

6-12 Glossary of Terms

Theatre Curriculum

- Act: To represent, perform, interpret, communicate a character other than oneself; a major division of a play.
- Actor: In performing a role or representing a character in a play, the actor uses vocal as well as physical techniques to bring the character to life for the audience. Posture, gestures, facial expressions, tone, pitch, rate, and diction all help to create and present the desired characterization.
- Advertise: To call public attention to an event.
- Antagonist: The antagonist sets the conflict in motion by offering an obstacle to the protagonist's objective.
- Apron: The curved part of the stage that extends beyond the main curtain.
- Arena Stage: Also called theatre-in-the-round and central staging. There is seating on all sides of the stage.
- Aside: The dramatic device in which a character speaks his/her thoughts aloud unheard by other characters on stage at the same time.
- Audition: An action-oriented interview between director and actors for the purpose of deciding who will be cast in what role; usually involves script reading, performing a prepared monologue, and/or improvisation.
- Backdrop: A painted piece of muslin hung from the battens to depict a scene.
- Backstage: This designation also applies to the wings area and, loosely, can be used to indicate anything in the physical plant that is not stage or house.
- Basic Makeup: Applying base, highlights, and shadow to improve or alter facial structure for the stage.
- Batten: A wood or metal pipe from which stage lights, drops, and scenery are hung.
- Blackout: Stage goes to complete black; the blackout lighting cue is often used for a startling effect at the end of a scene.
- Blocking: The actor's basic stage positioning given to the actor by the director or used in self-direction.
- Blocking Symbols: X=Cross E=Entrance EX=Exit C=Center SR=Stage Right SL=Stage Left DC=Down Center DSR= Down Stage Right DSL=Down Stage Left UC=Up Center USR=Up Stage Right USL=Up Stage Left RC=Right Center USRC=Up Stage Right Center USLC=Up Stage Left Center LC=Left Center DSRC=Down Stage Right Center DSLC=Down Stage Left
- Center Bow: A movement at the waist that demonstrates acknowledgment and thanks to the audience for coming to the performance.
- Box Office Manager: A person in charge of selling the tickets for a production.
- Box-set: A feature of realistic theatre, a two- or three-walled set representing the interior of a room.
- Cat-walk: A narrow bridge above the stage providing access to stage scenery or lighting units.
- Cast: 1. (verb) to assign the roles of a dramatic production to actors; 2. (noun) the group of actors with specific roles in a play or narrative.
- Character: A person or entity (e.g., animal) in a play, or the personality of that person or entity (e.g., animal).
- Characterization: The art of developing the character (e.g., their life, emotions, choices, motivations, objectives).

- Choices: The decisions of the actor or director regarding how a character will be interpreted in a given production. Most directors prefer to allow the actors some rehearsal time to explore their own choices before deciding what will best serve the show.
- Choral Speaking: Reciting, in unison, a poem or piece of literature.
- Chorus: In classical drama, the chorus was used to narrate offstage events. Commedia 'del Arte: The basic plots derived from Roman comedy, and the cast of stock characters including Arlecchino, Columbine, Pierrot, Pantaloon, Pagliaccio, Punchinello, and Scaramouche. The players appear in masks and in costumes that became the convention for the genre (e.g., the black-and-white "domino" costume of Arlecchino).
- Concentration: The actor's focus on the moment of the play.
- Conflict: Conflicts generally are described either as "human against human" (e.g., an equal struggle), "human against self" (e.g., a psychological struggle), and "human against an outside force" (e.g., an uneven struggle against some greater force such as nature, the gods, or some organization).
- Costumes: Clothing worn by the actors in a performance.
- Cue: The action or words that signals what happens next.
- Creative Drama: An improvisational, nonexhibitional, process-centered form of theatre in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experience.
- Crew: Group of people working on technical aspects of production (e.g., set crew, costume crew, lighting crew, sound crew, running crew).
- Comedy: A play that treats characters and situations in a humorous way and has a happy ending.
- Culture: The arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought at a particular time period.
- Cyc: Short for Cyclorama. It is a huge, light blue curtain at the back of the stage that can be made to look like the sky.
- Denouement: The solution to the conflict in the play, the untangling of the complications, and conflict between antagonist and protagonist.
- Dialogue: Two or more characters speaking with each other.
- Diction: The word choice made by the playwright; also, the enunciation of the actors as they say their lines.
- Director: Person responsible for coordinating, guiding, and developing of all aspects of a production so that the performance represents a unified vision.
- Dramatize: To present or view a story in a dramatic way.
- Dramatic Criticism: An evaluation and analysis of a play according to accepted aesthetic principles.
- Dramatic Play: Play in which children take on different roles (e.g., housekeeper, grocery store checker, camp counselor).
- Dramaturg: An assistant to the director who researches the culture, period, and literary references in a play.
- Ensemble: Acting in which a cast works together as a team to create a total effect rather than a group of individual performances.
- Exposition: As part of dramatic structure, the information that is often presented at the beginning of a play. Here the playwright may set the atmosphere and tone, explain the setting, introduce the characters, and provide the audience with any other information necessary to understand the plot.

