

Define The Various Types Of Drama



"Dissemination of Education for Knowledge, Science & Culture"

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Dattajirao Kadam Arts, Science & Commerce College, Ichalkaranji

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A Projecton: "Define The Various Types Of Drama"

Submitted in partial fulfilment to the requirement for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

Submitted By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project report entitled "**Define The Various Types Of Drama**" is my original work and has been carried out by me under the guidance of **Mrs. Sneha A Lingras**. This project report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of B.A-III.

I further declare that this work has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, or certificate.

All the sources of information used in this project have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATE

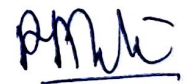
This is to certify that the following students have successfully completed the Group Project work entitled "**Define The Various Types Of Drama**" the academic year 2025-26 as the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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A Project on: **"Define The Various Types Of Drama"**

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2025-26

A Projection "Define The Various Types Of Drama"

Objectives:

1. To understand.....
2. To comprehend.....
3. To study.....
4. To know.....
5. To learn.....

Defination of Drama

Drama is a form of literature that is written to be performed on a stage before an audience. The word “drama” comes from the Greek word dran, which means “to do” or “to act.” Unlike other forms of literature such as poetry or novels, drama presents a story through the actions and dialogues of characters. It is meant to be acted out by performers in a theatre, making it a living and visual art form.

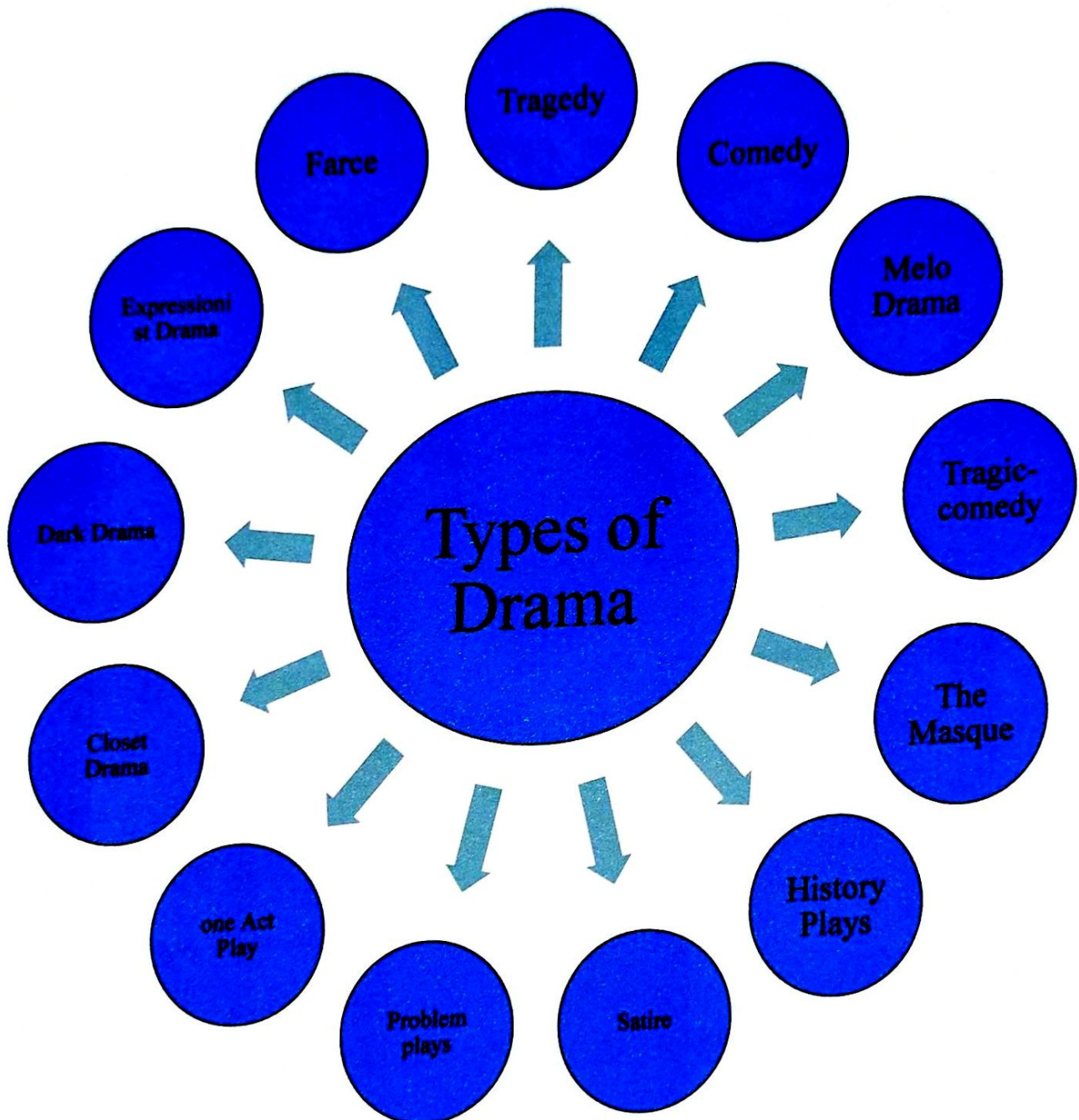
According to Aristotle, drama is an imitation of action that represents human life, emotions, and conflicts. Through characters, dialogue, and performance, drama shows the struggles, feelings, and experiences of people. It often includes elements such as plot, character, theme, dialogue, music, and spectacle.

