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**Drama and Literary Terms in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet***

Drama Drama is a mode of fictional representation through [dialogue](https://literarydevices.net/dialogue/) and performance. It is one of the literary genres, which is an imitation of some action. Drama is also a type of a play written for theater, television, radio, and film.

**Chorus** (From Greek drama) a group of singers or actors who stand alongside or off stage from the actors in a dramatic or musical performance. Their purpose is to comment on the deeds of the characters and interpret the significance of the events within the play. Shakespeare alters this by replacing the chorus with a single figure. In *Romeo and Juliet,* the chorus is replaced by one actor who narrates the Prologue.

Prologue  is an opening of a story that establishes the [setting](https://literarydevices.net/setting/), and gives background

details.

Aside words spoken by a character in a play that are only intended for the audience to

Hear, not the other characters on the stage

Monologue a short speech delivered by a character in a play, with other characters

present on stage, in order to express his or her true thoughts and feelings

Soliloquy The act of talking to oneself **alone on stage** in order to reveal a character’s thoughts and

feelings to the audience.

Dialogue A spoken conversation that includes two or more people.

Comic relief a humorous scene, incident, or speech in the course of a serious fiction or drama

Pun A pun is a play on words that produces a humorous effect by using a word that

suggests two or more meanings, or by exploiting similar sounding words that have

different meanings.

**Ex.** Why do we still have troops in Germany? To keep the Russians in *Czech*.

* A horse is a very *stable*
* Time flies *like* an arrow. Fruit flies *like* a banana.
* An elephant’s opinion carries a lot of *weight*.

Sonnet In poetry, a sonnet has 14 lines, and is written in iambic [pentameter](https://literarydevices.net/pentameter/). Each line has 10

syllables. It has a specific [rhyme](https://literarydevices.net/rhyme/) scheme, and a volta, or a specific turn.

Couplet A couplet has two successive rhyming lines in a [verse](https://literarydevices.net/verse/), and has the same [meter](https://literarydevices.net/meter/) to form a complete thought.

Meter Meter is a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that defines the rhythm of some poetry. These stress patterns are defined in groupings, called feet, of two or three syllables. A pattern of unstressed-stressed, for instance, is a foot called an [iamb](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb). The type and number of repeating feet in each line of poetry define that line's meter.

Iambic-

Pentameter A type of meter that contains five [iambs](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb) per line (thus the prefix “penta” meaning five)

An iamb is a “foot” that has an unstressed syllable (u) and a stressed syllable (/)

u /

**Ex:** | a – fraid |

* one iamb conductor ***minds the train***and a teacher ***trains the mind***.

Blank verse unrhymed iambic pentameter

Rhyme Scheme the pattern of rhyme that comes at the end of each [verse](https://literarydevices.net/verse/) or line in poetry.

Shakespearean

Comedy

* A Shakespearean comedy is one that has a **happy ending**, usually **involving marriages**

**Between the unmarried characters**, and a tone and style that is more **light-hearted** than

Shakespeare's other plays. They often include a struggle of young lovers to overcome difficulty, separation and re-unification, or deception of characters (especially mistaken identity).

* Tragedy A Shakespearean tragedy **tells the story of a seemingly heroic figure whose major**

**character flaw causes the story to end with his tragic downfall.**

Tragic hero a character who, either by choice or circumstance, is caught up in a

sequence of events that inevitably results in disaster; the fall is caused in

part by some error or frailty in the protagonist and not by a vice or depravity.

Tragic flaw a flaw in character that brings about the downfall of the hero of a tragedy

Stage Directions An instruction in the text of a play indicating the movement, position, or tone of an actor,

or the sound effects and lighting.

Characterization the personality a character displays; also, the means by which the author reveals

that personality

* Direct the author specifically tells the reader about the character in a **direct**, straightforward

manner

**ex:** “‘Jane is a cruel person,’ she said.’”

“Bill was short and skinny, and his bald spot was widening with every passing year.”

* Indirect the author describes what a character:

1. thinks, looks like, does, and says

**ex:** “As Jane walked past the box labeled ‘Free Puppies,’ she furtively glanced

around her, then gave the box a swift kick.”

1. how other characters react to her

**ex**: “The owner of the puppies shouted, “you are a cruel jerk, and if you don’t

leave I will kick you!”.

