

S.O.S. Parts of a Drama

LESSON 3

RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.5, L.3.4.b

Drama

1 GETTING THE IDEA

Dramas are special kinds of fiction stories. They are stories that people perform on a stage or in front of a camera. Sometimes, a drama is called a **play**. In this lesson, we will learn about drama and how it is the same as and different from other kinds of fiction stories.

Acts and Scenes

Many fiction stories are divided into parts called chapters. A drama is divided into parts called acts and scenes. An act is the largest part of a play. It is like a chapter in a book. A scene is a smaller part of an act. One act may have several scenes. What happens in the acts and scenes tells the story events.

Setting

In stories, authors usually give a lot of information. They tell what the setting and characters look like. They tell what the characters do and how they feel. Plays are different. People mostly watch a drama, so it does not have as many details. People see the details when they watch it. The setting they see is called a set.

In a drama, the author tells a little about the setting at the beginning of an act or scene. The words are usually in italics, or slanted type.

Read this setting. Where does this drama take place?

Setting: A sunny fall day. The curtain opens on a large room with many desks and chairs. At the front of the room is a chalkboard with the words "Welcome, Students!"

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Characters

Like other stories, a drama has characters. The characters in a drama are called the **cast**. A list of the cast is included at the beginning of the play. It is called the **cast of characters**. In a drama, the character names are shown in all capital letters. Read this cast of characters. How many characters are in this cast?

Cast of Characters

MS. LOPEZ, a teacher

LAYLA, a student

BILLY, a new student

Dialogue

The characters in a play do a lot of talking. In fact, almost the whole story is told through dialogue. The words the characters say are called **dialogue**. Dialogue helps you learn what the characters feel and think.

The dialogue in a play looks different from dialogue in a story. It does not have quotation marks around it. The words the characters speak come after their names. Which words are spoken in the example below?

MS. LOPEZ: Layla, this is Billy. Billy just moved here.

LAYLA: (*snakes Billy's hand*) Hi, Billy. How do you like our school so far?

BILLY: It's a lot bigger than my old school. (*sighs*) I hope I don't get lost.

LAYLA: Don't worry. I'll help you. Everyone will.

I know because I was a new student last year!

Stage Directions

Look at the example again. The words in italic type inside the parentheses () are stage directions. Stage directions give instructions to the actors. In the example, what should Layla do when she says "Hi" to Billy? What does Billy do when he answers Layla?