

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Character Study: "Fourteen"



## Objective

In this lesson, you will examine the main characters and their points of view along with themes in Alice Gerstenberg's drama, *Fourteen*. Additionally, you will compare the drama to a short story version called "The Dinner Party" with attention to how the structures of the texts contribute to their meaning.



## Before You Read

Alice Gerstenberg enjoyed the theater from a very early age.

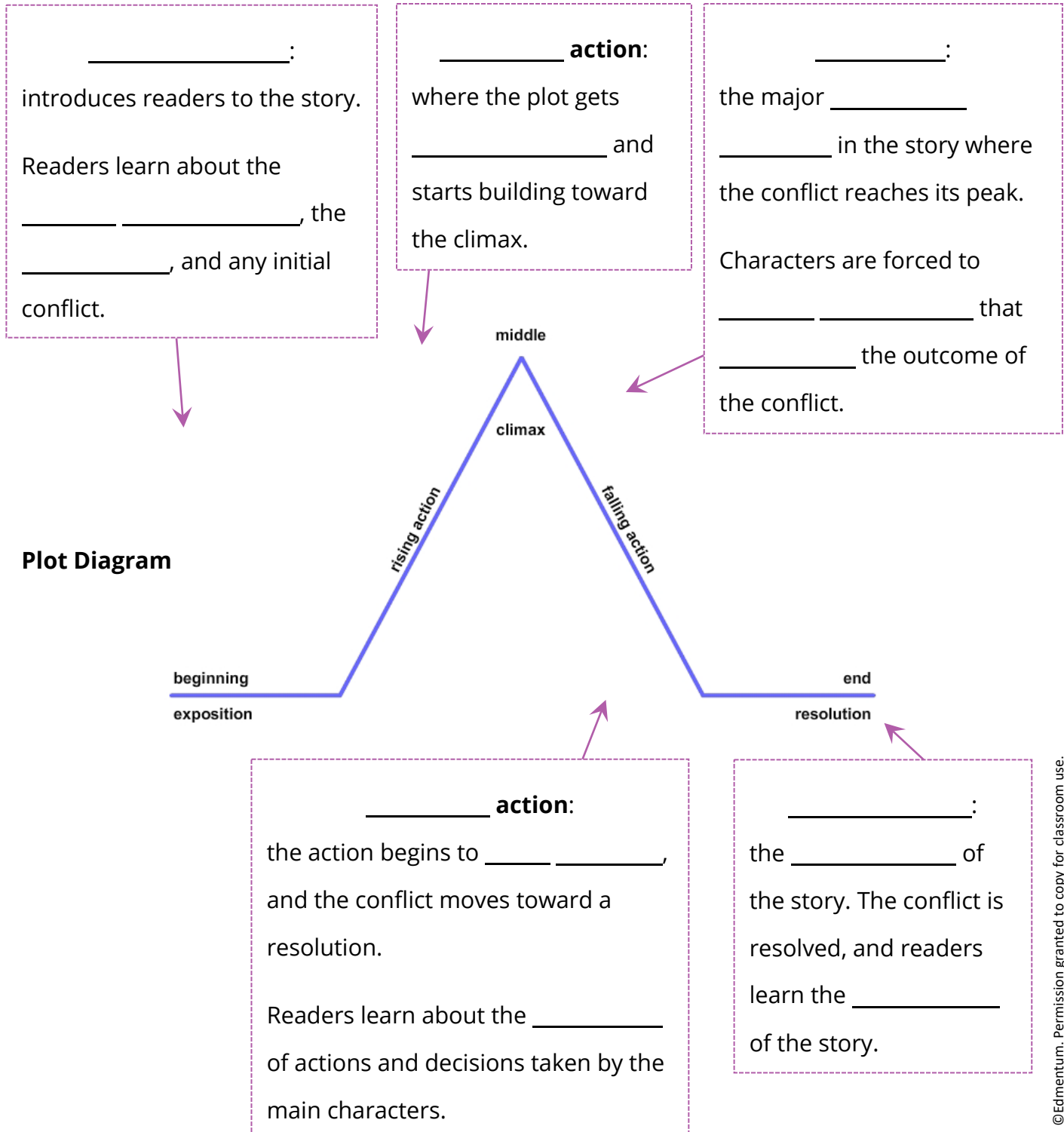
Throughout her life as a writer, actor, or theater activist, Gerstenberg enjoyed significant influence in the American theater community.

