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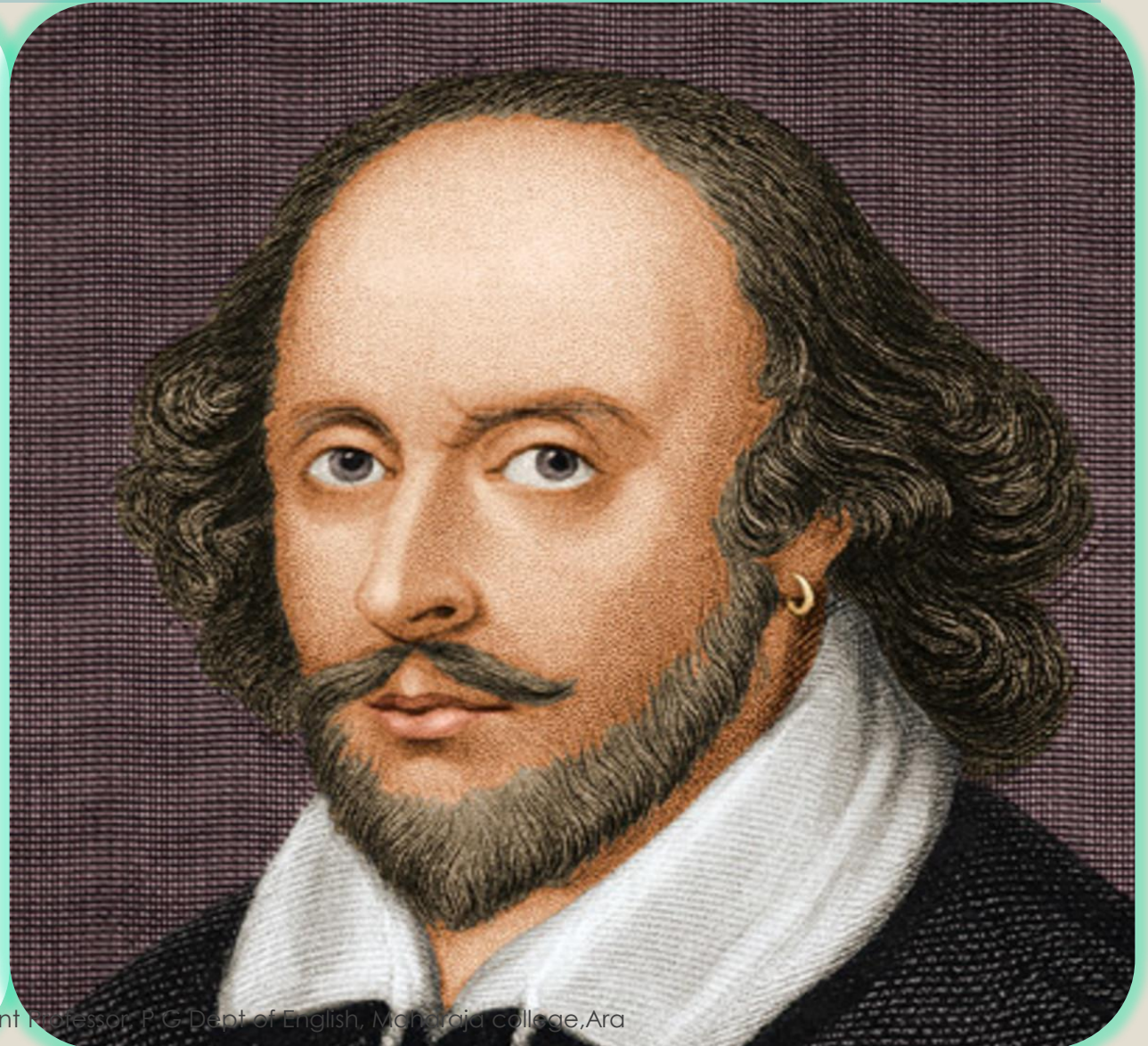
Shakespearean Tragedy

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ELEMENTS OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Elements	Explanation
Hamartia	The fatal character flaw of the tragic hero.
Tragic Hero	A main character cursed by fate and possessed of a tragic flaw.
Tragic Waste	The good being destroyed along with the bad at the resolution of the play. Often played out with the unnecessary loss of life, especially of good characters.
A Struggle Between Good and Evil	This struggle can take place as part of the plot or exist within the main character.
Catharsis	The release of the audience's emotions through empathy with the characters.
External Conflict	This can be a problem facing the hero as a result of the plot or a "bad guy" character.
Internal Conflict	The struggle the hero engages in with his/her fatal flaw.
Lack of Poetic Justice	Things end poorly for everyone, including the "good guys."
Supernatural Elements	Magic, witchcraft, ghosts, etc.
Comic Relief	One or more humorous characters who participate in scenes intended to lighten the mood.

