

Théâtre Classique Anglais

Question

The difference between a Play, Drama and Theatre ?

Answer

Here are the distinctions:

1. **Play**: A play refers to the written text or script that is intended to be performed on stage. It's the literary work that encompasses the dialogue, actions, and stage directions, designed for actors to bring to life during a theatrical performance. Plays can cover various genres, styles, and themes.
2. **Drama**: Drama is the broader term that encompasses all forms of written or live theatrical work, including plays. It refers to the genre of literature or the content of a performance that presents a story through dialogue and action, often involving conflict, emotions, and character development. Drama includes plays, but it also encompasses other forms like screenplays, radio dramas, and even improvised performances.
3. **Theatre**: Theatre refers to the physical space or venue where performances take place. It encompasses the entire production—the stage, seating area for the audience, lighting, sound, sets, costumes, and everything involved in presenting a play or dramatic work to an audience. Theatre can also refer to the art form as a whole, including the creative aspects of producing, directing, and acting in dramatic performances.

Question

Define These Categories of Drama: Tragedy, Comedy, Tragi-Comedy, Farce, Melodrama and Burlesque.

Answer

1. **Tragedy**: A serious and often somber play that depicts the downfall of a noble protagonist due to a fatal flaw or external circumstances. Tragedies

evoke feelings of pity and fear in the audience. **Examples** include Shakespeare's "Hamlet" or Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex."

2. **Comedy**: A light-hearted and humorous play that aims to entertain by emphasizing amusing situations, characters, and witty dialogue. Comedies usually have a happy ending and often explore societal norms or misunderstandings. **Examples** include Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" or Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest."

3. **Tragi-Comedy**: A play that blends elements of tragedy and comedy, often featuring serious themes alongside humor and a hopeful resolution. These works present a mix of tragic and comic elements, leaving audiences with a complex emotional experience. **Examples** include Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale" or Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead."

4. **Farce**: A type of comedy characterized by exaggerated and improbable situations, physical humor, and absurdity. Farces often rely on misunderstandings, mistaken identities, and fast-paced action to create humor. **Examples** include Molière's "The Imaginary Invalid" or Michael Frayn's "Noises Off."

5. **Melodrama**: A theatrical form that emphasizes exaggerated emotions, simplistic characters (often portrayed as entirely good or evil), and a clear moral conflict. Melodramas typically have heightened tension and strong emotional appeal. **Examples** include "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by George Aiken or "The Drunkard" by W.H. Smith.

6. **Burlesque**: A comedic theatrical form that uses satire, parody, and exaggerated imitation to mock or ridicule serious works, often through humorously risqué or absurd performances. Burlesques can involve exaggeration, irony, and comic reinterpretation of well-known stories or events. **Examples** include "Forbidden Broadway" by Gerard Alessandrini or "The Frogs" by Aristophanes.

Question

When did the English Classical Drama come into being ?

Answer

English Classical Drama began to emerge during the Renaissance, notably in the late 16th Century. This era saw the works of prominent playwrights like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and others, who contributed significantly to the development of English Classical Drama with their influential plays and contributions to the theatrical form.

Drama was introduced from Europe by the Romans, and auditoriums were constructed across the country for this purpose.

Question

The English Classical Drama periods.

Answer

The Medieval Period

During the Medieval Period, English drama largely encompassed two main forms:

1. Religious Plays or Morality Plays:

- Everyman: An allegorical play where the protagonist, Everyman, faces the inevitability of death and the morality of his life's choices.
- The York Mystery Plays: A cycle of biblical stories performed by trade guilds in York, depicting various biblical events from the creation to the Last Judgment.

2. Miracle Plays:

- The Second Shepherds' Play: A famous example, part of the Wakefield Mystery Plays, involving shepherds, angels, and a comic thief who tries to steal a sheep.

These plays were typically performed in churches or by traveling troupes, focusing on religious themes, biblical stories, morality, and the struggle between good and evil. They were essential in conveying religious teachings to the largely illiterate population of the time.