## FOURTEEN

Gerstenberg's *Fourteen* was well-received at its first performance in San Francisco in 1919 and is still performed to this day. It is a \_\_\_\_\_, or work that pokes fun at the \_\_\_\_\_ of society or individuals by presenting characters in \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ ways. In the one-act play, Gerstenberg gives the reader vivid characterizations to show the absurd value some people, particularly women, place on \_\_\_\_\_ and the lengths they go to \_\_\_\_\_ or maintain it.

## ELEMENTS OF PLOT

Most plays or stories present similar types of events in a pattern. This pattern makes up the plot, and the events are called the \_\_\_\_\_.



## UNDERSTANDING CHARACTERS



To understand characters in a play, pay attention to what they \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as well as what the \_\_\_\_\_ say to or about them. Through details, you can:

- “read between the lines” or \_\_\_\_\_ ideas that the playwright does not state in the text
- figure out characters’ \_\_\_\_\_ or think of words or phrases to describe what they are like
- understand their \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ and recognize their \_\_\_\_\_.

Motivations are the \_\_\_\_\_ for their words and actions.

Noticing any \_\_\_\_\_ that the playwright gives directly in the text or through the dialogue can help you understand the characters, too.

## CHARACTERS AND POINT OF VIEW

Many stories are told from the point of view of a narrator. The reader is told details that are revealed from one of three “places” or ways of seeing and hearing what happens in the story:

| Point of view        | Signaled by the Pronouns: | Narrator...          |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>first person</b>  | I, me, my, myself         |                      |
| <b>second person</b> |                           | speaks to the reader |
| <b>third person</b>  |                           |                      |

A character’s point of view is the way the \_\_\_\_\_ looks at or feels about someone or something. It can be understood as:

- a \_\_\_\_\_ that may be the same as or very different from the belief of another character in the play or story
- the character’s “\_\_\_\_\_”—toward other characters, events, and so on.

## Reading Selection

### EXCERPT FROM FOURTEEN

Read the excerpt from *Fourteen* by Alice Gerstenberg. Then, examine these aspects of the drama: characters, elements of plot, and point of view.

## Examining Characters and Theme

Authors often build plots around \_\_\_\_\_ that are the focus of the events or experiences of the characters. The ideas, or \_\_\_\_\_, are "\_\_\_\_\_" – they can be recognized or understood in other texts and connected to \_\_\_\_\_ and situations.

There can be \_\_\_\_\_ theme in a single story.



To recognize the themes that plots are built upon, you can ask some simple questions:

- 
- How does the main character \_\_\_\_\_ over the course of the story?
- 
- What does the author want you to \_\_\_\_\_ about these ideas?
- How does the theme connect or \_\_\_\_\_ to real-life situations?

## Comparing Text Structures

### PLAYS AND SHORT STORIES



|                         | Play or Drama                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Short Story                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Structure & Interaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The text (a script) includes descriptions of the stage or _____, and the _____ that the characters speak.</li> <li>It is meant to be _____ and is structured with a _____, _____ interaction (an audience).</li> <li>It is _____ written in paragraphs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is organized in _____ and has all the elements of a novel or longer work, but it is _____, primarily in _____.</li> <li>The reader's interaction with the text is _____ and _____.</li> </ul> |
| Characters & Events     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____ characters in a play are _____ to telling the story.</li> <li>Events of the plot center around a _____ and its _____.</li> <li>The events and the thoughts of the characters are communicated through _____.</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often, there are _____ in a short story.</li> <li>The main event is clearly tied to the _____.</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| Narrator                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is _____ to fill in gaps or explain what is happening.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The _____ tells the story, giving descriptions or details.</li> <li>Often, the narrator speaks from the _____ point of view (all-knowing position).</li> </ul>                                   |