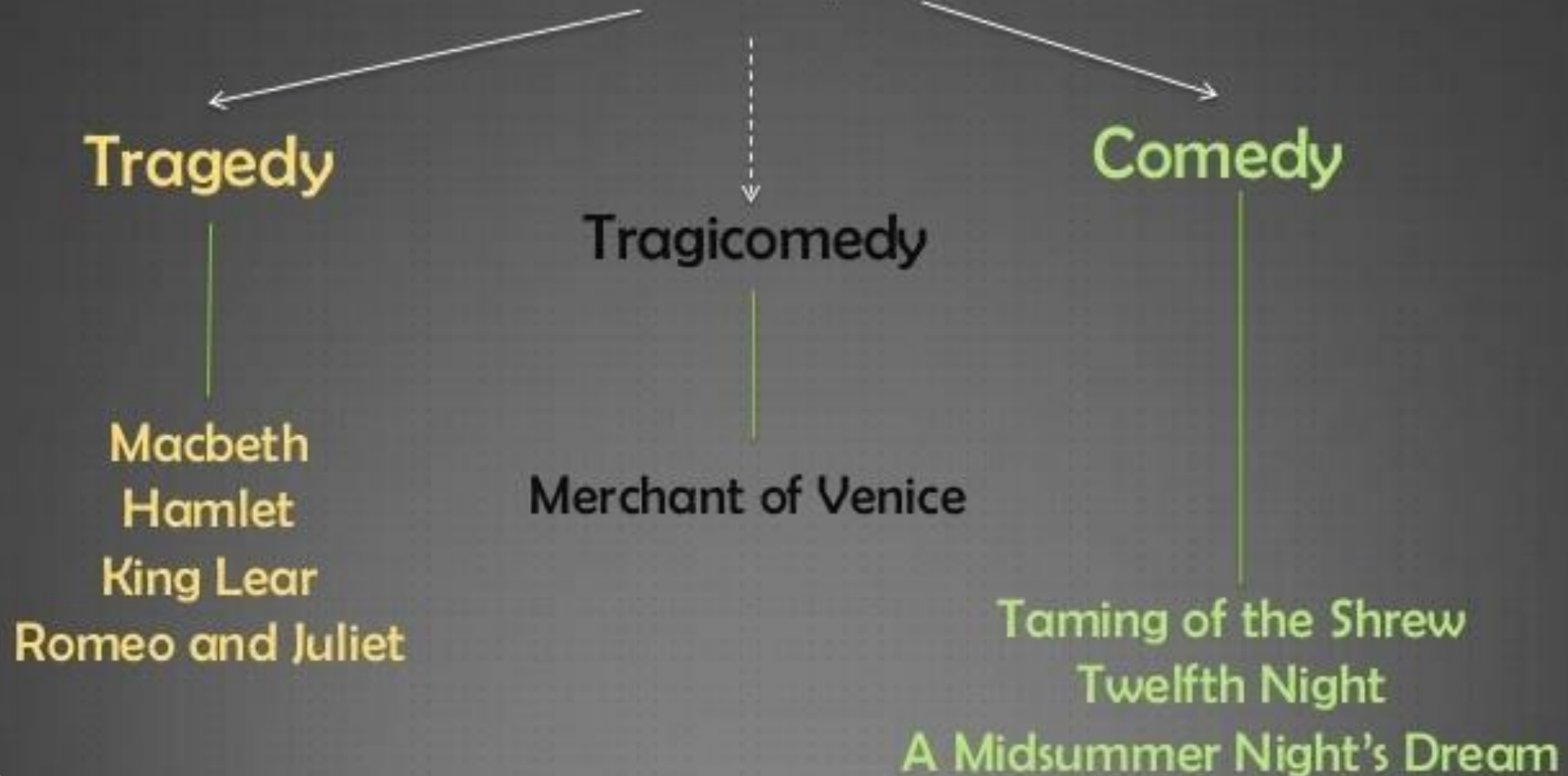
Elements of Shakespearean Tragedy



A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language; in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions.”

