
UNIT 3 RADIO PLAYS

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3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At the end of your **study** of this unit, you will be able to:

- **describe** the chief characteristics of a radio play
- differentiate **between** a radio play and a stage play
- define the importance of the radio play as a source of entertainment, and the need to choose appropriate themes that **will** provide clear and healthy entertainment
- explain the basic aspects of writing a play for the radio **using all** the facilities that the sound **medium** provides, such as dialogue, sound effects, and music.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier **units** (1&2), we dealt with informational activities through the radio medium. Radio Documentaries, Features, Interviews and Discussions are sources of **information** and the effort is not to **make** information top-heavy and monotonous. In this unit let us **see** how radio **can** be **used** as a **medium** of entertainment. We shall **discuss** the **special features** of radio drama. To **begin**, with we **will** discuss the basic **characteristics** of drama which are common to **radio, theatre**, television and film.

We **will** then focus our attention on the special qualities that differentiate a radio play from, for **example**, a **production** on stage, so to enable you to discern the sharp **differences** that exist between the two.

If the **characteristics** of drama are the same whether a play is produced **on** radio, **television** or **film**, **what** is it that **makes** a play suitable for radio **and** not for

television? How does a **writer** of radio drama convey the dramatic element through sound when he or she is denied the visual medium? How does he create an atmosphere **minus** the **costume**, scenery or lighting? Music, sound effects, dialogue and even silence are the **Vital** ingredients that **knit** a radio play together. But above all else, it is a skilful use of **dialogue** that **will** determine the success of any play over Radio. How does a playwright establish a scene or a situation or a character **mainly** through dialogue? These are some of the vital areas we **will** address ourselves to in this unit.

We will also introduce you to a **brief** history of the evolution of Radio plays to help you understand the story appeal that Radio play **has** for millions of listeners.

3.2 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DRAMA

Drama, to some extent, **shares** the same qualities as other literary forms that tell a story. Every playwright, like every novelist, has a story to unfold. But the manner and method adopted is **different**, depending on the medium through which it is presented. The writer of the short story cannot resort to the lengthy manner chosen by the novelist. Nor can the dramatist adopt the technique used by the novelist or the short story writer. **Nevertheless**, they all have one purpose—to tell a story.

Sharing the same **purpose** of telling a story is not enough. There are certain requirements they must fulfil to be **successful**. They must hold audience interest. How often it happens to us that we simply cannot put a book down because of its spell-binding interest. **You** know from your own experience that a short story or a play is good if it sustains our interest through **all** the pages.

The source of interest emanating from a **play**, short story or a novel could vary with each writer. Since we are dealing with radio plays in particular, let us focus on the essential elements of **drama**. These are **classified** under general characteristics (3.2.1-3.2.4) and special characteristics (3.3.1-3.3.4) of drama.

3.2.1 Audience Interest

Every play, whether it is **written** for a stage production or film or **television**, holds the interest of some **particular** kind of audience. One cannot expect to attract multitudes to watch a stage **production** or listen to a radio play, because audiences **everywhere** are restricted by their **taste** for one or the other medium by which they wish to be entertained. But here, let **us** confine ourselves to committed theatre-goers or radio listeners, who **can** be **counted** as the regular theatre audience.

Drama, whether it is on **radio** or television, should sustain the audience's interest from **beginning** to end. It is unusual to see a group of theatre lovers walk out during the course of a stage **production** because it does not hold their interest. **They** would rather remain seated in **the** dark and suffer it till the end. But the radio listener **can** switch off the moment he **loses** interest for various reasons. Apart from the fact that it could be a noisy **transmission**, the listener may not have been impressed **with** the beginning of the play, or he may have found the play thematically uninteresting.

One vital point to be **remembered** while attempting to write a play is that the writer must have an interesting **theme** to unfold, to arouse the interest of the audience. I am **reminded** of an evening when, after listening to the news on BBC, I was about to tune in to another station when the reassuring voice of the announcer said that the news would be **followed** by a play **based** in South Africa. He went on to give the listener a brief synopsis from which one gathered that the play **was** about a white South African, Dr. Franz Liensdorf, who, not interested in the politics of S. Africa, **suddenly** found himself in **love** with a black shop girl, and the problems faced by the two because of the strict **racial** laws prevailing there. **This** announcement **was** enough to arouse my curiosity **and** I followed the play till the end, enjoying every moment of it. The very next day, **while** going through the newspaper in the morning, I **was** happy to come **across** a **news** item **informing** us that the son of Mr. J.W. De Klerk, President of South Africa, was engaged to a black woman and had kept it a secret for a good length of time. He **is**, however, to **marry** her soon. I mention **this** just to bring home the fact that the **idea** of a play could be very near to a real life situation.