Drama usually follows a structured storyline called a plot, which includes a beginning, middle, and end. The story is developed through conversations between characters and their actions on stage. Stage directions are also included in the script to guide actors and directors about movements, emotions, and settings.

Drama can be divided into several types, such as tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama, and farce. Each type presents different emotions and themes. For example, tragedy deals with serious and sorrowful events, while comedy focuses on humor and entertainment.

Drama plays an important role in literature and culture because it reflects society, human behavior, and moral values. It not only entertains the audience but also educates them by presenting meaningful messages about life.

Types of Drama



❖ Tragedy

Tragedy is one of the most important and serious forms of drama. It originated in ancient Greece and has remained a significant genre in literature. The word “tragedy” is derived from the Greek word *tragoidia*, which means “goat song” (*tragos* meaning goat and *aeidein* meaning song). It is believed that tragedy developed from religious rituals performed in honour of the god Dionysus. During festivals, people sang and performed dramatic acts which gradually developed into tragic drama.

The three great playwrights of Greek tragedy are Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. They laid the foundation of tragic drama. Later, elements like story, dialogue, and characters were further developed in English drama through Morality plays, Miracle plays, and Interludes.

• Aristotle’s Theory of Tragedy

The most important critic of tragedy is Aristotle. In his famous work *Poetics*, he gives a detailed explanation of tragedy. According to him:

“Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with artistic ornament; in the form of action, not narration; through pity and fear bringing about the purification (*catharsis*) of these emotions.”

This definition highlights that tragedy deals with serious themes and aims to create emotional impact on the audience.

Six Elements of Tragedy

Aristotle mentions six important elements of tragedy:

Plot (Story) – It is the soul of tragedy. It refers to the arrangement of events. A good plot is usually complex with suspense and unexpected turns.

Character – These are the persons in the play, including hero and heroine. Characters can be protagonist, antagonist, round, flat, etc.

Thought – It refers to ideas, themes, and emotions expressed through dialogues.

Diction – It means the language used by characters. It should be artistic and expressive.

Song – It includes music and lyrical elements used in the play.

Spectacle – It refers to stage effects like scenery, costumes, and actions.

Types of Tragedy Based on Form

A) Classical Tragedy:

The chorus was a group Classical tragedy follows strict rules based on Greek traditions.

