

Elements of Literature and Creative Communication
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Lecture - 46
Introduction to Drama

Hello friends, we are in the 10th week of our course Elements of Literature and Creative Communication. Beginning with a very general introduction to the course and discussing the various nuances of literature, and different forms of literature, we moved on to discussing poetry in detail. We took about a couple of weeks to discuss poetry different manifestations of poetry, various techniques used in poetry, and poetry written across the globe.

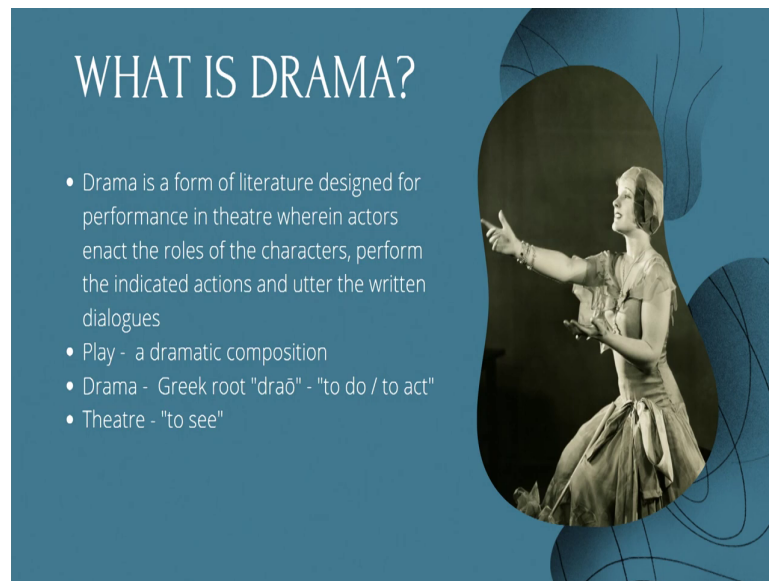
From American poetry, contemporary Indian poetry, Spanish poetry, and French poetry, of course, all through translations, and from there we moved on to discussing fiction in detail. We took about a couple of weeks again and last week was devoted to discussing short fiction. So, we are in the 10th week, that is, this week we are going to introduce a new element of literature or what we call the new form of literature here: drama.

Please recall right in one of our earlier classes we said that literature can be broadly categorized into prose, poetry, and drama, and of course, in prose, you have fiction, non-fiction, and all that. So, have we discussed prose, we discussed poetry and today we are going to discuss drama. It is a very distinct form of literature because it combines various elements.

Within language, it combines the elements of prose and verse. When it comes to elements of literature it combines the elements of fiction and poetry. So, in a sense, this is a hybrid form of literature or a hybrid genre right. How is drama distinct from other forms of literature? What is something new here? What happens when we come face to face with drama? What are the different types of drama? And in order for a dramatic production to take place what are the various compositions, what are the various composite units that we require for a dramatic production? What are the historical origins of drama? Are there any theories of drama? We going to pick up a particular play and discuss it.

These are something that we are going to think about in the next couple of weeks.

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So, let us go ahead and see what exactly is drama. Well a commonsensical understanding of drama is a simple one it is a form of literature like poetry is like fiction is, but it is designed basically for performances on stage, well on stage means theatre.

Here actors enact different roles of characters and perform actions that are present in the play and perform the written dialogues they utter the written dialogues. Now, look at it so, look at the kind of transformation the text goes through when it is a drama. There is a text whether it is an oral one or a written one is secondary because now look at it there is a poem, there is a written text and you just enunciate it.

You just need one more feature in order for poetry to come to bring it alive, just your enunciation. Whereas for a novel you do not even need to do that, for fiction you just have to read it silently whereas, for a play, it is not just enough that you have a text in your hand or a text in your head, you need to say that.

And that is not sufficient, you need to act it out and you need to utter the words, utter the dialogues so as not just to not just that you can hear it for yourself, but even those that are sitting in front of you. So, they are called the audience. Look at how drama becomes a composite art.

So, in a short while, we will discuss what a play is, and what a drama is. In fact, before that very quickly, drama has its roots in the Greek language. So, in Greek, the root word drao it means to do or to act something out.

And theatre also has a Greek root and; that means, to see, to watch, to observe something. And now, of course, see always remember as students of literature if you can go to the roots of language most of these concepts become clear. So, when we say theatre is to see and; obviously, you can understand the various dynamic associative qualities that come when you say seeing.