Activity 1

This activity is intended to help you to differentiate between a stage play and a radio play.

- 1) Write **down, briefly**, the main reasons why you liked watching a particular **play** because of its **thematic** value.

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- 2) Listen to a radio play in any language and state what interests you most in the **play**.

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Discuss with your fellow students and your counsellor at the study centre.

3.2.2 Emotional Appeal

It is not enough if a play interests an audience thematically though this is very **essential**. Nor is it true that everything written in the form of dialogue is drama. What is most essential is the dramatic appeal. A dramatic appeal is best created when a playwright appeals to the **emotions** of his audience rather than to its intellect. Though a play may have been written to convey certain messages, the technique **chosen** is to work upon the audience's emotions. A successful playwright is able to arouse the feelings of his audience. A **well-known** playwright, John Osborne, referring to this **aspect** in drama, **said**, "I want to make people feel. They **can** think afterwards." It is this emotional content in a play that largely helps to sustain the audience interest **from** start to the finish. Emotions can vary from one kind to another as the play progresses. They can move from involvement to concern to **anxiety**. Let us look at an example:

Spectators at a circus raise their eyes to a tight rope, where a lovely looking girl **begins** her daring act of **walking** above the animal cages. The event at once arrests the attention of **the audience**. **Soon** their emotions undergo a quick **transformation** from interest to one of concern, as she begins her death defying act. Concern gives way to anxiety when the **sprawling** net over the cages is removed adding to the tension of watching the spectacle. The audience goes through anxious moments as they witness a human being in great danger. Their emotions have moved from concern to anxiety. They now await the **climax** and wait expectantly for the final outcome. In much the same way the dramatist, who by arousing various kinds of emotions, **manages** to break the viewer's detachment and keeps him captive throughout the play.

Emotional responses may be of two kinds. When a viewer shares the feelings of a character in a play, and goes through the same emotions of anger, fear or sorrow as the character does, it is called empathy. It is this **direct** personal identification with the emotion of a character that is called **empathy**. Any playwright who uses this method to arouse the feelings of an audience is said to have found the most powerful means of exciting and sustaining interest. On the other hand, dramatists may be able to create in the audience a feeling for their characters. This could range from interest, to concern, to anxiety, as I had pointed out earlier. This response is called sympathy. To be able to make an audience anxious about a character's welfare is a sure way of **guaranteeing interest**.

There may be one more method of arousing interest in an audience. The dramatist may arouse an emotion of hostility through a villainous character. But we follow the character with interest till he reaches his eventual downfall.

Exercise 1

What is empathy? What is the difference between 'empathy' and 'sympathy'? Check with aids to answers in 3.8.

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3.23 Conflict in Drama

One of the best methods to arouse an emotional response in the audience is to present people torn by conflict. This is not difficult to stage because when we look around us, we find people beset with problems of all kinds, in varying situations. People who are not troubled by problems can never find a place in a play because they will have no power to arouse the emotion of an audience. So what happens when people are torn by conflict? Conflicts usually give rise to crises and it is these crises that form the high point of a play. A conflict may not occur in every scene of a play, but it will form an important structure of the play. Its intensity may differ in degree from one part of a play to another, but it will always be present.

3.24 Types of Conflicts

Conflict can be presented in various forms. It could be the conflict of one person against another, or a person against a group, a group against a group and a person or group against a natural force or obstacle. But the most powerful of all conflicts is the internal conflict experienced by a character when he is confronted with a choice of either one or another decision he has to make to achieve his goal. It is this conflict that can produce the maximum amount of emotional response from an audience.

It is, however, important to mention that the decisions to be made by the characters must involve important issues, such as life and death, success or defeat, faithfulness or unfaithfulness, freedom or captivity; in fact, disagreement over minor matters will hardly produce an emotional response.