Main Features: Three Unities

Unity of Time: Action happens within one day

Unity of Place: Action occurs in one place

Unity of Action: One main plot without subplots

Use of Chorus

The of singers and dancers who commented on the action and expressed public opinion.

Classical tragedy maintains discipline, order, and seriousness.

B) Romantic Tragedy:

Romantic tragedy does not follow strict rules and allows freedom of expression. Writers like William Shakespeare developed this form.

Main Features:

Combination of Ideal and Real – High characters are shown in realistic situations.

Tragi-Comedy – Mixture of tragic and comic elements.

Rejection of Unities – No strict rules of time and place.

Drama of Action – Events like battles, murders, and conflicts are shown on stage.

Romantic tragedy is more flexible, imaginative, and dramatic.

Types of Tragedy Based on Content

A) Horror Tragedy:

Developed in the 17th century by writers like John Webster. It focuses on shocking and terrifying incidents. The aim is to create fear and excitement rather than deep emotional conflict.

B) Heroic Tragedy:

Popular in the 17th century, especially by John Dryden. It presents a hero with great courage and noble ideals. The main conflict is between love and honour.

C) Domestic Tragedy:

This type deals with middle or lower-class characters and their everyday problems. It is realistic and serious in nature. It focuses on family and personal issues.

D) Sentimental Tragedy:

Also called "she-tragedy," it focuses on female characters and excessive emotions. It aims to create sympathy and pity among the audience.

❖ Comedy

Comedy is one of the most popular forms of drama, mainly because it provides laughter and a happy ending. It entertains the audience and celebrates joy, festivity, and human life. In Western literature, comedy began with the ancient Greeks. Aristotle explains that the word “comedy” may have been derived from the Greek words *Comae* (meaning villages) or festive celebrations. Early comedians performed for rural audiences and aimed to win their appreciation through humor and entertainment.

Comedy can be divided on the basis of form (structure) and content (theme).

1) Types of Comedy Based on Form

A) Classical Comedy:

Classical comedy follows strict rules laid down by Greek and Roman dramatists like Aristophanes. These rules include:

Unity of time, place, and action

Separation of comic and tragic elements

Focus on realistic everyday life

It is often satirical and aims to correct human behavior.

B) Romantic Comedy:

Romantic comedy flourished during the Elizabethan age with writers like William Shakespeare. It does not follow strict rules and is full of imagination, love, and happy endings. Plays often include confusion, disguise, and eventual reunion.

2) Types of Comedy Based on Content

A) Comedy of Humours:

Developed by Ben Jonson, this type focuses on characters dominated by one strong trait or “humour.” It is often satirical and exposes human weaknesses.

B) Comedy of Manners:

Popular during the Restoration period, it reflects the lifestyle and manners of the upper class. William Congreve portrayed social behavior, fashion, and moral values of society.

C) Sentimental Comedy:

This 18th-century comedy replaces humor with emotion and pathos. It focuses on middle-class problems and aims to create sympathy. Oliver Goldsmith contributed to this form.

D) Genteel Comedy:

Developed by Colley Cibber, it mocks the artificial behavior and fashion of high society.

E) Comedy of Intrigue:

This type involves complicated plots, disguises, and misunderstandings. Writers like John Fletcher used it to create humor through clever twists.

F) Commedia dell'Arte:

An Italian form of comedy where actors performed improvised dialogues using stock characters. It relied on humor, exaggeration, and familiar situations.

G) Festive Comedy:

Festive comedy celebrates love, renewal, and happiness. Shakespeare's plays like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* show confusion in love that ends in joyful union.