- Expressionism: A highly symbolic and poetic style of drama that features distorted, oversimplified, and symbolic characters rather than realistic characters.
- Falling Action: The action after the climax of the plot. (see denouement.)
- Fourth Wall: The invisible wall of a set through which the audience sees the action of a play.
- Front of House: 1. The part of the theatre in front of the proscenium arch. For example, the lighting equipment placed there is referred to as front of house lights. 2. Non-stage related production concerns, such as ticket sales, seating, concessions, and theatre house maintenance by the front of house staff.
- Gel: A thin piece of colored plastic, available in a wide variety of colors, that can be cut and fitted to a light to color the beam directed onto the stage.
- Genre: Each of the main genres may be subdivided by style or content. Comedy, for example, may be absurdist, comedy of humors, comedy of manners, or romantic. Genre studies examine a particular work in relation to others of the same kind, determining how closely it meets the characteristics in that genre.
- Gesture: An intentional movement of the arms, hands, or other parts of the body that expresses or emphasizes a feeling or idea.
- Graphic Organizer: A visual representation of organized data relating to a content area that integrates knowledge, fosters organization, and links higher order thinking skills.
- Grid/Gridiron: A steel framework above the stage to which lines are attached to fly scenery and lights.
- Ground Plan: A bird's-eye view of a stage set; also called a floor plan that often includes scenery placement.
- House: The place where the audience sits.
- House Manager: The person in charge of the theatre house, seating people, ushers, etc.
- Improvisation: A spontaneous scene or episode created without a script by an actor or actors.
- Lazzi: Plural for Lazzo, the Italian word meaning "trick" or "joke." Refers to comic bits or business, often repeated for humor (see Commedia 'del Arte).
- Leg: A tall, narrow curtain that an actor can stand behind before an entrance without being seen.
- Lighting Plot: A plan, usually drawn to scale, showing the placement of lighting instruments.
- Mask: To use backing, such as flats, draperies, and drops to hide backstage areas from the view of the audience.
- Melodrama: Features emotional action (more than motivation), stock characters, and a strict black-and-white view of morality (i.e., virtue rewarded and evil villains punished).
- Mime: Acting without words or props. Monologue: A work written to be spoken by just one person.
- Motivation: The reason a character does something; the reason for an action.
- Musical: A production consisting of a series of song and dance scenes, as well as spoken words.
- Nonverbal Communication: Communication without words.
- Objective: The goal a character has in a particular scene or throughout the play.
- Obstacle: A person, place, or thing that gets in the way of a characters reaching their objective.
- Off Book: When an actor has his lines memorized and doesn't need to look at the script.
- Open Script: A written dialogue with no apparent plot, given circumstances, or specific characters.
- Orchestra Pit: The place where the orchestra or band is set up: usually in the front of the theatre or under the stage.