And when you say to act automatically your mind is capable of grasping the associative activities related to doing something, to act something. So, that is the power of going to the roots.

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PLAY, DRAMA, THEATRE

- Drama generally transcends the textual dimension of the other two major literary forms. Text in Drama is transformed into a performance before an audience
- Drama = Text, Transformation, and Performance
- Text -- dialogue, monologue, plot, setting, stage direction
- Transformation -- Directing, Stage, Props and Lighting
- Performance -- actors, methods, tone, expressions, gestures
- Drama - a collective writing and a collective reading

"The enactment of drama in theatre, performed by actors on a stage before an audience, presupposes collaborative modes of production and a collective form of reception. The structure of dramatic texts, unlike other forms of literature, is directly influenced by this collaborative production and collective reception"

Now, before we proceed further let us try to understand the distinctions between a play, drama, and theatre. In fact, many people may sometimes use them interchangeably, especially a play and a drama and sometimes even a theatrical version.

Well, they are not altogether wrong, but of course, there are some subtle distinctions. As I said, a drama now look what happens here, there is a text we discussed this and you have to add to the text a transformative quality because the text as it is not sufficient for it to be qualified to be considered a dramatic piece right.

So, it has to transform itself and also add to it a performative angle. So, in other words, text plus performance plus production or transformation is called drama – a combination of all these things can be called drama. So, transformation means, what do you mean by transformation here, or what do you mean by a text here?

A text like any other literary text has dialogue, a set of characters, it has a plot, it has a setting, and especially in the context of a play it has certain stage directions because we have already identified that drama transcends the textual dimension. And how does it transcend? By adding performative elements to that you have stage direction. The writer of the text of a play who is called a playwright knows very well that this play is going to be acted.

Therefore there are certain instructions and stage instructions that are been incorporated so that actors who perform the roles, the characters then it is easy for them to get under the skin and then perform it therefore, these are textual elements in a drama. What are the textual elements? These are the textual elements. So, what do you mean when you say transformation?

Now, look at it if it is a text it is written by a writer, now when you say a drama, of course, a writer is involved because he or she is supposed to or they are supposed to write a play and added to that you need a director who transforms a text by his or her own interpretation of it. Directors have a creative leeway so as to interpret the text the way they see it therefore, you need a directorial intervention directing.

Then you have a stage because when you present a text on a particular stage; the stage has a capacity to add its own elements. Now, imagine in fact, there are a lot of experiments where for instance Hamlet has been staged on the shores of a lake, it is staged in a proper theatre and it is been televised, it is been brought onto a larger canvas, it is enacted in a classroom.

So, these different settings add their own flavor and also character to the text therefore, these are various agents that affect the text. Then you have props and lighting; props when we say props, it means various tools that we require in order to enact something. So, that is what is called props.

And there is lighting too. In fact, lighting also becomes very important and we are going to discuss all of them in a little more detailed manner. Now, the third element is performance, when you say for performance these are well in social senses we call them variables. Now, a

drama depends on all these variables— textual variables, the transformative variables, and performance-related variables, and in performance you have actors.

Supposing a particular role is enacted by two different actors. Well, the meaning that they are capable of producing either through their gestures or through their facial expressions can be radically different therefore, a play for its production of meaning depends on the characters. So, the character is a variable.

Now, you have methods each of them has its own methods. They have tonal variations, expressions, and gestures. So, these are the various things that a particular text has to keep in mind in order for it to become drama that is why I said, it is basically a collaborative venture. So, we can even go ahead and say that drama is collective writing and also it is a collective reading.

Now, compare drama vis-a-vis poetry and fiction. Fiction is not collective writing. A particular writer writes it, you read it in a traditional sense, even a poem too, when somebody writes poetry the person generally writes alone and you read it alone; whereas, a drama— it is not a play I am not talking about the play. Please remember play is a component of drama; drama is a composite whole.

So, a drama involves a collective collaboration. Collective writing because you have a playwright who writes it, you have a director who writes it subtly and you have a character, you have an actor who writes it in a sense through his or her performance— through their performance they add certain meanings to it. Therefore, all of it becomes a collectivistic venture therefore, you can call drama collective writing.

How is it a collective reading? Now, imagine when a drama is to be performed it is going to be simultaneously watched by the entire audience sitting there, the audience can range from anywhere from 10 to 10000 depending on the capacity of the theatre, it can accommodate anywhere between 10 and 10000.

