

Reading

The Art of Mime

Miming dates back to the theaters¹ of ancient Greece and Rome. Mimes use movements, **gestures**, and facial expressions to **portray** a character or an emotion or to tell a story—all without words. Over the centuries, the art of miming grew to include acrobatics, **props**, and costumes, **culminating** in the fine-tuned art form that people recognize² today.

Miming can be **abstract**, **literal**, or a combination of the two. **Abstract** miming usually has no plot or central character but simply expresses a feeling such as sorrow or desire. **Literal** miming, on the other hand, tells a story and is often comedic, using body **gestures** and facial expressions to present a main character facing some type of **conflict** in a **humorous** way, for example, acting out a tug-of-war without the aid of rope or other props.

The twentieth-century style of miming reflects outside influences of the period, most notably silent films, in which actors relied on their ability to communicate thoughts and stories through facial expressions and **exaggerated gestures**. Two superstars of the silent movie era, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, **sharpened** their miming skills in the theater before using them in movies. Both were so successful that they have continued to influence mimes and other live performers long after their deaths. People still consider Chaplin a master of the miming technique, in particular, his tragicomic "little tramp" character, who so **effectively portrays** human **frailty** through physical comedy, also known as slapstick.

Another twentieth-century influence on modern miming involves a **renowned** French mime and acting teacher named Etienne Decroux, who developed what was known as corporeal mime. This art form focused on the body, showing thought through movement, and became the **prominent** form of the modern mime era. In the 1930s, Decroux founded a mime school in Paris based on corporeal mime. One of his students, a young Frenchman named Marcel Marceau, **emerged** as what many consider the master of modern mime.

Marceau added his personal touch to the art of miming and presented it to the world for half a century on television and in theaters. Among his well-known **illusions** are portrayals of a man walking against the wind and a man trapped inside a shrinking box. Marceau also created his own special character, Bip the clown. White-faced and dressed in a striped shirt and floppy top hat with a red flower, Bip is **reminiscent** of both Chaplin's little tramp and Pierrot, the traditional downtrodden mime character from centuries earlier.

¹BrE: theatres

²BrE: recognise

Miming is still taught in dance, drama, and acting schools worldwide, although it has changed **considerably** since the ancient Greek plays and even since the solo performances of Marceau. Group miming is now in fashion, and sounds, lighting, and other special effects are included to help create the desired **atmosphere**. Current examples include the U.S. dance troupe Pilobolus, which **merges** modern dance, acrobatics, gymnastics, and mime to create elaborate geometric shapes with their bodies, and the Canadian Cirque du Soleil, which uses lighting, spectacular costumes, and special effects to produce striking **illusions**.

Answer the questions about **The Art of Mime**.

Questions 1-8

Complete the summary using words from the list below.

Mime is a type of theater performance that uses **1**..... and expressions to tell a story or show a character. There are two types of mime. The first is **2**..... mime, which tells a story and is often **3**..... . It makes people laugh. The second is **4**..... mime, which portrays feelings. Two influential actors **5**..... during the silent film era. They were Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, whose years of experience in the theater **6**..... in miming skills that they were able to use effectively in silent films. Their techniques influenced mimes for many years. The French mime Etienne Decroux developed the form known as corporeal mime. One of his students, Marcel Marceau, became a prominent modern mime. Marceau's **7**..... illusions include a man walking against the wind and a man trapped in a box. Now mimes often perform in groups. They have **8**..... a variety of skills, such as dance, acrobatics, and gymnastics, as well as mime, in their performances.

abstract
conflicts
culminated
emerged

gestures
humorous
illusion
literal

merged
props
reminiscent
renowned

sharpened

ESSENTIAL WORDS FOR THE IELTS

My Words

Write the words that are new to you. Look them up in the dictionary and write their definitions.

Words

Definitions

Word Families

adjective	considerable	It takes considerable skill to perform mime.
adverb	considerably	The mime's audiences grew considerably as word of his skill spread.

noun	effect	His skilled performance was the effect of years of experience.
verb	effect	He worked hard to effect change.
adjective	effective	A really effective mime performance makes the audience believe in the illusion.
adverb	effectively	A skilled mime can effectively perform a variety of illusions.

noun	exaggeration	A mime uses exaggeration to create illusions.
verb	exaggerate	A mime may exaggerate certain gestures.
adjective	exaggerated	The exaggerated gestures of a mime are used for humorous effect.

ESSENTIAL WORDS FOR THE IELTS

noun	frailty	Mimes can make us laugh at our own frailty.
noun	frailness	The mime portrayed the frailness of old age.
adjective	frail	Humans are frail, and mimes can make us laugh at this.
adverb	frailly	The mime moved frailly around the stage as if he were 100 years old.

noun	portrayal	Charlie Chaplin is renowned for his portrayal of the little tramp character.
noun	portrayer	Mimes are often portrayers of human frailty.
verb	portray	Mimes portray common situations in humorous ways.
adjective	portrayable	Almost any everyday situation is portrayable through mime.

noun	reminiscence	Reminiscences of the early days of film would include stories of stars such as Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.
verb	reminisce	People like to reminisce about the great performers of the past.
adjective	reminiscent	Marcel Marceau's clown character was reminiscent of characters performed by earlier mimes.

Word Family Practice

Choose the correct word family member from the list below to complete each blank.

Everyone enjoys watching mimes perform. A really good mime makes the job look easy, but in reality it is impossible to **1**..... the skill required to perform mime **2**..... . It takes a **3**..... amount of time to develop techniques and learn to perform them well. Mimes need to be able to **4**..... characters who will interest their audience, as well as perform a variety of illusions. The best mimes can show us our **5**..... while making us laugh at ourselves at the same time. Although mime has changed over the years, people still **6**..... about some of the popular mimes of the past, who have inspired today's performers.

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. exaggeration | exaggerate | exaggerated |
| 2. effect | effective | effectively |
| 3. considerable | considerably | |
| 4. portrayal | portrayer | portray |
| 5. frailties | frail | |
| 6. reminiscence | reminisce | reminiscent |

Dictionary Skill

Different Meanings

Many words have more than one meaning.

Read the definitions below. Then read the sentences and write the letter of the correct definition for each sentence.

QUESTIONS 1–2

at-mos-phere [AT-mu-sfeer]

A noun. the feeling of a place

B noun. the air, or mixture of gases, surrounding Earth and other planets

- _____ 1. The *atmosphere* helps hold warmth from the sun.
- _____ 2. The bright lighting in the theater created a happy *atmosphere*.

QUESTIONS 3–4

ef-fect [ɪ-FEKT]

A noun. result

B noun. special sound or lighting in a theater or movie

- _____ 3. The *effect* of watching Charlie Chaplin's little tramp character is a mixture of sadness and laughter.
- _____ 4. Modern mime performances often include special *effects* as part of the illusions they create.

Listening

CD 1
Track
13

Listen to the talk. Complete the notes below.
Write **NO MORE THAN ONE WORD** for each answer.

Mime

Performed without **1**

2 of everyday activities

- climbing stairs
- opening a window

Use **3** to show presence of objects

Act out stories

- **4** different characters
- Show the characters in **5**