

Elements of Theatre Production	
acting	Pretending to be someone or something that you are not.
design	The creative process of developing production elements such as costumes, lights, sets, makeup, props, and sound.
directing	The art and technique of bringing the elements of theatre together to create a play or production.
lighting	The combination of lights used to communicate mood, setting, character, or ideas in a play production.
makeup	Cosmetics, applications, and devices for transforming the appearance of an actor into a character.
music	The music, songs, or sounds used to communicate mood, setting, character, or ideas in a play production.
playwriting	The process of writing a play including dialogue and stage directions.
props	Objects (real or pantomimed) used by actors to communicate character, setting, and plot.
sets	The backdrops, hangings, furnishings, and accessories that communicate the setting in a play production.
sound effects	Sounds that help communicate the setting or tell the story.
theatre elements	The elements used to create a theatrical production (acting, directing, playwriting, costumes, makeup, lighting, music, sound effects, props, and sets).
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Jobs of Theatre Production	
actor	A person who becomes a role or character in a theatrical experience.
choreographer	The person who designs the dance movements.
director	The person in charge of mounting a production. Tells the actors where to go and what to do.
dramaturg	A person who researches dramatic literature and provides in-depth knowledge to the theatre company.
lighting designer	The person who designs and manages the lighting used in a play production.

makeup artist	The person who designs and manages the application of makeup used in a play production.
playwright	The person who writes the play.
prop master	The person who designs, finds, and selects the props needed for a production.
puppeteer	The person who brings a puppet to life with voice and movement.
set designer	The person who designs and supervises the construction of the scenery, backdrops, and furnishings used in a play production.
sound designer	The person who designs and manages the sound effects and/or music used in a play production.
stage crew	The backstage technical crew responsible for running the show including lights, curtains, sets, props, and costume changes.
stage manager	The person who supervises the physical production during rehearsals and who also is in charge of running each performance.

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Theatre History Genres and Styles

absurd theatre	Tragic farces in which human existence is seen to be pointless.
black comedy	Humorous drama that portrays a bleak, comic view of life.
comedy	A humorous play usually with a happy ending.
commedia dell'arte	Italian improvisational theatre developed in the 1500s featuring stock characters and standardized plots.
Elizabethan theatre	The theatre of England during the reign of queen Elizabeth.
farce	A comedy with exaggerated characterizations, plots, and physical humor.
Greek theatre	The plays of ancient Greece characterized by comedy, tragedy, masks, and a Greek chorus.
improvisation	The art of creating spontaneous scenes based on audience suggestions (e.g., "Who's Line is it Anyway?" or Comedy Sports.)
Kabuki	Traditional form of Japanese theatre, originating in the 1600s, that combines stylized acting, costumes, makeup, and music.
mask theatre	Theatre in which actors wear full, half, or partial masks to emphasize or hide facial characteristics.

melodrama	A dramatic form popular in the 1800s characterized by stock characters and plots, cliff-hanging events, heart tugging emotional appeals, the celebration of virtue, and stylistic exaggerated acting.
mime	The stylized art of silent acting developed in France, in which the actor wears a white face, black pants, and a striped shirt.
minstrel show	Musical theatre genre of white actors in blackface performing African American music and dance using negative racial stereotypes.
morality play	An allegorical medieval play form, in which the characters represent thematic ideas to deliver a strong moral message.
musical theatre	A type of entertainment containing music, song, dance, and story.
Noh	Traditional form of Japanese theatre in which masked male actors tell stories through poetry and stylized dance.
radio drama	A play communicated primarily through voice acting, sound effects, and music; the "golden age of radio" occurred in mid-twentieth century America before the arrival of television.
restoration comedy	English theatre of the late 1600s, which produced witty and bawdy comedies.
tragedy	A play depicting terrible events in which the main character suffers a reversal or downfall.
vaudeville	A stage variety show with singing, dancing, comedy skits, and animal acts; highly popular in America from the late 1880s to the 1930s.

