

Dramaturgical Research

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What is Dramaturgy?

- **Dramaturgy** is the study of the world of a play, including historical context and past productions, that the director of the play feels is essential to the production.
- This research not only helps the actors have a clearer understanding of the play, but it also helps create a more cohesive production that enhances the director's vision while remaining true to the text.
- I worked for the **Houston Shakespeare Festival** to create dramaturgical research packets for Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Comedy of Errors*

Rehearsal and Beyond

Once rehearsals are underway, a dramaturg's research will cater to the needs of the rehearsal that day. This can include:

- **Expanding on a topic in the research packet**
 - Example: Expanding on Catherine of Aragon's first marriage
- **Clarifying the meaning of a period specific word or phrase**
 - Example: Clarifying what "an ell and three quarters" is in modern measurement
- **Providing more details on something mentioned by the director during the rehearsal**
 - Example: Sending trailers for movies referenced or providing a link to an article or news story mentioned that's relevant to the show.

A Dramaturg's Process

- A dramaturg will first consult with the director to determine what themes and topics are important to research
- A dramaturg will then consult various editions of the text, footnotes, scholarly articles, and reviews of past productions, and prepare a concise packet of research for the first day of rehearsal.
- This packet is typically expanded upon as questions come up throughout the rehearsal process

After the Show Goes Up

After rehearsals are done, a dramaturg may share the discoveries of the company in the form of a **program note or talkback** with audience members. For *Hamlet*, these discoveries included:

- Understanding the different ideas of Purgatory associated with Protestant and Catholic beliefs.
- For hundreds of years, actresses have taken on the role of Hamlet. This practice remains prevalent today, as the gender of the actor does not affect their ability to embody this role.

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References

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- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2002