

### Common Themes in World Theater

#### Exposition

**Definition:** in the world of writing, exposition refers to the art of providing essential background information about the main characters and the world of the story. Literary exposition can help provide emotional stakes throughout the beginning of the story, the rising action, the falling action, and the eventual end. The presentation of information necessary for the audience's understanding of the dramatic situation and action in the performance of a play. In traditional dramaturgy, the exposition is identified with the introductory scenes preceding the rising action. [...] Information is commonly presented through dialogue, often among minor characters, or between a protagonist and confidant. **Example:** If you show your character walking into an old house at the beginning of your story, you can say something like, "It was the first time she'd been back in her childhood home since her grandfather's death."

#### Dramatis Personae

**Definition:** (Latin for "persons of the drama") are the main characters in a dramatic work written in a list.

#### Mise-en-Scène / Stage Directions

**Definition:** is the arrangement of actors and stage design in scenes for a theatre or film production, both in visual arts through storyboarding, visual theme, and cinematography, and in narrative storytelling through direction. **Example:** 'The man deals a deck of cards' or 'Katy enters the room' are examples of stage directions. They describe the movements of the characters in the scene. Furthermore, setting description such as 'the morning sunlight fills the room' is also an example of stage direction.

#### In Medias Res

**Definition:** into the middle of a narrative; without preamble. **Example:** a thriller that starts in medias res might open with the detective already on the trail of the killer. **Usage:** having begun his story in medias res.

#### Ekphrasis/ Hypotyposis

**Definition:** vivid description; using details to place an object, person, or event before the listeners' eyes. **Example:** a painting of a sculpture: the painting is "telling the story of" the sculpture, and so becoming a storyteller, as well as a story. **Usage:** this is a novel, though not always successfully, saturated in ekphrasis. **Side note:** as the word ekphrasis represents a literary response to art, there seems not to be a word, or phrase, assigned to the art of creating a visual response to a piece of writing other than illustration, or "ekphrasis in reverse."

#### Embodiment/ Incarnation

**Definition:** a person who embodies in the flesh a deity, spirit, or quality. **Example:** if you say that someone or something is incarnated in a particular form, you mean that they appear on earth in that form. **Usage:** the god Vishnu was incarnated on earth as a king.

#### A Cult of Personality

**Definition:** the result of an effort which is made to create an idealized and heroic image of a leader by a government, often through unquestioning flattery and praise. **Example:** Ferdinand Marcos developed a cult of personality as a way of remaining President of the Philippines for 20 years, in a way that political scientists have compared to other authoritarian and totalitarian leaders such as Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. **Usage:** an extraordinary cult of personality had been created around the leader.

#### Polis/ Polemos

**Definition:** in Greek mythology, Polemos was a divine personification or embodiment of war. No cult practices or myths are known dedicated to him, and as an abstract representation he figures mainly in allegory and philosophical discourse.



### Common Themes in World Theater (cont)

#### Apostrophe

**Definition:** a rhetorical figure in which the speaker addresses a dead or absent person, or an abstraction or inanimate object. **Example:** "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" Juliet believes she is alone and addresses Romeo, thinking that he is absent.

#### Preterition

**Definition:** the action of passing over or disregarding a matter, especially the rhetorical technique of mentioning something by professing to omit it. **Example:** the favourite rhetorical trope of the historical novelists is preterition, saying that you are not going to say something and thereby saying it.

#### Panegyric

**Definition:** a public speech or published text in praise of someone or something. **Example:** a panegyric on the pleasures of malt whisky.

#### Castigation

**Definition:** reprimand (someone) severely. **Example:** he was castigated for not setting a good example.

### Greek Theater / Antigone by Sophocles

#### Anagnorisis

**Definition:** the point in a play or novel, in which a principal character recognizes or discovers another character's true identity or the true nature of their own circumstances; refers to a change in the protagonist from ignorance to knowledge. **Example:** we see the tormented figure of Oedipus come to recognize the truth in a classical moment of anagnorisis.

#### Hubris

**Definition:** excessive pride and self-confidence, sometimes towards or in defiance of the gods, leading to nemesis. **Example:** the self-assured hubris among economists was shaken in the late 1980s.

#### Catharsis

**Definition:** the purification or purgation of the emotions (especially pity and fear). **Example:** at the end of Romeo and Juliet, the two lovers have sought release from their "crossed" love by killing themselves. The audience experiences a catharsis when the two families bury the hatchet.

