

Drama Vocabulary List

A

Accent Way of speaking used in a local area or country

Agitprop – a style of theatre that is designed to persuade an audience to believe a political point of view

Alliteration – when the same letter or sound occurs repeatedly in a line of words

Antiphon/Antiphony – a choral group speaks in two or more groups, which gives a sense of question and response

Appropriate language – language which fits the character the actor is playing

Articulation Clear pronunciation of words

Aside A remark to the audience only

Audience People watching a drama

Auditorium The area for the audience, generally filled with seats

Avenue Audience seated on two sides of the acting area

B

Backcloth Canvas cloth which covers the back of the stage: can be

Backstage Non-acting area behind the stage

Balance Keeping an even distribution of weight

Barndoors Adjustable metal flaps attached to the front of a fresnel spotlight for shaping the beam of light

Blackout The acting area is not lit

Blank verse – verse that does not rhyme

Blocking Deciding where and when actors will move on stage

Blocking in – where actors and props are positioned in a drama space so that the audience can see and hear everything

Body Language Messages given by the position or movement of the body

C

Capocomico – the lead actor in a commedia dell'arte group

Centre Stage (CS) The centre area of the stage

Centre Stage Left The left hand centre side of the acting area as the actor faces

Centre Stage Right The right hand centre side of the acting area as the actor

Character Specific person in a drama

Characterisation The process of fully developing a character

Characterization – typical attributes or personality traits that are part of a character

Choral speaking – when a group says a speech

Clarity Clearness of the voice

Collective mind – when a group sits in a circle on the floor with their eyes shut and each member of the group imagines what a particular character is thinking, then each member of the group speaks their thought aloud

Comedy A drama which is funny/comical

Commedia dell'arte – 16th century Italian theatre that involved masks, stock characters and simple plots; it literally translates as 'comedy of art'

Conscience alley – when a group forms two lines facing each other with a gap between them and one person plays a character who is feeling indecisive about making an important moral decision; the character must walk between the two groups while they call out opposing arguments to try to persuade the character to either choose to do the right thing or the wrong thing

Conventions Alternative ways of presenting parts of a drama

Costume Clothes worn by actors for their character

Costumes – the clothes that actors wear to help represent the characters they are playing

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

Cross-cutting – interweaving and re-ordering speeches to create dramatic effects

Crossfade To change from one lighting cue to another with no blackout in between, or to change from one sound cue to another with no silence in between

Cue A signal for an actor to do or say something, or for a lighting or sound effect to begin or end

Cumulative – when more speakers are added gradually during choral speaking

Cyclorama The back wall of the stage which can be painted or lit

D

Dance Drama A drama presented through dance moves

Day-in-the-life – when you imagine what a character is doing at different times of the day to help you get into your role

Devised drama – when you plan a piece in detail then perform it for an audience

Dialogue – when two or more characters speak to each other

Dialogue A conversation between two or more characters

Direct address – when a character speaks directly to the audience to make them feel part of the action

Docu-drama A documentary style drama, including reconstructions of events

Documentary drama – drama based on actual events and historical sources, and often includes the words of real people

door flat Frames into which a door is built

Down Stage Centre The middle part of the stage nearest the audience

Down Stage Left The part of the stage nearest the audience on the left as the actor (DSL) faces the audience

Down Stage Right The part of the stage nearest the audience on the right as the actor (DSR) faces the audience

Dramatic Irony Actions or remarks whose significance is not realised by all the characters

Dramatizing songs – when you reflect the tempo, mood, volume and pitch of some songs in your use of movement

Dress rehearsal Final rehearsal of a drama with all the theatre arts

Duologue – when two actors speak in depth only to each other

E

Echoing – when some of the group delay speaking in a choral speaking piece to create an echo effect

Emphasis The stress on a word or phrase

End on Audience seated at one end – acting area at the other

End stage – a stage with the audience on one side

Enter To come on stage

Essence machines – a repeated sequence of sounds, words and actions which creates a 'machine' that summarizes the essence of a subject or theme

