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**Subject: Contemporary American Literature/ Master 01.**

**Course Title: Drama**

**FEATURES OF DRAMA**

**Introduction** : Knowing the elements of drama helps the appreciation and discussion of plays that we see and read.

**Elements of Drama**

**1.Characters**: Most plays have round major characters and flat minor characters.

**1.1.Protagonist**: The main character, usually the one who sets the action in motion. Example, Hamlet is the protagonist in the play ‘Hamlet’.

**1.2. Antagonist:** The character that stands as rival to the protagonist is called the antagonist. He is the villain.

**1.3. Foil**: A character whose traits contrast with those of another character. He is used to emphasize differences between two characters. By using foil, authors call attention to the strengths or weaknesses of a main character. For example, a handsome but dull character might be a foil for one who is unattractive but dynamic.

**1.4. Confident**: He is the character that lends an ear and gives his input to usually the protagonist. He is the closest friend or trusted servant of the main character. He also has the function to reveal the mind and the intentions of the main character. The confident’s inputs are revealed only to the audience and not to the other characters in the play.

**1.4. Stock Characters**: A stereotypical character who is not developed as an individual but as a collection of traits supposedly shared by all members of a group. These characters are easily recognized by audience due to their recurrent appearance and familial roles. Example: A comic, a servant, a crooked stepmother, a coward…

**2. Dialogue**

The dialogue is the words that are uttered by the characters. It reveals the plot and characters of the play. Dialogue may take various forms:

1. An exchange between two or more characters.
2. Soliloquy: A character that is typically alone on the stage who delivers a long speech which is called a soliloquy. The soliloquy reveals the emotions and the innermost thoughts of the character.
3. Aside: This dialogue is spoken by a character to another character or to the audience but is not heard by the other characters on stage. Aside reveal what a character is thinking or feeling.

**3. Plot**

The plot is the events that occur in a story sequentially and their logic developments. The plot provides the audience with the reasons why characters behave the way they do. Plot in drama follows the same pattern as in other literary genres as the novel or the short story.

**4.Setting**

The setting and time in the play inform us where the story happened and the time it occured. The setting is very influential and impacts the events of the play. Shifts in time and space are often indicated by the actors through their speech, costumes, movements and change in the setting.

**4.1. The lighting**: It is very important for it can express the mood of the play, its time and stress the importance of an event or focus on a character’s action.

**4.2. Costumes**: They used to portray a character’s profession, status, ethnicity, age and so on.

**4.3. Props**: They are items used by actors on stage to create a particular atmosphere of the play and convey a particular information. These can be simple writing materials, chairs and tables, flowers, sofa, trees,…

**5. Stage Directions**: The stage directions serve to inform the reader or the director about the movements or positions or costumes of the actors as well the props, sound effects, lighting effects or the characters’ body language and facial expressions and even the tone of the voice. In addition to comments about the surroundings and when a character enters or exits . This is done through short phrases usually printed in Italics and enclosed in parentheses or brackets. They help us understand the feelings of the characters and the mood of the story.

**6. Theme**

The theme actually tells what the play conveys and means. It deals with the main idea within the story.

**7. Language**: The choice of language in drama can be crucial as it is a major means of communication. Language can be verbal or non-verbal (body language) as it can be chanted.

**8. Sound:** In general, sound has the function to create atmosphere or mood in the play. It is also a kind of language.

**9. Symbol**: Symbol implies a greater meaning than the literal suggestion. Symbol can be found in props, the use of colours ( eg, purple symbolizes royalty,..) etc. Also gestures performed by characters can be repeated later in different circumstances to signify different meanings.

**10. Conflict**: It is considered as an essential ingredient in drama. Without it, the play is dull and uninspiring. Conflict can between two or more characters as it can be internal like in soliloquies.

**11. Rhythm**: It refers to the timing and pace of the play. It is its beat. Generally, it is never the same throughout the drama. Rhythm can follow the emotional state of one or more characters or the atmosphere of the performance at particular moments. To explain, rhythm follows the pace of the events in the play. With accelerated events, the rhythm is quick while in other situations it is heavy. So it is never the same throughout the play.

**12. Mood:** It is the feeling or tone of a performance. The mood of a performance is closely linked with everyday feelings such as pity, anger, happiness or frustration. It can be created via sound, lighting, movement, setting, rhythm, contrast, conflict and more..

**Reference**

* English.tutorvista.com/literary-response/characteristics-of-drama.html. Visisted: 23-01-2017.