Voices Beyond Dialogue

Trace how theatrical conventions shape meaning and audience response.

10.RL.1.D "Identify and explain 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 each sentence that describes a dramatic convention. In the margin, write a short note explaining its effect on the theme or audience.

Three Ways to Guide an Audience

1. At an outdoor festival, performers stage a short scene modeled on ancient Greek tragedy. A chorus of townspeople enters the playing space together, chanting about a flood that ruined fields. The chorus does not simply report damage. It asks whether citizens ignored warnings and repeats, "A city stands when each hand helps." While the main characters argue over grain, the chorus returns to the larger community. Its shared voice turns one family's crisis into a question about civic responsibility for every listener in the crowd.

2. In a quieter indoor space, a scene draws on Japanese Noh theater. A seated chorus, called jiutai, sings that the traveler has returned to a shoreline where a village once stood. The masked central actor moves slowly and never says aloud that he is grieving. Instead, the jiutai gives voice to his memory: "The waves carry names away." By placing inner sorrow in the chorus, the scene creates distance from ordinary conversation. The audience can reflect on loss and impermanence rather than watch a realistic confession unfold in real time.

3. A third performance borrows a convention from classical Sanskrit drama of India. Before the action begins, a sutradhara, or stage manager, steps forward and speaks directly to the audience. He introduces a play about two sisters who disagree over selling their late father's mango orchard. Rather than hiding the setting and conflict until dialogue reveals them, the sutradhara frames the choice as a test of family duty and personal desire. His direct address makes the audience partners in judging the conflict. When the sisters enter, viewers already expect their argument to explore competing obligations, not merely property.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Greek-style chorus in paragraph 1 make the flood scene about more than one family's problem?

2. What does the jiutai reveal that the central actor does not say aloud, and how does this choice affect the scene?

3. What does the sutradhara tell the audience before the sisters enter, and how does direct address shape the audience's response?

4. Compare the Greek chorus and the Noh jiutai. How does each convention support a different theme?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-line mini-scene about a choice that affects a community. Use one convention from the passage, then write two sentences that name the convention and explain how it develops a theme and affects the audience.

ANSWER KEY

Voices Beyond Dialogue

GRADE 10 · 10.RL.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each sentence that describes a dramatic convention. In the margin, write a short note explaining its effect on the theme or audience. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Greek-style chorus in paragraph 1 make the flood scene about more than one family's problem?	**Its shared comments connect the family's crisis to the whole city's civic responsibility.**
2	What does the jiutai reveal that the central actor does not say aloud, and how does this choice affect the scene?	**The jiutai voices the traveler's grief and memories. This creates a reflective, less realistic effect that emphasizes loss and impermanence.**
3	What does the sutradhara tell the audience before the sisters enter, and how does direct address shape the audience's response?	**He introduces the conflict over the orchard and frames it as a struggle between family duty and personal desire. His direct address prepares the audience to judge the conflict.**
4	Compare the Greek chorus and the Noh jiutai. How does each convention support a different theme?	**The Greek chorus emphasizes civic responsibility and community action, while the jiutai emphasizes personal loss and impermanence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Sutradhara: Audience, the well is low, and the council must decide. Sutradhara: Watch whether fear or fairness guides this meeting. Lena: My street needs every bucket it can save. Omar: The clinic cannot close its doors. Lena: I was thinking only of my own gate. Omar: Then let us share water by need. This scene uses a sutradhara's direct address to frame the dispute before the action begins. It develops the theme of shared responsibility and makes the audience judge Lena's choice alongside the council.

Accept equivalent explanations that correctly identify a convention and connect it to a theme or audience effect. For the open task, accept any clear six-line scene using a convention from the passage and a two-sentence explanation that addresses both theme and effect.