

DRAMA: THE SOAP OPERA*

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1 ARTS AND CULTURE

2 Grade 5

3 CRITICAL AND CREATIVE REFLECTION

4 Module 12

5 DRAMA: The soap opera

With this module we shall be looking at a medium most of you enjoy and know very well: television - specifically the 'soap opera'.

Television is a very intimate medium. The characters are in your living room – a close-up!

The best known of all programmes is, undoubtedly, the serialised drama, often called a 'soap opera' or 'soapie', because in the early days many had a soap company as their sponsor.

6 ACTIVITY

7 TO REFLECT ON DRAMA: “EGOLI”

8 [LO 2.2]

1. Assignment:

Your educator will let you watch a recorded episode of a soapie.

Write down aspects of interest to you while watching the episode.

Watch the video again.

2. Class Discussion:

Discuss the following:

Focus: knowing what the episode is about and how to transmit this meaning more effectively to the audience.

Tension: the 'pressure' for response'; this can take the form of a conflict, a challenge, a surprise, a time restraint or the suspense of not knowing. Tension is what works in a drama to assure the audience's desire to know what will happen next.

Contrasts: dynamic use of movement, stillness, sound, silence and light and darkness.

Consider the following:

how were these elements organised in the episode?

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how did these elements function to connect each of the scenes?

how the artistic intention of each actor is served by the use of these elements.

Make connections between your own dramas and the episode you have just seen.

Compare this soap opera to actual theatre:

difference in acting style;

plot complications;

dialogue delivery;

décor;

scene changes.

3. Practical:

A small group of learners must discuss and reach a consensus about the focus (the key moment) of the episode. (This exercise must be repeated with different groups).

Choose a moment in the episode which you feel clearly communicated that focus and recreate that moment.

Present the scene to the rest of the class.

Participate in a discussion exploring the following:

the various interpretations of the scene;

aspects of your own interpretation and your understanding of the episode;

the complex processes involved in creating a scene;

how what you saw relates to real life.

