2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Drama

The word drama is derived from the Greek word *dran*, which means “to do” or “to act,” and *doing* and *acting* have always been drama’s major characteristics. Although the word sometimes refers to a single play, it may also refer to a group of plays or to all plays. A person who writes plays is a dramatist or playwright. (*Playwright* is a word combining *play* with *wright*).

2.1.1 Drama and Performance

The text of a play consists of dialogue, monologue, and stage directions. *Dialogue* is the conversation of two or more characters. A *monologue* is spoken by a single character that is usually alone on stage. *Stage directions* are the playwright’s instructions about vocal expression, “body language,” stage appearance, lighting, and similar matters.

Although drama shares many characteristics with fiction and poetry, the most important difference is that plays are written to be presented by actors on a stage before an audience. The actors *perform* the various actions and also *mimic* or *imitate* the emotions of the major characters, in order to create a maximum impact on the audience. It is performance that creates the movement, immediacy, and excitement of drama.

2.1.2 Actors

Actors bring the characters and the dialogue to life—loving or hating, strutting or cringing, shouting or whispering, laughing or crying, or inspiring or deceiving. Actors give their bodies and emotions to the characters, providing
vocal quality and inflection, gestures, and facial expressions. They move about the stage according to patterns called blocking. They also engage in stage business—gestures or movements that keep the production active, dynamic, and often funny.

2.1.3 Costumes and Makeup

Actors also make the play vivid by wearing costumes and using makeup, which help the audience understand the time period, occupation, mentality, and social status of the characters. Costumes may be used realistically (a king in rich robes, a salesman in a rumpled business suit) or symbolically (the use of black clothing for a character suffering depression). Makeup usually enhances an actor’s facial features, but it also may help fix the illusion of youth or age or emphasize a character’s joy or sorrow.

2.1.4 The Director and Producer

In theater, all aspects of performance are controlled by the director, the person who plans the production in association with the producer, who takes responsibility for financing and arranging the physical aspects of the production. The director tells the actors to move, speak, and act in ways that are consistent with his or her vision of the play. When a play calls for special effects, as in Molière’s love is the doctor, the director and producer work with specialists such as musicians, choreographers, and sound technicians to enhance and enliven the performance.

2.1.5 The Stage

Most modern plays are performed on a proscenium stage (like a room with one wall missing so that the audience may look in on the action), a thrust stage (an
acting area that is surrounded by the audience). Regardless of the kind of stage, the modern theater is likely to provide scenery and properties (or props), which locate the action in place and time, and which underscore the ideas of the director. The sets (the appurtenances for a particular scene) may change a number of times during a performance, as in *Hamlet*, or a single set may be used throughout, as in *Oedipus the King*.

2.1.6 Lighting

Today’s theater relies heavily on lighting. Until the seventeenth century, however, lights were not used in the theater. Before then, plays were performed during the day and under the sky, in inn yards and in courtyard-like theaters like the Globe Theater, in which many of Shakespeare’s plays were first performed. Because open-air performances depended on favorable weather, plays were eventually taken indoors, and theaters then relied on candles, and later gaslight, for lighting effects (yes, some theaters burned down). The development of electric lights in the late nineteenth century revolutionized dramatic productions. For today’s performances, producer may use spotlights, filters, dimmers, and other lighting technology to emphasize various parts of the stage, to shape the mood of a scene, and to highlight individual characters. In productions of plays like *The Glass Menagerie* and *death of a Salesman*, lighting is even used to indicate changes in time or place.

2.1.7 The Audience

The audience plays a significant role in a theatrical performance. The reactions of spectators to the onstage action provide instant feedback to the actors,
and thus continually influence the delivery and pace of the performance. Similarly, the audience, sitting together in a darkened auditorium, offers a communal response to the play. Thus, drama in the theater is the most immediate and accessible to the literary arts. There is no in prose fiction, and no speaker, as in poetry.

The basic forms of drama are full-length plays and short plays, just as in fiction the basic forms are novels and short stories. Full-length play, also sometimes called regular plays, may consist of three, four, or five separate acts (A Doll House, Hamlet), a long series of separate scenes (Oedipus the King and The Glass Menagerie), or two long acts (Death of a Salesman). Such plays are designed for a full performance of three or more hours (with intermissions); they provide for complete and in-depth development of character, conflict, and idea. Full-length plays containing separate acts, like A Midsummer Night's Dream, are also subdivided. These subdivisions, or scenes, are not always noted in the text, but often they are given formal scene numbers. Characteristic of scenes are a coherent action, a unified setting, and a fixed group of characters, much like sections and chapters in novels.

