

ARISTOTELIAN (PARTS OF PLAY APPROACH)

1. Plot: Total ordering and construction of the plot--structure, craftsmanship, how the story is told.
Major elements of plot; conflict, discovery and reversal.
2. Character: Any differentiation of one role from another.
Ways a writer can characterize.
What a character says, what other characters say about him, what a character does (best).
Levels of characterization; physical, classification, habit patterns, emotional bent, etc.
What are the goals of a character and what choices does the character make to achieve those goals?
(In serious plays these choices are either moral or expedient.)
3. Thought: Any ideas of the play--theme, what the author is saying.
4. Diction (language): Anything written in the play, including stage directions. Usually refers to dialog. Ideal diction is both clear and interesting.
5. Rhythm (song): Pattern of stress--breaking of time into patterns. May include overall rhythm of a play or a single line.
6. Spectacle; Anything visually put upon the stage--sets, costumes, lighting, movement of the actors, etc. Aristotle considered this element least essential.

CONTENT APPROACH

1. Degree of imagination shown by the author : Originality, story-telling ability.
Is it a new idea or at least a new treatment?
2. Degree of suffering: How much does the main character suffer--otherwise why should we care about him?
Both physical and psychological suffering may be used as an attention-getting device.
3. Dramatic distance covered: Distance travelled by the main character from where the play begins to the end.
May be short and intense, as in Phaedra.
4. Insight shown by the author: What the main character learns from all his suffering.
If he does not learn anything, his suffering is pathetic rather than tragic.
(Consider Oedipus, Joan of Arc, John Proctor, etc.)
5. Depth of mind of the author: Shown in the author's solution to the conflict, how the conflict is resolved.
The author's statement about the world and man's condition.
A character may be shown in his relationship to God?
Nature, society, or himself. In modern plays the focus is apt to be on the relationship of man to society or himself.

