TEI BY EXAMPLE



MODULE 5: DRAMA

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2. Drama

Consider following text:

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 ACT 1
SCENE 1: HELLO WORLD
user, computer
In a clean room without windows, a table stands in the middle,
carrying a computer screen.
The screen blinks, the computer emits random beeps.
[The contents of the computer screen are projected onto a big
screen at the left hand side of the stage.
The user's face is filmed in close up and projected onto a screen
at the right hand side of the stage.]
(user enters room, walks towards the table, takes a seat, and
reads what's on the screen)
COMP:    Hello.
(user looks around and starts typing)
USER:     What is on the table?
COMP:    The table does not exist.
(user frowns)
USER:     There is a table in the room.
COMP:    Ok.
USER:     What is on the table?
COMP:    Nothing.
USER:    There is a black box on the table.
COMP:    Ok.
USER:    What is on the table?
COMP:    A black box.
USER:    There is a black box on the table.
(computer beeps frantically)
COMP:    I know.
USER:    There is a red ball in the black box.
COMP:    Ok.
USER:    Where is the black box?
COMP:    The black box is on the table.
USER:    What is in the black box?
COMP:    A red ball.
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USER:    Where is the black ball?
COMP:    I don't know what black ball you are talking about.
USER:    Where is the red ball?
COMP:    In the black box.
USER:    There is a black ball in the box.
COMP:    Ok.
USER:    The red ball is on the table.
COMP:    In fact the red ball is in the box.
USER:    The ball in the box is small.
COMP:    I cannot understand such a sentence at the present time.
USER:    The black ball is small.
COMP:    I see.
USER:    What is in the box?
COMP:    A small black ball and a red ball.
(user smiles, stands up, takes a small green ball out of his pocket,
walks away throwing and catching the ball)
[Kraftwerk's "Computer Love" accompanies the exit]
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Example 1. A sample drama text.

When determining this text's structural DNA, it is clear that it is not prose, nor poetry. On the macro-level, the major structural divisions are acts and scenes (instead of prose chapters or poetic stanzas). On the micro-level, the basic textual unit is made up of short lines of text. At first sight, they visually appear as poetic lines, yet there is no systematic rhyme nor metre in this case. On the other hand, each line could be considered a mini-paragraph. Yet, the text lines (be it lines or paragraphs) seem to be grouped according to a specific rhetorical principle: the narrative character by whom they are spoken. Often, as in this example, this character is named at the beginning of each utterance. It is these *utterances* (called "speeches") that make up the basic structural unit of drama texts.

As this example illustrates, a drama text shares some characteristics with other text genres, but has its own specific structural features, too. Common structural text elements can be encoded with the elements discussed in Module 1: Common Structure, Elements, and Attributes of this tutorial series. The elements specific to drama texts are discussed in this module.

CHALLENGE

Identify and try to name all structural units you can distinguish in the text above.

SOLUTION

These are significant elements of drama texts that are discussed in this tutorial module:

- Acts
- Scenes
- Set descriptions
- Speeches
- Stage directions
- Technical directions

The following sections of this tutorial explain how these phenomena can be encoded using TEI.