Short plays, usually consisting of one act, do not permit extensive development and subdivision. They are not commercially self-sustaining unless two or three of them are put together for an entire evening in the theater. However, one-act plays may be used for studio and classroom performance, or, for that matter, for adaptation as hour- or half-hour performances for film or television. Usually, one-act plays like Before Breakfast and The Bear flow
smoothly from beginning to end without a break. On the other hand, somewhat longer short plays, like *Love Is the Doctor* and *Am I blue*, may contain formal scene and act divisions. *Love Is the Doctor* is unique because it features French scenes, in which a new scene begins each time a character enters or leaves the stage.

### 2.2 Types of Drama

In our times we do not even have to go to the theater to have drama at our fingertips. We can find virtually everything on the television screen. Some representative samples are situation comedies, continuous narrative dramas including soap operas, made-for-TV films, short skits on comedy shows, and many other types. All these various genres ultimately spring from the drama that was developed originally in ancient Greece twenty-five hundred years ago. Although the centuries have produced many variations, the types the Greeks created are still as important today as they were then. They are *tragedy* and *comedy*.

#### 2.2.1 Comedy

*Comedy* is a play written in a kindly or humorous, perhaps bitter or satiric vein, in which the problems or difficulties of the characters are resolved satisfactorily, if not for all characters, at least from the point of view of the audience. Low characters as opposed to noble; characters not always changed by the action of the play; based upon observation of life. Comedy and tragedy are concerned more with character, whereas farce and melodrama are concerned more with plot.
2.2.2 Tragedy

Tragedy is a play written in a serious, sometimes impressive or elevated style, in which things go wrong and cannot be set right except at great cost or sacrifice. Aristotle said that tragedy should purge our emotions by evoking pity and fear (or compassion and awe) in us, the spectators.

2.3 Basic Elements of Drama

The basic elements of drama are plot, character, point of view, setting, language, tone, symbolism, and theme or meaning. Poetic drama, such as Shakespeare’s Hamlet and A Midsummer’s Dream, add poetic elements such as meter and rhyme. All these elements have remained relatively constant throughout the history of drama.

2.3.1 Plot and Conflict

Plot, in drama as in fiction, is an ordered chain of physical, emotional, or intellectual events that ties the action together. It is a planned sequence of interrelated actions that begins in a state of imbalance, grows out of conflict, reaches a peak of complication, and resolves into some new situation. It is easy to oversimplify the idea of plot in a play. Dramatic plots are often more complicated than a single movement toward a single solution or resolution. Some plays have double plots (two different but related lines of action going on at the same time). Other plays offer a main plot, together with a subplot that comments, either directly or indirectly, on the main plot. In A midsummer Night’s Dream, four separate plots are woven together to form a single story.
The mainspring of plot in a play is conflict, which can be physical, psychological, social, or all three. It can involve a character’s struggle against another person, against the environment, or against himself or herself. Most commonly, the conflict in a play is a combination of these general types. In Albee’s *The Sandbox*, for example, Grandma is in conflict with her family, society, and death. Similarly, the hero in *Hamlet* is in conflict with himself, his enemy, and his society at the same time. Conflict in drama can be more explicit than in prose fiction because we actually see the clash of wills and characters on stage or on the page.

### 2.3.2 Character

A character is a person created by the playwright to carry the actions, languages, ideas, and emotions of the play. Many of the types of characters that populate prose fiction are also found in drama. In drama as in fiction, for example, we find both *round* and *flat* characters. A round character, like Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Ibsen’s *Nora*, undergoes a change or development as the play progresses. On the other hand, a flat character, like Molière’s *Lisette*, is undeveloped, even though she or he may be interesting, vital, and amusing. As in fiction, dramatic characters can also be considered static (fixed and unchanging) or dynamic (growing and developing).

Because drama, like fiction, depends on conflict, we also find protagonists and antagonists in plays. The protagonist is usually the central character in the action. The antagonist opposes the protagonist and is often a villain. A classic opposition type may be seen in *Hamlet*, in which Prince Hamlet is the protagonist.
while his uncle King Claudius is the antagonist. The play develops as Hamlet the protagonist tries first to confirm, and then to punish, the villainy of his uncle the antagonist.

