

Subject specific vocabulary

The following subject specific vocabulary provides definitions of key terms used in our GCSE Drama (8261). Students should be familiar with and gain an understanding of all these terms.

Accent

A way of speaking in a local area or country.

Accessories

An article or set of articles of costume, such as gloves, earrings, or a scarf, to add to one's basic outfit.

Amateur theatre

Participants are not usually paid. This does not include performances by peers.

Amplifier

Sound equipment that converts low voltage, low current signal from a tape deck or mixer into a higher current signal suitable for speakers.

Analyse

The process of examining how drama, literary, technical and performance elements are used.

Angling

To set, fix, direct, or adjust at an angle.

Artistic intention

Refers to the decisions made by theatre makers to communicate deeper meaning through their work. Without an artistic intention a piece of drama lacks a purpose or a message for its intended audience

Birdie

A compact display luminaire containing a Par 16 lamp. It is called this because it is similar to, but much smaller than, the Parcan, and so is 'one under Par'.

Blackout

Lighting term: switching all lights out at once, leaving the stage in complete darkness.

Body language

Non-verbal communication by movement or position.

Centre stage

The middle of the stage.

Character

A person portrayed in a drama, novel, or other artistic piece.

Character interaction

The ways in which characters communicate or interact with each other. The action or relationship among two or more characters.

Character motivation

The reason behind a character's behavior and actions in a given scene.

Choral movement

Where the actors perform the same movement at exactly the same time.

Choral speaking

A group of people speaking in unison.

Clarity of diction

Clearness of the voice.

Collaborate

Working together.

Colour

The physical appearance through hue and pigmentation.

Commedia dell'arte

Also known as 'Italian comedy', a style of drama that originated in Italy in the 16th century. Use of stock characters, music, dance, witty dialogue and all kinds of trickery contributed to the comic effects.

Comedy

A play that treats characters and situations in a humorous way.

Communicate meaning

Vital to a successful theatrical experience. How the performers share messages or information with the audience verbally, non-verbally and physically.

Construction materials

Any materials used to build or make the set and any props.

Coordination

The ability to use different parts of the body together smoothly and efficiently.

Creating

The process of developing a drama's content and roles through practical exploration, experimentation and problem solving.

Cross fade

A lighting action in which a particular light cue fades down as the next light cue fades up.

Cue

The command given to technical departments to carry out a particular operation.

Cyclorama

Plain cloth or plastered wall filling the rear of the stage. The term is often loosely applied to a blue skycloth, or any flattage at the rear of the stage. May be curved at the ends.

Develop

Process of devising, to gradually add details to a piece to make it more clear or complete.

Devise

Create a performance, usually based on a stimulus.

Dialogue

Spoken conversation used by two or more characters to express thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Digital recording/live streaming

Live theatre which has been recorded and then viewed on screen.

Distortion

Usually undesirable result of overloading sound equipment. Reducing the levels can remedy the situation.

Documentary theatre

Uses pre-existing material (such as newspapers, government reports, interviews, journals, and correspondences) as source material for stories about real events and people, frequently without altering the text in performance.

Downstage

From an audience's perspective towards the front of the stage (left, right, centre).

Dramatic climax

Turning point of a drama, its point of highest tension, or it is the time when the action starts during which the solution is given.

Drapes

Stage curtains.

Dressing

Decorative props (some practical) and furnishings added to a stage setting.

Echo

A repeated sound received late enough to be heard as distinct from the source.

Effect

An event or a moment intended to create a particular emotional reaction.

Emotional range

Change of voice to express emotion.

End on staging

The audience faces one side of the stage directly, and may sit at a lower height or in tiered seating.

Entrance

A part of the set through which actors can walk onto the stage. The act of an actor walking on to the stage.

Epic theatre

Style of theatre created by Bertolt Brecht where a range of theatrical devices or techniques are used so that the audience are reminded throughout that they are watching theatre. A presentation of life, not real life itself.

Ethnic authenticity

To be realised in a scene, even where it is highly theatrical.

Evaluate

To judge the strengths and weaknesses of a performance.

Exit

A part of the set through which actors can leave the stage. Or, the act of an actor walking off the stage.

Fabric

Cloth or material.

Facial expression

Look on face which shows emotions.

