

Dramatic action: the energy contained in a line of dialog and manifested as a desire.

Dramatic activity: the illustration of the action; the business performed by the actor making the action known and physical.

Plot: The arrangement of the units of dramatic action

Unit: A segment of the plot. A unit is a structure consisting of:

- A. a **precipitating context**. Like the play as a whole, which grows out of a set of given circumstances, each unit has a particular context which colors the action of that unit. You can look at a unit as: act, scene, or French scene. The smaller the unit, the better. We will use a French scene; divide when:
 1. a character enters or exits
 2. there is a shift in the action in the play
- B. characters in pursuit of an **objective**.
 1. Each line of dialog is the container of an **energy** released as a **strategy**.
 - a. a character's **objective** may be perceived as a coherent series of strategies.
 - b. a strategy is best expressed as an **active verb**.
 2. A character's objective is the temporary focal point of all his or her **energy**.
 3. A character's objective should be expressed as an **active verb**.
Example: "I, Oedipus, want to undermine Creon's testimony."
 4. A character's objective will vary according to:
 - a. **the character's consciousness of his wants**. Hamlet's energy may be focused on a definite objective of which he is fully conscious, or his energy may be focused on a vague goal of which he is not fully conscious.
 - b. **the strength of the character's motivation**. Some objectives are more vigorously pursued than others, because some objectives are more vital to the interests of the character.
 - c. **the source of the character's desires**. An objective may be an expression of an instinct, a rational decision, a wilful choice, or an impulse.
- C. One character in the unit will be the **impelling agent (protagonist)** because his **determination propels the action**. Other characters in the unit will be the **blocking agents (antagonist)** and his or her **subordinates**, and the subordinates of the impelling agent.
- D. Each unit contains the spectacle of **reciprocal forcing**, as the impelling agent and his subordinates clash with the blocking agent and his subordinates.
- E. Each unit progresses through a period of **intensification**, which reaches its peak in the moment of **crisis**. The crisis precipitates a **release** of tension.
- F. A unit shows one of two tendencies in its development: it inclines toward being either **active or reactive**:
 1. An active unit contains an active **conflict** between the impelling agent and the blocking agent.
 2. A reactive unit contains some sort of sustained emotional release.
THUS, a unit ends when:
 1. A new character enters and alters the context.
 2. The impelling agent achieves or abandons his objective.
 3. The rhythm of intensification, crisis, and release is complete. (2-3 shift the action).

The **DRAMATIC ACTION** of a play may be summarized in terms of :

1. The super-objective of each of the principal characters. The super-objective is a statistical summary, or an abstraction from the several objectives of the character.
 - a. A super-objective is best expressed as an active verb or verb phrase.
 - b. A super-objective may be explained (but not explained away) in terms of the character's degree of consciousness, his strength, and the sources of his motivation.
2. The **root conflict** between the hero and the blocking agent. The root conflict is an abstraction summarized from the conflicts in the several units of the play.
3. The dynamic structure *of the play*, consists of
 - (1) given circumstances
 - (2) **rising action** or intensification of the plot of the play
 - (3) **the climax** or the major crisis of the play, and the
 - (4) **denouement** or the release following the play's climax.

Dynamic Analysis Assignment

For *Small Box With a Revolver*,

- A. Divide the play into French scenes. For each of the first 3 French scenes, tell me why you divided it there.
- B. Then, you will analyze the following for each of the first 3 French scenes:
 1. characters' objectives (full sentence with active verb)
 2. protagonist/antagonist and subordinates of both
 3. reciprocal forcing
 4. intensification/crisis
 5. reactive/active why?
 6. denouement
- C. For the whole play:
 - a. Protagonist/antagonist
 - b. super-objective (full sentence with active verb) for each character
 - c. Climax
 - d. Denouement

Remember you will tell me: What you think, why you think so, and prove that what you think is valid in terms of text references.

Upload analysis and pdf of the French scenes with division lines.