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Drama and Theatre in Schools

clowning	The art of entertaining an audience with tricks, gags, acrobatics, physical comedy, and exaggerated costume and makeup.
creative dramatics	An improvisational, process-oriented form of drama in which children are guided by a leader to imagine and enact a wide variety of experiences.
drama education	An umbrella term for any and all examples of teaching theatre arts for its own sake and/or using drama as a teaching tool across the curriculum.
drama/theatre	The art form of producing a play for a live audience.
dramatic play	The spontaneous pretend play of young children.
puppetry	The art form of creating characters and stories out of inanimate objects.

	Types include rod, hand, shadow, and marionette.
reader's theatre	A rehearsed performance in which actors read from the script instead of memorizing the play.
standards	State adopted content standards for what students should know and be able to do in theatre arts at all grade levels.
story dramatization	The process of turning a story into a play in a classroom or theatre.
storytelling	The art of telling a story using body, voice, and words.
theatre arts	One of the four arts named part of the core curriculum of study for students in American public schools. Most state adopted content standards include exposure to and experiences in acting, directing, playwriting, and design.

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Drama Skills

aesthetic appreciation	Understanding and appreciating the creative and aesthetic choices used to produce a work of theatre.
characterization	The acting process of developing and becoming a believable character.
clarity	Communicating an idea clearly and precisely so that an audience is able to understand what was portrayed.
concentration	Sustained mental focus on a single task while ignoring distractions; staying in character and maintaining the believability of one's acting.
cooperation/collaboration	The ability to work together and create theatre using the ideas and abilities of all members of a group.
imagination	The ability to visualize, think of new ideas, or find a different interpretation for something familiar.
imitation	Reproducing the movements and sounds of people, animals, and objects.
listening	Paying active attention to the words and sounds of fellow actors.
memory	The acting skill of remembering where and how to perform rehearsed movements, actions, and dialogue.
observation	Noticing the details of human movement, behavior, and speech. Watching fellow actors closely in order to cooperate together.

physical expression	Creative use of the body to communicate characters, stories, and ideas.
problem solving	The skill of figuring out how to interpret and communicate a theatrical idea, conclude an improvised scene, or resolve conflicts in collaborative work.
reaction	Responding to fellow actors' ideas, the situation, or the environment.
relaxation	The release of tension in the mind, body, or voice.
self-discipline	Demonstrating control of one's mind, body, and voice; also the ability to persevere until a creative idea is developed and presented.
sensory awareness	Noticing and recalling the details of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.
speech	Speaking skills including projection, articulation, emotion, inflection, rate, pitch, and emphasis.
spontaneity	Releasing one's creative, intuitive ideas in the moment.
stage skills	The conventions of speaking and moving on a stage including facing the audience, blocking, and visual composition.
timing	Speaking, moving, or reacting at just the right moment.
trust	The ability to trust oneself, a partner, or a group to generate creative ideas and support each other in a theatrical task.
vocal expression	Creative use of the voice to communicate characters, stories, and ideas.

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Vocabulary: A-B

accepting	Going along with ideas offered by fellow actors. Accepting your partner and/or group members.
act	One of the major sections of a play or opera.
actor's tools	What an actor uses for creative expression; the mind, body, and voice.
actor's positions	The orientation of the actor to the audience (e.g., full back, full front, profile left or right, quarter turn left or right, three quarter turn left or right).
ad-lib	To make up dialogue, actions, or stage business not written in the script.
amphitheater	A large elliptical outdoor theatre from ancient Greece or Rome.

antagonist	A person, situation, or inner conflict in opposition to a character's goals.
apron	The area of the stage that extends towards the audience, in front of the main curtain.
arena stage	A central stage with audience seated all around, arena style.
articulation	Clearly enunciating vowel and consonant sounds for clarity of speech.
aside	An observation or remark made by a character to the audience that is not being heard by other characters.
audience	The people or classmates watching the actors perform or share.
audition	An opportunity for an actor to demonstrate talent or earn a role in a production or theatre company.
avant-garde	Experimental theatre or an artist working outside of known conventions.
backdrop	A large sheet of painted canvas or muslin that hangs at the back of a set to help portray the setting of the play.
backstage	The area of the stage that is out of sight of the audience.
bit part	A small role in the play.
black box	A bare room used as a versatile theatre space in which the audience and staging can be presented in any configuration.
blackout	When the stage lights go out; signals the end of a scene in a play.
block	To deny a fact or not go along with an "offer" in improvisation.
blocking	The planning and working out of the actors's stage movements.
body	One of the three basic tools of the actor. Includes the skills of physical expression, and characterization.
bow	Actors bend forward to signal the audience that the performance is finished.
burlesque	Dramatic literature characterized by parody, mockery, and ridicule.
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Vocabulary: C-D	
callback	A follow-up audition by director's invitation for those actors being given serious consideration for a role.
cast	The actors who play the roles in a play.