Evaluate To judge the strengths and weaknesses of a drama

Exit To leave the acting area

F

Facial expression Look on face which shows emotion
Facial expressions – when actors pull faces to communicate their characters' emotions or feelings
Feet/Foot – more than one foot; syllables arranged in a rhythmic pattern
Flashback – a scene in a play that is set before the main plot
Flashback Acting out an event in the past
Flashforward Acting out of a future or imagined event
Flats Wooden frames, joined together and covered with canvas, which can be painted
Flies Area above the stage from where scenery/actors are flown in on pulleys
Flood Lantern giving a wide spread of light
Fluency Natural, flowing speech
Focus Key moment, scene, character, relationship or event in a drama
Focussing Positioning the lanterns to get the desired lighting
Follow spot Powerful profile used to follow actors around the acting area
Form The overall style of a drama
Forum theatre – a form of theatre that allows spectators (the audience) to take an active part in the drama by interrupting in the middle of scenes and swapping places with actors to take over the roles
Forum Theatre The audience suggest changes to a drama in order to affect outcomes
Freeze frame The action is frozen in time
Freeze-frames – still images created by actors to illustrate a particular moment (also known as **still images** or **tableaus**)
Fresnel Spot Lantern giving a soft edged beam of light
Front of House (FOH) Any job in the theatre which involves dealing with the audience
Frozen picture Foundation word for tableau

G

Gait – the way a person walks
Gauze See-through material which cannot be seen through when lit from
G-clamp Clamp used to secure lantern to lighting bar or stand
Gel Film placed in front of a lantern to change the colour of the beam
Gels – coloured filters that are placed in front of stage lanterns to change the colour of the light streams
Gesture Movement of the hand or arm which communicates a meaning or
Gestures – bodily movements that communicate ideas
Gobo Thin metal plate cut out in a pattern and placed in a lantern to project
Gobos – stencils that are placed in front of stage lanterns to create patterns in the light streams
Good cop/bad cop – when a character is unsure whether to do the right thing or the wrong thing a good cop urges the character to do the right thing, and a bad cop must try to persuade the character to do the wrong thing
Grammelot – a theatrical type of gibberish that includes words from other languages and onomatopoeic words
Ground plan Bird's eye view of the set showing what is on the set, entrances/exits and the position of the audience

H

Hot-seating – a character sits on a hot seat and is asked questions by a group who want to find out more about them or their views
Hot-seating Questioning a character in role

I

Iambic pentameter – a type of metre in poetry that contains five feet (groups) of syllables

Improvisation: spontaneous and prepared – actors improvise when they create their own drama instead of following a script; spontaneous improvisation is done with very little or no preparation; prepared improvisation is done with preparation first

Intonation Rising and falling of voice in speech

K

Key Explanation of symbols on a ground plan

Kyogen theatre – a farcical form of Japanese masked theatre

L

Lazzi – comic routines that included mimes, clowning, acrobatics and dance in commedia dell'arte

Levels – how high or low the actors are placed on a stage to reflect their characters' status levels

Lighting – the lighting used during performances to illuminate the actors and create dramatic effects

Line around – when a choral group performs a speech with individual speakers saying the lines

M

Make-up Worn by actors for their character

Mantle of the expert – when an actor pretends to be an expert in a given field during an improvisation and reflects it in their language, gestures and facial expressions

Mapping – creating a literal or figurative map to follow during an improvisation

Masking One actor unintentionally preventing another from being seen by the audience

Masks – coverings worn over all or part of the face

Masks Covering for all, or part, of the face

Metamorphose – when a human or animal changes in form or nature

Metre – the rhythm in poetry, a sequence of feet

Mime – elaborate movements that actors use to convey a situation, emotion or character without speaking

Mime Stylised form of movement which creates an illusion of reality

Mixing desk Control desk for sound effect being used in a drama

Monologue – a long speech given by one actor

Monologue A character speaks their thoughts aloud

Movement – when actors move to express emotions, situations or characters

Movement Use of the body as a means of communication

Multi-roling – when two people play the same character at the same time

Music – music can be used as a background accompaniment during a performance or as an integral part of a performance