Does this imply that a dramatist is always on the lookout for an unusual event or an extraordinary action? Not necessarily. Drama is life. Your theme for a play could involve the woman next door, or the shop across the street; but the situations that the characters find themselves in must give rise to conflicts and complications without which the play may never hold. The great Alfred Hitchcock, referring to this aspect remarked, "Drama is life, from which we have wiped out the stains of boredom."

Exercise 2

What kind of conflict is best represented in Radio Drama? Why? Check with aids to answers in 3.8.

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effort of the director, **producers**, performers, designers and the production crew. The message of a play and its essential dramatic element *can* be brought home only by a competent drama group.

3.3.2 Tense in Drama

Drama, when it unfolds on stage, film and radio, presents what is happening. We watch or hear characters **living** through situations. All of its actions **occur** in the present. The play may take us to a past event, but all its actions take place at that particular moment. The **dialogue** is in the present tense.

The drama unfolds at a **certain** pace and the viewer is carried along with it. There is little time for an **audience** to pause and seek clarification as a reader of a novel may do by turning back a few pages to clear his doubts. The audience is drawn forward unknowingly into the **climax** of the play.

3.3.3 Drama is ~~Minus~~ Comment

Dramatists usually have **no** comment to make in their plays. Their only means of communicating to the **audience** is through the dialogue which is spoken by their characters. It is for the **audience** to react and imagine what the characters **are**, as they are presented in a play. **See** how different the playwright is from the novelist who may resort to pages of **description** in attempting to describe a scene or a situation! A novelist has unlimited scope to analyse a character, narrate an incident and present **his** own views, as an **observer**.

A well-known teacher of **writing**, George Pierce **Baker**, said, "In most novels the reader is so to speak **personally conducted** by the author as our guide. In drama we must travel alone."

3.3.4 Emphasis on Crisis

In drama the playwright **invariably** plunges **straightaway** into the turmoil that a character or **characters are** faced with; the playwright has no time for a slow build up because this would **weaken** the interest of the audience. A play presents characters either in the midst of a **crisis** or near a moment of **crisis**. It gives no time for the audience to pause and **reflect**. Scenes and acts follow in quick **succession**. Only such events are chosen that **have** a direct relation to the play. Others which do not, are either suggested as taking place behind the scenes, or **implied** through the dialogues of the characters in a play.

While these are the **special** characteristics of all drama, when we turn to Radio Drama, we discover that it has more special features.

3.4 ELEMENTS OF A RADIO PLAY

Radio play needs special **treatment** both in scripting and presentation. Unlike the stage play (or TV play), **which** has the visual props to support it, Radio play is totally dependent on the audio **factor**.

3.4.1 Sound Drama

One of the most **important** aspects to remember in attempting to write a play for the radio is that you **are writing** for sound. Your play will **be** heard by hundreds of people and not **seen**, as by people **who** flock to the theatre. You are denied the techniques available to the stage director, namely, **costumes**, **set designs**, lights, properties and the **physical** appearance of the actors. The radio dramatist has to work with dialogue, music and **sound effects** and **sometimes** even **silence**, to create pictures in the minds of the listener*.

3.4.2 Time Restriction

The other important **point** to note is that a radio production is **restricted** by time, whereas a stage **production can carry on** for three hours at a stretch. The radio

dramatist cannot resort to a **slow** build up, or introduce too many subplots because this will **weaken** the **story** line and the listener may soon **get** disinterested. But a writer of radio drama can **transport** his listener to a world quite different from the one he **lives** in by **creating** an immediate impact on the listening audience by a dramatic beginning.

Here is the opening of a Radio play "Dreams, secrets, beautiful lives" by Robert **Ferguson**:

Pamela is on the phone.

Pamela: I can't, what would I say, what excuse could I give?...No. I can't say that. Anyway it's too late. I've already said I'll go... **Look**, I feel guilty enough as it is. God how I hate **this** creeping about and telling **lies**....**oh** come on! how could I have, how could I have? **-No I'm sorry** I'm not in a position to consider moving to a new house in the country because as a matter of fact I'm **leaving** you next Monday. Perhaps, I should've mentioned it before.... Yes I'm all right....

Here is another—from "The **Gingerbread** House" by Ken Whitmore.

