

Glossary of Terms Used in the Theatre Lessons

Actor	A person, male or female, who performs a role in a play or entertainment.
Antagonist	A person, a situation, or the protagonist's own inner conflict in opposition to the protagonist's goals.
Blocking	The planning and working out of the movements on stage of actors.
Center Stage	The center of the acting area.
Character	The personality or part an actor recreates.
Characterization	The development and portrayal of a personality through thought, action, dialogue, consuming, and makeup.
Climax	The point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action.
Collaboration	The act of working together in a joint intellectual effort.
Cold Reading	A reading of a script done by actors who have not previously reviewed the play.
Commedia dell'Arte	A professional form of theatrical improvisation developed in Italy in the 1500s featuring stock characters and standardized plots.
Conflict	The opposition of persons or forces giving rise to dramatic action in a play.
Context	The interrelated conditions in which a play exists or occurs.
Costume	Any clothing worn by an actor on stage during a performance.
Crisis	A decisive point in the plot of a play on which the outcome of the remaining actions depends.
Dialogue	The conversation between actors on stage.
Downstage	The stage area toward the audience.
Dramatic Play	Children's creations of scenes when the play "pretend."
Gesture	An expressive movement in which the body and limbs (or both) are used.

Improvisation	A spontaneous style of theatre in which scenes are created without advance rehearsing or scripting.
Lazzi-stage Tricks	Comic business, something foolish or witty in words or actions.
Level	The height of an actor's head as determined by his or her body position (e.g., sitting, lying, standing, or elevated by an artificial means).
Melodrama	A dramatic form popular in the 1800s and characterized by cliff-hanging plots, heart-tugging emotional appeals, the celebration of virtue, and a strongly moralistic tone.
Mime	An art form based on pantomime in which conventionalized gestures are used to express ideas rather than to represent actions. Also, a performer of mime.
Monologue	A long speech by a single character.
Motivation	A character's reason for doing or saying things in a play.
Musical Theatre	A type of entertainment containing music, songs, and usually, dance.
Objective	A character's goal or intention.
Pacing	The tempo of an entire theatrical performance.
Pantomime	Acting without words through facial expression, gesture, and movement.
Performance	A public, theatrical presentation before an audience.
Personification	A literary device where a non-human subject is given human characteristics.
Playwright	A person who writes plays.
Plot	The "what happens" in a story. The beginning events, middle events, and the ending in which the problem is solved.
Props	Items carried on stage by an actor; small items on the set used by the actors.
Proscenium	The large hole cut through the wall to allow the audience to view the stage. It is also called the proscenium arch. The archway is in a sense the frame for the action of the stage.

Protagonist	The main character of a play and the character with whom the audience identifies most strongly.
Puppetry	Almost anything brought to life by human hands to create a performance. Types of puppets include rod, hand, and marionette.
Reader's Theatre	A performance created by actors reading script rather than working from memory.
Rehearsal	Practice sessions in which the actors and technician prepare for public performance through repetition.
Scenario	A plot outline for a story or play.
Script	The written text of a play.
Sense Memory	Memories of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures, It is used to help define a character in a certain situation.
Stage	The areas where actors perform.
Stage Left	The left side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.
Stage Right	The right side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.
Stereotype Character	A character representing generalized racial or social traits repeated as typical from work to work with no individualizing traits.
Stock Characters	Established characters, such as young lovers, neighborhood, busybodies, sneaky villains, and overprotective fathers who are immediately recognizable by an audience.
Tableau	A silent and motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture. The plural is tableaux.
Upstage	Used as a noun, the stage areas away from the audience; used as a verb, to steal focus of a scene.
Vocal Quality	The characteristics of a voice, such as shrill, nasal, raspy, breathy, booming, and so forth.