Now, imagine what happens to look at the spectacle; all 10000 of them watching the play that is being enacted on the stage and gathering together in the process of meaning-making.

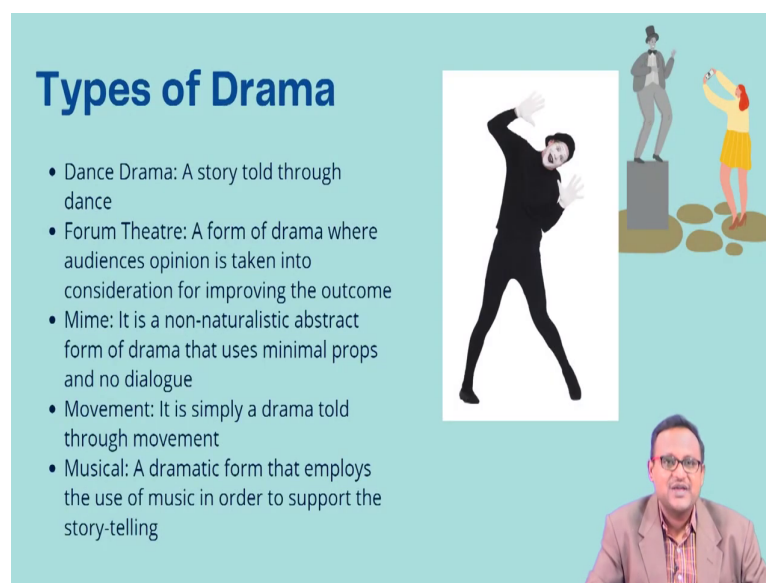
How the very concept of semiotics takes on a beautiful turn in a play because all of them so beautifully sit together and decipher decode the meaning. So, it becomes a collective reading

as opposed to reading a poem, reading fiction, reading short fiction, and all of that, now I guess it becomes clear.

Now, because of this variation, the sensibility that a drama offers when it is enacted is extraordinary and unique, and sometimes it is even called complete because here all your sensory organs most of them you make use of it. When you read a work of art only your eyes, here your eyes, the sense of lighting and of course, the sound, and when they use props they can even create certain fragrances and all these effects.

Therefore it can be a complete experience complete literary experience. If you really wish to have a complete literary experience it is better you watch a play being enacted on stage. So, these are some things that we can keep in mind.

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Types of Drama

- Dance Drama: A story told through dance
- Forum Theatre: A form of drama where audiences opinion is taken into consideration for improving the outcome
- Mime: It is a non-naturalistic abstract form of drama that uses minimal props and no dialogue
- Movement: It is simply a drama told through movement
- Musical: A dramatic form that employs the use of music in order to support the story-telling

The slide features two illustrations: one of a person in a black suit performing a dramatic pose, and another of two people on a stage, one standing on a pedestal and the other reaching up. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a man with glasses and a brown jacket speaking.

From here let us go and see what are the different types of drama; obviously, there are various varieties that can be kept in mind. You have a dance drama where a story is basically narrated to dance right, it is called a dance drama. You have a forum theatre which is a type of drama where audience opinion is also taken into consideration.

In fact, remember in one of the literary techniques we discussed breaking The Fourth Wall. Now, here in this particular type of drama a character or an actor involves the audience by directly asking the question, and their opinion is kept in mind thereby it is like an improvised skit.

The text is fluid here because it depends on the answer the audience gives and you cannot factor that well in advance; you do not know what the audience says therefore, it becomes a fluid text, especially in forum theatre. You have mime, in a mime, of course, there is no dialogue, the entire meaning has to depend on gestures and expressions, now look at it– you just mute yourself out.

Whereas your gesture and expressions are capable of exuding all the meanings, the range of meanings, the text encompasses how difficult it should be. And you have movement, you have musical of course, in musical especially like dance drama makes use of dance, in musical drama it employs music predominantly in order to support the narrative here using various songs, using various ragas. This type of drama furthers the story or the narrative or anything like that.

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- **Pantomime:** "a theatrical entertainment, mainly for children, which involves music, topical jokes, and slapstick comedy and is based on a fairy tale or nursery story, usually produced around Christmas"
- **A Play Scripted:** The script is very important for drama productions and one must pay close attention to the stage directions, voice modulations written in italics
- **A Play Improvised:** A drama which has been devised/ improvised later by actors and directors
- **Physical Theatre:** A theatrical drama which is told mainly through physical movements

So, there are very many other methods there is a pantomime, there is a scripted play, there is a play improvised. There are certain overlaps, of course, you can see here. So, these are some things that you can keep in mind, especially in a pantomime it involves children.

