

Advanced A.S.B QUESTION 5

ELEMENTS, TECHNIQUES, CONVENTIONS AND FEATURES EXPLAINED

NB: These definitions come from a range of resources and reflect here the way they are commonly used in drama and may be used within SNZ examinations – in particular question 5 in Advanced ASB theory.

ELEMENTS: These are the main key elements of Drama.

ROLE: The role is performed by the actor. It entails using imagination and skills to identify with someone else in order to explore and represent experience from another viewpoint. (Drama techniques and technology can be incorporated into role through the use of costume and makeup).

SITUATION: This is the event or activity that is happening in the moment. (Technology-set, lights, costume and placement of character can all contribute to the situation.)

TIME: This can be defined as the time of day or the period. For time of day, lighting can be used as an indicator of period; costume, character, set and props can place the scene in time.

SPACE: This is the appropriate use of the acting areas. Character relationships, status can be clarified by positioning in space. Levels, groupings, personal proximity, location, set, costume can contribute.

TENSION: The use of mental pressure or intensity is used to provoke a response, focus attention or heighten involvement. The use of lights, character change, sound, can all assist the creation of a tense moment or scene. It can be created by the pace of a play, by the pace of verbal delivery, by successive, quick-paced scenes building to a climax, the highest point of tension in a play.

FOCUS: Focus involves a moment in time, an action, or even a gesture, that indicates the essence of the scene; or a theme that drives the performance. Character, costume, and set can assist with focus. The audience can also be asked to focus on an actor or area of the stage through the use of lighting or positioning of bodies in the space.

ACTION: This is found by asking questions after studying the text; developing character, circumstances, superficial objectives, deeper(underlying) objectives; obstacles; physical, verbal, mental and emotional action.

MOOD: Mood is the feeling a scene evokes. Mood can be assisted through the characters' interactions with each other, or the audience, through lighting, music/sound or even set.

SYMBOL: A symbol can be used to represent an idea within a scene or play. It may stand for another object or idea.

TECHNIQUES: These are the specific methods or procedures used to achieve a particular purpose, relating to voice, body or movement.

VOICE: This includes all aspects of volume, projection, tone, pitch, breathing, articulation, pausing and phrasing, pace, accent.

BODY: Suiting a body shape to the role, posture, showing a relationship to others (body language), personal body awareness, conveying the mood and role, thought activates the movement.

MOVEMENT: Personal; use of stillness as a contrast, travelling through the space, variety of pace of movement, speed of the movement of the character, character traits of movement - smoothly, jerkily, heavily, softly- (see Laban's descriptors).

- i) with others; unified –all doing the same thing at the same time; Complementary-linking movements; Contrasting- clashing.
- ii) showing the audience an imagined space; awareness of the audience in body positioning (sight lines).

GESTURE: Controlled, uncluttered, precise, clear; uncontrolled, fussy, frenzied, pointless, depending upon requirements of character/role. Demonstrating intention; conveying mood and role; showing a relationship to others; as integral part of style and features.

FACIAL EXPRESSION: Variety; appropriate to role and character; clarity of emotions; communication of message or intent; revealing relationships to others and audience.

CONVENTIONS: These are the established ways of working in Drama that explore meaning or deepen understanding OR established practices in the theatre.

STRUCTURE CONVENTIONS: Include in this, story, time and action conventions - still image- diagrams-maps, montage.

STORY CONVENTIONS: Narrator, chorus, spoken thoughts, song, repetition, audience interaction. These conventions add to the story by giving the audience more information about the character or situation, or by repeating parts of the story to give strength to, or explain a moment in the story.

TIME CONVENTIONS: fast forward- frozen moment-flashback- split stage. These change the time frames to allow the audience to see what happened in the past, what might happen in the future or to freeze a moment in time.

ACTION CONVENTIONS: slow motion-Dance-Mime-Ritual. These use actions to explain and support the story.

PROCESS CONVENTIONS: Deal with preparatory work towards character development eg role on the wall—hot seating, mantle of the expert, teacher in role, visualization, telephone conversation.

THEATRE CONVENTIONS: Include the actor-audience relationships, exits-entrances, theatre technologies.

TEXTUAL CONVENTIONS: Interior monologue, dialogue, stage directions.

DRAMA TECHNOLOGIES: Types of equipment that help to create, present, explain, document, analyse, view, interpret or learn about dramatic work e.g. puppets, masks, lighting, props, set, costume, make up, recording equipment, sounds etc.

FEATURES: These are the factors which clarify the period, costume, movement, gesture and style belonging to the specific drama. Style can mean the style of the period/language/the director/setting/actor/delivery/genre etc, appropriate to the requirements of the question.