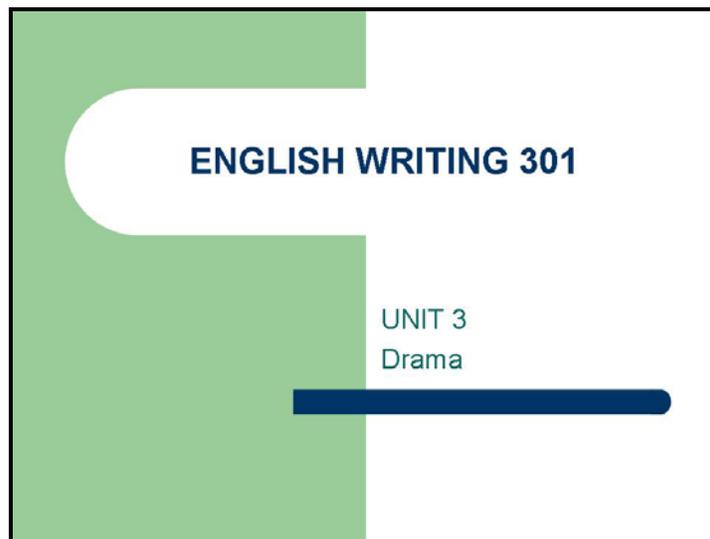


# English Writing 301 – Transcript of Drama – Episode 1

## Welcome to Ann Lewis's Instructional Video Series for both ONLINE and F2F students



Welcome back – As we move into the third unit of this class – drama – we are going to use many of the same tools that we used for Fiction and Poetry: character, plot, setting, imagery, metaphor. But there is one thing that sets drama apart from these genres: It's not meant to be read. It's meant to be "viewed." As such, it is open to the interpretation of producers, directors, and the actors themselves.

I thought the perfect place to start this unit would be just looking at the beginnings of Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* which you have read for today. If we look at the "play on the page," we'll see that the author begins with a description of the opening scene—the kitchen—as follows:

**Scene:** The kitchen in the now abandoned farmhouse of John Wright, a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in order—the walls covered with a faded wall paper. Down right is a door leading to the parlor. On the right wall above this door is a built-in kitchen cupboard with shelves in the upper portion and draws below. In the rear wall at the right, up two steps is a door opening onto stairs leading to the second floor. In the rear wall at left is a door to the shed and from there to the outside. Between these two doors is an old-fashioned black iron stove. Running along the left wall from the shed door is an old iron sink and sink shelf, in which is set a hand pump. Downstage of the sink is an uncurtained window. Near the window is an old wooden rocker. Center stage is an unpainted wooden kitchen table with straight chairs on either side. There is a

small chair down right. Unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the breadbox, a dish towel on the table—other signs of incompleting work. At the rear the shed door opens and the Sheriff comes in followed by the County Attorney and Hale. The Sheriff and Hale are men in middle life, the County Attorney is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by two women—the Sheriff's wife, Mrs. Peters, first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face. Mrs. Hale is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door.



What we are going to do today is look at three different beginnings – three different ways of starting this play on the "stage." They don't all start in the kitchen. And I'm going to ask you after viewing these three introductions to comment on the differences that each makes to the viewer's reaction.

In Glaspell's "play on the page," she begins with a conversation between the County Attorney, the Sheriff, and Mrs. Peters. It's not until the second page—through the recollections of Hale—that we find out what happened to John AND the purpose of this visit. Ironically, all three of the three directors/producers of the clips decided to omit the beginning conversation.

Instead, all three begin with a variation of this original speech by Hale (from the second page of the "play on the page") – the first two just with visuals and the third with an actual voice-over/narration as though we are hearing this (as Glaspell intended) from Hale's point of view.

HALE: Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, "How do, Mrs. Wright, it's cold, ain't it?" And she said, "Is it?"—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised: she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, "I want to see John." And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: "Can't I see John?" "No," she says, kind o' dull like. "Ain't he home?" says I. "Yes," says she, "he's home." "Then why can't I see him?" I asked her, out of patience. "'Cause he's dead," says she. "Dead?" says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth. "Why—where is he?" says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that. (*Himself pointing to the room above.*) I started for the stairs, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then I says, "Why, what did he die of?" "He died of a rope round his neck," says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help. We went upstairs and there he was lyin'——

**Here are a couple of scenes from each of the three clips:**

**CLIP #1**



**CLIP #2**



**CLIP #3**



**The discussion board for this week asks you to comment on the effects of these different openings to the "play on the stage" – follow the directions on the discussion board itself. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.**

**For our next lesson, we'll be looking more closely at the dialogue . . .**