So, making use of it is a kind again of a hybrid variety you make use of music, you can also make use of dance, jokes, slapstick comedy, fairy tales, nursery rhymes all that. So, these are some variations that we can introduce when it comes to drama or a play.

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Types of Drama

- **Agitprop:** A play with a strong political message.
- **Black Comedy:** A comedy with dark themes.
- **Comedy of Manners:** A comedy which uses society's stereotypes.
- **Commedia Dell 'arte:** Improvised theatre, which looks at using stock characters, such as; the slave, the damsel etc. It also uses a lot of physicality.
- **Docudrama:** Documentary style drama



And again depending on the content you can classify a drama. So, if it is a play that has strong political overtones, of course, it is not new that drama or theatrical performance especially has been a predominant mode of expressing resistance, the resistance of the collective masses right.

Theatre has also been used for education, theatre is used for raising consciousness and various consciousness-raising activities therefore, depending on the content you can again divide drama. So, if it has a strong political overtone you can call it agitprop.

If it is a play that involves comedy whereas, this comedy conceals some darker themes it can be called black comedy. We have already discussed this. When it comes to Charlie Chaplin more than looking at him as a comic actor it is like a black comedy because behind that humor you can realize the tragedy of modern life in an extraordinary way.

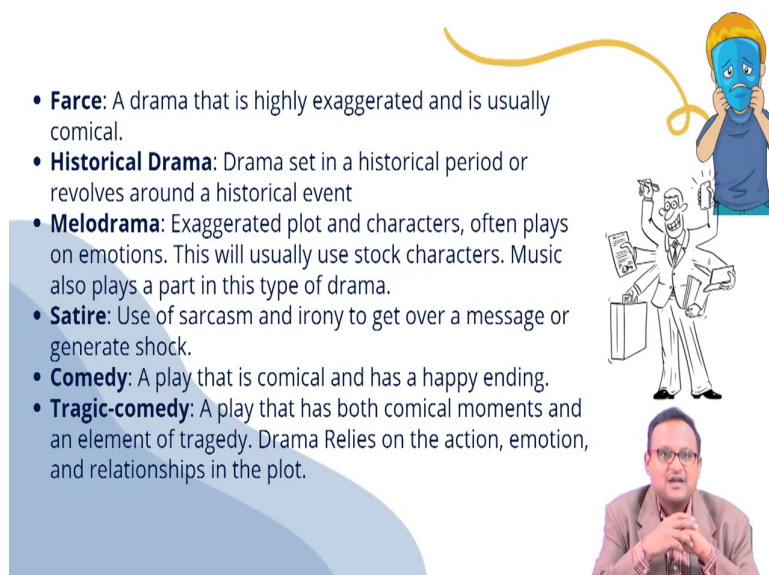
So, you have the comedy of manners. Basically, comedy of manners makes use of a society's stereotypes; it is based on gender stereotypes, society stereotypes, and all that and it makes fun of it, especially during the Restoration time, comedy of manners was introduced in order to break the conventions of society in order to make the society come out of its conventional boundaries and to introduce novel elements during the restoration time comedy of manners was introduced.

You have Commedia dell Arte, an improvised theatre, it again takes a look at stock characters to say for instance you have a slave, say for instance you have a black character, say for instance you have a policeman, say for instance you have a politician anybody like that and again makes use of it you can call it a part of the comedy of manners, but slightly different.



And then you have docudrama drama which is in the style of a documentary. So, these are some various types of drama that we can keep in mind. From here we need to understand where drama is enacted; right in the beginning we said right in order for a drama to exist you need a play or a script generally and you need a setting, in fact, there is a particular setting. In fact, that is called a stage which is generally there in the theatre.

So, depending on where the play is enacted it is going to acquire the characteristic trait of that setting therefore, may be an active understanding of different stages, and an active understanding of different styles of theatres is essential for us right. Let us go take a quick look at the different types of theatres we have.