❖ Melodrama

Melodrama is a minor dramatic type. It is a debased form of tragedy. Melodramas are sensational plays with highly charged emotional appeal. It was a Popular form of entertainment in the 19th century in Europe and the United States. Etymologically, the word melodrama means 'song'. Now, the term melodrama Means a play of a crudely sensational type, relying for its effect on physical action, Purely theatrical language and behaviour and naïve sentiment. Originally, the term Melodrama is taken from French word 'Melodrame' meaning a play, a part of play, Or a poem that had a musical background to support the spoken text. In Italian, Melodrama is a synonym for opera. Rousseau's Pygmalion (1770) is regarded as the Successful beginning of the melodrama. The characters in melodrama are mere puppets in an extravagant story of crime, Revenge, the evils of drink or gambling, lost wills, missing heirs and so forth. In it, Villainy is foiled and virtue is triumphant of the end, melodrama was chiefly notable Shipwrecks, fires, floods, earthquakes and other calamities. Eg. The Duchess of Malfi By John Webster.

❖ Farce

Farce is a minor dramatic form and low kind of comedy. The term 'Farce' has Latin origin. It is derived from Latin verb 'farcire' meaning 'stuff'. A farce is stuffed With absurd characters and incidents. The term 'farce' was used in the 13th century To indicate interpolations made by the clergy into the litany i.e. a solemn public Prayer. The germs of farce are found in Greek and Roman comedies in the works of Aristophanes and Plautus of the 15th century. An example from this period and skill One of the best is La Farce de Maitre Pierre by an unknown French writer. In England, the plays of this kind took the form of a short piece called an 'Interlude'. The main purpose of 'Farce' is to provoke laughter. It does not observe life Realistically. It does not attempt any serious criticism of life. It ridicules man's faults And weaknesses. It has minimal literary value. A farce is a lively caricature. It is not a Representation of things as they are. It belongs to the realm of nonsense in which the Characters are free from everyday care and restraints. The themes of the farce are Deception and impersonations. They are about feelings from angry wives, husbands, Creditors etc. eg. William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night Dream, Charles Hawtrey's The Private Secretary, and G. B. Shaw's Arms and the Man.

❖ Tragi-Comedy

Tragi-Comedy is also called Dramatic Romance. The Greek classical writers did Not favour this form of the drama. Aristotle condemned such a mixture because he Felt that such mixture spoils and weakens the tragic effect. A dramatic type 'Tragi-Comedy' was unknown to the Greeks. One can find a germ of tragi-comedy in the Play 'Amphitruo' by Platus, the Latin comic dramatist. He called his play a 'tragico-Comedia'. In English, the tragi-comedy arose in the reign of James I under Italian and Spanish influences. A King and No King by Beaumont Fletcher is the first English Tragi-comedy. William Shakespeare's Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest are the masterpieces of tragi-comedy. The plot of tragi-comedy is a tale of mingled weal and woe. It often verges on The improbable. The characters undergo transformation, sometimes natural, Sometimes rather forced before the play closes. The dramatist makes free use of Supernatural and pastoral elements to serve the purpose. A tragi-comedy is a play, the Action of which, though apparently tends towards tragedy, ends happily. It is a Complete tragedy up to a certain point and a complete comedy thereafter. It means in The rising acon, it is tragedy and in the falling action, it is comedy. The climax Separates the one from the other.

❖ The Masque

The masque is a kind of dramatic entertainment. It was of Italian origin. In England, it was popular in the age of William Shakespeare. This kind of dramatic Entertainment was called a Masque or a Masquerade because the actors wore masks Or wizards on their faces. Oxford Dictionary defines, "Masque is an amateur historic Or musical entertainment with metrical dialogue." In the Modern Era the masque has Developed into something like splendid modern ballet, with additional attractions of Beautiful speeches and songs. The Masque was a costly form of entertainment. It was designed either for Presentation at court or to grace a festive occasion at a noble man's house. Often, it Was performed as part of the celebrations at a wedding in a great family. Shakespeare's The Tempest contains two masks. In the masque, the use of allegorical And mythical subjects is made. The characters are deities of classical mythology, Nymphs and personified abstractions like love, delight, harmony etc. The number of Characters is restricted to six. The scenes are laid in ideal regions, at least in some far Off region picturesque and romantic, such as Olympus, Arcadia, and the Fortunate Isles. The entertainment is much shorter than the regular drama. The patronage of James I and his court helped to popularize it in England. .