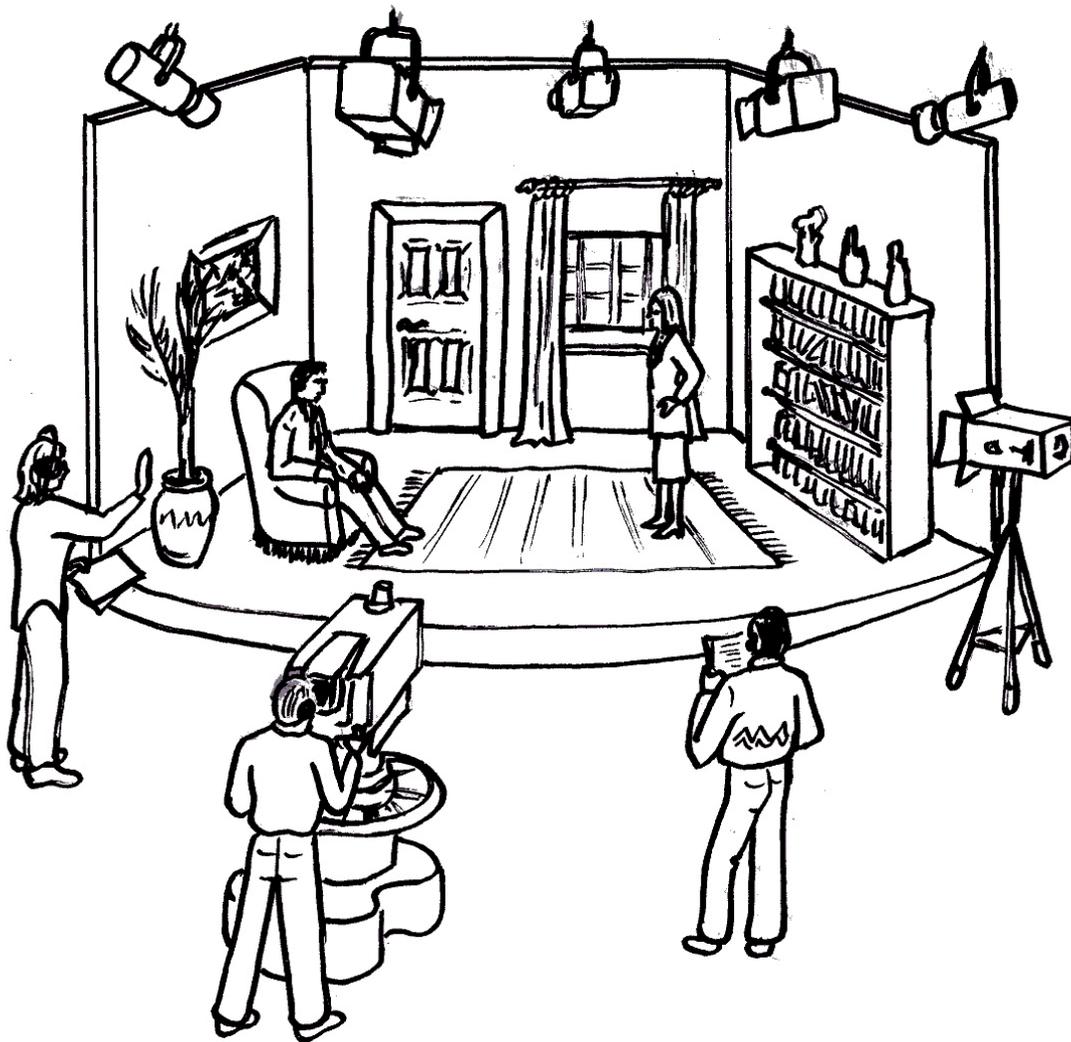


Figure 1

4 Questionnaire:

Complete the questionnaire (copies will be handed out) after the class discussion.

1. Do you like watching television? Why? Why not?
2. Do you like watching soap operas? Why? Name them. Why not?
3. What was the focus of the soapie episode?
4. Did the tension work effectively in this episode to engage your desire to know what would happen next? How?
5. What other choices could particular characters in the soapie have made?
6. Why do you think this episode was written?

7. What does the episode tell us about the situation in our country?
8. What does the episode mean to you? Was it realistic?
9. If you had to choose: would you rather act on stage, on television, on radio, in a movie? Why?

Assessment Chart

The learners are able to:	1	2	3	4
Participate actively in a class discussion:	did not participate	made a reasonable contribution	participate well	participated actively and enthusiastically
Fill in the questionnaire successfully:	did not complete the questionnaire	completed some of the questions	completed the questionnaire well	successfully and creatively completed the questionnaire
Reflect on drama:	did not recognise the criteria of the activity	recognised some of the specified criteria of the activity	recognised most of the criteria specified in the activity	recognised and reflected on all of the criteria specified in the activity

Table 1

9 Assessment

LO 2

REFLECTINGThe learner will be able to reflect critically and creatively on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles in past and present contexts.

We know this when the learner:

DANCE

2.1 takes an active role in a class discussion about interpretations and reactions to a dance seen live or on television; pays attention to the use of design elements, the purpose and the style of the dance;

2.2 identifies and describes the many kinds of dances in South Africa.

DRAMA

2.3 reflects on drama (television, radio, community or classroom) in terms of:

- recognising key moments in a drama;
- identifying themes, ideas and moods;
- explaining why particular techniques were used;being sensitive to the social and cultural contexts;

MUSIC

2.4 recognises the letter names of notes on lines and in spaces on a treble staff and their difference in pitch;

2.5 recognises crotchet, minim and quaver note values and rests in a short melody;

2.6 recognises and describes the different timbres of voices in choral music;

2.7 listens to a variety of selected songs and identifies the genre (e.g. Blues, Pop, Kwaito, Classical, Traditional, Free-Kiba, Opera, Musicals, Malombo, Kwassa-Kwassa, Techno, Soukous), and offers opinion on the style;

VISUAL ARTS

2.8 differentiates between various art forms such as drawing, painting, architecture, sculpture, design, craftwork, and graphic media;

2.9 responds to images and craft objects used in popular culture, pictures and photographs in terms of purpose, content, form, contrast and meaning.

10 Memorandum

Module Overview:

With this module the learner will be guided to reflect critically and creatively on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles in the past and present contexts.

The learner will then be able to reflect on and respond to Drama activities using appropriate terms, vocabulary and other resources. The time schedule for this module is \pm two weeks.

Assessment Standards

The learner will be reflecting on drama in terms of:

- recognising key moments in drama;
 - identifying themes, ideas and moods;
 - explaining why particular techniques were used;
 - being sensitive to the social and cultural contexts;
- All Drama modules will be structured accordingly:

- Introductions
- Activities (exercises) exploring the learning outcomes
- Helpful hints for the educators
- Assessment grids

ACTIVITY 1: “EGOLI”

With this activity we shall be focussing on the television media, and for this terms purpose we will be looking at a local television soap opera.

Please read the following carefully in order for you to be fully prepared for this module.

Television

Television is a very intimate medium. The characters are in your living room – in close-up!