Musical Drama which includes song and/or music

Mystery cycles – plays that re-enact the Christian biblical stories from Creation to Judgement day

N

Narration – when an actor narrates to the audience what is happening during a performance instead of relying on the dialogue to communicate the action

Narration Part(s) of the drama are told as a story by a narrator

Narrator – an actor who narrates what is happening during a performance

Neutral masks – plain masks without facial expressions

Noh theatre – a serious form of Japanese masked theatre

P

Pace Speed of speech or movement

Pantomime Christmas theatrical entertainment usually based on a fairy tale

Pause A break in speaking; period of silence

Performance Presentation of a drama to an audience

Personal prop An item carried or worn by a character e.g. glasses, handbag, wallet

Physical theatre – when actors use movement, dance and mime as the main form of expression in a performance

Pitch How high or low the voice is

Play Another word for a drama

Playwright Person who has written the play

Plot Storyline of the drama

Posture – how a person holds their body when standing or sitting

Posture Position of the body – how it is held

Presenting The results of the Creating process, including performance and evaluation

Profile spot Lantern giving a hard-edged beam of light

Promenade Audience follows the action on foot, moving from one location to another

Promenade theatre – a type of theatre that involves moving the audience between different performance spaces to follow the actors

Prompt copy Master copy of the script with all moves and technical effects included

Prompt side Left hand side of the stage where prompter and stage manager sit during performance

Prompt To supply forgotten lines to an actor

Props – objects that are used during performances

Props Short for properties - objects used by an actor

Proscenium Arch Stage within an enclosing arch

Proxemics – how close or far apart actors stand from each other

Puppet – a model of an animal or person that can be moved, often with strings, hands or rods

Puppeteer – a person who controls puppets

Pyrotechnics Stage fireworks

R

Rake Slope of stage (to allow actors to be seen)

Refrain – when a chorus is repeated during a piece of choral speaking

Register Appropriate speech for the person being spoken to, or for the situation

Rehearsal Practice or preparation of a drama

Rehearsed Drama devised/created without a script which is rehearsed **Improvisation** before presentation

Revolving stage Stage which turns in a circle

Rhythm Movements which follow a pattern or beat

Ritual – a ceremony consisting of set actions or words that are performed in a particular order during a dramatic performance

Role Part played by an actor / attitude adopted

Role-on-the-wall – an outline image of a character is drawn on a piece of paper; write inside the outline how the character is feeling about an issue or what is going on in their life

Role-play – when actors play a role during an improvisation

Role-play A means of exploring attitudes and beliefs

Rostra Blocks or platforms used to create levels

S

Safety chain Used to attach a lantern to the lighting bar for safety

Scenario Outline of the plot of a drama, including changes in time or place

Scene Section of a drama, set in one place at one time

Scenery Resources used to create the setting where a drama takes place, e.g. backcloth, flats, rostra, furniture.

Script – the written text of a play, which actors follow to play their characters

Script The written words of a drama

Scripting – the writing of scripts

Set – the area where a performance takes place

Set (1) Scenery used to show where a drama takes place

Set (2) To place a drama in a certain time or place

Set prop An item placed on the set, usually part of it e.g. a lamp, clock, picture

Setting – where a performance is set in time and place

Sight lines What the audience sees of the stage from where they are sitting

Slow fade to The lighting/sound is faded out slowly

Slow motion Movement performed at a slowed down speed

Snap to Blackout is achieved instantly

Soliloquy A single lengthy speech, made when no other characters are on stage

Solo – when one speaker says a word or phrase during choral speaking

Sound effects – noises and sounds used during performances to add to the atmosphere or to communicate an idea

Soundscape – the order in which sounds should be played to create a piece of music

Space – the area where drama is performed

Special effects Used to create a mood or atmosphere on stage e.g. strobe light, mirror ball, smoke machine

Spectactors – the name of the audience in forum theatre who can interrupt the action to swap places with actors and take over the roles

Spontaneous Drama created 'on the spot' without a script or plan **Improvisation**

Spotlight Beam of light created by a lantern for a person or place on the acting area