Richard (off, **upstairs**): oh, **hell!** who's that?

The children laugh. The front door bell chimes. (coming downstairs) Yes, I'm coming! (calling back) You get your clothes on. You'll be catching pneumonia.

He opens the front door.

Yes? I'm sorry to keep you. I was bathing the children.

Cynthia : Oh, what **fun!** I'm Cynthia.

Richard : Cynthia?

Cynthia : A friend of Mary's. Cynthia **Blanchard**. You must be Richard?

Richard : Yes.

Cynthia : Is Mary at **home?**

Richard : Oh. You haven't heard?

Cynthia : No. Heard what?

Richard : You'd better come in.

3.4.3 **Blind Medium**

Radio plays are often **referred to as** Sound Drama, because it is a blind medium. But it has a **unique** power upon the ear so that by stimulating the imagination it creates a kind of drama which can handle subjects that film and theatre may never approach. With subtle and skilful manipulation of sound and words, together with its quality of **immediacy**, a radio play enjoys a certain intimacy, which gives it a coveted place in the field of entertainment.

In the above excerpts you notice the sound effects—there is the phone bell ringing, the laughter of the children, the door ringing-footsteps climbing downstairs, unlocking the bolt and opening the door, etc.

3.4.4 **Radio is Economical**

For writers wanting to experiment with play writing, radio has another big advantage. It is **cost-wise** a less expensive medium compared to theatre and television. The cost of radio production is much lower than that of television and theatre and radio is free from the **obsessive** compulsion of attracting huge audiences.

3.4.5 **Problems of a Radio Playwright**

But the radio writer has **problems which** other writers of drama may not face. The fact that listeners **cannot see** what is happening introduces some unique difficulties.

- i) One of the biggest problems facing a writer is to give the audience an idea of the dimensions of **space/location** existing in a scene, and this relates chiefly to the opening scene. A listening audience must comprehend the location of action in a play. The first step for the writer is to **visualise** the space in which the scene takes place. The dramatist must then chalk out the main characters and which of them will have the **closest** position to the **microphone**, as they have to speak the most

Dialogue is the **only** link through **which** a playwright establishes contact with the **audience**. You may have an interesting story with individual characters, each **different from** the other and each going through a different experience in a given **situation**; but, if the dialogue fails to transmit these qualities, then the entire dramatic **effort** fails.

3.5.1 Functions of Dialogue

The moment a character begins to speak, the audience **will** make a note of the character's values and traits. Dialogue must reveal character and the sooner this is done the better, especially so in a radio drama where the playwright is restricted by time. Dialogue is also one of the chief **means** by which the story moves forward and the theme is unfolded.

3.5.2 Characteristics of Good Dialogue

How do we distinguish good dialogue from that which is poor? It is often thought that dialogue should be natural, meaning thereby, that it should bear a strong resemblance to everyday conversation. So far as its naturalness is concerned, every day **conversation** is **more** often than not plain, repetitive, full of poorly chosen words, and **often** pointless and lacking in direction. Most of the conversation we hear around **us** is too dull and static and therefore not suited to drama. In drama, characters speak a language that has a **definite** purpose, and has a close relation to the changes and development in a particular scene. As we mentioned earlier, effective dialogue has **three** main functions—reveals character, advances the story and reveals the theme. So dialogue has to be vivid, spontaneous and enlightening. As a well-known writer of radio **scripts**, Morton **Wishengrad**, puts it: "**Good** dialogue should sound like a pair of **boxers**, trading blows—short, swift, muscular and monosyllabic."

Does that mean, that we totally reject the sound of every day speech? Not quite. If you are writing a play about **contemporary** times, your play **will** have characters whose language must be the language of our times—what we speak and comprehend in our day-to-day conversation. To make the characters come alive, we may have to retain the sound of normal speech, and elevate the content of the dialogue. When characters are in conversation they should not sound as if they are engaged in a trivial talk which they alone can enjoy.

