Comparing Poems, Plays, and Prose

Lesson 21

Comparing and contrasting the features of poems, drama, and prose will help you write and speak about the main differences between them.

Read

The three major forms of literature—poetry, drama, and prose—all make use of distinctive structural elements, or special features. Their shapes alone make the literature forms easy to tell apart.

These forms of literature differ in other ways. A poem often packs deep thoughts and feelings into a few words. A drama is written to be performed onstage. And for prose—novels and short stories—a narrator reveals the characters’ thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Each form of literature has its own features, so reading it is a unique experience!

Study the sheets of paper below. Can you use the text shapes and word clues to identify each form of literature?

Jack and the Beanstalk

Once upon a time, ~~~~~~
~~~~~
~~~~~
~~~~~

And everyone lived happily ever after—except ~~~~~~!

The Star

Twinkle, ~~~~~~ star,
~~~~~ are,
Up ~~~~~~ so high,
~~~~~ the sky!
~~~~~ star,
~~~~~ are!

The Three Little Pigs

Wolf: ~~~~~~~~~~~

Pig One: ~~~~~~~~~~~~~
~

Wolf: ~~~~~~~~~~~

Pig Two: ~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Pig One: ~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Wolf: ~~~~!!
**Think** What have you learned about the ways poems, drama, and prose differ? In the chart below, describe each element. Then mark an X in the box where the element is frequently found.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Drama</th>
<th>Prose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>setting</td>
<td>Time or place something happens</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialogue</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>cast of characters</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>stage directions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>description</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>chapters</td>
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<tr>
<td>stanza</td>
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<tr>
<td>narrator</td>
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</table>
Angie’s Solo
by Lars Gary

1 My sister Angie’s glee club was about to perform for their annual show, and the auditorium was packed. I was incredibly nervous because Angie would be singing her first solo in front of an audience, and I really wanted her to do well.

2 At last, the glee club members filed onstage and began singing the first song on the program. Too soon it came time for Angie to sing. Although she seemed tense and was probably trembling inside, I could tell Angie put her heart into it and sang away. But I also knew what she sounded like when she practiced—and tonight’s performance was far from perfect. In fact, Angie sounded flat several times. Still, the crowd started cheering even before she had finished.

3 I almost dreaded seeing Angie after the show. Should I be honest about her performance? After all, I knew Angie was extremely sensitive and hated any form of criticism. I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so what should I tell her?

4 “Brian!” she called when she saw me. “What did you think of my solo?”

5 I didn’t hesitate for a moment. “It was really beautiful! You should be proud of yourself,” I replied. When I saw her beaming, I knew at that moment how right I was to think that the truth is sometimes wrong.

At the Concert
by Lars Gary

When my sister sang her solo,
I thought it sounded awfully flat.
But I didn't want to hurt her feelings,
So I could hardly tell her that.

5 So later when she asked me
What I thought about her song,
I told her, It was beautiful,
Because that night the truth felt wrong.
Explore

What are the similarities and differences between the ways the two pieces of literature tell the same story?

Think

1 Complete the chart below by writing Xs in the boxes next to details that appear in the poem, the prose, or both. Some details may have been used in both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Prose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The night of his sister’s solo (setting)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue between two characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhyming words that help describe events</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas grouped as stanzas</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoughts and feelings of the narrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas grouped as paragraphs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2 What are two details you learn about the sister’s performance in both the story and the poem? Write them in the box below.


Talk

3 The story and poem use different structural elements to tell about the concert. Describe the similarities and differences between what you learn about it from the story and the poem. Make a list of your ideas.

HINT How are the feelings of the narrator revealed in each passage?

Write

4 Short Response Compare and contrast the different ways the story and poem describe the same event. Include text evidence in your response. Use the space provided on page 334 to write your response.
The Sound of Money
based on a Turkish folktale

1 Cast of Characters: A Traveler, an Innkeeper, the Town Judge
2 Setting: Outside a country inn in Turkey, a very long time ago
3 [A poor Traveler stops outside a country inn. The Innkeeper stands outside, cooking a large pot of soup over an open fire.]
4 Traveler [leans over the pot to smell the soup]: Oh, I am so hungry. And this soup smells so delicious!
5 Innkeeper [angrily grabbing the Traveler’s arm]: Hey, what do you think you’re doing, stealing my soup? Why, you rascal!
6 Traveler: But sir, I took no soup. I was only smelling the steam from the pot.
7 [Just then the Town Judge walks onto stage. He stops to listen to the Innkeeper and the Traveler.]
8 Innkeeper: I do not give my soup away. You must pay me, this minute. I demand money!
9 Traveler [pulls out his pockets to show they are empty]: But I have no money. Not a cent, for I am a poor man.
