

Name: _____

Honors English 12

Date: _____

Period _____

Macbeth

Tragedy in Drama

Nearly every story has a hero, but some are a better off by the end of the story than others. In this video, we learn what is so tragic about the hero in a tragedy.

Tragedy in Drama

Almost every play is an attempt to bring _____ to _____, to solve a problem.

The way the problem or conflict is solved can determine whether a piece is a _____ or a _____.

Tragedies typically end _____ for the main character.

Tragedy: Origins and Definition

A tragedy is a type of drama where the characters go through _____.

In the simplest terms, Aristotle defined tragedy as a form of drama whose plot is centered _____ for the purpose of evoking feelings of _____ in the audience.

This feeling, which Aristotle called _____, helps the audience move beyond the feelings of pity and fear to find _____ by the end of the play.

Characteristics of Tragedy

But a tragedy is more than just a play about _____.

Aristotle explains that the plot in a tragedy is more than just the story itself; it is the arrangement of the _____, or chain reaction of _____ events, that happen in the story.

The _____ is the most important piece of the tragedy and, according to Aristotle, should be whole, with a beginning, middle and end.

But, he also believed that the plot must have unity of action, where all of the events are dependent on _____ and lead to _____. Because they are all tied together, and usually to the same person, this creates _____.

This plot is slightly different than what we see in a standard plot diagram.

- We start with the incentive moment, or the moment that _____
- The reversal is a reversal of _____.
- The climax, as in a standard plot, is the _____.
- Recognition is when the character makes an _____ and gains _____.
- The catastrophe marks the hero's _____, which sometimes includes his _____.
- The resolution only comes when the other characters can _____ of the hero, but see the _____ that has come with his passing.

The tragic hero is the focus of the tragedy and holds special characteristics of his own. Aristotle believed the tragic heroes all possessed similar qualities, an idea that is still taught in literature courses today. And, while there are variants and debates surrounding specific characters in tragedies, the tragic hero is usually a man with the following characteristics:

1. He comes from a _____; he is likely a noble or even a king.
2. While he's a great guy, he's not perfect. The tragic flaw, or the _____, leads to his _____. Even though the gods, or some other supernatural force, have set his fate, the hero makes a choice that results in his own suffering.
3. Even though the hero suffers, in the end, he learns _____ and his place in the world. Unfortunately, he sometimes dies after his discovery and the play ends, leaving the audience reflective on the significance of the hero's life.

Changes to Tragedy over Time

The tragic hero fuels the plot of the tragedy, and that image of the hero has changed over time. Like the origin of many aspects of drama, the creation of the tragedy is debatable. According to most sources, the _____ are attributed as the founders of tragedy in drama.

The first tragedies, which were often based on _____, with the intermingling of gods and humans, are attributed to the Greeks.

By the time of the English Renaissance, the tragedy had become more _____. While the Greek tragedies did not always end with the death of the hero, the tragedies of the Renaissance usually found the hero dead. Additionally, the hero was not always _____. Take Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example. Macbeth becomes a sort of _____ by the end of the story, and though he does learn something about himself by the end of the play, he is also responsible for _____, including the king and his wife.

Notes on Tragedy – From Video

Nearly every story has a hero, but some are a better off by the end of the story than others. In this video, we learn what is so tragic about the hero in a tragedy.

Tragedy in Drama

When most of us think of the theatre, we usually picture the two masks representing comedy and drama. Regardless of whether the play qualifies as one or the other, almost every play is an attempt to bring chaos to order, to solve a problem. The way the problem or the conflict is solved can determine whether a piece is a comedy or a tragedy. The comedy ends with some sort of an, 'And they all lived happily ever after.' Tragedies, on the other hand, typically end badly for the main character.