casting	Selecting which actors will play which roles or characters.
catharsis	The purification, purging, or cleansing of the emotions caused in a tragedy.
center stage	The center area of the stage.
character	The part or role an actor re-creates (person, animal, object, or creature).
cheat	Facing out to the audience; adjusting one's body to make sure fellow actors are visible to the audience.
chorus	A group of singers in musical theatre.
climax	The highest point of dramatic tension or a major turning point in the plot.
closing	The last performance of the run of a production.
cold reading	An unrehearsed reading of a script.
conflict	The main problem or tension in the story or play.
costume	The clothing worn by an actor to convey the character.
cross	The actor's movement from one area of the stage to another.
cue	Words or actions that signal another actor to speak, move, or act.
curtain call	The actors bow in front of the audience at the end of a performance.
denouement	The final resolution of the conflict in the plot of a story or play.
dialogue	Words spoken by two or more actors; the lines written in a script.
downstage	The stage area closer to the audience.
drama	The art form of live theatre for an audience.
dress rehearsals	The final few rehearsals before opening night in which all production elements are put together for the first time.
dressing room	A room in which the actors prepare makeup and costumes for a performance.

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Vocabulary: E-H

emotions	Feelings that characters express in a situation, story, or play.
ensemble	A group of theatrical performers working together.
exaggerate	Make movements, sounds, or facial expressions larger than life so that the

	audience can see and understand the idea being communicated.
exposition	Information early in the plot that establishes the back-story for character, setting, and situation.
five senses	Sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch.
five W's	The who, what, where, when, and why of any situation, scene, or play.
floor plan	A line drawing of a stage set as seen from above showing the placement on the stage floor of the scenic elements.
foreshadowing	Clues given to the audience about upcoming events in the play.
fourth wall	The imaginary wall between the actors and audience.
full back	Actor's position of back facing the audience.
full front	Actor's position of facing straight out to the audience.
full house	Audience seating filled to capacity.
genre	A known type of play that includes standard conventions (e.g. farce, musical, morality play, tragedy).
gesture	An expressive movement that communicates an idea.
gibberish	An expressive language of sounds and gestures used in acting.
house	The seating area for the audience in a theater or auditorium.
house lights	The lights above and around the audience seating areas.
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Vocabulary: I-O	
illusion	Creating believability for actions and objects in pantomime acting.
improvisation	Unplanned acting without a script; an act made up along the way.
ingenue	The young, pretty, and innocent girl character in many plays.
intermission	A pause in the performance during which the curtain falls and the audience may leave their seats for a short time.
levels	The height of the actor's head (e.g., low, middle, or high).
mind	One of the three basic tools of the actor. Includes the skills of concentration, imagination, problem solving, and memory.

monologue	A long speech by a single character.
monotone	Literally "one-tone"; boring vocal delivery with no emotion or change in pitch, pacing, or emphasis.
motif	A recurring thematic element, pattern, or design in a work of theatre.
motivation	The reason why a character is doing or saying something.
mugging	Using excessive exaggerated expressions.
objective	A character's goal, desire, or intention.
off-book	Ready to rehearse or perform without the script; lines and blocking are memorized.
offer	An idea given by a fellow actor in a scene.
off-stage	Areas to the right and left of the stage not visible to the audience.
on-stage	Area of the stage that is visible to the audience.
opening night	The first "official" performance for the public after dress rehearsals and previews.