There are also characters that set off or highlight the protagonist, and other who are peripheral. The first of these types, the foil, is somewhat like the protagonist, but with contrasting qualities. In *Hamlet*, for example, both Laertes and Fortinbras are foils to Hamlet. The second type, called a choric figure, is rooted in the choruses of Greek tragedy, and is usually played by a single character, often a friend or confidant of the protagonist, such as Horation in *Hamlet*. If this type of character provides commentary about the play’s major issues and actions, he or she is called a raisonner (the French word meaning *reasoner*) or commentator.

Dramatic character may be realistic, nonrealistic, symbolic, and stereotyped or stock. Realistic characters are normally accurate imitations of individualized men and women; they are given background, personalities, desires, motivations, and thoughts. Nonrealistic characters are usually stripped of such individualizing touches and they are often undeveloped and symbolic. All of the characters in *The Sandbox* are nonrealistic. Symbolic characters represent an idea, a way of life, moral values, or some other abstraction. The two women in *Tea Party* symbolize the agonized loneliness of old age, while Dr. Fillpocket in *Love is the Doctor* symbolizes cynicism, greed, charlatanism, and the misuse of responsibility.
Stereotyped or stock characters have been used in drama throughout the ages. In effect they serve as a shortcut in characterization. The general types developed in classical and Renaissance drama are the bumpkin, the braggart, the trickster, the victim, the stubborn father, the shrewish wife, the lusty youth, and the prodigal son. Modern drama continues these stereotypes, and it has also invented many of its own, such as the hardboiled detective, the loner cowboy, the honest policeman, and the whore with a heart of gold.

The major difference between characters in fiction or poetry and characters in drama is the way they are revealed. Playwrights do not have the fiction writer’s freedom to describe a character directly. We therefore must listen to the words of characters, watch and interpret their actions, heed what other characters say about them, and observe what other characters do to them.

2.3.3 Point of View

Point of view in drama is strikingly different from the comparable element in fiction and poetry. With the exception of works like Tennessee Williams’s The Glass Menagerie, plays rarely have narrators, and it is difficult for a playwright to sustain a perspective that is exclusively first person-protagonist or third-person-omniscient. Instead, playwrights employ the dramatic point of view, whereby the playwright gives us the objective raw materials (the actions and the words) but arranges them in such a way that we ourselves must draw all the conclusions.

Within these limits, playwrights do have techniques to lead an audience to see things from a specific character’s perspective. In O’Neill’s Before Breakfast, the entire play is a monologue spoken by Mrs. Rowland. Another commonly used
device is the soliloquy, in which a character reveals his or her thoughts directly to
the audience. In plays from the sixteenth and seventeenth-century, soliloquies are
common, and in the twentieth century, soliloquies have again become an
important element in experimental and nonrealistic drama. Another device, called
the aside, allows a character to address brief remarks to the audience which the
other characters do not hear.

2.3.4 Setting or Scenery

A play’s scenery or setting is what we first see on the stage, and it brings
the written directions to life through backdrops, furnishings, properties, and
lighting. The function of scenery is to establish plays in specific places and times
and also to determine the level of reality.

Like characters, the setting may be realistic or nonrealistic. A realistic
setting requires extensive construction and properties, for the object is to create as
lifelike a stage as possible. In Trifles, for example, the setting is a realistic copy of
an early twentieth-century Midwestern farm kitchen. A nonrealistic setting is
nonrepresentational and often symbolic, as in The Sandbox, where the scenery
consists of a sandbox and a number of chairs. Often such scenery is produced in a
unit set such as a series of platforms, rooms, stairs, and exits that form the locations
for all the play’s actions, as in Death of a Salesman.

Generally, one-act plays rely on a single setting and a short imagined time
of action, as with The Bear, Trifles, Tea Party, and Before Breakfast. Many full-
length plays also confine the action to a single setting and a short time of action,
as with Sophocles’ Oedipus the King, which takes place in less than a day of
imagined time before the royal palace in ancient Thebes. Other longer plays may extend imagined time while being set in the same location, as in *The Glass Menagerie*, in which all the action takes place, in a rather long imagined time, in the apartment home of the Wingfields. Some full-length plays change setting frequently just as they also stretch out imagined time. *Hamlet* takes place in a number of different locations, including battlements, a throne room, bed chambers, castle halls, and a graveyard.