Tragedy: Origins and Definition

A tragedy is a type of drama where the characters go through some form of suffering. Most definitions of tragedy that we use today come from some parts of the work *The Poetics* written by the philosopher Aristotle. In the simplest terms, Aristotle defined tragedy as a form of drama whose plot is centered on human suffering for the purpose of evoking feelings of pity and fear in the audience. This feeling, which Aristotle called catharsis, helps the audience move beyond the feelings of pity and fear to find peace by the end of the play.

Characteristics of Tragedy

But a tragedy is more than just a play about suffering. In *The Poetics*, Aristotle explains that the plot in a tragedy is more than just the story itself; it is the arrangement of the incidents, or chain reaction of cause-and-effect events, that happen in the story. The plot is the most important piece of the tragedy and, according to Aristotle, should be whole, with a beginning, middle and end. But, he also believed that the plot must have unity of action, where all of the events are dependent on the previous and lead to the next. Because they are all tied together, and usually to the same person, this creates unity.

This plot is slightly different than what we see in a standard plot diagram.

- We start with the incentive moment, or the moment that begins the cause-and-effect chain of events.
- The reversal is a reversal of circumstances for the worst.
- The climax, as in a standard plot, is the highest point of action.
- Recognition is when the character makes an important discovery and gains insight to his life.
- The catastrophe marks the hero's ultimate suffering, which sometimes includes his death.
- The resolution only comes when the other characters can mourn the loss of the hero, but see the good that has come with his passing.

The tragic hero is the focus of the tragedy and holds special characteristics of his own. Aristotle believed the tragic heroes all possessed similar qualities, an idea that is still taught in literature courses today. And, while there are variants and debates surrounding specific characters in tragedies, the tragic hero is usually a man with the following characteristics:

1. He comes from a place of importance; he is likely a noble or even a king.
2. While he's a great guy, he's not perfect. The tragic flaw, or the mistake the hero makes, leads to his downfall. Even though the gods, or some other supernatural force, have set his fate, the hero makes a choice that results in his own suffering.
3. Even though the hero suffers, in the end, he learns something about himself and his place in the world. Unfortunately, he sometimes dies after his discovery and the play ends, leaving the audience reflective on the significance of the hero's life.

Changes to Tragedy over Time

The tragic hero fuels the plot of the tragedy, and that image of the hero has changed over time. Like the origin of many aspects of drama, the creation of the tragedy is debatable. According to most sources, the Greeks are attributed as the founders of tragedy in drama.

The first tragedies, which were often based on myths, with the intermingling of gods and humans, are attributed to the Greeks who wrote them for the festival of Dionysus. Most sources explain that as part of the festival, which celebrated wine and fertility, a goat was sacrificed to purify the city of its sins. The word 'tragedy' comes from the Greek 'goat song.' This also falls in line with Aristotle's idea of catharsis, which is the purification of emotion. So not only did these tragedies have a hero who was able to better himself by reaching new understandings, they served as a means of purification for the audience too.

By the time of the English Renaissance, the tragedy had become more complex and dark. While the Greek tragedies did not always end with the death of the hero, the tragedies of the Renaissance usually found the hero dead. Additionally, the hero was not always mostly good. Take Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example. Macbeth becomes a sort of villain by the end of the story, and though he does learn something about himself by the end of the play, he is also responsible for the deaths of many, including the king and his wife.

The Neo-classical period, which was dominant in France, returned to the rules that Aristotle had established. There was less originality in the writing since they, in general, did not seek to make new ideas, but to value the truths that had already been discovered. This form never quite made it to England, and was quickly overshadowed by the bourgeois tragedy that turned everyday people into heroes.

This shift from finding heroes in the upper social classes to finding heroes in the everyday man has fueled the modernist view of tragedy. Arthur Miller, famous for his tragedy *Death of a Salesman*, wrote an essay called 'Tragedy and the Common Man' in 1949. In his essay, he argues that tragedies can show ordinary people in everyday situations. The debate on what qualifies as a tragedy continues as writers experiment with new plots, characters and dramatic forms.