

English 102
Prof. Carrillo
Dramatic terminology
from Pickering, Theatre: A Contemporary Introduction

The following are terms you need to know in our study of drama

antagonist: the character who stands in opposition to the leading character in a play.

aside: one of the conventions of theatre in which the audience accepts the idea that the words spoken by an actor can be heard by the audience but not by the actors onstage.

catharsis: in Classical Greek tragedy, a “purging” of the audience by bringing forth pity and fear

Chorus: originally a group of 50 men who performed songs and dances at religious celebrations

comedy: a term generally used to describe plays in which the characters undergo embarrassment or physical accident, but so handled that pain is not present and the audiences are interested and amused without feeling profound sympathy.

comic relief: humorous speeches or incidents put into tragedy to enhance and enrich the action but exist primarily to relieve tragic tension.

dramatic action: simply, everything that happens within the play. What happens to the characters, physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

melodrama: plays in which protagonists are totally pure, antagonists totally evil, and both dramatic action and characterization are sacrificed to violent effect.

mood: the prevailing emotional context of the play

protagonist: the leading character in the play

setting: the locals and period in which a drama takes place. In drama, the scenery, props, and costumes used in staging.

soliloquy: a speech delivered by an actor alone onstage, which by convention is understood by the audience to be the character’s internal thoughts, not part of the dialogue.

tragedy: generally, plays of high seriousness in which the protagonist in asserting himself and his humanity meets disaster.