



Contemporary One-Act Plays: With Outline Study of the One-Act Play and Bibliographies

B Roland Lewis

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Contemporary One-Act Plays Student and Teacher Edition With Outline Study of the One-Act Play and Bibliographies Dramatic Analysis and Construction of the One-Act Play By B. Roland Lewis A one-act play is a play that has only one act, as distinct from plays that occur over several acts. One-act plays may consist of one or more scenes. The origin of the one-act play may be traced to the very beginning of drama: in ancient Greece, *Cyclops*, a satyr play by Euripides, is an early example This collection of one-act plays appears because of an increasingly large demand for such a volume. The plays have been selected and the Introduction prepared to meet the need of the student or teacher who desires to acquaint himself with the one-act play as a specific dramatic form. The plays included have been selected with this need in mind. Accordingly, emphasis has been placed upon the wholesome and uplifting rather than upon the sordid and the ultra-realistic. The unduly sentimental, the strikingly melodramatic, and the play of questionable moral problems, has been consciously avoided. Comedies, tragedies, farces, and melodramas have been included; but the chief concern has been that each play should be good, dramatic art. The Dramatic Analysis and Construction of the One-Act Play, which appears in the Introduction, also has been prepared for the student or teacher. This outline-analysis and the plays in this volume are sufficient material, if carefully studied, for an understanding and appreciation of the one-act play. The one-act play is with us and is asking for consideration. It is challenging our attention whether we will or no. In both Europe and America it is one of the conspicuous factors in present-day dramatic activity. Theatre managers, stage designers, actors, playwrights, and professors in universities recognize its presence as a vital force. Professional theatre folk and amateurs especially are devoting zestful energy both to the writing and to the producing of this shorter form of drama. The one-act play is claiming recognition as a specific dramatic type. It may be said that, as an art form, it has achieved that distinction. The short story, as every one knows, was once an embryo and an experiment; but few nowadays would care to hold that it has not developed into a specific and worthy literary form. This shorter form of prose fiction was once apologetic, and that not so many years ago; but it has come into its own and now is recognized as a distinct type of prose narrative. The one-act play, like the short story, also has come into its own. No longer is it wholly an experiment. Indeed, it is succeeding in high places. The one-act play is taking its place among the significant types of dramatic and literary expression. Artistically and technically considered, the one-act play is quite as much a distinctive dramatic problem as the longer play. In writing either, the playwright aims so to handle his material that he will get his central intent to his audience and will provoke their interest and emotional response thereto. Both aim at a singleness of impression and dramatic effect; both aim to be a high order of art. Yet since the one is shorter and more condensed, it follows that the dramaturgy of the one is somewhat different from that of the other, just as the technic of the cameo is different from the technic of the full-sized statue. The one-act play must, as it were, be presented at a "single setting": it must start quickly at the beginning with certain definite dramatic elements and pass rapidly and effectively to a crucial movement without halt or digression. A careful analysis of any one of the plays in this volume, like Anton Tchekov's *The Boor*, or like Oscar M. Wolff's *Where But in America*, will reveal this fact. The shorter form of drama, like the short story, has a technical method characteristically its own.

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