

The Use of Acts by Playwrights

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Act

An act is synonymous with the actions in play and frequently used by playwrights. The director of the play employs the technique when he intends to accommodate a change in setting, time, characters, or mood. Act in the play becomes visible with “a priest Father Flynn is in the late thirties” (p. 1431). The use of acts is common with the change of location or scenes.

Allusion

The purpose of using allusions is to portray the thoughts of the writer and build reference to different characters or events. They are important for implying the cultural experiences and personal viewpoints of the writers of the play. They act as recalling an event such as “What do you do when you are not sure” (p. 1431). Allusions remained a common element in Shakespeare’s plays.

Antagonist

Antagonist refers to the force or the character in fiction reflected through Sister Aloysius’s character as she mentions, “much can be accomplished in sixty minutes (p. 1432). He is a person who acts against struggles, adversaries, or other people but is unwilling to come to a compromising position. The antagonist does not represent a good guy and a common example of Claudius who opposes the forces in Hamlet.

Antihero

The antihero lacks the traditional attributes of a hero and is also known as the protagonist. His condition reflects that he is isolated as in the play Flynn is an antihero, “imagine the isolation” (p. 1431). The miseries and adversities of the world convert him into an isolated and lonely person. His personal experiences put him in a state where he fails to accept the values and existence of God.

Archetype

Archetypes are symbols that generate emotions among readers. A common example includes, “he might have intentionally given himself a nosebleed” (p. 1432). They convey meanings that are related to human experiences, while common types include stories and mythological revelations. Archetypes

work to persuade the audience and convince them to accept certain beliefs.

Aside

Aside is a speech that targets the audience only while it remains inaudible to the other actors or performers present on the stage, aside from acts to build a close interaction between the actor on stage and the viewers. It appears in the play when Flynn states, “What if no answer comes? Silence” (p. 1431).

Biographical criticism

It suggests that the author’s personal experience and knowledge aid his understanding of his work. Biographical criticism has a significant impact on the author’s work; however, it is a useful tool for textual interpretation and analysis. The description of John Patrick Shanley shows biographical criticism (p. 1430). The purpose of the biographical criticism is to assess the writings more explicitly.

Comic relief

Comic relief eliminates the tensions involved in serious work, providing momentary comfort to the audience. Comic relief emerges when sister Aloysius says, “Do you have a handkerchief?” (p. 1435). The creator of the play incorporates the element to evoke emotions of ease by allowing laughter. It provides discontinuity from displaying too much stress.

Conflict

Conflict remains one of the crucial elements of the plot, displaying struggle as in the play Flynn mentions, “no one knows I have done something wrong” (p. 1431). Conflict allows the protagonist to engage with the opposing forces, becoming visible in different forms such as society, aspects, or a person. Conflict is something that needs resolution and often leads to indecision.

Cultural criticism

A literary approach is used to emphasize the historical aspects as the play mentions, “horrible, lost and doomed to be terrible death” (p. 1431). It identifies cultural artefacts and their impact on different areas of art, including fiction, plays, and films. The purpose of its adoption is to find the relevance of fiction or art to popular culture.

Convention

Convention indicates a literary genre that can be unreal but attains audiences' acceptance due to its representation in time. It divides the scene that appeared, "the message of constellations has imagined it" (p. 1431). Literary conventions are used in literature to recreate the events that foreshadow a deeper idea or concept.

Canon

Canon is most commonly used by critics to read the study. A common example includes, "that's the ethics" (p. 1434). The reason for using canon is to assess the literary devices used in the creation of literature. An in-depth analysis of literary writing allows critics to identify the role of personal biases and thoughts on their creativity. Critical canon was made part of literary analysis during the 1960s.

Catharsis

The emotions that the audience releases are known as catharsis, such as pity emerging in the play when sister Aloysius says, "Am I falling short?" (p. 1434). Historical writers used catharsis in their writings, such as Aristotle, who used it in Poetics. It is a necessary element for evoking emotions and building a close association with the viewers.

Crisis

Crisis generates substantial influences on the protagonist, which represents a turning point. In the play, it appears in a statement that "boys are made of gravel" (p. 1434). The crisis also portrays the climax of the play under the unity of the opposing forces. It reveals the unpleasant side of the story, provoking emotions of sadness.

Understatement

It refers to a speech when the speaker says less than what is needed. It does not convey the exact meaning and commonly supports the comic purpose of the play. It appears as Sister James in the play replies, "I know how to handle them" (p. 1434).

Theme

It explains the central idea that the director wants to present to the audience. It includes abstract concepts, concrete images, and characterization of actions. The theme becomes visible as the play mentions, "There is a bit of sunshine in her heart" (p. 1432).

Stock response

It represents the responses to the characters, symbols, or situations. It is one of the effective tools used to generate reactions in audiences, such as the use of God and peace. In the play, it appears when Flynn mentions, “You look for God’s direction” (p. 1431).

Stage directions

It involves a set of instructions that act as guidelines for the actors presenting a certain story or theme. The facial expressions and the way the actor behaves are the results of directions becoming visible in sister James’ expression “Oh” (p. 1434).

Setting

It displays the social and physical aspects of the play, such as the time, social environment, and the play. In the play, settings are visible, such as “people sitting together bound together by a common feeling of hopelessness” (p. 1431).

Paradox

It is a statement that exhibits controversy, but a closer look makes it more sensible. It appears, as sister Aloysius says, “another waste of time” (p. 1435).

Work Cited

Doubt: A Parable. By John Patrick Shanley. 2005