

A Comparative Study between Short Story and Drama in Terms of Their Elements

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Abstract- This study entitled A Comparative Study Between Short Story and Drama in Terms of their Elements was conducted with the following objectives: 1) To identify the different elements of short story and drama, 2) To determine the similarities and differences of the elements of short story and drama, and 3) To appreciate the beauty of literary works. This study used qualitative research, for the author relied his findings based on his reading of some printed materials and the internet. After thorough analysis and interpretations, the writer arrived at the following conclusions: 1. The elements of short story and drama are plot, characters, setting and theme, 2. Short story and drama have the same elements but they only differ in terms of their meanings, and 3. Literary works have unique beauty that can only be realized by the readers of literary pieces.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the best loved forms of literature is the short story. It is a brief work of fiction containing made-up characters and events. Because short stories are brief, they do not take long to read. Usually you can start and finish one in a single sitting. Short stories are fun to read, presenting us in an endless variety of characters, places and situation. In addition, they often reveal truths about life and so deepen our understanding of the human condition.

The basic meaning of the word *fiction* is “anything made up.” Because short stories are made up from a writer’s imagination, they are not just reports of events that actually happened. However, they are “made up” in another sense, too. They are put together from several basic elements: plot, characters, setting and theme. The characters are, of course, the people, or sometimes the animals, that take part in the events. The setting is the time and place of the story. The theme is the central idea or insight into life that

is revealed through the events of the story (Prentice Hall Literature Bronze, 1991).

Short Story is a literary form - the nature of which is implicit in the words comprising its name. As a story, it narrates a series of events or a single incident involving individuals in mental or physical activity. Thus, like all fiction, it portrays, and its success depends on the immediacy achieved between the reader and the subject portrayed. As a short story, however, it cannot effect this immediacy by the means common to the novel, such as leisurely characterization, detailed description, and repetition. Instead it must portray with mirror-like swiftness and completeness.

For this reason, the short story is most powerful through graphic narration. This is not to say that its subject matter can be only simple and realistic. Of all literary forms, the short story is the least restricted in subject matter, for its length permits treatment of subjects that could not alone sustain interest in a longer form (Encyclopedia Americana).

The word *drama* leaves a thrill in the air. Hear the word and you immediately think of the excitement of the theater with live actors on the stage and a live audience offering its applause. Or you recall the pleasure of drama brought into your home through television or radio or into the cinema through movies.

Since drama is meant to be performed, when you read it, you must imagine how it would appear on the stage or screen, or, if it is a radio play, how it would sound over the radio or on a tape cassette. The story of the drama is told mainly through dialogue, or conversation between characters. From what the characters say, you discover what they are feeling and what they are like. In addition, stage directions describe how the characters would move or act before an audience. The sets are the re-creation of

settings on the stage; the props, the physical objects the characters use; the costumes, the clothes the characters wear; and the sound effects, the planned noise that accompanies the play. Each of these devices create the world of the play on the stage.

Just as a short story may be divided into episodes, a short play may be divided into scenes. Just as a novel is divided into chapters, a full-length play is divided into acts (Prentice Hall Literature Bronze, 1991).

Drama is an art form that tells a story through the speech and actions of the characters in the story. Most drama is performed by actors who impersonate the characters before an audience in a theater.

Although drama is a form of literature, it differs from other literary forms in the way it is presented. For example, a novel also tells a story involving characters. But a novel tells its story through a combination of dialogue and narrative, and is complete on the printed page. Most drama achieve its greatest effect when it is performed. Some critics believe that a written script is not really a play until it has been acted on a stage before an audience.

Drama probably gets most of its effectiveness from its ability to give order and clarity to human experience. The basic elements of drama—feelings, desires, conflicts, and reconciliations—are the major ingredients of human experience. In real life, these emotional experiences often seem to be a jumble of unrelated impressions. In drama, however, the playwright can organize these experiences into understandable patterns. The audience sees the material of real life presented in meaningful form—with the unimportant omitted and the significant emphasized.

No one knows exactly how or when drama originated, but nearly every civilization has had some form of it. Drama may have developed from primitive religious ceremonies contained many seeds of drama. Priests often impersonated supernatural beings or animals, and sometimes imitated such actions as hunting. Stories grew up around some rites and lasted even after the ceremonies themselves had died out. These myths later formed the basis of much drama.

Another theory suggests that drama originated in choral hymns of praise sung at the tomb of a dead hero. At some point, a speaker separated himself from the chorus and began to act out deeds in the hero's life. This acted part gradually became more elaborated, and the role of the chorus diminished. Eventually, the stories were performed as plays, their origins forgotten.

