

The Lifeline of Drama

Consider the following scenario:

Crowded departure lounge at a busy international airport hub ... 10:15 p.m. ... disgruntled passengers ... the last word was that the overbooked flight to JFK New York had been delayed for 5 hours. As a result, many passengers had missed their connecting flights departing JFK to their final destinations. The mob thickened.

Stoic Airline Agent: *Ladies and gentlemen, when further information becomes available we will advise you. We sincerely apologise for the delay.*

Angry Single Mother: *I am here with four hungry children without an offer of a food voucher!!! Is this any way to treat your passengers? Look at them, they are tired and restless.*

Final-year University Student: *I have been bumped from flights for the past two days due to your company's overbooking!!!! What nonsense? Why must I suffer such repeated inconvenience?*

First Class Passenger: *Unprofessional!!! Unprofessional!!! You will hear from my lawyers!!!*

The innocent passerby observing the scene would walk away thinking, "what drama!" Another cultural setting would term it as "bacchanal". Regardless of one's background, this situation and similar situations reek tension.

Drama in its broadest sense is the literary form that is intended for performance on stage, that is, it is expected to be seen and heard. It establishes a direct relationship between:

1. The message or the script (issues/themes primarily developed through dialogue);
2. The characters or actors (what is said and more importantly unsaid);
3. The situation or setting (the nesting ground of conflict);
4. The stage directions, props, sound effects, costuming; and
5. The audience (the link to the community emotional experience).

Drama is rooted in the golden age of Greek theatre and tradition, where a celebrated personality or someone of social status was noted as having a '**tragic flaw**'. This tragic flaw created a universal appeal within the audience and was usually responsible for the downfall of the hero. The flaw might have included greed, ambition, jealousy, anger, rebellion, pride or perhaps a desire for

revenge. This concept of tragic flaw has been noted to be the agent of the **conflict and themes** that still exist in modern day drama - a melting point of contradictions, puzzles and riddles. There were also cases when a 'commoner' was the bearer of an extraordinary skill that elevated him or her to hero status. Either scenarios would have been riddled with contradiction and controversy.

This very concept involved the entire community in a dramatic production. Conflicting issues were identified and made fun of by a playwright. The playwright then crafted an uphill tangled web of masks and situations to a climax, which followed a downhill unravel and that tapered to a conclusion or resolution. This web of situations may have ridiculed or poked fun at the celebrated personality, in which was engrained a moral or life lesson.

The study of drama today is no exception. The characters or actors bring the playwright's message to life before the audience and take the audience on an emotional journey throughout the dramatic presentation. This journey therefore requires a co-ordinated approach for a nail-biting appeal and greatest audience impact. As such, the study of drama by our students requires that consciousness to objectively probe scenarios and to appreciate the unities involved to stage a production. It involves the collective awareness of sight, sound and heart. It is the happy tri-party marriage between the '**what is said**', the '**flair and passion as to how it is said**' and **created artistic backdrop** to create the perfect audience experience - the dramatic effect.