10 Town Judge: Ah, but I do! [He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handful of coins.]
11 Innkeeper: I don’t care whose money it is, as long as I get paid for my soup!
12 Town Judge: And I know just the price you deserve. [He jingles the handful of coins in front of the Innkeeper.] For the smell of soup, you receive only the sound of the money.

How does the drama tell you about the characters’ actions? Circle details that tell the characters how to act.
A beggar was given a piece of bread, but nothing to put on it. Hoping to get something to go with his bread, he went to a nearby inn and asked for a handout. The innkeeper turned him away with nothing, but the beggar sneaked into the kitchen where he saw a large pot of soup cooking over the fire. He held his piece of bread over the steaming pot, hoping to thus capture a bit of flavor from the good-smelling vapor. Suddenly the innkeeper seized him by the arm and angrily accused him of stealing soup.

“I took no soup,” said the beggar. “I was only smelling the vapor.”

“Then you must pay for the smell,” answered the innkeeper. The poor beggar had no money, so the angry innkeeper dragged him before the qadi.¹

Now Nasreddin Hodja was at that time serving as qadi, and he heard the innkeeper’s complaint and the beggar’s explanation.

“So you demand payment for the smell of your soup?” summarized the Hodja after the hearing.

“Yes!” insisted the innkeeper.

“Then I myself will pay you,” said the Hodja, “and I will pay for the smell of your soup with the sound of money.”

Thus saying, the Hodja drew two coins from his pocket, rang them together loudly, put them back into his pocket, and sent the beggar and the innkeeper each on his own way.

¹ qadi: judge
Think  Use what you learned from reading the texts to respond to the following questions.

1 Which statement best describes one difference between how the writers describe the setting in the drama and in the story?
   A The writer of the drama describes the setting first. The writer of the story has to describe the setting quickly using stage directions.
   B The writer of the drama describes the setting early in the play. The writer of the story describes the setting as different story details are told.
   C The writer of the drama describes the setting at the end of the play. The writer of the story describes the setting first so the story makes sense.
   D The writer of the drama describes the setting at the end of the play. The writer of the story also waits until the end to describe the setting.

2 Which statements best explain how readers learn about the innkeepers’ accusations against the traveler and the beggar? Pick two choices, one from the drama and one from the folktale.
   A In the drama, the dialogue provides the details.
   B In the drama, the stage directions supply the details.
   C In the drama, the narrator’s dialogue provides the details.
   D In the folktale, the stanza supplies the details.
   E In the folktale, the dialogue provides the details.
   F In the folktale, the narrator’s description supplies the details.

3 What elements in the drama tell the Innkeeper, the Traveler, and the Town Judge how to act and what to say?
   A stage directions and dialogue
   B dialogue and setting
   C rhythm and dialogue
   D dialogue, meter, and stanzas
This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A
What is one way in which the drama and the folktale are alike?

A  The thoughts of some characters are written out.
B  Stage directions explain the action.
C  A cast of characters is provided.
D  Dialogue is used to help tell the story.

Part B
What evidence from the end of the drama and the folktale best supports the answer to Part A? Write the similar details in the boxes.

Drama

Folktale

Talk

Compare and contrast how you learn about the characters in the drama and the story. Use the chart on page 335 to organize your thoughts.

Write

Short Response  Compare and contrast how you learn about the characters in the drama and the story. Use the information in your chart for help. Include at least two details from each passage to support your response. Use the space provided on page 335 to write your response.
Angie’s Solo  At the Concert

4 Short Response  Compare and contrast the different ways the story and poem describe the same event. Include text evidence in your response.

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Check Your Writing

☐ Did you read the prompt carefully?
☐ Did you put the prompt in your own words?
☐ Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
☐ Are your ideas clearly organized?
☐ Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
☐ Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

Don’t forget to check your writing.
5 Use the chart below to organize your ideas about the story and play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Details</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Play Details</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

6 Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 333.

**Short Response** Compare and contrast how you learn about the characters in the drama and the story. Use the information in your chart for help. Include at least two details from each passage to support your response.

**HINT** Compare and contrast how the story and the drama show what the characters say and feel.
The Talker
based on the short story by Ari Washington

WORDS TO KNOW
As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- obviously
- serious
CAST OF CHARACTERS
CLARISSE ....... a 6th-grade student
MOTHER ....... Clarisse’s mother

1 Setting: A bare stage with a kitchen table, four chairs, and a refrigerator. Mother and Clarisse are at the table. Mother is reading a magazine. Clarisse is talking on a phone.

2 Clarisse [into the phone]: Mary, I’m not kidding! He was great, and now the whole school knows my brother can really dance!

3 Mother: Clarisse, it’s 7:15. You need to get off the phone and get busy on your homework!

4 Clarisse [putting her hand over the phone]: Mama, I was just telling Mary about Jerome winning the dance contest, and—

5 Mother: You can tell her all about it at school tomorrow, but tonight is not the time.