Dialogue sounds natural when you make the effort of using short, informal and colloquial words. **Again**, the golden rule to be applied is to give a particular character the language that he or she **normally** speaks. People who are used to speaking in their native tongue will speak in a simple, fluent style. Others who are **not** familiar with the language **will** speak it in a more formal manner, using words that they may have studied from books. A group of professors sitting around a table in the **staff** room of a college will speak in a simple colloquial style and may even resort to a few slang expressions. **This will** be in direct contrast to the language they may adopt while delivering a lecture. So, really, it is a question of one's observations. The golden rule is to keep your ears open when you move about in your daily life to make mental notes on the kind of language that human **beings** speak when they mix **and** move around in society. Note, for example, the courteous language **used** by a steward in a plush hotel as soon **as you** sit at table. See how different it is when you walk into a less expensive eating joint!

3.5.3 Contractions

Use ordinary conversation when you deal with ordinary people. Use the contracted form "**I'm** going back" instead of "I am going back", or "I'll be there", instead of "**I** will **be** there" to bring home the fact that the play deals with ordinary human **beings** like us. Again, this rule **cannot be** applied always. Sometimes a non-contracted form is a must while dealing with **characters** who tend to be formal while discharging their daily duties. If you ever witness a senior doctor talking to his students while he is doing his normal rounds of the hospital wards, you **will** know what I **mean**.

3.5.4 Simple Sentences

Long-winded sentences are to be avoided; they only tend to confuse the reader or the listener. **Simple sentences** convey definite ideas and bring out the meaning strong

- and **clean**. In a radio **play**, it is essential to have the **characters** speak in **short** simple sentences. It also allows immense scope for characters to interact with **each other** quickly and take the **story** forward.

Let us turn once more to "The Gingerbread House."

Read the following **dialogue** and **see** how short sentences are more effective.

Cynthia : **Would** you like a word with her?

Richard : **Yes please.**

Cynthia : **Oh, she's gone.** She was here a second ago.

Richard : **Is Harry there?**

Cynthia : **No, he's upstairs** somewhere. **All** right. You'll want to push on. I'll **expect** you at eight. Missing you.

Richard : Take care of my babies, won't you?

Cynthia : Of **course**. Goodbye Richard. **Drive carefully.**

Long passages can **sustain** the audience's interest **only** if the **language** is powerful and it reveals character while the lines **are being** delivered. A good example of this is **seen** in Shakespeare's **soliloquies**. **This** is the **reason** why Shakespeare plays are **adaptable for radio** broadcast.

Here is an excerpt from *Relics* by David **Campton**. **This** is a play produced for radio by the BBC in 1974.

Aunt Dorothy: **Help....Help!** No, one does not **call** for help. One **was** brought up to believe in self-reliance. Self-reliance is all that matters in the long run. With self-reliance **one** does not need to call upon anyone for help....But in **these** circumstances....In what **circumstances?** In circumstances that lead **one** to cry help...Help...And no one hears. Which is perhaps as well. **Help...**One's voice falls dead! **The** falling dust makes more sound. If only the door and window were not so far away. If only the lace curtain did not proclaim so loudly to the **outside** world that there is no one in this house in need of help...Help....For **what?** Are you hungry? No. Are you cold? No. Are you in pain? No. Then **why** call for help? **Because—because** I'm **alone**....Crying for help because you **are** alone? What next? An old woman must expect to be **alone**. But **one** is **not** sorry for **oneself**. One **has** **learned** to accept.

(The soliloquy **continues** for another two pages)

3.5.5 Incomplete Sentences

Look back and **recall how** often **you have begun** to **say** something, **when** you are **interrupted** by the person **you** are **talking to**. **There** are **several reasons** for **this**. Your friend may want to refute **your** point of view even before you **am** **convey** the complete ideas. He **knows** what is **coming**. Or may be you begin with an idea and decide **half** way **not** to speak it out. **This** is part of **natural conversation** which **must** figure in a radio play. **Very often** there could just be a single word or just an exclamation or **grunt**. **This technique** of using incomplete sentences invariably **lends** the quality of **natural conversation** to a dialogue. It allows the writer to **switch** from one **character** to another, so that the dialogue **reveals** a character's reaction to a **given** situation. Even when a **character** needs to **reveal** more, the **best** possible **method** would be to restrict the **character's dialogue** to a short speech.

