

Who Controls the Audience?

Evaluate how dramatic conventions shape meaning and audience response.

12.RL.1.D "Analyze and evaluate how dramatic conventions (e.g., soliloquy, aside, narration, direct address to the audience) contribute to the theme and effect of plays from various cultures."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline A14–A16. Circle B4 and the direction that establishes Nora is alone. Use the questions to explain what these choices let an audience hear or do.

Two dramatic voices

Stage directions appear in brackets. They guide performance and are not spoken dialogue. Exeunt means the characters leave; exit marks one departure.

A direct address treats spectators as listeners. A soliloquy voices a character's thoughts without a conversational partner. Read the speech and stage conditions together to decide which convention is at work.

These excerpts come from different plays and literary traditions. Compare their effects without treating either scene as a description of an entire culture. Use the letter-number labels to locate spoken evidence.

A • A Midsummer Night's Dream

William Shakespeare • Act V, Scene 1, closing speech • Public-domain text; original verse lines preserved.

At the close of this English comedy, the other characters leave. Puck remains to deliver the final speech.

[Exeunt Oberon, Titania and Train.]

PUCK

- A1 If we shadows have offended,
- A2 Think but this, and all is mended,
- A3 That you have but slumber'd here
- A4 While these visions did appear.
- A5 And this weak and idle theme,
- A6 No more yielding but a dream,
- A7 Gentles, do not reprehend.
- A8 If you pardon, we will mend.

PUCK (continued)

A9 And, as I am an honest Puck,
A10 If we have unearnèd luck
A11 Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
A12 We will make amends ere long;
A13 Else the Puck a liar call.
A14 So, good night unto you all.
A15 Give me your hands, if we be friends,
A16 And Robin shall restore amends.

[Exit.]

shadows: figures in the play; gentles: members of the audience; reprehend: blame; serpent's tongue: hissing criticism; hands: applause; Robin: Puck; Train: attendants.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1514>

B • A Doll's House

Henrik Ibsen · Act II opening · English translation by R. Farquharson Sharp · Public-domain text; opening set description excerpted.

In this Norwegian play, Nora secretly borrowed money for a journey to help her ill husband. Krogstad has threatened to expose her forged signature. Here she awaits possible news of that threat.

[She is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. She stops by the sofa and takes up her cloak.]

[drops her cloak]

NORA

B1 Someone is coming now!

[Goes to the door and listens.]

NORA

B2 No—it is no one. Of course, no one will come today, Christmas Day—nor tomorrow either.
But, perhaps—

[opens the door and looks out]

NORA

B3 No, nothing in the letterbox; it is quite empty.

[Comes forward.]

NORA

B4 What rubbish! of course he can't be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn't happen; it is impossible—I have three little children.

[Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.]

earnest: serious; he: Krogstad; the feared event: exposure of the secret. B1–B4 label speech units; a prose unit may wrap across printed lines.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2542>

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Puck is alone, yet addresses spectators. Use A14-A16 to explain why staging alone does not make this a private soliloquy.

- 2** Does the dream framing in A1-A8 invite imaginative freedom or pressure spectators to excuse the play? Defend one reading with two details.

- 3** Compare Nora's repeated checking with her claim of impossibility in B4. How does private speech develop a tension between appearance and fear?

- 4** Would an onstage confidant strengthen or weaken B's effect? Evaluate one likely gain and one likely loss using the excerpt.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 120–160-word comparison evaluating which convention more effectively makes spectators active interpreters. Defend your judgment with two details from each excerpt, explain their effects on a developing idea or theme, and acknowledge one limit to your judgment.

Compare, evaluate and qualify

Discuss both excerpts. Explain how the dramatic choices produce their effects; do not stop at naming conventions.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline A14-A16. Circle B4 and the direction that establishes Nora is alone. Use the questions to explain what these choices let an audience hear or do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Puck is alone, yet addresses spectators. Use A14-A16 to explain why staging alone does not make this a private soliloquy.	He says good night to you all and asks for hands as friends. He invites spectators' applause, rather than simply voicing thoughts to himself.
2	Does the dream framing in A1-A8 invite imaginative freedom or pressure spectators to excuse the play? Defend one reading with two details.	It can pressure spectators toward forgiveness: offended admits possible dissatisfaction, while do not reprehend asks them not to blame. A dream reading may instead free them from judging events literally.
3	Compare Nora's repeated checking with her claim of impossibility in B4. How does private speech develop a tension between appearance and fear?	She checks the door and letterbox but insists the threat cannot happen. The contrast exposes anxiety beneath her attempted reassurance, giving spectators access unavailable to a conversational partner.
4	Would an onstage confidant strengthen or weaken B's effect? Evaluate one likely gain and one likely loss using the excerpt.	A confidant could challenge the unsupported insistence that children make exposure impossible. But a reply would interrupt the isolated cycle of checking and denial that lets spectators witness her private fear.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nora's soliloquy makes spectators more active interpreters because they must weigh reassurance against behavior. She checks the door and letterbox, then insists that exposure is impossible because she has children. Her actions and claim conflict, developing the idea that private fear can undermine the appearance of control. Viewers must judge the denial rather than receive an explanation from another character. Puck's direct address also gives spectators power: the request for pardon acknowledges their judgment, and the invitation to give their hands lets them answer with applause. Yet his dream comparison steers them toward a forgiving interpretation of what they have seen. My preference concerns interpretive uncertainty in these excerpts, not the quality of either whole play; a performance could make Puck's invitation feel questioning rather than controlling.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Accept either supported evaluation. The sample has 127 words and compares excerpt-level effects, not entire cultures or plays. Nora's children do not prove safety; that is her reassurance, not the key's factual claim.