

Aside

Definition of Aside

Normally playwrights use characters' dialogues to tell their stories, but often it becomes difficult for them to express what their characters are *thinking*. Hence, they use a typical dramatic device, called “aside,” to solve this problem. An aside is a short comment or speech that a [character](#) delivers directly to the [audience](#), or to himself, while other actors on the stage appear not to hear. Only the audience knows that the character has said something to them.

In essence, through an aside, a character comments on what happens in the play. Simply, we can define aside as a short commentary that reveals private opinions and reactions of the character. However, it refers to the major [conflict](#) in a play, though it may not involve his personal conflict.

Difference Between Aside and Soliloquy

Both asides and soliloquies are dramatic devices; they have similarities and differences. The similarity between them is that a single character speaks directly to himself, or to the audience, and no other character can hear his comments. The difference between them is that an aside is a shorter comment, while a [soliloquy](#) is a longer speech. Another difference is that an aside reveals hidden secrets or judgments, whereas the soliloquy reveals motives, inner thoughts, or internal struggles going on in the mind of the character.

Examples of Aside in Literature

Aside became a popular dramatic technique during the Elizabethan era, when structure and arrangement of the theaters themselves were changing. The structure of stages was transformed into a three-sided shape that allowed spectators to come closer to actors than ever before. Hence, this

friendly [setting](#) made asides more realistic. Following are a few examples of aside from literature:

Example #1: *Macbeth* (By William Shakespeare)

“Time thou anticipat’st my dread exploits.
The flighty purpose never is o’ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand.”

Here, readers learn that the leading character, Macbeth, feels regret to launch an attack on MacDuff. However, his speech announces that Macbeth would attack MacDuff’s castle and kill his family. This speech reveals Macbeth has lost his [moral](#) values. First, he struggles with the decision to kill the king, but now he does not feel hesitation to murder the king’s whole family. This aside makes it clear that he has transformed into a violent and ambitious man.

Example #2: *Crucible* (By Arthur Miller)

Arthur Miller, in his play *Crucible*, uses aside through the last words of Elizabeth towards the conclusion of the play, when she says:

“He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him.”

Elizabeth forgives her husband of his adultery, and John – after making many mistakes – makes the right decision and confesses his sin. This good moral decision restores his goodness. Therefore, when Reverend Hale asks Elizabeth to convince her husband not to give up his life, she makes an aside, saying that she cannot do this when he finally realizes that he has his goodness.

Example #3: *Hamlet* (By William Shakespeare)

Another example of aside occurs in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In this play, after the death of the King of Denmark, the king's brother Claudius takes the charge of the throne, rather than Prince Hamlet. Moreover, Claudius marries the king's wife. In the first act of this play, when Claudius talks to Hamlet, by calling him his son and nephew, Hamlet makes an aside by saying:

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."

Example #4: *Cherry Orchard* (By Anton Chekhov)

Yasha: (Aside.)

"Lyubov Andreyevna, could I have a word? I was wondering if Madame would be going back to Paris ... the food's uneatable, that old man wandering about muttering to himself ..."

In this example, Yasha makes an aside to express that he wants to go back to Paris with Mrs. Ranavesky, as there are no standards living in her estate, and also he is not satisfied with the behavior of its residents.

Function of Aside

Aside gives special information to the audience about the plot and other characters onstage. It is like a window into the thoughts of characters. Since aside is a comment about the characters without bringing into their knowledge, it gives better understanding to the audience about the essence of the matter.

Asides also create an enjoyable experience for the audience, as a character talks to them directly, drawing them closer to his or her actions and thoughts. They can enter into the true thoughts and feelings of the characters. However, in comedies asides are delightful, and as a result, playwrights could imagine how the audience enjoys their work.