Stage – a platform or raised floor

Stage combat – choreographed violence that forms part of performances

Stage directions Written or spoken advice on how to act a drama

Stage whisper A loud whisper intended to be heard by the audience

Staging The position of the acting area relative to the audience

Stance Attitude or position of the body

Status – the relative 'rank' that a person is perceived to have in society

Status Importance relative to others

Status levels – when status is measured in units

Stereotype An exaggerated portrayal of a type of person

Stimulus Anything which suggests ideas which can be developed into a drama. When Devising and writing your own plays you will be given a stimulus which could come from any of the following categories:

Aural – Which means things you hear

- A conversation you hear at school/on the bus/ at a football match etc
- Something someone famous has said such as a politician/ an actor or actress/ a peace keeper e.g. Martin Luther King etc

Visual – Which is something you see

- A Picture
- A Sculpture
- A family photograph
- An old photograph
- A postcard
- A part of a novel that you have read or seen on TV
- Something you have seen on TV which has disturbed you etc
- The use of a prop e.g. a chair/ a mirror/ a newspaper/ scarf/ pair of shoes
- A book you have read
- A character out of a book
- Newspaper cutting
- A recipe
- A map of a certain area
- A poem

Thematic – Relating to a theme

- War
- Famine
- Politics
- Rights for women
- The environment
- Eating disorders
- Moods and feelings
- Death
- Divorce
- And many many more

Stock characters – fixed social types that behave stereotypically, e.g. evil old hag, beautiful damsel in distress

Storyboard – a series of illustrations that represent what will happen during a performance

Strike To remove all the set from the acting area

Structure Way in which time, place and action are sequenced

T

Tableau A stage picture, held without movement

Tab Curtains

Target Audience A specific group of people at whom a drama is aimed

Teacher-in-role – when a teacher takes part in an improvisation by playing one of the roles

Tension Build up of excitement

the front, but can be seen through when lit from behind

Theatre Arts The collective name for lighting, sound, costume, props, make-up and set

Theatre in Education (TIE) – a way of teaching an audience about an issue through theatre

Theatre in the round Audience seated all around the acting area

Theatre-in-the-round – a stage which the audience sits all around

Theme – the subject of a performance

Thought tapping – students in a freeze-frame say what their character is thinking at that particular moment when their teacher taps them on the shoulder

Thought tracking An aid to characterisation: the character speaks their thoughts out loud

Thought tunnel Character(s) walk past other characters who comment on their situation

Thrust Audience seated on three sides of the acting area

Thrust stage – a stage with the audience seated on three sides

Timing Speaking, moving or pausing at exactly the right moment

Tone Change of voice to express emotion

Tragedy A drama about unhappy events and with a sad ending

Tragic and comic masks – the happy and sad masks which are Greek and Roman symbols of theatre

Transcript – a word-for-word record

Transitions – the time it takes to move between scenes

Trapdoor Door in a floor

Treads Stairs

Truck Piece of scenery on wheels for ease of movement

U

Unison – when a group speaks at the same time

Up Stage Centre (USC) The middle part of the stage furthest away from the audience

Up Stage Left (USL) The left hand part of the stage furthest away from the audience as the actor faces the audience

Up Stage Right (USR) The right hand part of the stage furthest away from the audience as the actor faces the audience

V

Venue Place where a drama is presented

Verbatim theatre – a type of theatre that is based on words from the transcripts of real people's interviews

Verse – speeches in plays that follow a metre

Voice – when actors use their voices in particular ways

Voice-over Recorded speech played during a drama

Voices in the head Recall of words said by others about a character or situation

Volume Loudness or quietness of the voice

W

Wings Sides of a theatre stage

Writing in role – writing in role as a character

Theatre Arts Vocabulary List

THE THEATRE STAGE

G Proscenium Arch Stage within an enclosing arch

C Apron Part of the stage in front of the curtain

Auditorium The area for the audience, generally filled with seats

Backcloth Canvas cloth which covers the back of the stage: can be painted

Backstage Non-acting area behind the stage

Balcony Areas of seating above the stalls

Blacks Drapes which curtain off the sides, or back, of the stage

Cyclorama The back wall of the stage which can be painted or lit

(Dress) Circle Area of seating above the stalls and below the balcony

Front of House (FOH) Any job in the theatre which involves dealing with the audience
e.g. box office, refreshments, usher