According to the third theory, drama grew out of man's natural love of storytelling. Stories told around campfires re-created victories in the hunt or in battle, or the feats of dead heroes. These stories developed into dramatic retellings of the events (The World Book Encyclopedia, 1974).

II. RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

• *Similarities between a Short Story and a Play*

While short stories and plays are different in format and presentation, as works of literature they share many common elements. Besides standard elements such as setting, plot and foreshadowing, much of the structure of a short story is similar to that of a play.

• *Standard Elements*

Like most forms of literature, plays and short stories share elements of setting, conflict and plot. The setting in a short story is sometimes explicitly stated, but often revealed one tidbit at a time, such as a character's mentioning the year, or the weather in their location. In a play, the setting is stated in the stage directions for readers, but is revealed to play viewers through backdrops and costumes as well as spoken lines. Conflict is what drives any work of literature, and both plays and short stories have at least one conflict. Although literary works often play games with plot, having a beginning, a middle and an end is generally common to a short story, with a climax of action then a denouement, or falling action, at the end.

• *Dramatization*

Both plays and short stories use dramatization to reveal character and plot. Good short stories, then, have dialogue and action that is similar to a play. For example, instead of explaining action, a story shows it. Rather than saying, "Peter told Annie that his ex-

wife and their children would be coming for dinner without giving her any explanations,” a short story would dramatize by saying, “Janet and the kids are coming for dinner tomorrow,” Peter announced. “What?” countered Annie, but Peter did not respond as he walked out the front door.” In both short stories and plays, the audience should be shown and not told.

- *Character Development*

Both short stories and plays use minimal background, description and explanations, leaving character development to the dialogue in the story. Readers or viewers pick up information about the characters in bits and pieces, through lines they speak, clothing they wear and how they interact with other characters. By contrast, novels often have long passages describing the thoughts, feelings and backgrounds of characters, allowing the reader to quickly have a view of who they are and what their motivations are.

- *Discovery and Interpretation*

In both short stories and plays, a great deal of the explanation, background and motivation is left to the viewer or reader to discover and decide for himself. Because not everything is explicitly stated, each viewer or reader interprets action for himself and may have a different experience than another person viewing the same play or reading the same story.

- *The Importance of Minor Characters*

Any discussion about the importance of minor characters to a novel, film or play, begins with a discussion about characters in general. Characters-the people that inhabit the story-must be well-rounded, realistic and should resonate with the reader. The reader should connect with all the characters, heroes, villains and bit players. After all, great characterization turns a novel into a new world. And in that new world, minor characters play a major role.

- *Delivering Exposition*

As far back as Ancient Greek theater, minor characters have served the story by delivering exposition, or vital information necessary to move the story forward. For example, in “Oedipus the King,” by Sophocles, it is the chorus that helps propel the story forward and provide information to fill in

backstory. This does not come from Oedipus, the main character. In “Star Wars,” Luke Skywalker’s aunt and uncle provide information about Obi-Wan Kenobi and give us our first glimpse into Luke’s secret backstory.

- *Adding Dimension to Leads*

Just as in real life, the people that surround the main character speaks a lot about the protagonist’s personality. In Michael Chabon’s “Mysteries of Pittsburgh,” the main character, Art Bechstein, is trying to move away from his father’s ties to organized crime. But he quickly makes friends with young man, Cleveland, Arning, who is every day delving deeper into organized crime. Arning’s connection to the mob tells us that Bechstein is more like his father than he wants to be, as he is attracted to the same people and lifestyle as his father.

- *Symbolism*

Sometimes minor characters act symbolically and help propel the story that way. A great example is the “Girl in Red” from Steven Spielberg’s “Schindler’s List.” The film, which explores the true story of Oskar Schindler’s rescue of hundreds of Jews from the Nazis, was shot almost entirely in black and white. During the film, Scindler, resolved to ignore the Jews’ plight, sees a young Jewish girl walking amongst a Nazi siege. The girl appears in a red coat-the only color in the film-and Schindler sees her. The girl, who does not appear again, symbolizes Schindler’s sudden realization that he must do something.

