



The Elements of Drama

John L. Styan

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This is an introduction to the drama, singling out and discussing its various elements, with detailed and generous quotation from masterpieces. Styan emphasizes that plays are meant to be judged in performance, not in the study, and that the play is something created by a co-operation of author, actor, producer and audience. The actor is doing something for the author's words; he is making the play work; and so is the spectator as he responds to the art of the actor, the producer and the playwright. It is a unique relationship, and the play in performance must be judged by 'theatrical' standards as well as literary ones. Styan begins with the elements of a dramatic text and the way they are built together. For every aspect - words, movement, tempo - and for larger considerations, such as verse-drama, convention, 'character', and audience-participation, Styan provides close analyses of excerpts from plays by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, Wilde, Shaw, Strindberg, Pirandello, Synge, Anouilh, Sartre, Eliot and others. These detailed expositions give an insight into the aims and techniques of the particular playwrights as well as into the general themes. This is an ideal introduction to the art of the theatre for the general reader and the student of literature.

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