

The techniques of "affective analysis" lead the analyst to an answer to the question:

**"What kind of emotional experience may a production of this play provide an audience?"**

Critics, directors, actors, even casual readers or viewers needing an answer to the question, "What feeling is the playwright trying to express?" can read prefaces, prologs, the author's letters, or transcripts of his speeches, or they can, sometimes, ask the playwright what attitude or emotion prompted the writing of the play. Unfortunately, however, many playwrights simply never leave any explanatory documents for the aid of bewildered and curious investigators. Some playwrights will try to explain the emotional foundations of their plays, but the explanations often have little apparent relevance to the plays, either because playwrights are not adept at explaining themselves, or because they don't know what prompted them to begin writing or what feeling sustained them during the period of composition. Even if they know what drives them, they may refuse to explain because they want readers and viewers to experience their plays: They'll say, "If I could explain the pathos of the play, I wouldn't have to go through the agony of writing it!" Still more important for the play analyst is the possibility that the emotion the playwright is conscious of may not be the emotion expressed in the play. The conclusion of all this is that reference to sources outside the play in itself can be only secondary indications of the pathos of the play. **The primary source of information about the potentialities of a playscript is the playscript itself.** One can further conclude that the emotional power or significance of the play is a product of the playwright's manipulation of character, setting, action, theme, language. The answer to our leading question: "What kind of emotional experience may a production of this play provide an audience?" can be answered best in terms of the techniques employed by the playwright to facilitate expression of the play's unique pathos.

*Please note:* An affective analysis is aimed at discovering the unique and individual pathos of a play, not merely at discovering whether a play is a "comedy" or a "tragedy." Such gross classifications are helpful only when they suggest avenues along which the critic pursues the deeper significance of the play's experience.

### THE TECHNIQUE OF AFFECTIVE ANALYSIS:

1. **What do the character's want?** The technique of dynamic analysis combined with a close reading of the text will lead the analyst to an understanding of character motive. Express in active verb statements.
2. **What is the main action of the play?** Summarize the wants of the character; the play's dynamic substance is the sum of the dynamic attributes of the dramatis personae to find the main dramatic action. Sort of combining structure and dynamic
3. **What is the play about?** In other words, what subjects dominate the dialog? Note the subjects of each speech. What do the character's talk about? What are the main attributes of the world of

the play? No play is about everything, about “life.” Each play creates a circle of interests and the characters live in that circle and no other. Sort of like thematic

4. **How do the MAIN characters perceive the world of the play?** What are the attitudes of the characters toward their situation? Two kinds of evidence are available:

- a. Lyrical statements by the characters’ outpourings of feeling about a situation gives the analyst an overt, self-conscious version of the character’s pathetic qualities.
- b. An indexing of subject talked about, actions performed, and lyrical expressions provides the analyst with a deeper insight into the character’s emotional make-up. With regard to each theme, what does each character do? What other themes crop up in dialog in association with the central theme? What does the character confess to feeling about each theme and of what strategic value is each confession?

5. Once the analyst knows what the characters want and what they feel about what they want, the analyst can ask, **"What has the playwright done to promote an audience's identification with each MAIN character?"** (for doing this professionally, you would consider each character).

- a. How does the playwright manipulate elements of the mise en scene to promote an audience's sympathy for a character? to promote an audience's rejection of a character?
- b. How has the playwright selected events for dramatization which promote or diminish audience identification?
- c. Has the playwright used familiar or unfamiliar character types?
- d. How has the playwright manipulated language, gesture, movement, to promote or diminish identification?
- e. Do characters' expressed attitudes promote or inhibit identification

### **Assignment**

For the assigned play, perform the technique of affective analysis as outlined above (1-5). Start with an introduction. Each character for this class’s purposes means the main characters (protagonist and antagonist/s). Make sure you first identify who the protagonist and antagonist(s) are along with proper support for your choices. You can do this in you introduction if you want. End with a summary paragraph that answers the question: What kind of emotional experience may a production of this play provide an audience?