❖ History plays

History as we know it today was a very late development in the domain of Human knowledge. It began as a record of events presented in order of time and by Events that influence man's life in this world. These records were called Chronicles.

It was a regular practice to up-date them. The most reputed and influential chronicle Was that of Raphael Holinshed (died 1580), the Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (1577) which was the source of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan Dramatists. The materials in the chronicles were used by dramatists to highlight the major Events in the lives of heroes of the past. The pattern was predominantly episodic, that is, events arranged in a time sequence. It was, however, Christopher Marlowe in his Edward II, who gave a certain shape to historical material. Later Shakespeare wrote a Series of plays that dramatized England's history. His cycle of history plays begins With King John (1199-1214) and ends with Henry VIII (1509-1547), the father of Queen Elizabeth.

The writing of a history play is rather difficult. It has to be history as well as Drama. Therefore, a dramatist who chooses historical events as his subject matter has To do a lot of tightrope walking. Otherwise he loses his balance. History represents a Record of the past. Its interpretations might change, but the events as such are not Subject to change. In a history play, a dramatist has really speaking no choice as far As public events are concerned. Such public events do have social, political or even Cultural orientations and their significance may be perceived differently. Now Interpretations may give us a better understanding of their historical meaning.

This is What historians in fact do when they read the events of the past and try to relate them To the forces of the present. But a writer, like the historian, cannot take liberties with Recorded events as such. The sphere of public events is there for everyone to see. But It is equally true that the public events are not as impersonal and general as we tend To regard them. These are the consequences of the decisions taken by men and Women of the past.

❖ Satire

The dictionary tells us that satire is a way of criticising a person, an idea or an Institution in which humour is used to show their faults or weaknesses. The word is Derived from Latin *satura* or *satira* meaning medley or a mix. When applied to Writing it was primarily associated with verse of some length that attacked Individuals, institutions, social groups or classes or ideas. The main intention or Function of such an exercise was to expose faults, vices, evil tendencies and Limitations. It uses a wide range of language and devices in order to ridicule the Subject chosen. More often than not it generates an attitude of amusement. But we Must also note that satire, barring a few significant examples, rarely stands on its Own. Therefore, critics have argued that satire is a mode rather than a full-fledged Literary form. Contempt, scorn, indignation are some of the feelings satire Successfully communicates. It aims at deriding individual behaviour, institutional Administration, social evils and more importantly political power.

Mockery, derision, Caricature, criticism, invective, irony, humour, wit and perception of disparity and Incongruity between ideas and practice (that is, “what one says” and “what one Does”) contribute to the strength of satirical writings. The simplest and the most common example that everyone is familiar with is That of the cartoon in a newspaper. The cartoonist exaggerates the distinctive features Of famous personalities in a few bold lines. We immediately recognise the public Figure but see him in a new light, a reduction that at once amuses and makes us Laugh. It is an oblique way of looking at a person that usually does not hurt.

Satire is regarded as a highly sophisticated and formal form of literature. In Primitive societies and tribal cultures verses were used to ridicule and abuse the Enemy. Such utterances were fairly common in ancient Greek rituals associated with Magic. Out of these ritual practices developed a number of literary forms that aimed At moral instruction. Laughter, ridicule, mockery or direct criticism had a corrective Function because they ruthlessly exposed human folly. Satire, therefore, continued to Be a dominant element even in early Greek comedy, especially that of Aristophanes.

Perhaps it is necessary for us to remember that the “comic” and the “satiric” are not The same. We may not be able to distinguish the two as precisely and clearly as we Desire. The “comic” provokes laughter for its own sake, for sheer enjoyment.