Fade

To increase (fade up), decrease (fade down) or eliminate (fade out) gradually the brightness of a lantern or the volume of a sound.

Filter

Lighting: A sheet of plastic usually composed of a coloured resin sandwiched between two clear pieces.

Sound: Electronic device to isolate and redirect specific frequencies in a speaker system.

Flat

A lightweight timber frame covered with scenic canvas.

Flood

A lantern without a lens that produces a broad non-variable spread of light.

Fly

To raise or lower scenery and equipment above the performing area by means of a rigging system.

Form

The overall style of the drama.

Focusing

The process of aiming a lighting instrument so that it illuminates a particular portion of the stage.

Fresnel

A type of lantern which produces an even, soft-edged beam of light.

Functionality

The range of operations that can be run on a computer or other electronic system.

Furnishings

Furniture, fittings, and other decorative accessories such as curtains and carpets.

FX

Abbreviation for Effect, usually referring to Sound Effects, but can also mean special stage effects.

Gait

A person's manner of walking.

Gauze

See-through material which cannot be seen through when lit from the front, but can be seen through when lit from behind.

Gel

Film placed in front of a lantern to change the colour of the beam.

Genre

A category of literary or dramatic composition. Drama is a literary genre, which is further divided into tragedy, comedy, farce, and melodrama. These genres in turn, can be subdivided.

Gesture

Any movement of the actor's head, shoulder, arm, hand, leg, or foot to convey meaning.

Gobo

Thin metal plate cut out in a pattern and placed in a lantern to project pattern or shape onto the acting space.

Grease paint

Make up supplied in stick form, for application to the face or body.

Gum

Adhesive used for sticking costume and make up prosthetics such as wigs or false facial hair.

Inflection

Change in pitch or loudness of the voice.

Intensity

The strength or amount of sound or light.

Intonation and phrasing

Rising and falling of voice in speech.

Lamp

Lightbulb used in a lantern.

Language

In drama, the particular manner of verbal expression, the diction or style of writing, or the speech or phrasing that suggests a class or profession or type of character.

Lantern

General term for unit of lighting equipment including spotlight and flood light.

Levels

The intensity of a lighting or sound level. Physical levels of actors on the stage help to indicate status.

Location

A particular place or position.

Material

The matter from which a thing is or can be made.

Melodrama

A style of play, which originated in the 19th century, relying heavily on sensationalism and sentimentality. Melodramas tend to feature action more than motivation, stock characters, and a strict view of morality in which good triumphs over evil.

Microphone

An instrument which collects live sound and converts it to electrical impulses which are then put into a mixer or amplifier.

Mood and atmosphere

The tone or feeling of the play, often created by the music, setting, or lighting.

Movement

Stage blocking or the movements of the actors on stage during performance. Also refers to the action of the play as it moves from event to event.

Multimedia

A combination of different content forms such as text, audio, images, animations, video and interactive content.

Musical theatre

Uses song, dance and dialogue to tell a story.

Naturalism

A style of drama that developed in the late 19th century as an attempt to represent real life on stage faithfully and without artifice. The actions of characters tend to be dominated by determinism (societal or environmental forces).

Pace

The speed at which someone or something moves, or with which something happens or changes.

Pause

A break in speaking, period of silence.

Performance conventions

A set of rules which the audience and actors are familiar with and which act as a useful way of quickly signifying the nature of the action or a character.

Performer manipulation

How a puppet is controlled: for example, human arm, rod, shadow or string.

Performance space

The area within which the actor may move in full view of the audience.

Period

When all the facets of a production are carefully aimed towards representing a specific period in history.

Physical theatre

Style of theatre that puts emphasis on movement rather than dialogue. It's often abstract in style, using movement in a stylised and representational way.

Pitch

The particular level (high or low) of a voice, instrument or tune.

Plot

The events or story of a play or arrangement of action, as opposed to the theme.

Plot

Face and body cosmetic.

Positioning

The location of a lantern in the fly or lighting rig.

Posture

Physical alignment of a performer's body, or a physical stance taken by a performer which conveys information about the character being played.

Production values

Lighting, sound, set and costume.

Professional theatre

Those in which performers receive payment for their performances.

Profile

A type of spotlight (qv), with an optical system rather like a projector which produces a narrow, hard-edged beam of light.

Projection (design)

Slides or video are used to project film, images or textures. Lighting effects, Moving cloud, rain or fire effects can be achieved.

