**Larbi Ben M’hidi University**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of English**

**Module: ITL-first year-**

**Drama (Summary):**

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**I-Definition:**

Drama is one of the main literary genres along with fiction and poetry. It is an art that is not meant only to be read, but to be performed by actors on stage before an audience. So, as Marjorie Boulton puts it, “a play is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three-dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes”.

**N.B:**

**\***The one who writes plays is called a playwright.

\*The script of a play is divided into **acts** which are the major sections of the play (Act I, Act II, Act III….). These acts are made up of **scenes** (scene 1, scene 2….).

**An example**: William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* consists of five Acts, and the number of scenes differs from one act to another.

**II- The Main Elements/Aspects of Drama:**

Just like the elements of fiction (setting, plot, characters...) are used to analyze novels, novellas, and short stories, the aspects of drama are the tools that we use to examine dramatic texts.

1-**The Opening scene** or the way a play opens is of extreme importance because it provides the reader/the audience with a background about the whole play by identifying the setting and presenting characters and the relationship between them. The opening scene creates an atmosphere or a mood that arouses the audience’s interest in the play. **Ex**: The opening scene of *Hamlet*.

**2-Characters** are imaginary figures (persons, animals or imaginary creatures) created by the playwright who gives them certain qualities that are revealed through the character’s performance.

\*The way a playwright presents a character to the audience is called **characterization**.

**3-Stage Directions** are one of the ways through which characters are presented in dramatic works. They are instructions that you can read in the script as they are usually placed between brackets, but if you are watching, you will see them performed.

**Ex:**

**Laertes**: I humbly take my lead my lord. **(To Ophelia):** Farewell, Ophelia. Remember what

I have said to you.”

**4-Asides and Soliloquies** are dramatic techniques/devices that the playwright uses to tell us about the characters’ deepest thoughts and feeling.

\***An aside** is a character’s short comment or a ‘stage whisper’ that is meant to be heard only by some of the other characters on stage or the audience.

**Ex:**

**King**: Enjoy your youth, Laertes. Time is yours, [a]nd you may spend it as you like! But now, my

nephew Hamlet, and my son––

**Hamlet** **(aside)**: I may be your nephew, [b]ut I will never be your son!

\***A soliloquy** is a speech that a character makes when he/she is alone on stage to reveal his/her motivations, internal thoughts, and plans to the audience. It can be either public (when the actor approaches the audience) or private (when he/she ignores the presence of the audience).

**Ex**:

(The **King** and **Polonius** exit. **Hamlet** enters.)

**Hamlet**: “To be, or not to be——…In your prayers, remember my sins.” (Act III, scene 1)

**5- Plot:** The elements of plot in a work of drama are almost the same as the ones we find in a work of fiction. However, since drama is performed on stage, the physical aspects and the presence of the audience impose some limitations on the dramatic form. So, the plot in a work of drama must be highly selective and clear. It consists of five stages (**exposition**, **dramatic incitement**, **complication**, **crisis**, and **resolution**). / See your lecture.

**6- Themes:** All of the elements of a drama work together to convey an idea that represents the theme of the play.

**III. Types of Drama:**

See the table provided in the last video.