2.3.5 **Dictionary, Imagery, Style, and Language**

Most of what we learn about characters, relationships, and conflict is conveyed through dramatic language. Characters tell us what they think, hope, fear, and desire. Their dialogue may reflect the details of their daily lives or their deepest thoughts about life and death. Their words must fit the circumstances, the time, and the place of the play. Thus it would be as wrong for Miller’s Willy Loman to speak in Elizabethan blank verse as it would be for Shakespeare’s Hamlet to speak in modern American English.

The words and rhetorical devices of a play delineate character, emotion, and theme, much as they do in fiction and poetry. Dramatists may employ words that have wide-ranging connotations or that acquire many layers of meaning. Such is the case with the words *trifle* and *knot* in Glaspell’s play *Trifles*. Similarly, playwrights may have their characters speak in similes or metaphors that contribute significantly to the play’s meaning and impact. Again in *Trifles*, one of the characters compares another to a bird, and this simile grows to become one of the play’s central symbols.
Dramatists may also employ accents, dialects, idiom, jargon, and cliché to indicate character traits. The characters in *The Sandbox*, for example, speak in cliché that mark their limitations and shortcomings. The gravedigger in *Hamlet* speaks in an Elizabethan dialect which distinguishes him from the aristocratic persons in the play. Most of the characters in *The Glass menagerie* speak in dialect, complete with slang expressions, that locates them in the Southern United States.

### 2.3.6 Tone and Atmosphere

Tone in drama, as in fiction and poetry, signifies the way moods and attitudes are created and presented. In plays, tone may be conveyed directly to the spectator through voice and through the stage gestures that accompany dialogue, such as rolling one’s eyes, throwing up one’s hands, shaking one’s head, jumping for joy, and staggering in grief. Even silence can be an effective device for creating tone and mood.

Whereas voice and movement establish tone on the stage, we have no such exacting guides while reading a play. Sometimes a playwright indicates the tone of specific lines through stage directions. In *The Sandbox*, for example, Albee prefaces many speeches with directions such as *whining*, *vaguely*, *impatiently*, and *mocking*. These cues to tone are intended for the actors, but they also help readers. When such directions are lacking, the diction, tempo, imagery, and context all become clues to the tone of specific speeches and whole plays.
2.3.7 Symbolism and Allegory

In drama, as in fiction and poetry, the meaning of symbolsextends beyond the apparent meaning of the symbol itself. Dramatic symbols, which may be characters, settings, objects, actions, situations, or statements, may be both universal and private. Cultural or universal symbolssuch as crosses, flags, snakes, flowers are generally understood by the audience or reader regardless of the context in which their appear. In act V of Hamlet, for example, we recognize Yorick’s skull as a symbol of death. Contextual or private symbols develop their impact only within the context of a specific play or even a particular scene. We often don’t realize at first that such objects or actions are symbolic; they acquire symbolic meaning only through context and continued action. The Sandbox, for example, opens with a “large child’s sandbox with a toy pail and shovel” on stage. Initially, these objects seem to have little significance. As the play goes on, however, we realize that the sandbox symbolize a lifetime of ease, advancing senility, the waste products of life, and, finally, death and the grave.

2.3.8 Subject and Theme

Although most playwrights do not seek primarily to persuade or propagandize their audience, they do write their plays to dramatize ideas about the human condition. The aspects of humanity a playwright explores constitute the play’s subject. Plays may be about love, religion, hatred, war, ambition, death, envy, or anything else that is part of the human condition.

The ideas that the play dramatizes about its subject make up the play’s theme or meaning. Thus, a play might explore the idea that love will always find a
way or that marriage may be destructive, that pride always lead to disaster, or that grief can be conquered through strength and commitment to life. The theme is the end result of all the other elements of drama, and for this reason it is often difficult to isolate and identify. Even short plays may have complex themes, as in Molière’s *Love Is the Doctor*, which farcically explores the themes that freedom seeks way out of suppression, that love is one of the most powerfully inventive human emotions, and that deceit is thoroughly infused within the human spirit and may be as strong as life itself.