Elizabethan Drama (Late 16th Century):

- William Shakespeare
- "Hamlet"
- "Macbeth"

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- "Othello"
- "King Lear"
- "Romeo and Juliet"
- "A Midsummer Night's Dream"

- **Christopher Marlowe**

- "Doctor Faustus"
- "Tamburlaine the Great"
- "The Jew of Malta"

- **Ben Jonson**

- "Volpone"
- "The Alchemist"
- "Bartholomew Fair"

- **Thomas Kyd**

- "The Spanish Tragedy"

- **John Webster**

- "The Duchess of Malfi"
- "The White Devil"

Jacobean Drama (Early 17th Century):

- **John Fletcher & Francis Beaumont (Collaborative works)**

- "The Maid's Tragedy"
- "Philaster"
- "The Knight of the Burning Pestle"

- **Thomas Middleton**

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- "The Changeling"
- "Women Beware Women"
- "A Chaste Maid in Cheapside"

- John Ford
- "Tis Pity She's a Whore"
- "The Broken Heart"

Victorian era

Notable playwrights and works of the Victorian era include:

1. Oscar Wilde (1854-1900):

- "The Importance of Being Earnest"
- "An Ideal Husband"

2. Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934):

- "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray"
- "Trelawny of the Wells"

3. W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan:

- Collaborative works in light opera, including "The Pirates of Penzance" and "The Mikado"

4. Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906): Though Norwegian, Ibsen's works had a profound impact on Victorian drama:

- "A Doll's House"
- "Hedda Gabler"
- "Ghosts"

Victorian drama often addressed social issues, moral dilemmas, and challenged societal norms, especially through the works of playwrights like Wilde and Ibsen. Despite not being the golden age of English drama, the Victorian era contributed significant pieces that explored societal complexities and human nature.

These periods, authors, and their works form the backbone of English Classical Drama, showcasing a diverse range of themes, styles, and storytelling techniques that have significantly influenced the theatrical tradition.

Question

What is "the Golden Age of English drama" ?

Answer

The Golden Age of English drama is often considered to be the **Elizabethan and Jacobean eras**, encompassing the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

This period saw an explosion of theatrical creativity and innovation, marked by the works of playwrights like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton, and others. The theaters flourished, and London became a hub for dramatic productions, with the establishment of venues like The Globe and The Blackfriars Theatre.

These playwrights produced enduring masterpieces that explored a wide range of themes, emotions, and human experiences, setting the foundation for what is considered a pinnacle in English dramatic literature. The richness and diversity of the plays from this period have led to it being celebrated as the Golden Age of English drama.

Question

What are the elements of Drama ?

Answer

Remember, there are three (3) major elements of Drama, but they get some small elements that make them. They are :

Literary Elements:

1. **Plot:** The sequence of events that make up the story.

2. **Character**: Individuals or entities in the story, developed through actions, dialogue, and interactions.
3. **Theme**: The central idea or underlying message conveyed by the play.
4. **Dialogue**: The spoken conversation between characters driving the narrative forward.
5. **Rhythm**: The pattern of speech or movement in a play, contributing to its pacing and impact.
6. **Spectacle**: The visual elements and striking moments that captivate the audience.

Technical Elements:

1. **Setting**: Time and place where the story occurs.
2. **Stage Directions**: Instructions in the script guiding actors' movements, positions, and actions on stage.
3. **Scenery**: The physical backdrop and set design representing the play's locations.
4. **Costumes**: Attire worn by actors to depict their characters.
5. **Props**: Objects used by actors during the performance to enhance the story.
6. **Lighting**: The manipulation of light to create atmosphere and emphasize scenes.

Performance Elements:

1. **Conflict**: The tension or struggle between opposing forces driving the story.
2. **Genre**: The category or type of the play (e.g., tragedy, comedy, drama).
3. **Symbolism**: Use of objects, actions, or characters to represent abstract ideas.
4. **Mood/Tone**: The emotional atmosphere conveyed by the play, affecting the audience's experience.

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These elements collectively combine to shape the holistic theatrical experience, incorporating literary depth, technical finesse, and engaging performances.