— Aristotle

Shakespeare



GENRE OF SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMAS

GENRE OF SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMAS			
TRAGEDIES	HISTORY	COMEDIES	TRAGI-COMEDIES
<u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>	Henry IV Part I	All's Well That Ends Well	<u>The Merchant of Venice</u>
<u>Coriolanus</u>	<u>Henry IV Part II</u>	<u>As You Like It</u>	A Winter's Tale
<u>Cymbeline</u>	<u>Henry V</u>	<u>The Comedy of Errors</u>	
<u>Hamlet</u>	<u>Henry VI Part I</u>	<u>Love's Labour's Lost</u>	
<u>Julius Caesar</u>	<u>Henry VI Part II</u>	<u>Measure for Measure</u>	
<u>King Lear</u>	<u>Henry VI Part III</u>	<u>The Merry Wives of Windsor</u>	
<u>Macbeth</u>	Henry VIII	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u>	
<u>Othello</u>	<u>King John</u>	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u>	
<u>Romeo and Juliet</u>	<u>Richard II</u>	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u>	
<u>Timon of Athens</u>	<u>Richard III</u>		
	Henry IV Part I		
	<u>Henry IV Part II</u>		
	<u>Henry V</u>		
	<u>Henry VI Part I</u>		
	<u>King John</u>		

An additional group, 'problem plays', has sometimes been used to categorise *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

The Plays of William Shakespeare in chronological order

- 1 *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- 2 *Taming of the Shrew*
- 3 *Henry VI, part 1*
- 4 *Henry VI, part 3*
- 5 *Titus Andronicus*
- 6 *Henry VI, part 2*
- 7 *Richard III*
- 8 *The Comedy of Errors*
- 9 *Love's Labours Lost*
- 10 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- 11 *Romeo and Juliet*
- 12 *Richard II*
- 13 *King John*
- 14 *The Merchant of Venice*
- 15 *Henry IV, part 1*
- 16 *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- 17 *Henry IV, part 2*
- 18 *Much Ado About Nothing*
- 19 *Henry V*
- 20 *Julius Caesar*
- 21 *As You Like It*
- 22 *Hamlet*
- 23 *Twelfth Night*
- 24 *Troilus and Cressida*
- 25 *Measure for Measure*
- 26 *Othello*
- 27 *All's Well That Ends Well*
- 28 *Timon of Athens*
- 29 *The Tragedy of King Lear*
- 30 *Macbeth*
- 31 *Anthony and Cleopatra*
- 32 *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*
- 33 *Coriolanus*
- 34 *Winter's Tale*
- 35 *Cymbeline*
- 36 *The Tempest*
- 37 *Henry VIII*

INTRODUCTION

- What did Shakespeare's plays look like when he wrote them?
- They tended to be written in something called **blank verse**. This is made up of lines of iambic pentameter that don't rhyme.
- What's **iambic pentameter**?
- It's a 10-syllable line divided into five units, or feet, called iambs. An iamb is just two syllables that go light-STRONG in stress. For example, one of the more famous lines of iambic pentameter comes from *Romeo and Juliet*. This is when Romeo sees Juliet on the balcony at the start of that famous balcony scene:

'But SOFT! what LIGHT through YONder WINdow BREAKS.'

WHAT IS TRAGEDY

- *Tragedy is a serious play or drama typically dealing with the problems of a central character, leading to an unhappy or disastrous ending brought on, as in ancient drama, by fate and a tragic flaw in this character, or, in modern drama, usually by moral weakness, psychological maladjustment, or social pressures."*

— Webster Dictionary

- The word tragedy was derived from the Greek word "*tragoidia*", which means '*the song of the goat.*' It is called "the song of the goat" because in ancient Greece the theatre performers used to wear goatskin costumes to represent satyrs.
- Shakespearean tragedy has got its own specific features, which distinguish it from other kinds of tragedies. It must be kept in mind that Shakespeare is mostly indebted to Aristotle's theory of tragedy in his works.