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- **Farce:** A drama that is highly exaggerated and is usually comical.
- **Historical Drama:** Drama set in a historical period or revolves around a historical event
- **Melodrama:** Exaggerated plot and characters, often plays on emotions. This will usually use stock characters. Music also plays a part in this type of drama.
- **Satire:** Use of sarcasm and irony to get over a message or generate shock.
- **Comedy:** A play that is comical and has a happy ending.
- **Tragic-comedy:** A play that has both comical moments and an element of tragedy. Drama Relies on the action, emotion, and relationships in the plot.



Yeah before that I forgot well here are some more varieties. You have farce; where it is highly comical a based on exaggerated types. The historical drama is again based on the content where the play is set in the historical context. Melodrama, satire, comedy, and tragic comedy, of course, we are going to discuss them in a little more detailed manner maybe in subsequent classes, but for time being you can know that comedy is a play where generally anything that has a happy ending is called comedy.

And anything that has a slightly negative ending or unhappy ending is called tragedy which is something that most of us are aware of. What is a melodrama? In fact, if somebody exaggerates anything even if we use it right do not be so melodramatic if somebody is overdoing something we say do not be melodramatic. So, it makes use of excessive use of emotions, and excessive characteristic traits, all of them, which is called a melodrama.

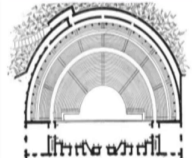
Based on tragedy and comedy there is a combination of both of them it is called tragic comedy, it has both comical moments as well as an element of the tragedy, of course, life is a tragic comedy you cannot say anybody's life is one big saga of comedy or one big saga of tragedy; life is a tragic comedy. So, probably it may represent the broad contours of life in a better way tragi-comedy.

So, these are some things we can keep in mind. Now, of course, we said theatre.

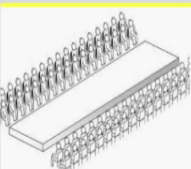
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Types of Stage

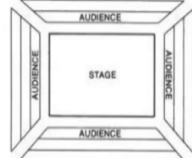
The stage setup is crucial to provide the audience with a better experience of the theatre. Here are a few things we need to know about the stage:



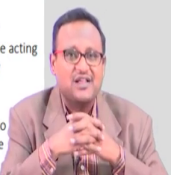
Amphitheatre
Also known as 'Arena'. Large performance space. Audience in Semi-Circle with tiered seating. Ancient Greek form of staging that started in the 5th Century BC then became Roman also.



Traverse
The acting area is down the middle of the space. The audience sits facing the acting area from two sides.



In-the-Round
Theatre in the Round is a form of audience seating layout where the acting area is surrounded on all sides by seating. There are often a number of entrances. Special consideration needs to be given to furniture and scenery as audience sightlines can easily be blocked.



Now, here are different types of stages when we say theatre it makes use of various props, stages, and all that. So, we need to know as I said a play can be enacted on different stages and the moment there is a change in the stage there is also a change in the shade of the meaning the play acquires. So, these are various variables; these are different variables.

Now, look at this these are some conventional theatres or stages that are involved in various theatres. Basically, a stage is a setup where the actors enact the play and the audience sits and watch. So, it involves when you say a stage you have where the audience can be seated and

watch it and a place where actors come out and perform it and where lighting and everything are there this is in general staging.

The first is amphitheater it is also called an arena, generally it is a very large performance space. In fact, our stadiums the contemporary sports stadiums that you and I might have watched either a cricket match or a football match it is based on an amphitheater structure. In fact, imagine in fact, in India which is the largest stadium is it the Kolkata stadium how many does it accommodate—just think of it.

Now, the entire play is being watched by people sitting there and it is seated so beautifully that everybody can watch it, something like that.

So, it is an arena. Usually, in ancient Greece, huge amphitheaters were made use of now and now you will be surprised that even as back as the 5th century there were stages designed so beautifully architecturally architectural marvels such that people more than 20000, 30000 people could sit together and watch a play even earlier then look how beautifully it must have been designed.

Then you have traversed, here the acting area is down the middle of the space, and the acting area is there. The audience sits facing the acting arena from the two sides that are well presented there, something like the audience is slightly on an elevated level and the acting area a little down.

Now, imagine what kind of experience it has vis a vis watching a play looking by raising your head and or by lowering your gaze. What kind of experience? Do you think there is some kind of change? Then you have the round stage in the sense here like the stage is in the middle and it is surrounded on all four sides by the seating arrangement for the audience.