3.5.6 Dialogue must reveal Character and Mood

Since the radio playwright is **restricted** by time he **must write dialogue** that reveals a character's **nature**. **Economy of expression** is vital. A correct **choice** of words and phrases must be made for **each character** so that the **listener's** imagination **can be** stimulated to **picture** a **certain character** in his **mind**. Before putting words into the mouth of a **character** **ask yourself**, a number of times, whether the character you **have** **chosen** is likely to speak **in such** a manner. **Will** he appear credible to the **listener?** There must **also** be a **distinct** difference **between** the way one character speaks and the other **responds**. It is **only** thus that **each** character will **stand** out **individually**, with **his own** unique **characteristics**. Every **line** must be loaded. It must **convey**, as **quickly** as possible, a **character's** desires and the values that dominate his life. A **trade union** leader, for example, would **speak** in a **manner** as to **arouse** the feelings and **emotions** of his fellow workers. His **language** would be down to earth and **fiery**. **Contrast** this

with the soothing manner in which a cardiologist speaks to his **patient**. People who do not **belong** to the so-called educated classes would use a language that may even sound coarse. These are important points to remember when writing good dialogue.

3.6 SOUND EFFECTS

Since we are dealing with writing **drama** for the sound medium, and as we had earlier referred to radio as "the blind medium", the use of sound effects in a radio play are far more important than would otherwise be the case because they are the chief **means** of **leading** the listener to visualise the scene. Sound effects in the television **play** are not produced separately as they are in radio, because of the action that takes place in a scene. A man seen entering a house in a TV play or on the **stage**, produces the necessary noise. In a radio play, when a listener is denied the sight, sound has to establish the scene.

We usually relate sound effects to the kind of sounds we normally associate **within** a given situation or incident. Not all of them need to be included, if they have no special meaning to convey. Filling up a radio play with sound effects, indiscriminately, would make a production complicated. Only those sounds **are** chosen that will establish the particular idea the playwright wishes to convey. For example, the **play** must begin on a note that immediately establishes where the characters are placed. Are they sitting relaxed over a cup of tea in a living room, or are they out in the garden, or by the side of a lake, maybe?

A particular sound should be included only after the playwright asks himself the following questions: Does the sound

- help to make something clear?
- help to add a realistic touch and authenticity to the play?
- enhance the mood or atmosphere of a scene?
- does the audience expect to hear the sound?

3.6.1 Identifying Sound

Sound **effects** should not exist by themselves in a **radio play**. A **listening** audience **will** find it extremely **difficult** to determine the source of the **cause** for certain sounds that occur in the play. A playwright must ensure that, by and large, **some** reference is made by **the** characters **which** will warrant a **particular** sound to emanate from a certain **source**. **You cannot, for example, have** the sound of **fierce** wind blowing, shattering **window-panes**, without the characters making any reference to it.

3.6.2 Types of Sound Effects

A **playwright** will need various **kinds** of sound effects to convey the mood and setting of his play. Sounds **emanating** from the action **of the** characters in his play can be termed as **Action Sounds**.

These sounds are **introduced** to inform **the audience that the** action causing the **sound is taking place**. If a **door slams shut**, it could signify the angry exit of a **character**. Similarly, other sounds could be included **which will** have a direct **relation** to a **character's** mood and peculiarity. A **character playing** the role of a blind man can be heard **tapping a cane as he walks along**. The sound of a **cock crowing** can give the audience a **sense of time**.

Sounds **which** give the listener an idea of the location of a scene are known as **Setting sounds**. **Setting sounds** can be **used** to establish the time and place where the characters **are** placed. They can also be used as effects to build up a certain **mood** and atmosphere. The **chirping** of crickets would certainly suggest that it is night. But, to visualise an **ecerie** night; may be the call of a jackal would enhance the fearful aspect of **night** fall.

3.6.3 Describing Sound Effects

When writing a play for the radio, the playwright **must** describe the sound **effects** required as he **proceeds to** write the dialogue, keeping in mind always that his play **will** be heard and **not** seen.

There are two methods **which** a writer **can** adopt. Either he could describe the action that produces the **sounds** or describe the **sounds** themselves.

To give you an **example**.

(Om **Puri and Shiv** leave the **car**, cross the **foothpath**, **climb** the steps to the porch and **knock on** the door.)

It is now the director of **the** play who **will** be responsible for having these sound effects recorded. **Compare** the previous method, with this one.

