Appendix IV.1.16

Writing Beginnings

Within the first few minutes of a well-constructed play, the audience must learn:

- The central characters (Who are they? How many?)
- The foreshadowing of the central dramatic action (What's the plot? What do the characters want? What's in their way?)
- The tone (Serious? Comic?)
- The style (Naturalism? Realism? Restoration?)
- The design – setting, sound, light, costume (A real bedroom? An abstract unit set? A bare stage?)

Exposition can be communicated in a number of ways:

- Through *dialogue* between characters onstage
- Through monologues spoken by one character to either an unseen character or directed toward the audience
- Through stage action
- Through design elements (sets, lights, sound, costumes)
  (example, page 95 Hatcher)

**An audience hangs onto exposition that has to do with the dramatic questions posed by the play.*

Read example of character/conflict-driven exposition, from Sam Shepard's *True West*

Representational Exposition: **tells the audience what has happened, what is happening, and what may happen next. Representations depiction of reality is an attempt to make an onstage dramatic scene appear as if it were happening in much the same way it would in real life. In a representational play, the onstage characters behave as if they are unaware of the audience's presence.**

Presentational Exposition: depicts reality within the frame of a theatrical presentation. It knows it is a "show." In a presentational play, the characters do behave as if they are aware an audience is watching. Soliloquies, asides, direct-address, even audience interaction underlie this kind of presentation. The actors are saying, in effect, "We are presenting a play to you. We are not pretending to be real. We know you're out there."