- *Comic Relief*

Quite often, minor characters act as comic relief, especially in dramas and action films. Where the main character wouldn’t act bumbling or scared or goofy, minor characters can. Gabby Hayes, comic star of dozens of Westerns, is a good example. But you can easily find them in today’s TV shows and films: Jon Turturo’s character in “Transformers,” Jamie Kennedy’s character in the “Scream” franchise and Jorge Garcia’s character in “Lost” (Pen & the Pad. Internet).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study entitled A Comparative Study between Short Story and Drama in terms of their Elements used qualitative research, for the author relied his findings based on his readings of some printed materials and the internet. The writer of this study used his own words solely in the discussion part of this study.

IV. DISCUSSION

Short stories and drama have the same basic elements. These are *plot*, *characters*, *setting*, and *theme*.

The plot of the short stories and drama is the sequence of events in the story. It is the skeleton of the story. It is the story itself because the sequence of events happened in the story is the story by itself. Plot has five components and these are *exposition*, *complication*, *climax*, *end or denouement* and *resolution or aftermath*. The exposition of the story is the beginning of the story. In this part of the story, the writer usually shows the background of the story. By just pondering the exposition of the story, we can have the glimpse of what the story is all about.

Next to exposition is the complication of which in this part of the story the conflict begins. There are two types of conflict: the external and the internal conflict. External conflict occurs between the main character and another person in the story whereas internal conflict happens within the main character. Usually the main character is the one facing this conflict. As the story goes by, the main character finds ways to resolve the conflict.

Next is the climax or the turning point of the story. In this part, the story reaches its peak wherein the conflict is greatest. The conflict in this point is about to be solved. As the story declines from its peak, the end of the story is about to happen and it is called denouement. Aftermath or resolution is the last part of the story. In this part, the writer of the story tells what will happen to the characters after its end, or the audience or readers will be the ones to guess the aftermath of the story.

Next to the plot is the characters of the story. These are persons, animals or even inanimate objects that make the story moved. Characters in the story have different qualities and their qualities are based on the roles they are taking part in the story. The main or important character in the story is the *protagonist*. The story revolves around him. He will be the one that will face the conflict in the story and also the one that will find solutions to solve it. The *antagonist* or *villain* in the story is the trouble-maker or conflict-maker. He will be the one that put problems to the protagonist. After the end of the story, the protagonist wins over the antagonist. Other characters in the story are supporting characters of the protagonist and the antagonist.

Next to characters is the setting of the story. Setting is the time and place of the story. As I mentioned above, setting gives background to the story. Usually the audience or readers can guess what the story is all about by just analyzing the setting of the story. The time and place of the story usually portray a significant role in the story. Time and place of the story teach the audience or readers not only the background of the story but also teach history itself or facts about past life lessons.

And last but not the least element of the short stories and dramas is the theme of the story. The theme is the main or central idea of the story. The whole story is attached to its theme. Some writers of the story tell directly the readers the theme of the story, whereas others put on the readers to guess the theme of the story.

Short stories and dramas as I mentioned above have the same basic elements like plot, characters, setting and theme. This is because short stories and dramas are both stories of human experiences. The only difference is that short stories are narratives. They are usually between 1,000 and 4,000 words. They are actually made to be read by the readers themselves. Whereas dramas are made to be performed on the stage by actors before the audience. Dramas have dialogues and script directions.

In addition, reading short stories and watching dramas are really pleasurable for us audience. Literary works like short stories and dramas teach us

human experiences. These experiences mirror our life so that we can reflect on what to be retained and changed in our attitudes and behaviors in our life in this real world.

Appreciation of the beauty of literary pieces is evident among readers or audience. Appreciation in the sense that human experiences learned from literary pieces are actually hold enjoyable moments among the audience. Writers do also appreciate the beauty of literary works. They enjoy writing stories about life lessons. They are motivated, for they know that they can give both pleasure and lessons in life to the audience.

CONCLUSION

After a thorough analysis and interpretation, the writer arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The basic elements of short stories and dramas are plot, characters, setting and theme.

Plot is the sequence of events in the story and it has five components like exposition, complication, climax, denouement and aftermath.

Characters are persons, animals or even inanimate objects in the story. Protagonist is the main character in the story. Antagonist is the villain or evil-doer in the story. Other characters are supporting characters in the story.

Setting is the time and place of the story.

Theme is the central idea in the story.

2. Short stories are narratives. They are usually between 1,000 and 4,000 words. They are made to be read. Whereas, dramas have dialogues and script directions. They are made to be performed by actors before the audience.
3. Literary works like short stories and dramas have their own beauty. They give pleasurable moments to audience. They also teach the audience life lessons because short stories and dramas portrays human experiences that mirror man's life.

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