(Car door opens **and** closes, footsteps on foothpath, steps on porch, **knock on** door)

It is extremely **important** to be clear about the sound your script requires. Otherwise, a director **wishing to produce your play** on radio **will** be left **confused** if sound effects **are not put down clearly**. **Nothing** should be left vague, **as** for example in (Man leaves room). **This gives the director** no idea **as to** whether the audience is expected to hear footsteps or the **sound** of a door closing. Such notations are of vital importance while **describing** sound effects.

3.6.4 Handling Sound

It is not enough mainly **to** describe the kind of sound effects that occur from time to time in a play. The **manner** in which the sound is to be handled is equally important. A radio playwright **will hence** decide the relationship of the sound effects to the dialogue in a play. **Will** a particular sound effect be heard in the background to create an atmosphere or **will** it be projected **as** emanating from the character in the play? Is the sound to be **heard** approaching the main scene of action or receding from the centre of action? **This, in** radio technique, would mean on-mike and off-mike positions.

Once a playwright **introduces** a sound effect to establish the locale of scene of action, **the effect is played at normal** volume to make an audience conscious of the setting and then the **volume is reduced**, so that the dialogue of the characters **can** be heard clearly.

Example: Establish sound of plane landing, then fade to background (1) to establish the arrival of someone and (2) to introduce people waiting at the airport to receive him/her.

A **sense of** time is **crucial** while projecting a sound effect. A sound effect prolonged for an extra **length of time will tell on the** listener's patience. It is **also** important to **note that a balance should be maintained** between the volume of the sound effects and the dialogues **spoken by** the characters. **This** is often **referred** to in radio parlance **as** mixing.

The writer of radio **drama has** to decide which **part** of a scene **will** have what a stage director may want **to project as** action on centre stage. Every other action that **takes** place around the **main characters** is secondary, but none the less important. Similarly, in radio it is the **main character in** a scene who **will** be given the on-mike position (**centre stage**) **which the radio listener will** visualise to be the centre stage.

The next step is to figure **out** the other elements in the play in relation to the main action. Characters who **do** not feature in the main **cast**, but who nevertheless are important in the play, **will** rarely be heard using the on-mike position. They could take up positions away **from** the on-mike position and give the impression that, though their voices may **be** audible, they are however, not the characters who dominate the centre **stage** of action. It is also very important for the playwright to **know** that, apart from **the** technicalities involved, it is also the actor's ability that

conveys the **type** of **character** that he is playing by the sheer use of **his** or her voice. It is therefore important to choose the actors for what their voices suggest and not by ~~what~~ they look like.

3.7 SUMMING UP

In **this** unit we have discussed:

- general characteristics of drama that contribute to audience interest and emotional **appeal**
- the significances of **conflict** in drama and the various types of **conflict** such as external, internal and psychological
- the **limitation** of Radio drama in respect of time restriction and lack of visual **appeal**
- the **use** of sound effects through dialogue music.

3.8 AIDS TO ANSWERS

Exercise 1: Empathy means "Feeling into"—It is an involuntary projection of ourselves into an object, where the object may be human, nonhuman or inanimate. It denotes the power of entering into another's personality and imaginatively experiencing **his emotions** and feelings. Sympathy denotes fellow feeling—not a feeling into, but a feeling along with the state of mind and emotions of another human being. We **sympathise** with the emotional experience of a child when he first attempts to recite a piece. We **empathise** when he falters in his recitation.

Exercise 2: The best kind of conflict in a radio play is the psychological or **inner** conflict of a character. During his expression of the **conflict** within him, the character reveals **his** temperament and personality. Since radio play depends a great deal on "Words" and not "**Action**"—i.e. physical action, the psychological conflict is best suited for presentation on radio.

Exercise 3: *Macbeth*—Deals with the conflict between loyalty and treachery. **Macbeth**, a loyal soldier is tempted to kill his king and usurp the throne. The conflict in him is well brought out in his soliloquies **everytime** he contemplates a heinous action.

Hamlet—Famous **line** "to be or not to be" expresses his conflict after he learns about the infidelity of his mother and the treachery of his uncle in killing his father.

Lear—The conflict between Pateago on the one hand and selfless love on the other exemplified in Lear and **Cordelia** respectively.