6 Clarisse [rolling her eyes and sighing]: See you tomorrow, Mary. [hangs up]

7 Mother [shaking her head]: Clarisse, all you do all day is talk, talk, talk! Why do I constantly have to remind you to get to work? When are you going to figure out it’s the right thing to do?

8 Clarisse: But Mom, talking isn’t so bad, you know. Why, just today at school—

9 Mother [flipping through her magazine, clearly annoyed]: I mean, really, Clarisse. All that talking is no recipe for success. Nobody ever got anywhere by just talking.

10 Clarisse: But that’s what I’m trying to tell you! Just today—

11 Mother [worried]: You know, one of these days, you’re going to wake up with no skills and have to go to a boring job every day that you hate. That’s not right. Don’t you want a rewarding career?

12 Clarisse: Like as a radio talk-show host?

13 Mother [finally looking up from her magazine]: What?

14 Clarisse: I’ve been trying to tell you. The Communications Club at school is starting a real radio station, and every Tuesday they’re going to broadcast a live talk show after school, called “Talk Time.” So guess who they invited to host it? The biggest little talker you know—me!

15 Mother [laughing]: Wow! That’s great! [Reaches across to give Clarisse a high-five.] But you’re still going to get serious about your homework. There’s no talking your way out of this.

16 [Clarisse groans, puts her head down on the table. Mother smiles, obviously proud. Curtain.]
“Mary, I’m not kidding,” Clarisse giggled into the phone. “He was great, and now the whole school knows my brother can dance!”

“Clarisse, it’s already 7:15. You need to get off the phone and get busy on your homework! You’ve got a pile of work right next to you on the kitchen table. This is no time to be talking to friends.”

“Mama, I was just telling Mary about Jerome winning the dance contest,” Clarisse said in a wounded tone. “And—”

“You can tell her all about it at school tomorrow, but tonight is not the time. I will get up from this chair and take away your phone if I have to.”

“See you tomorrow, Mary,” Clarisse said, sighing.

Turning back to her magazine, Clarisse’s mother sighed and furrowed her brow. Why did she have to remind Clarisse to quit talking and get down to work? How would things turn out for her if she didn’t start getting better grades? All day and night she did nothing but talk, talk, talk. That wasn’t a recipe for success.

It wasn’t a matter of intelligence: Clarisse was as smart as any straight-A student. No, it was a matter of discipline. At this rate, Clarisse would probably wake up one day with no skills and discover herself stuck in a boring job. How would she talk her way out of that kind of unrewarding situation?

“Mama,” Clarisse announced just then, “I was so excited about Jerome winning the dance contest that I forgot to tell you what else happened today! The Communications Club at school is starting a real AM radio station, and every Tuesday they’re going to broadcast a live talk show after school, called ‘Talk Time.’ So guess who they invited to host it? The biggest little talker you know . . . me!”
Think Use what you learned from reading the texts to respond to the following questions.

1 If the story or drama were presented as a poem, how would it most likely be different?
   A It wouldn’t have verses.
   B It would have more characters.
   C It wouldn’t have stanzas.
   D It would have rhythm.

2 Underline two details from the story and play excerpts below that provide the reader with details about the mother’s actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the story</th>
<th>From the play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Turning back to her magazine, Clarisse’s mother sighed and furrowed her brow. Why did she have to remind Clarisse to quit talking and get down to work? How would things turn out for her if she didn’t start getting better grades? All day and night she did nothing but talk, talk, talk. That wasn’t a recipe for success.</td>
<td>7 MOTHER [shaking her head]: Clarisse, all you do all day is talk, talk, talk! Why do I constantly have to remind you to get to work? When are you going to figure out it’s the right thing to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 CLARISSE: But Mom, talking isn’t so bad, you know. Why, just today at school—</td>
<td>9 MOTHER [flipping through her magazine, clearly annoyed]: I mean, really, Clarisse. All that talking is no recipe for success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Which statement best describes how the story and drama differ?
   A The story writer uses stage directions to tell about the setting.
   B The story writer uses stanzas to organize separate ideas.
   C The drama writer uses stage directions to tell the setting.
   D The drama writer uses stage directions to organize ideas.
4 Read the sentence from the story “The Talker.”

The Communications Club at school is starting a real AM radio station, and every Tuesday they’re going to broadcast a live talk show after school, called “Talk Time.”

Which phrase best states the meaning of communications?

A means of passing along information  
B people involved in repairing electronics  
C organization engaged in sending letters  
D classmates taking part in a popular social club

5 Write How are the setting, characters, and events presented in the story and in the drama? Reread both texts. Then underline the details that illustrate the differences between the structural elements of the two forms of literature.

5 Plan Your Response What structural elements are present in the story? What elements appear in the drama? Use a chart to organize your thoughts before you start writing.

6 Write an Extended Response Using evidence from both texts, compare and contrast the way each form of literature presents the setting, characters, and events through its structural elements.

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In this lesson, you’ve compared and contrasted different structural elements in poems, drama, and prose. Explain the understanding you’ve developed about how to write and speak about these three forms of literature.