Writing Dramatic Scenes

Definition of Dramatic Scene

What is a dramatic scene? A dramatic scene is like a Hollywood film, which has a set, location, details, action, characters, and dialogue. A scene includes the following elements:

* Location/setting of the event or experience
* Concrete and specific details that are sensory details
* Action from characters who take participate in the story, event, or experience
* Sense of the passage of time
* Dialogue between characters to reveal something important about the character or the event or story.

Your goal is to make the experience come alive in the mind of your reader.

How to Recreate the Scene

A dramatic scene has a sense of time and place. Time can refer to clock time, the time of day, the season of the year, or the time it takes for an event to occur. Place refers to location, which can refer to your family home, travel destination, nature, and so on. Be sure to include the time and location where the event or experience took place. It gives your story context and makes your story real. For instance, In September 1972, I saw the most important hockey game and sporting event in my life from the auditorium of my high school…

A dramatic scene also includes important details and descriptions. Details are concrete and specific. Details are also sensory images that appeal to the reader’s sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. Details make your story come alive. Example: Walking in the snow, the wind howling, the cold biting my face, I could see the trail to the road in the distance. I was hungry, exhausted, my body ached from the two hour cross country skiing in the woods, along the trail to the frozen lake, a place where I swam on during the warm, hot summer months of July and August. Now, it was January. I wanted to get home to cook a juicy, spicy pepper steak on the barbeque, drink a cold ale in front of the fire place, and relax on my lazy boy chair.

A dramatic scene includes the comments you make or the conversations between two or more people. A dramatic scene requires dialogue that reveals character or advances the narrative.

A dramatic scene includes action. Your goal is to not include any action but action that is important or significant; action that is related to the event or events.

**Screenwriting: How To Write a Dramatic Scene**

When it comes to **screenwriting**, drama is the backbone of any movie, book and play. Even comedies must have some type of drama, or the plot won't move forward.  So, writing a dramatic scene is essential to the success of any screenplay. To write a drama scene, screenwriters need to have the characters deal with a certain conflict, and the scene should help to progress the overall play.

**Step 1: Understand what Constitutes Drama**

Drama doesn't always mean that people are arguing or physically fighting, even though that can be the case in some screenplays. Drama simply means that tension or conflict exists. This tension can come in the form of uncomfortable silence, a revelation that adversely affects another character or a lie being told. However the drama is created, it needs to move the plot along, and the scene shouldn't look artificial. Don't try to force drama where there is none. Conflict should make the audience want to keep watching the film or play.

A dramatic scene should also open up a character or situation more. Something needs to be learned from the scene. For example, in *The Sixth Sense*, Haley Joel Osment's character reveals in a hospital bed that he sees dead people. Not only does it explain the conflict that the child is having with his mother and the psychiatrist, it also moves the film along. Now, the audience knows of what the child is afraid.

**Step 2: Understand What Should be Cut from a Dramatic Scene**

Anything that doesn't progress the story or provide more information about a character are the obvious ones. But, there are other sections that need to be cut as well. If a section isn't needed to tell the story, it needs to be cut. Or, if a similar scene is elsewhere in the screenplay, it also needs to be removed. If not, the screenwriter is just repeating what was said before.

Another major item to consider is whether or not the scene is actually needed to tell the story. Does it reveal enough about a character?  Or, just a little? Only major characteristics should be revealed unless a small revelation leads to something larger. A screenwriter, however, could lose the audience if the plot gets too confusing.

Is it really important to the overall plotline? If the answer to this is no, then the screenwriter needs to cut the scene. Unnecessary scenes will do no service to an audience if the screenwriter even gets that far. Hollywood and Broadway like simple plotlines. Producers probably will just skip over complicated plots.

**Step 3: Dialogue**

Dialogue will be extremely important in a dramatic scene. Even fight scenes must have some dialogue, but that dialogue may be quite simplistic.

Screenwriters need to figure out what they want to say, and then they need to write that in the way the character would speak. If a character eternally speaks in a monotone voice and never yells, it's unlikely that they would yell during a fight scene. Ensure that the dialogue fits the character.

Even silence can be an important part of conflict. It can build up tension and reveal twists like character breakdown, family issues and the like.