READING: DRAMA

Drama is different from other types of literature -- it is written to be performed. Use your imagination to see and hear the play as you read the text.

Get the big picture.

◊ Read the introductory material to learn:
  ♦ When was the play written?
  ♦ How was it staged?
  ♦ Who was the audience intended by the author?
  ♦ Were the theatrical conventions of the time different from today?

◊ Briefly skim the play to determine:
  ♦ Is it written in verse, or in regular prose?
  ♦ Is it divided into acts and scenes, or arranged by another method?

See the action.

◊ Visualize the setting. Sometimes the setting is described in the stage directions; sometimes you must infer the setting from what characters say and do.

◊ Imagine the characters. How old are they? What do they look like? How are they dressed? The text will give you clues.

◊ Picture what the actors might do as they say the lines. The same words with different actions could have different meanings.

Hear the voices.

◊ Read the first scene aloud, using an expressive voice. Whenever the text begins to confuse you, read the text aloud.

◊ Remember that the way a person speaks is as meaningful as what s/he says. Imagine how the lines might change depending on the actor's delivery.

◊ If possible, listen to a recording or watch a video of the play. Good actors bring the words to life.
Reading Drama Worksheet

Jot down a brief summary of the action after you read each scene.
Use your notes to answer these questions:

√ Who is the protagonist?

√ What does the protagonist want?

√ Which obstacles keep him/her from achieving this goal? Is there an antagonist or are there other obstacles?

√ At what point is the conflict introduced?

√ Which setbacks does the protagonist encounter?

√ When is the climax -- the point just before the ultimate success or failure of the protagonist?

√ What is the resolution? What happens to the protagonist and the other characters?

√ Are there subplots in addition to the main plot? How are the subplots and main plot related?