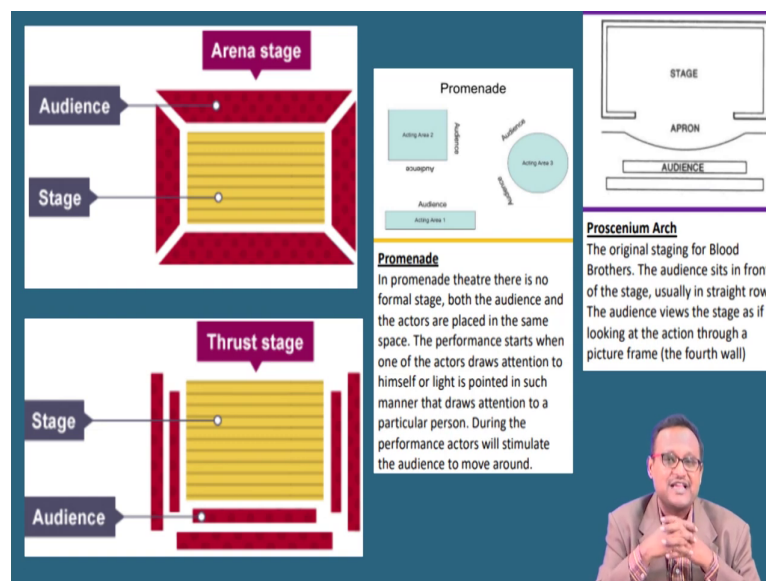
Of course, it has multiple entrances you can see that please look at the schematic – the audience is placed on all four sides, and the stage is in the middle. And now look at this when the audience is watching they are not just watching the characters or the actors here they can also watch the responses of the audience that are sitting opposite them, it happens for all of them.

Now, this is a beautiful design of stage because here you get to watch not just the play that is being enacted, but also the play that is getting enacted on the faces of the audience, and all of

them have access to that, all of them have access to that a beautiful experience. In fact, I would really recommend you to watch it because you get to watch two plays at the cost of one you get to watch two plays.

One that is being performed on the stage, the other that is being performed on the faces of the various audience, that is an extraordinary experience.

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Now, we have yeah we discussed arena. I have a thrust stage, of course, there is a minor difference between the arena stage and a thrust stage. In the arena, the audience covers the entire stage area whereas, in a thrust stage, the audience sits on the three sides.

Now, look at this there is a stage in which acting takes out and on the three sides of it there is an open space one side is open and on the three sides, the audience sits and watches it which is a thrust. So, then you have a promenade. In fact, the promenade is very very interesting in all these stages there is a demarcating line between the actors and the audience.

There is some kind of a demarcating line right whereas, in the promenade, there is nothing like that. In fact, you do not even know who is an actor and who is audience because the moment the lights are out and maybe a visual is heard or some cue word is uttered all of a sudden people there are people in a room and the moment lights go out or some cue word is given a couple of them just get up somewhere in the middle and start acting out.

You do not know I mean some characters start speaking from where you think the act action is going to happen there, then suddenly somebody starts speaking from here you turn here you are surrounded by characters you do not know I mean randomly it is randomly.

There is no space that I mean this is especially I mean very essential because now the I mean those plays or those dramatic productions that involve promenade believe that drama, in order for drama to take place you do not need to have a demarcating line between the actors or the stage and where the audience sits.

So, therefore, you are surrounded by action all around and that too from unexpected on unexpected corners in from unexpected characters something like this. And sometimes again it can as well be very improvised a character an actor might as well ask you to act, comment something like that. A very beautiful innovative stagecraft.

Then you have a proscenium arch I mean something that we see generally in a movie theatre there is the stage is the at one end and just the opposite of the stage demarcated by space which is called an apron you have the audience sitting there like you watch most of us when we watch a movie in a regular theatre. So, it makes use of a proscenium arch. So, there are various stagecraft that is involved.

Now, as I said when a playwright writes a play he or she or I mean they keep in mind the stage in which it is generally performed because an active understanding of the stage in which it may be performed is going to shape their writing right. So, therefore, not all the stages are for all types of plays. So, you have to be careful in your choices and proceed, you also if you are a director you need to know what kind of stage can be made use of for a particular play.

Or if you are a playwright you need to know if you are writing in this particular way it should be enacted on a particular stage. So, an active awareness of these things will definitely help enhance the experience of drama alright. I am sure this class has given you a kind of some background information, it has prepped you in other words to watch them play in a little better way. In the next class, we come up and discuss something more interesting related to drama.

Thank you.