

# **THE DRAMA DICTIONARY**



**WARRINER SCHOOL  
Drama Department**

## A

**Accent** Way of speaking used in a local area or country

**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

## B

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

**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

Slow fade to Blackout -The lighting/sound is faded out slowly

Fast fade to Blackout -The lighting/sound is faded out quickly

Snap to Blackout - is achieved instantly

**Blocking** Deciding where and when actors will move on stage

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

## C

**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

**Character** Specific person in a drama

**Characterisation** The process of fully developing a character

**Clarity** Clearness of the voice

**Comedy** A drama which is funny/comical

**Conventions** Alternative ways of presenting parts of a drama

**Costume** Clothes worn by actors for their character

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

**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

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

## D

**Dance Drama** A drama presented through dance moves

**Dialogue** A conversation between two or more characters

**Diction** The use of clear speech

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

**Down Stage Centre (DSC)** 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

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

## E

**Emphasis** The stress on a word or phrase

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

**Enter** To come on stage

**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

**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 door flat Frames into which a door is built

window flat Frames into which a window is built

**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** The audience suggest changes to a drama in order to affect outcomes

**Freeze frame** The action is frozen in time

**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 e.g. box office, refreshments, usher

## G

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

**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

**Gesture** Movement of the hand or arm which communicates a meaning or emotion

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

**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** Questioning a character in role

## I

**Intonation** Rising and falling of voice in speech

## K

**Key** Explanation of symbols on a ground plan

## M

**Make-up** Worn by actors for their character

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

**Masks** Covering for all, or part, of the face

**Mime** Creating a play without words, your body language and gestures should reveal what you are doing, how you are feeling.

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

**Monologue** A character speaks their thoughts aloud

**Movement** Use of the body as a means of communication

**Musical Drama** which includes song and/or music

## N

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

## P

**Pace/rhythm/tempo** The rate at which the action moves along and the extent to which this changes, such as fast to slow or slow to fast. The drama will be more interesting to watch with changes of pace which can also build up the tension. Pace can refer to the speed changes in movement or with the delivery of lines spoken.

**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

**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** 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

**Prompt** To supply forgotten lines to an actor

**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

**Props** Short for properties - objects used by an actor

**Proscenium Arch** Stage within an enclosing arch

**Proxemics** A character from the drama stands or sits in the centre of the room. Other students take up positions of distance or closeness to them. The distance represents the relationship between them and how they feel towards one another.

**Pyrotechnics** Stage fireworks

## R

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

**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

**Role** Part played by an actor / attitude adopted

**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 words of a drama

**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

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

**Slow motion** Movement performed at a slowed down speed

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

**Sound collage** A series of sounds that are layered together to create a dramatic effect. They create an atmosphere and set the scene. Musical instruments can be used or peoples voices, hands and feet or any other props available.

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

**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 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** Importance relative to others

**Stereotype** An exaggerated portrayal of a type of person

**Stimulus** Anything which suggests ideas which can be developed into a drama

**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

**Tabs** Curtains

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

**Tension** Build up of excitement

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

**Theatre in the round** Audience seated all around the acting area

**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

**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

**Trapdoor** Door in a floor

**Treads** Stairs

**Truck** Piece of scenery on wheels for ease of movement

## U

**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

**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

# Vocabulary for Specific Roles in the Theatre

## FOR ACTORS

**Protagonist** The main character.

**Antagonist** The bad guy, usually in opposition to the protagonist.

**Prologue** A speech that starts the play. This sets the scene, introduces the central characters and location. For example: the opening of Romeo and Juliet.

**Epilogue** A speech addressed to the audience about what happens after the play has ended. It can also sum up any loose ends at the closing moments of this play.

**Chorus** A person or group of people with a narrative function. Originated from Greek Theatre. These members of the chorus could give/offer advice to the main protagonist.

**Improvisation** Making something up by using whatever is immediately to hand; your own ideas.

## IN THE THEATRE

**Proscenium Arch** Stage within an enclosing arch

**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

**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**

**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**

**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 that reflects clothing from a time in history

## **PROPS (PROPERTIES)**

**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**

**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**

**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