❖ Drama of Ideas or Problem Plays or Propaganda Plays

The term "Problem Play", that designates a subgenre, refers to a drama which Explicitly deals with contemporary social problems. The form was popularized by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. The chief exponents of this realistic drama of Ideas were Henrik Ibsen, G.B.Shaw, John Galsworthy and Granville Barker. The Situation faced by the protagonist is put forward by the author as a representative Instance of a contemporary social problem, in problem plays. The issue may be the Drastically inadequate autonomy, scope, and dignity allotted to women in the middle-Class nineteenth-century family (Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, 1879); or the Orality of prostitution, regarded as a typical product of the economic arrangements In a capitalist society (George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 1898).

Drama of Ideas or Problem plays can also be compared with 'Social Conditions Of England Novels' or 'Industrial Novels' simply for raising and projecting the issues That were deeply affecting the society. George Bernard Shaw pioneered Drama of Ideas which is a type of discussion play. The most acute problems of social and Personal morality are the clash of ideas and hostile ideologies. There is a little action But discussion in a Drama of Ideas. Only the vehicles of ideas are characters. The Conflict is the essence of drama which is reached through the opposing ideas of Different characters. To educate people through entertainment is an important aim of Drama of Ideas. An excellent example of the Drama of Ideas is *Arms and the Man*.

Here very little happens except discussion. The plot is built up with dynamic and Unconventional ideas regarding war and love. Shaw criticizes the romantic notion of War andlove prevailing in contemporary society. By extension, the term came to be Applied also to other Shakespearean plays which explore the dark side of human Nature, or which seem to leave unresolved the issues that arise in the course of the Action.

❖ One Act Play

A One-act-play is an important branch of literature and the most popular form of Dramatic representation. A One-act play has only one act. Percival Wilde, in his book 'The Craftsmanship of the One-Act-Play' has provided a considerable definition of One-act-play. He says, "A One-Act-Play is an orderly representation of life, arousing Emotions in the audience. It is characterised by superior unity and economy; it is Playable in comparatively short space of time, and it is intended to be assimilated as A whole." One-act plays may consist of one or more scenes. In recent years, the 10-minute Play has emerged as a popular subgenre of the one-act play, especially in writing Competitions. The origin of the one-act play may be traced to the very beginning of Drama: in ancient Greece, Cyclops, a satyr play by Euripides, is an early example. One-act plays by major dramatists are as follows- Edward Albee – The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia? (2002) Samuel Beckett – Krapp's Last Tape (1958)

❖ Closet drama

A closet drama is read by a solitary reader and not supposed to be performed on Stage. The division between private 'closet' drama which is designed for reading and Public 'stage' drama is designed for performance in a commercial theatre setting Dates from the late 18th century. The practice of circulating plays in written form May be printed or handwritten for literary audiences. Although non-performative in Nature, the literary historian Henry A. Beers considers closet drama "a quite Legitimate product of literary art." Closet dramas are traditionally defined in narrower terms as belonging to a Genre of dramatic writing unconcerned with stage technique and seldom produced for The stage. "Sometimes the term carries a negative connotation, that such works either Lack sufficient theatrical qualities or require theatrical effects beyond the capacity of Most (if not all) theatres, closet dramas through the ages have had a variety of Dramatic features and purposes not tied to successful stage performance."

Stage Ability is only one aspect of closet drama. Many times, some playwrights might Choose the genre of 'closet' drama to avoid censorship of their works like political Tragedies. (Wikipedia) The drama of Hroswitha of Gandersheim and debate poems in quasi-dramatic Form (The Debate of Body and Soul) are some of the closet drama of the Middle Ages.

❖ Dark Comedy or Black Comedy

Black comedy is also known as Dark comedy of a comic style that is generally considered serious or taboo. There is a controversy regarding the term Black comedy due to its subject matter. The term black humour was coined by the surrealist theorist Andre Breton in 1935 to label a subgenre of comedy and satire in which laughter arises from cynicism and scepticism, often relying on topics such as death. For his Book Anthology of Black Humour Breton coined the term Black Comedy. According to Breton Jonathan Swift is the originator of black humour. Breton included many examples with which the audience empathizes, as is more typical in the tradition of Gallows humour, and examples in which the comedy is used to mock the victim.

