Vocabulary Words/Terms Needed to Discuss and Analyze Drama

From Elements of Literature (4th Course, 720-723).

**Drama**: “a story that is enacted in real space and time by actors for a live audience.”

**Internal and External Conflicts**: Characters may be conflicted within themselves (internal) or have a conflict with others or outside forces (external).

**Basic Situation/”Set-Up”/Exposition**: A drama will always start with an initial problem or situation that sets the basis and tone for the play. Look for a major problem to be resolved.

**Complications**: These are the conflicts as they progress through the play. “Rising action” would be all of the conflicts up to the climax of the play.

**Climax**: This is the most tension-filled moment in the play, or the moment upon which the play’s conclusion will hinge.

**Resolution/Denouement**: This is the conclusion of the play, or the final outcome of the character’s actions at the climax.

**Tragedy**: A play that ends unhappily and which deals with deep elements and challenges of the human condition. Great pain is endured, but great lessons are learned through the tragedy. Tragedy “pits human limitations against the larger forces or destiny—an almighty power or an indifferent universe.” Characters are often noble or high-ranking.

**Tragic Hero**: The protagonist of a tragedy, a “noble figure, who is admirable in many ways, but he or she has a tragic flaw.

**Tragic Flaw**: The character failing which causes the fall of the tragic hero: pride, ambition, rebelliousness, jealousy, greed, etc.

**Comedy**: A comedy ends happily and often has a plot progression centered around boy-meets-girl/loses girl/is reunited –progression, or something similar. Everyday people, and everyday activities are the characters and events portrayed in a comedy.

**Setting:** This will be the location, the time period, the environment—either outside or inside, etc. Each Act, or even scene, may have a different setting. Setting can be used to develop characters as well.

**Mood and Tone**: This is also known as “atmosphere,” and it has to do with a feeling evoked by the scenery or the dialogue: gloomy, cheerful, angry, suspenseful, anxious, excited, fearful, etc. Tone has to do with how the author is treating the topic, and how the author feels about the topic: mocking, optimistic, angry, indignant, joyful, etc.

**Characterization:** The author/writer may use either direct or indirect characterization to reveal characteristics**. Indirect characterization** is what we pick up from other characters about a different character; this happens when they are speaking about him/her. **Direct characterization** is what we learn about the character from him-or-herself, through actions or dialogue.

**Stock Characters/Archetypes/Flat or Round Characters**: Stock characters may be those you’d find in any story: the fool, the wise woman, the handsome prince, etc. The archetypal characters are those who represent a universal characteristic from ancient times and which may be an integral part of the human psyche, according to psychology: the fool, the wise woman, the hero, the heroine, etc. Flat characters are superficial and do not change; round characters are changeable and they grow and learn from their lessons.