10.1 Background

Television is probably the most modern form of art and entertainment. Television broadcasting began in 1936 in Britain and the United States, but was suspended during World War II. Effectively, television really got under way in 1946 after the Second World War was over.

Much of the material broadcast has been borrowed from other forms of art and entertainment. The two principal borrowings have been from the theatre and from cinema (which itself owes a debt to the theatre). In many countries, television has very largely taken over the role of the cinema as a source of entertainment. Not only does it screen numerous films, but frequently programmes made specially for television are almost indistinguishable in character and technique from cinema films.

Unlike radio, television is less successful in presenting straight music, but does well where there is a spectacle involved, as in opera and ballet. Other forms of stage shows also translate well into this medium, such as variety and music shows.

With most forms of sport, television succeeds in giving the viewer a seat at the event. With news and its background, television has borrowed the techniques of news-papers and translated them into sound and visual terms.

Colour, first demonstrated in 1928 by John Logie Baird, started coming into general use for television in the 1950's.

10.2 The Soap Opera

The best known of all programmes is, undoubtedly, the serialised drama, often called a ‘soap opera’, so-called because in the early days many had a soap company as their sponsor.

The story lines and dialogue are simple. The characters are larger than life. The situations are credulous and sometimes far removed from real life, but it provides the audience with escapism and entertainment.

10.3 Tricks of the Trade

A television performer can appear against a background apparently far from the studio. Originally this was done by back-projection – throwing film of the background on to a transparent screen behind the performer – but this effect can now be produced electronically by a process known as ‘Inlay’. A simpler device is superimposition, in which an image from one camera appears on top of the image from another.

In a sense the majority of television pictures are special effects, because the action takes place on a set in which scenery is used to create an apparent real situation. But as in theatre, the audience is really looking at a room with one wall missing.

11 Homework for the Educator

Tape an episode of any soapie – any episode will do for our exercise

Watch the episode for a second time and make notes on the following:

the different **characters** and into which categories they fall, e.g. **protagonists** (the good guys) and the **antagonists** (the bad guys);

the **purpose** of each character in the series (is he/she a main character; supporting player; why is (s)he in the episode; what is he doing in order to develop the story or plot);

the different **story lines** of this specific episode;

the **mood** of each story line;

special effects (lighting, explosions, sound, etc.);

the **different locations** the action took place;

the effective use of close-ups, wide shots, two-shots, etc.;

conflicts;

suspense;

dynamic use of movement, stillness, sound, silence, light, darkness.

1.

Show the learners the episode

Write aspects you want them to focus on while watching the episode on the board.

Show them the video again.

12 Class Discussion

Discuss the following:

- Focus: knowing what the episode is about and how to transmit this meaning more effectively to the audience.
- Tension: the “pressure” for response; this can take the form of a conflict, a challenge, a surprise, a time restraint or the suspense of not knowing. Tension is what works in a drama to assure the audience’s desire to know what will happen next.
- Contrasts: Dynamic use of movement, stillness, sound, silence and light and darkness.

Have the learners consider the following:

- how were these elements organised in the episode?
- how did these elements function to connect each of the scenes?
- how the artistic intention of each actor is served by the use of these elements?

Have them make connections between their own dramas and the episode they have just seen.

Have them compare this soap opera to actual theatre:

- difference in acting style;
- plot complications;

- dialogue delivery;
- décor;
- scene changes.

13 Practical

Volunteer a small group of learners to discuss and reach a consensus as to the focus (the key moment) of the episode.

Repeat with a different group of learners.

Ask them to choose a moment in the episode which they feel clearly communicated that focus.

Ask them to re-create that moment.

Have them present the scene to the rest of the class.

Repeat with a different group of learners.

Conduct a discussion exploring the following:

- the various interpretations of the scene;
- aspects of their own interpretation and their understanding of the episode;
- the complex processes involved in creating a scene;
- how what they saw relates to real life.

Questionnaire

Have the learners complete the questionnaire after the class discussion.

Helpful Hints:

encourage participation;

select learners for responses;

be positive throughout;

be constructive in your response to the learners' comments;

show the video as many times as you think necessary;

prepare the learners beforehand for the activities in order for them to anticipate the experience;

encourage some preliminary reflection and when the learners' appetites for the activity and provide them with some valuable 'hooks', but do not spoil any of the surprises which the episode might hold in store for them;

since they are seeking to clarify and share their understanding of this aspect of dramatic work, it makes good sense to use drama strategies to aid them in exploring, expressing and sharing their different ideas – like the 'Practical' exercise and questionnaire for example.