- Oral Interpretation: Interpreting and communicating a story or script primarily through voice, facial expression, posture, and minimal gestures. In formal theatre, used in specialized presentations like Readers Theatre and storytelling.
- Pantomime: Creating an imaginary object through hand and body movement.
- Personal Review: An announcement in print or broadcast media of a production with some description of the cast, plot, and technical elements.
- Places: A stage manager's term. It means you go to your first entrance and are quiet so that he/she knows you are ready and can start the show.
- Play Space: Any space where drama takes place (e.g., classroom, stage, auditorium).
- Playwright: A person who writes a play.
- Portfolio: An organized, systematic record of student work chosen by the student and teacher that documents growth in student learning. Portfolio types usually include process, product, and cumulative portfolios.
- Producer: The person who puts together a theatrical production: obtains financial backing; leases rights to the play; rents the theatre; hires the directors, designers, crews; and supervises the budget.
- Prompt Book: A notebook containing a script pasted on large pages with areas for notes. The notebook also contains production notes, blocking, and all lighting, sound, and special effects cues.
- Props: Short for stage properties. Usually divided into four categories: hand props, set props, dress props, and effects not produced within the lighting and sound boards.
- Proscenium Stage: A performance space in which the audience views the action as if through a picture frame.
- Readers Theatre: A performance at which a play is read aloud for an audience rather than memorized.
- Rendering: A sketch or illustration of a proposed product, often used to depict scenery that reflects the meaning and intent of a play.
- Resolution: A period of time in which the conflict in the play is ended.
- Rigging: The process of hanging scenery or lights; the handling of stage curtain or drops.
- Rising Action: The events of a play leading up to the climax; the creation of conflict; the entanglement of forces.
- Role-Play: Taking on a role in a play or improvisation. Scene: A division of an act or of the play itself.
- Scrim: A drop made from sharkstooth scrim or theatrical gauze and dyed or lightly painted: it becomes transparent when lit from behind.
- Script: The text of a play, motion picture, or broadcast.
- Script Analysis: The separation of the script into its parts in order to determine/understand its nature.
- Setting: The surroundings in which the action of the play develops; also the units of scenery that combine to suggest a particular place.
- Sight Line: Lines indicating visibility of onstage and backstage areas from various points in the house or audience.
- Stage Crew: The backstage technical crew responsible for running the show.
- Stage Manager: The person in charge backstage during the performance.
- Stage Property: Anything that the actor handles onstage as well as furniture and other items used to enhance the set.
- Story Board: The depiction of the script in comic book form to help visualize a play.

- Story Dramatization: An improvised play based on a story and used in informal drama. At the elementary level, students are usually guided by a leader who reads or tells a story while the students take on roles. At upper levels, students assume the various roles and work in ensemble to dramatize the story, often interchanging roles and experimenting with ideas.
- Storytelling: The process of orally interpreting a story with a script or from memory using voice, facial expression, and gestures.
- Strike: To take down the set.
- Synthesis: The combination of separate elements into a single or whole unit.
- Tableau: A frozen picture.
- Tech Control Center: The place where the lighting and sound operation equipment is setup and run.
- Technical Elements: Lighting, sound, makeup, costumes, set design/construction, props.
- Theme: What the play means as opposed to what happens.
- Thrust Stage: A combination of the proscenium and arena stages, where the audience sits on two or three sides of the acting area.
- Tragedy: A play in which the protagonist fails to achieve desired goals or is overcome by opposing forces and, in many tragedies, dies.
- Understudy: Someone who learns a role for the purpose of performing in the absence of the primary actor cast in that role.
- Unit Set: A stage setting consisting of units of scenery that are capable of being rearranged in various combinations for different scenes.
- Venues: Types of performance space.
- Verbal Communication: Communicating with words.
- Wings: The offstage area to the right and left of the set used as entrances but concealing backstage areas.