Projection (vocal)

Directing the voice out of the body to be heard clearly at a distance.

Promenade staging

Performance area may be set in various locations in a venue. Audience follows the action on foot, moving from one location to another.

Proscenium arch staging

The audience faces one side of the stage directly, and may sit at a lower height or in tiered seating. The frame around the stage is called the proscenium arch.

Prop

Any moveable item used on the set of a play or handled by an actor.

Prosthetics

An artificial feature or piece of flexible material applied to a person's face or body to change their appearance temporarily.

Pyrotechnics

The use of explosions, flashes and smoke on stage.

Refine

Make minor changes to improve.

Rehearse

Practice or preparation of a drama.

Research

Systematic investigation to establish facts. a search for knowledge.

Reverb

The effect of multiple sound waves reflecting off surfaces in a room.

Revolve

A turntable built into the stage floor on which scenery can be set and driven into view.

Rigging

The battens, lines and associated equipment required for the vertical movement of scenery.

Rhythm

Strong, regular repeated pattern of movement or sound.

Scale

The relationship between the real size of something and its size on a model or stage.

Shadow

Artistic lighting design can (sometimes) be about what isn't lit, just as much as what is lit. Along with any shadows that are created.

Shape

The particular physical form or appearance of something, an arrangement that is formed by joining objects together in a particular way.

Social, cultural and historical context

Circumstances of the time the play is set in. It refers to the physical and social setting including the culture, education and people.

Soundscape

Used to create the atmosphere of a scene through sound only, usually provided by the actor's themselves.

Spatial relationships

Sometimes referred to as proxemics, referring to spatial signifiers of the relationship between different performers or a performer and elements of the set which convey information about character and circumstances.

Specialism

Chosen role within the performance – performer or designer.

Special effect

Technical effect, usually spectacular. These can vary from the relatively simple gunshot or the flying of a character to a vast flood or thermonuclear war.

Smoke machine

Or Fogger is an electrically powered unit which produces clouds of white non-toxic fog to produce an atmospheric haze.

Stage directions

Part of the script of a play that tells the actors how they are to move or speak their lines.

Staging configuration

The shape and nature of your performance space or stage, considering where the audience will be.

Stage positioning

Different places/areas on stage.

Stimuli

Something that gives you an idea – an inspiration, a starting point. It is the beginning of the creative process.

Strobe

Device giving a fast series of very short intense light flashes which can have the effect of making action appear intermittent. Because strobe lighting can trigger an epileptic attack in sufferers, the use of a strobe must be communicated to the audience before the performance begins.

Style

The way the drama form is presented on stage.

Subtext

The underlying and often unspoken thoughts and motives of characters – what they really think and believe.

Texture

The quality of something that can be decided by touch. The degree to which something is rough or smooth or soft or hard.

Theatre in education

Theatre in education is used to encourage effective learning in schools. It calls for careful consideration of the audience's age and requirements in order to engage them and get the message across.

Theatre in the round staging

The **stage** is positioned at the centre of the audience. This means that there's an audience around the whole stage.

Theatrical conventions

Practical devices which are used on stage that contribute to an overall performance style. Different techniques that are used in presenting the drama (flashback, flashforward, still image, mime, monologue, movement, slow motion, narration, voice over, aside soliloquy, tableau).

Thrust staging

Where the acting area in front of the proscenium arch comes forward so that some of the audience are sitting on three sides of the action of the play.

Time

Time in drama can be considered from a variety of angles depending on which general concepts of time are expressed in and by a play.

Timing

Rate of movement or speed of action.

Tragedy

A drama about unhappy events and with a sad ending.

Traverse staging

Where the audience sits on two sides – like a catwalk.

Trimming

The draperies, curtains and other items included in a set for aesthetic reasons. Also can mean to adjust a drop or border so that it hangs the correct distance from the stage floor. Also used to describe the process of adjusting the dimmers that control the intensity of the lighting instruments.

Trucks

Pieces of scenery on wheels for ease of movement.

Upstage

From an audience's perspective towards the back of the stage (left, right, centre).

Volume

Loudness or quietness of the voice.

Specifications that use this resource:

[GCSE Drama 8261 \(https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/drama/gcse/drama-8261\)](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/drama/gcse/drama-8261)

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