Flies Area above the stage from where scenery/actors are flown in on pulleys

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

Green room Area in which actors wait when not on stage during a performance

Prompt side Left hand side of the stage where prompter and stage manager sit during performance

Pyrotechnics Stage fireworks

Rake Slope of stage (to allow actors to be seen)

Revolving stage Stage which turns in a circle

Stalls Lowest area of seating, not above stage height

Trapdoor Door in a floor

Treads Stairs

Truck Piece of scenery on wheels for ease of movement

Wings Sides of a theatre stage

LIGHTING

F G C

Blackout The acting area is not lit

Slow fade to The lighting/sound is faded out slowly

Fast fade to The lighting/sound is faded out quickly

Snap to Blackout is achieved instantly

Crossfade To change from one lighting cue to another with no blackout in between

Fade up/down To brighten or dim the lighting

Flood Lantern giving a wide spread of light

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

Spotlight Beam of light created by a lantern for a person or place on the acting area

Focussing Positioning the lanterns to get the desired lighting

Follow spot Powerful profile used to follow actors around the acting area

Fresnel spot Lantern giving a soft edged beam of light

LFX The quick way to write 'lighting effects'

Lighting Desk Control board for lighting

Profile spot Lantern giving a hard edged beam of light

Wash The whole acting area is evenly lit

Barndoors Adjustable metal flaps attached to the front of a fresnel spotlight for shaping the beam of light

G-clamp Clamp used to secure lantern to lighting bar or stand

Gobo Thin metal plate cut out in a pattern and placed in a lantern to project pattern or shape into the acting area

Pyrotechnics Stage fireworks

Safety chain Used to attach a lantern to the lighting bar for safety

Special effects Used to create a mood or atmosphere on stage e.g. strobe light, mirror ball, smoke machine

SOUND

F G C

Cue A signal for an actor to do or say something, or for a lighting or sound effect to begin or end

Fade in To bring the volume up

Fade out To bring the volume down

Crossfade To change from one sound cue to another, with no silence in between

Live (SFX) An SFX is operated on cue during the performance e.g. a doorbell, a phone ring, a knock

Pre-recorded (SFX) An SFX is recorded on tape and played on cue during the performance

SFX The quick way to write 'sound effects'

Mixing desk Control desk for sound

COSTUME

F G C

Costume Clothes worn by actors for their character

Hats Items worn on head in keeping with the character being played

Jewellery Items worn on ears, neck or wrists in keeping with costume worn

Wigs Artificial hair in a variety of colours and styles for any character part

Costume list A list of all costumes for each character in a drama

Period costume Costume which reflects clothing from a time in history

PROPS (PROPERTIES)

F G C

Personal prop An item carried or worn by a character e.g. glasses, handbag, wallet

Props (short for properties) – items used or carried by an actor, or items on the set

Set prop An item placed on the set, usually part of it e.g. a lamp, clock, picture

Props table Table in the wings on which all props are placed for actors to collect as they enter, and replace as they exit

MAKE-UP

F G C

Fake Blood Powder, liquid or capsules which create the effect of bleeding

Foundation The basic skin colour

Liners Sticks of make-up in different colours used to create lines, bruises, shading, highlighting etc.

Pencils Soft pencils in different colours which are easily smudged and blended

Scarring Scars created with make-up, putty or scarring material

Stipple sponge Used to create an unshaven look or the appearance of cracked veins

Tooth varnish Used to create the look of a missing tooth by blacking out an existing one

Crepe hair Plaits of artificial hair which can be cut and trimmed to form eyebrows, moustaches and beards

Highlighting Using light colours to make face areas stand out

Shading Using colours to make facial areas look shrunken

Spirit gum Glue used to attach hair to the face

Latex Liquid rubber which can be used to make skull cap moulds and false noses

Nose putty Type of clay used for altering the shape of the nose or chin and/or making warts and wounds