Bruce Jay Friedman, in his anthology entitled Black Humour, imported the concept of black comedy to the United States. He labelled many different authors and works with the idea, arguing that they shared the same literary genre. Early American writers who employed black humour were Nathanael West and Vladimir Nabokov. In 1965 a mass-market paperback titled Black Humour, was released. It contained work by a myriad of authors, like Edward Albee, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth and others. This was one of the first American anthologies devoted to the conception of black humour as a literary genre; the publication also sparked nationwide interest in black humour. Among the writers labelled as black humorists by journalists and literary critics are Roald Dahl, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, and Philip Roth. All these writers have written novels, poems, stories, plays, and songs in which profound or horrific events were portrayed in a comic manner.

The purpose of black comedy is to explore vulgar issues; some comedians use it as a tool. The major themes of the genre include: Violence (murder, abuse, domestic violence, rape, torture, war, genocide, terrorism, corruption); Discrimination (chauvinism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia); Disease (anxiety, Depression, suicide, nightmares, drug abuse, mutilation, disability, terminal illness, insanity); Sexuality (sodomy, homosexuality, incest, infidelity, fornication, religion and barbarism).

❖ Expressionist Drama

Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller were the most famous playwrights of the Expressionist movement in the early 20th century. Reinhard Sorge, Walter Hasenclever, Hans Henny Jahnn, and Arnolt Bronnen are some of the practitioners of Expressionist Drama. Swedish playwright August Strindberg and German actor and Dramatist Frank Wedekind are regarded as the precursors of dramaturgical Experiments. The play *Murderer, the Hope of Women* by Oskar Kokoschka was the first fully Expressionist work. When there is a struggle for dominance between an unnamed Man and woman, the Man brands the woman and she stabs and imprisons him. But He frees himself and she falls dead at his touch. At the end of the play, the man Slaughters all around him "like mosquitoes."

The characters extreme simplification Of mythic types, choral effects, declamatory dialogue and heightened intensity would Become characteristic of later Expressionist plays. The first full-length Expressionist Play was *The Son* by Walter Hasenclever, which was published in 1914 and first Performed in 1916. The term Expressionism was very much popular in American Literature. Among the expressionists, Eugene O'Neill (*The Hairy Ape*, *The Emperor Jones* and *The Great God Brown*), Sophie Treadwell (*Machinal*), Lajos Egri (*Rapid Transit*) and Elmer Rice (*The Adding Machine*) used expressionistic technique in Their plays. Martin Esslin notices the decline in the mere representation of surficial Reality as it could never convey the whole truth. According to Esslin this type of Expressionist drama becomes "a theatre of cries, a theatre of ecstasy, or at least ssFrenzied intensity" (535).

Conclusion

Drama is one of the most powerful forms of literature that presents stories through performance, dialogue, and action. Different types of drama help us understand various aspects of human life, emotions, and society. Each type has its own unique features and purpose, which makes drama interesting and meaningful. Tragedy shows serious and sad events, usually ending in the downfall of the main character. It teaches lessons about fate, mistakes, and human weaknesses. Comedy, on the other hand, focuses on humor and happy endings. It entertains the audience and often highlights social issues in a light-hearted way. Tragicomedy is a mixture of both tragedy and comedy, showing that life has both serious and funny moments.

Melodrama is another type that emphasizes exaggerated emotions and dramatic situations. It usually has clear distinctions between good and evil characters. Farce is a form of comedy that uses silly situations, misunderstandings, and physical humor to make people laugh. Historical drama presents real events from the past, helping audiences learn about history in an engaging way.

In conclusion, the different types of drama play an important role in entertainment as well as education. They not only provide enjoyment but also help us understand life, emotions, and society better. Drama continues to evolve, but its importance remains strong in literature and performance.