**The** reader must draw conclusions about a character based on ***indirect*** information.

Classical Allusion reference to well-known Greek or Roman person, place, event, literary work, or

work of art

Dramatic irony the audience knows there is a discrepancy between the action and what is being said in a play/movie/book, but the characters do not

Oxymoron An **oxymoron** occurs when two contradictory words are together in one phrase to create an effect. In fact, **oxymoron** translates from the Greek words oxy meaning sharp, and moron, which means dull. Thus, the word itself is two contradictory words pushed together.

**Ex:** cruel kindness, tragic [comedy](https://literarydevices.net/comedy/), seriously funny, awfully pretty,

foolish wisdom, original copies, liquid gas

Paradox A statement that contradicts itself and still seems true somehow. Often, a paradox contains two statements that are both true, but in general, cannot both be true at the same time. A paradox is often used to make a reader think over an idea in innovative way.

**Ex:**

* I am nobody.
* “What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young.”
* Truth is honey, which is bitter.
* “I can resist anything but temptation.” – Oscar Wilde
* “Nobody goes to that restaurant because it’s too crowded.”

\*\*It is important to understand the ***difference between an oxymoron and a***[***paradox***](https://literarydevices.net/paradox/). A paradox may consist of a sentence, or even a group of sentences. An oxymoron, on the other hand, is a combination of two contradictory or opposite words. A paradox seems contradictory to the general truth, but it does contain an implied truth. An oxymoron, however, may produce a dramatic effect, but does not make literal sense. Examples of oxymoron are found both in casual conversations and in literature.

Alliteration a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a

series.

Anachronism an event, scene, or person that does not correspond with the time period portrayed in the

work

Universal theme A **universal theme** is an idea that applies to anyone regardless of cultural differences, or

geographic location. **Universal themes** are ways to connect ideas across all disciplines. It

is a central idea about the human condition. It is a generalization about life or human

nature; they deal with basic human concerns.

Apostrophe An apostrophe is a term used when a speaker directly addresses someone or something

that is not present in the poem. The speaker could be addressing an abstract concept like

love, a person (dead or alive), a place, or even a thing, like the sun or the sea.

Conceit Conceit is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which two **vastly different** objects are likened together

With the help of similes or metaphors. Conceit develops a [comparison](https://literarydevices.net/comparison/) which is exceedingly

unlikely but is, nonetheless, intellectually imaginative. A comparison turns into a conceit

when the writer tries to make us admit a similarity between two things of whose

unlikeness we are strongly conscious. For this reason, conceits are often surprising. In

everyday life we use conceits like “Love is like an oil change,” or “The broken heart is a

damaged china pot.” In these examples, the attempt to compare two noticeably unrelated

objects makes the comparisons conceits.

Metonymy Metonymy is a figure of speech in which something is called by a new name that is related

in meaning to the original thing or concept. For example, it’s common practice to refer to

celebrity life and culture in the United States as “Hollywood,” as in “Hollywood is

obsessed with this new diet.”

**Examples:**

* The big house—Refers to prison
* The pen—Can refer to prison or to the act of writing
* Stuffed shirts—People in positions of authority, especially in a business [setting](http://www.literarydevices.com/setting/)
* The crown—a royal person

**Dramatic Structure of a Shakespearean Tragedy**

**Act 1:**

**Exposition**

Here, the audience learns the setting (Time/Place) and sometimes the theme is introduced; it establishes

the mood and atmosphere for the play, and characters are developed.

**Inciting Action**

An incident that introduces the conflict and sets in motion the rising action of the play.

**Act 2:**

**Rising Action**

At the beginning of the rising action the conflict is introduced and an incident occurs that sets the

rising action in motion. Throughout the rising action a series of events occur that lead to the climax. It

is at this point in the play that the tragic hero suffers from his fatal flaw in character and makes

errors of judgment. **Complication** is accomplished by making things go wrong for the main character in his

struggle to achieve his goal.

**Act 3:**

**The Climax**

The climax represents the turning point of the play. From this point on, the hero moves towards his inevitable doom. The climax does not tell the audience how the struggle is won or lost, but it does indicate which ‘side’ will win.

**Act 4:**

**Falling Action**

During the falling action, the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist unravels, with the

protagonist winning or losing against the antagonist. The falling action may contain a moment of final

suspense, in which the final outcome of the conflict is in doubt.

**Act 5:**

**Denouement or Resolution**

This is the final outcome of the drama. The conflict is resolved, whether through a catastrophe and the

downfall of the tragic hero.