#### Mimesis

**Definition:** the process of imitation or mimicry through which artists portray and interpret the world. Mimesis is not a literary device or technique, but rather a way of thinking about a work of art. **Example:** if a painter paints a picture of the sunrise, then that painting is a mimesis of the real sunrise.

#### Peripeteia

**Definition:** a sudden reversal of fortune or change in circumstances. **Example:** the death of King Creon's son Haemon at his father's hands after he opposes him.

#### Sophrosyne

**Definition:** an ideal of excellence of character and soundness of mind, which when combined in one well-balanced individual leads to other qualities, such as temperance, moderation, prudence, and self-control. **Example:** the virtue on which they insisted was sophrosyne, knowing the limits which nature fixes for human conduct and keeping within them.



### Sanskrit Theater / Little Clay Cart by Shudraka

#### Sutradhara

**Definition:** literally the "holder of strings", the sutradhara is the stage manager and director of Sanskrit drama, though he has been conventionalized in other traditions in India.

#### Captatio Benevolentiae

**Definition:** (Latin for winning of goodwill) rhetorical technique aimed to capture the goodwill of the audience at the beginning of a speech or appeal.

#### Rasas

**Definition:** the rasa signifies the point at which the spectators' expectations, the performers' skill in enacting the play text, and the actual performance meet; a drama leaves behind only the rasa or taste - in effect, the memory of the performance. It connotes a concept in Indian arts about the aesthetic flavour of any visual, literary or musical work that evokes an emotion or feeling in the reader or audience but cannot be described. **Example:** uniting in bed, they played the game of rasa, enjoying and eating nectar sweet fruit.

#### Bharata's Natyasastra

erotic (shringara) - comic (hasya) - sorrowful (karuna) - angry (raudra) - heroic (veera) - fearful (bhayanaka) - odious (vibhatsa) - wondrous (adbhuta) - peace (shanta) / love, humor, wonder, courage, calmness, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust

### Chinese Theater / Snow in Midsummer by Frances

#### Zaju

**Definition:** a form of Chinese opera which provided entertainment through a synthesis of recitations of prose and poetry, dance, singing, and mime, with a certain emphasis on comedy.

### French Theater / Tartuffe by Molière

#### Castigat Ridendo Mores

**Definition:** Latin phrase that generally means "one corrects customs by laughing at them," or "he corrects customs by ridicule." Some commentators suggest that the phrase embodies the essence of satire; in other words, the best way to change things is to point out their absurdity and laugh at them.

#### Deus Ex Machina / Rex Ex Machina

**Definition:** an unexpected power or event saving a seemingly hopeless situation, especially as a contrived plot device in a play or novel. **Example:** if a character fell off a cliff and a flying robot suddenly appeared out of nowhere to catch them, that would be a deus ex machina. The goal of this device is to bring about resolution, but it can also introduce comedic relief, disentangle a plot, or surprise an audience.

#### Three Unities

**Definition:** the three principles derived by French classicists from Aristotle's Poetics; they require a play to have a single action represented as occurring in a single place and within the course of a day. These principles were called, respectively, unity of action, unity of place, and unity of time.

#### Plausibility (Vraisemblance)

**Definition:** refers to ways in which a text may be brought into contact with and defined in relation to another text which helps make it intelligible. **Example:** the small part of Meixner, the theological student turned social-democrat, had vraisemblance.



### French Theater / Tartuffe by Molière (cont)

#### Propriety (Bienséance)

**Definition:** the general idea of what is proper, fitting, moral etc; the quality or act of being decent. **Example:** she conducted herself with propriety.

#### Diabolus Ex Machina

**Definition:** is the evil counterpart of Deus ex Machina - the introduction of an unexpected new event, character, ability, or object designed to ensure that things suddenly get much worse for the protagonists, much better for the villains, or both.

#### Alexandrine (Hemistichs & Caesura)

**Definition:** alexandrine - a verse or line of poetry of twelve syllables; hemistichs - a half-line of verse, either standing as an unfinished line for dramatic or other emphasis, or forming half of a complete line divided by a caesura; caesura - a stop or pause in a metrical line, often marked by punctuation or by a grammatical boundary, such as a phrase or clause - it is generally it is not marked at all – it's simply part of the way the reader or singer pronounces the line.



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