### Drama Terms for IB

**(this list is not necessarily for performers or it would be more exhaustive)**

**Elements of drama:** The elements of drama, by which dramatic works can be analyzed and evaluated, can be categorized into three major areas: literary elements, technical elements, and performance elements.

* **literary elements** include story line (plot), character, story organization (beginning, middle, end), plot structures (rising action, turning point, falling action), conflict, suspense, theme, language, style, dialogue, monologue.
* **technical elements** include scenery (set), costumes, props, lights, sound, music, makeup.
* **performance elements** include acting (e.g., character motivation and analysis, empathy), speaking (breath control, vocal expression and inflection, projection, speaking style, diction), and nonverbal expression (gestures, body alignment, facial expression, character blocking, movement).

**analysis:** in responding to dramatic art, the process of examining how the elements of drama—literary, technical, and performance—are used.

**antihero:** a protagonist who does not have the heroic qualities of the traditional protagonist, a warty hero **tragic hero:** the central figure in a tragedy; typically, a tragic hero is a person of basically good character who passes from happiness to misery because of a character flaw or error in judgment.

**apron:** the area between the front curtain and the edge of the stage.

**backdrop:** a flat surface the width of the stage, hung upstage of the acting area, upon which scenery is usually painted. **scenery:** the theatrical equipment, such as curtains, flats, backdrops, or platforms, used in a dramatic production to communicate environment.

**blocking:** the path formed by the actor’s movement on stage, usually determined by the director with assistance from the actor and often written down in a script. Also called ‘**staging’**

**catharsis:** the feeling of release felt by the audience at the end of a tragedy; the audience experiences catharsis, or is set free from the emotional hold of the action, after experiencing strong emotions and sharing in the protagonist’s troubles.

**centre stage:** all from the actors’ persective. The area in the centre or middle of the stage. Actor in front of the stage facing you is downstage centre. The actor’s left is the audience’s right. Stage right is the actor’s right while facing you. Upstage left, right and centre are at the back of the stage from the audience’s perspective. In old theatres that raked up towards the back of a theatre, upstage was literally a little up from downstage.

**climax:** the point of greatest intensity in a series or progression of events in a play, often forming the turning point of the plot and leading to some kind of resolution. This tends a bit more codified in theatre than in novels in the late 20th century.

**cue:** the words or action at which an actor is expected to deliver a line or perform another action, to enter or exit, or for a sound from the sound tech.

**curtain:** the main drape, usually made of cloth, used to separate the stage from the auditorium.

**deus ex machina:** literally, “god from the machine”; refers to the character in classical Greek tragedy who entered the play from the heavens at the end of the drama to resolve or explain the conflict; in modern drama, refers to any arbitrary means of plot resolution.

**dialogue:** spoken conversation used by two or more characters to express thoughts, feelings, and actions. Also ‘**lines’**

**director:** the person who is responsible for the overall interpretation of a dramatic work produced by a dramatist or playwright, bringing all the elements together to create a unified production.

**domestic drama:** a style of drama characterized by a domestic setting and a protagonist who is a common man.

**entrance:** stage direction indicating the act of entering the play area during a performance.

**epilogue:** a summary speech delivered at the end of a play that explains or comments on the action. **prologue:** a speech which introduces a play.

**exit:** stage direction; to leave the stage.

**fourth wall:** the invisible wall of a set through which the audience sees the action of the play.

**interpretation:** in conjunction with a director, how an actor creates a character (physically, emotionally, etc.). Imagine your favourite actor playing a villain. Imagine an intelligent woman playing an ingénue (naïve fool). Villains and fools can be lovable or detestable—depends on the script, actor & director.

**dramatic monologue:** a long speech made by one actor; a monologue may be delivered alone or in the presence of others. In Shakespeare’s theatre, we refer to a **soliloquy** which is usually an actor alone.

**Mood/atmosphere/tone:** the tone or feeling of the play, often engendered by the music, setting, or lighting.

**playwright:** a person who writes a play. You may use ‘**dramatist’**.

**props:** short for stage properties; is usually an article that a character brings on stage and uses in some way. It is portable or moveable: character takes $20 and gives to another in a scene; character carries an umbrella on stage; character enters with a crutch after an injury, etc.)

**realism:** an attempt in to represent everyday life and people as they are or appear to be by way of character motivation, costume, setting, and dialogue.

**reversal:** when an action produces the opposite of what is desired or expected.

**role:** the character portrayed by an actor in a drama.

**script:** the written dialogue, description, and directions provided by the playwright or dramatist

**set:** the physical surroundings purposefully designed, visible to the audience, in which the action of the play takes place. **setting:** when and where the action of a play takes place. The ‘set’ is physically created part of the setting of a play. Usually playwrights describe setting and the director or set designer designs a set.

**special effects:** visual or sound effects used to enhance a theatrical performance (usually prerecorded by a sound technician).

**spectacle:** the scenery, costumes, and special, or visual effects in a production. It is the showmanship, the wow factor, the jazz hands, etc. In a zombie show in Vancouver a few years ago, audience in the first row sat on garbage bags, because they were literally covered in goop by the end of the show—that is spectacle.

**stage business:** actions or behavior of an actor on stage used to give information, enhance character, define focus, or establish importance. This is sometimes called ‘a bit of business’.

**stage directions:** instructions in the script that tell the actors what to do and where to move on stage; may also provide information about the setting.

**stylization:** the shaping of dramatic material, settings, or costumes in a deliberately nonrealistic manner. When you look up Death of a Salesman sets online, many of them are very highly stylized (not a real house, might be missing walls, etc.)

**tableau:** a technique in creative drama in which actors create a frozen picture, as if the action were paused; plural is tableaux.

**tempo:** the pace of a scene or a play. Also called **‘pacing’ or ‘timing’**

**turning point:** the climax or high point of a story, when events can go either way.