

PLAYWRITING

Meaning

Playwriting simply means writing plays. A playwright is the originator of the idea of a drama. He begins the whole process of a drama performance. He initiates the idea, develops it into story, creates the plot and assigns characters to the speeches and actions. He can also be referred to as a dramatist. The world has celebrated several playwrights/dramatists throughout history who have made laudable impact in by writing dramas

Categories of playwrights/dramatists

Playwrights can be divided into three namely

1. Classical or universal playwrights
2. Modern playwrights
3. Contemporary playwrights

Classical or universal playwrights: These are the persons who wrote ancient Greek plays. Their works laid the foundation for the kind of drama we perform today. Notable among them are Plutarch, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes etc. Basically we can divide Greek tragedy into two:

- (a) Greek tragedy: These are Greek dramas that have sad ending. Many of them are based on Greek myths. Some of the tragedies are trilogies. A trilogy refers to three plays based on one unifying theme. Aeschylus is considered to be the father of Greek tragedies. He also wrote trilogies. Other playwrights who wrote tragedies include Euripides (writer of the play, *Medea*) and Sophocles (writer of the play, *Oedipus Rex*).
- (b) Greek Comedy: These are dramas with happy endings. It also includes lots of comic elements. Aristophanes is a major contributor to this style. He wrote quite a lot of Greek comedies.

Modern playwrights: These are playwrights whose plays have gained modern appeal. Their works are highly respected and performed. Many of them wrote fascinating stories. Their works are of high quality and standard. Examples of such playwrights are William Shakespeare who wrote, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet* etc. He is the most notable playwright in this category. Many times these playwrights were inspired by ancient Greek works.

Contemporary playwrights:

These are recent playwrights whose works have gained a lot of recognition. Examples are Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J. P. Clark, Ahmed Yerima, etc. Wole Soyinka was the first Nigerian to be honored with the prestigious Nobel prize award in 1986.

Duties of a playwright

1. He conceives the whole idea of the play
2. He arranges the idea into a plot
3. He develops and elaborates story based on the plot
4. He organizes the story into speeches and actions to be made by characters of play

5. He introduces the location and situations

Some Nigerian playwrights

Wole Soyinka

Hubert Ogunder

Ola Rotimi

Summary

Playwriting simply means writing plays. Playwrights are person who write plays. Playwrights can be divided into three namely classical or universal playwrights, modern playwrights, contemporary playwrights. The duties of a playwright include conception of the whole idea of the play, arrangement of the idea into a plot, development and elaborate story based on the plot etc.

Review Questions

Define Playwriting

List and explain the three categories of playwright

State three duties of a playwright

List three popular playwrights