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Vocabulary: P-R

pacing	The tempo and timing of a theatrical performance.
pantomime	Acting silently and/or using imaginary objects.
performance	A presentation, formal or informal, of a work of theatre for a live audience.
personification	Giving human characteristics to a non-human object or animal.
pitch	The highness or lowness of the voice.
places	The call for all actors and stage crew to take their places for the start of the rehearsal or performance.
play	A story written for or performed on a stage.
plot	The action of a story consisting of the beginning (characters and setting), the middle (conflict, rising action, and climax), and the end (resolution and denouement).
pretend	To make believe.
preview	A dress rehearsal performed for an audience.

problem	The central obstacle or source of tension in the story or play.
profile	Actor's position of facing stage right or left, profile to the audience.
projection	Speaking loudly enough (without yelling) for the entire audience to hear.
proscenium	The arch that frames the stage, separating it from the audience.
protagonist	The main character of a play with whom the audience can most identify.
raked stage	A sloped stage, angled so that the rear (upstage) area is higher than the forward (downstage) area.
range	The vocal variety of pitches for an actor, ranging from low to high.
read-through	A reading of the entire play by the cast.
rehearsal	Practicing a piece of theatre; preparing for a performance.
resolution	The solution or outcome of the conflict or problems in the plot.
rising action	The middle part of a plot consisting of complications that create conflict.
role-play	Improvisational scene work exploring outcomes or alternatives from a given set of circumstances.
run	The length of time, in days, weeks, or months, that a show will be performed.
run-through	A rehearsal of the entire play without stopping for corrections or notes.
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Vocabulary: S	
scansion	The acting technique of marking accented and unaccented syllables for emphasis and meaning. Used for plays written in verse.
scenario	A plot outline, or a set of given circumstances.
scenes	The smaller units of a play like chapters are to a book.
script	The written text of a play, including dialogue and stage directions.
sense memory	An acting technique of recalling sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures to bring reality to a character's situation.
setting	The where and when for a scene, story, or play.
slapstick	Highly physical comedy marked by chases, pratfalls, fighting, and crude practical jokes.

soliloquy	A speech in which a character speaks his or her thoughts aloud.
spotlight	A strong, moveable beam of light used to center attention on a solo actor.
stage	The area in which the actors perform for an audience.
stage areas	From the actor's perspective looking at the audience: stage right, stage left, center stage, upstage, and downstage.
stage business	Actions performed by an actor to add detail and believability to a scene.
stage combat	The art of carefully planning and rehearsing fight sequences on stage.
stage directions	A playwright's clues for acting and staging written in parentheses in the text of a play.
stage fright	Fear of performing or speaking in front of an audience.
stage left	The left side of the stage from the perspective of the actor facing the audience.
stage right	The right side of the stage from the perspective of the actor facing the audience.
stage whisper	An exaggerated whisper that the audience can hear.
stock characters	Established recognizable character types that appear throughout theatre history and in modern stage, television, and film work.
strike	The dismantling of the set, costumes and props after the final performance.
subtext	The inner thoughts of a character that are not spoken out loud.
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Vocabulary: T-Z	
tableau	A frozen picture or stage composition in which the actors remain motionless.
tactics	The specific attempts of a character to get what he or she wants.
theater	The place where a performance or show is held for an audience.
theatre history	The study of the development of western and non-western forms of theatre around the world.
theme	The underlying meaning of a play or literary work.
thespian	An actor; from Thespis, the first Greek actor.

thrust stage	A stage that thrusts forward so that the audience is seated around three sides.
tongue twisters	Tricky phrases practiced by an actor to develop articulation and diction.
typecasting	Casting of actors based on their physical similarity to a character type or on their reputation for specializing in that kind of role.
understudy	An actor who prepares for and temporarily takes the place of an actor who is unable to perform.
upstage	As a noun, the stage area further away from the audience. As a verb, to steal the focus of a scene.
voice	One of the three basic tools of the actor. Includes the skills of vocal expression, characterization, and speech.
warm-up	To prepare the actor's tools (mind, body, and voice) for energized, creative work. An exercise or game used to develop creative expression.
wings	The space behind the curtains to either side of the stage, often used for exits and entrances for actors or scenery.