

Elements of Drama

Dialogue, the verbal exchanges between characters in a play, typically has three major functions: to advance the plot, to establish setting (time and place of the action), and to reveal characters' thoughts, responses and emotional states – its most important and consistent function.

Plot, character, and theme, in terms of drama, are generally defined the same as they are for fiction. See your Elements of Fiction handout.

Stage directions are a playwright's written instructions about how the actors are to move and behave in a play. They explain in which direction characters should move, what facial expressions they should assume, how they should speak a line, etc.

Staging is a play's visual detail. This includes such things as the positions of actors on-stage (sometimes referred to as *blocking*), their nonverbal gestures and movements (also called *stage business*), the scenic background, the props and costumes, lighting, and sound effects.

NOTE: Although plays can certainly be read and enjoyed as literature, always remember that drama is a staged art. Plays are written to be performed by actors before an audience.