Skull cap Plastic head-shaped covering to give appearance of baldness

SET

F G C

Acting area That part of the available space occupied by the set and/or used by actors when acting

Centre Stage (CS) The centre area of the stage

Centre Stage Left (CSL) The left hand centre side of the acting area as the actor faces the audience

Centre Stage Right (CSR) The right hand centre side of the acting area as the actor faces the audience

Down Stage Centre (DSC) The middle part of the stage nearest the audience

Down Stage Left (DSL) The part of the stage nearest the audience on the left as the actor faces the audience

Down Stage Right (DSR) The part of the stage nearest the audience on the right as the actor faces the audience

End on Audience seated at one end - acting area at the other

Ground plan Bird's eye view of the set showing what is on the set, entrances/exits and the position of the audience

Key Explanation of symbols on a ground plan

Rostra Blocks or platforms used to create levels

Set (1) Scenery used to show where a drama takes place

Set prop An item placed on the set, usually part of it e.g. a lamp, clock, picture

Sight lines What the audience sees of the stage from where they are sitting

Staging The position of the acting area relative to the audience

Theatre in the round Audience seated all round the acting area

Thrust Audience seated on three sides of the acting area

Up Stage Centre (USC) The middle part of the stage furthest away from the audience

Up Stage Left (USL) The left hand part of the stage furthest away from the audience as the actor faces the audience

Up Stage Right (USR) The right hand part of the stage furthest away from the audience as the actor faces the audience

Avenue Audience seated on two sides of the acting area

Dress the set Add soft furnishings such as tablecloth, cushions, pictures and pre-set props

Portable staging Lightweight frames and boards for creating levels

Proscenium Arch Stage within an enclosing arch

Promenade Audience follows the action on foot, moving from one location to another

Drama Techniques

Freeze-frames

These are still images or silent tableaux used to illustrate a specific incident or event.

Conscience (or decision) alley

The class create two lines facing each other. One child in role as a particular character walks down the 'alley' between the lines. The class voice the character's thoughts, both for and against a particular decision or action which the character is facing, acting as his or her conscience. The child in role listens to his or her conscience before making a decision about the course of action to take.

Mime

Acting without words. Communicating through actions.

Hot-seating

Hot-seating involves the class in asking questions of someone in role as a character, who sits on the 'hotseat'.

Flashbacks and 'flash forwards'

In which an earlier or later event (in a scene) is put into the play. Moving back and forward in time in order to extend students' understanding of themes and characters.

Cross-Cutting

Cross-cutting (also called split-screen) is a drama technique borrowed from the world of film editing, where two scenes are intercut to establish continuity

Narration

Narration is a technique whereby one or more performers speak directly to the audience to tell a story.

Monologue

A piece of oral or written literature (e.g., a story, poem or part of a play) spoken by one person who exposes inner thoughts and provides insights into his or her character.

Characterisation

The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss

Choral speaking

Speaking all together at the same time

Unison

Moving or speaking together at the same time

Canon

Moving or speaking together at the different times

Thought tracking

pupils, in role are asked to say what they are thinking or feeling at a given moment in the drama : or other pupils may take turns to say what they think the character is thinking at that point.

Cross Cutting/Flashbacks/forwards:

a very useful in technique in improvisation where you can ask groups to flash back or forward days, weeks months or years to other moments in the lives of the characters they are depicting.

Forum Theatre

members of the group can help actors to create or develop a piece of theatre by commenting on the action and making suggestions. They can also step into an observed role play.

Hot seating

a pupil answers questions about the character they are playing in role, with or without preparation to help develop their role.

Monologue

These can be improvised in sessions or they can be planned and worked on over a period of time, or scripted monologues can be used.

Role-play

Using their own values and attitudes, pupils place themselves in an imagined situation.

Teacher in Role

The teacher adopts the persona of a character in an improvisation to help direct work from 'the inside' without stopping it. This can encourage others to take the work more seriously, or challenge them to develop ideas further.

Soliloquy

In role the actor speaks to the audience, sharing thoughts and insights into events.