find themselves

Monologue

a longer speech given by one character which expresses his or her thoughts and feelings; the character may be speaking to another character who does not reply to him or her

Motivation

reasons why a character behaves or reacts in a particular way in a scene or play

Narrative pantomime

a guided pantomime where participants simultaneously act out a narrative read by the facilitator

Non-Linear a series of scenes that are episodic but are connected by character, location, or theme

Non-representational materials objects which can be transformed into specific props through the imagination

Non-traditional drama drama used in different spaces outside of a theatre and sometimes accompanied by actors and script

Objective goal or particular need that a character has within a scene or play

Pace appropriate tempo of a performance

Pantomime a performance in which the actors communicate with body, gestures, and facial expressions

Physical characterization the process of communicating a character's emotions, ideas, and temperament through movement which may include expression, gesture, posture, movement quality and tempo, entrances and exits, and position within the performance space

Play voluntary or guided exploration of ideas; examples are dramatic play, symbolic play, role play

Playwright the individual(s) responsible for developing the written text and/or visual vocabulary for a particular production of a play or devised piece

Plot 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

Pre-text a story, poem, current event, artifact, newspaper article, painting, or similar prompt that is used as the catalyst in process drama work

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

Production elements technical elements selected for use in a specific production, may include design elements such as set, sound, costume, lights, music, props, and make-up, but also include elements specific to the production like puppets, masks, special effects, or other story telling devices/concepts

Props (properties) objects used in drama or theatre that express information about the story, theme, character, and time period

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| Protagonist | a main character with whom the drama participants or the audience identifies most strongly; the protagonist is opposed by the antagonist who provides an obstacle to the protagonist's goal or objective; in process drama students often take on the role of the protagonist |
| Puppet | any object brought to life by human hands to create a performance |
| Research | methods of theatre inquiry that include qualitative research (the study of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior), quantitative research (empirical investigations of subjects) or critical/theoretical research (the study of cultural, social, and global ideologies) |
| Rehearsal | steps in preparation for a performance or presentation that can include character development, analysis, blocking/staging, refining and modifying the work of theatre or drama to convey meaning |
| Resolution | moments at the end of the play or scene that solve the problem or address the conflict or question of the play |
| Rising action | part of the plot after the inciting incident where complications and obstacles create tension and interest |
| Role-play | to take on the particular perspective or point of view of a character in order to examine a situation |
| Script | a piece of writing for the theatre which explores the human experience and that includes a description of the setting, a list of the characters, the dialogue, and the action of the characters |
| Script analysis | the study of a script to understand the underlying structure, themes of the play's story, and the motives and objectives of its characters |
| Scene | the subdivision of an act in a play, or process drama, identified by place and time |
| Scenario | the outline for a story, play, or improvised piece |
| Scenery | the background constructed for process drama or theatre work which identifies location |
| Setting | the time and place of a story, scene, or play |
| Side-Coaching | verbal coaching given to a participant simultaneously to the creative play |
| Stage picture | the physical look of the stage used in designing and directing |
| Staging/Blocking | patterns of movement in a scene or play including stage crosses, entrances, and exits which help to convey meaning |

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| Story | a linear or non-linear series of events that includes such things as character, setting, and plot |
| 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 |
| Style | the use of a specific set of characteristic or distinctive techniques such as realism, expressionism, epic theatre, documentary theatre, or classical drama; style may also refer to the unique artistic choices of a particular playwright, director, or actor |
| Tableau | a group of mute, motionless actors that create an artistic picture of an event or moment in a play or scene |
| Tactic | the means by which a character seeks to achieve their objective, the selection of a tactic is based on the obstacle presented; in acting and directing a tactic refers to a specific action verb |
| Teacher in-role | a teacher engaged in a drama using a fictional role alongside the participants to foster deeper learning |
| Technical design | unifying visual aspects including design and creation of sets, lighting, sound, properties (props), costumes, and makeup |
| Technical elements | the specific materials used to create a technical design |
| Technical problems | complications that arise when using technical elements in a rehearsal or performance |
| Techniques | a. diverse instructional methodologies and skills of teaching and learning theatre/drama that may include such skills as vocal techniques, pantomime, movement training, story drama, and improvisation; b. acting methods used for developing a role which may include such things as Stanislavski technique, the method, or other well-recognized approaches to acting |
| Tempo | the pace of a character or piece of work defined by pause, repetition, rhythm, and speed |
| Tension | an intense moment of conflict that occurs when characters in the drama are faced with opposing needs, or want to take different courses of action; tensions derive from a combination of actions, characterizations, and circumstances, all of which help to drive the action forward |

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| Text | the script of a play or the inspiration for a devised piece which could include such things as photos, song lyrics, newspaper clippings, or historical documents |
| Text analysis | the study, investigation and research used to examine piece of theatrical text by an actor, director, designer, or dramaturg; text analysis includes identifying dramatic structure, given circumstances, scenes, beats, themes, the spine of the characters, etc. |
| Theatre research | methods of theatre inquiry that include qualitative research (the study of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior), quantitative research (empirical investigations of subjects) or critical/theoretical research (the study of cultural, social, and global ideologies) |
| Theatre work | theatrical activity which is focused on participants creating an event that will be observed by others |
| Theme | the aspect of the human condition under investigation in the drama; it can be drawn from unifying topics or questions across content areas |
| Vocal characterization | the use of techniques such as rate, pitch, volume, intensity, clarity, and accent to create the unique voice of the character |
| Vocal technique | the use of specific exercises to develop breath support, projection, articulation, and expressivity |