ELEMENTS OF A SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

- A tragic hero is one of the most significant elements of a Shakespearean tragedy. This type of tragedy is essentially a one-man show. It is a story about one, or sometimes two, characters. The hero may be either male or female and he or she must suffer because of some flaw of character, because of inevitable fate, or both.
- The hero must be *the most* tragic personality in the play.
- An important feature of the tragic hero is that he or she is a towering personality in his/her state/kingdom/country. This person hails from the elite stratum of society and holds a high position, often one of royalty. Tragic heroes are kings, princes, or military generals, who are very important to their subjects.
- Take Hamlet, prince of Denmark; he is intellectual, highly educated, sociable, charming, and of a philosophic bent. The hero is such an important person that his/her death gives rise to full-scale turmoil, disturbance, and chaos throughout the land. When Hamlet takes revenge for the death of his father, he is not only killing his uncle but inviting his own death at the hands of Laertes. And as a direct result of his death, the army of Fortinbras enters Denmark to take control.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

- **Good vs. Evil**

- Shakespearean tragedies play out the struggle between good and evil. Most of them deal with the supremacy of evil and suppression of good. According to Edward Dowden, a 19th century noted poet and literary critic, "*Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is concerned with the ruin or restoration of the soul and of the life of man. In other words, its subject is the struggle of Good and Evil in the world.*" Evil is presented in Shakespearean tragedies in a way that suggests its existence is an indispensable and ever-enduring thing. For example, in *Hamlet*, the reader is given the impression that something rotten will definitely happen to Denmark (foreshadowing). Though the reader gets an inkling, typically the common people of the play are unaware of the impending evil.
- In *Julius Caesar*, the mob is unaware of the struggle between good and evil within King Caesar. They are also ignorant of the furtive and sneaky motives of Cassius. Goodness never beats evil in the tragedies of Shakespeare. Evil conquers goodness. The reason for this is that the evil element is always disguised, while goodness is open and freely visible to all. The main character (the most pious and honest person in the tragedy) is assigned the task of defeating the supreme evil because of his goodness. As a result, he suffers terribly and ultimately fails due to his fatal flaw. This tragic sentiment is perfectly illustrated by Hamlet in the following lines:
 - *O cursed spite,*
 - *That ever I was born to set it right."*

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

◦ 3. Hamartia/Tragic Flaw

- Hamartia is the Greek word for “sin” or “error”, which derives from the verb *hamatanein*, meaning “to err” or “to miss the mark”. In other words, hamartia refers to the hero's tragic flaw. It is another absolutely critical element of a Shakespearean tragedy. Every hero falls due to some flaw in his or her character. Here I will once again reference A. C. Bradley, who asserts, “*The calamities and catastrophe follow inevitably from the deeds of men and the main source of these deeds is character.*” As a result of the fatal flaw, the hero falls from a high position, which usually leads to his/her unavoidable death.
- A good example of hamartia can be seen in *Hamlet* when Hamlet's faltering judgment and failure to act lead him to his untimely death. He suffers from procrastination. He finds a number of opportunities to kill his uncle, but he fails because of his indecisive and procrastinating nature. Every time, he delays taking action. In one case he finds an opportunity to kill Claudius while Claudius is praying. Still, Hamlet forgoes the excellent opportunity to achieve his goal with the excuse that he doesn't want to kill a man while he is praying. He wants to kill Claudius when he is in the act of committing a sin. It is this perfectionism, failure to act, and uncertainty about the correct path that ultimately result in Hamlet's death and lead Denmark into chaos.

HAMARTIA/TRAGIC FLAWS IN HEROES OF SHAKESPEARE

- Romeo's fatal flaw is his impulsiveness. The tragic consequences of his actions: both he and Juliet end the play dead by their own hands.
- Hamlet fatal flaw lied in his indecisiveness and inability to commit to a course of action. Hamlet broods over them too long.

To Be or Not To be, that's the question

- Macbeth's fatal flaw is a much baser human emotion: his vaulting ambition. All MacBeth's actions as king are driven by his ambition, and these decisions culminate in his death.
- For Othello, his own insecurity and inability to trust or believe in the loyalty of his wife, precedes utter devastation and his own bitterly sad demise.
- Flattery is such a useful tool to an attacker. King Lear craves flattery and values appearances over reality when he asks his daughters to publicly declare their love for him.. He wants to enjoy all the trappings and worship of a king but has lost interest in behaving like one, and fulfilling the obligations and responsibility the position demands.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

◦ **4. Tragic Waste**

- In Shakespearean tragedies, the hero usually dies along with his opponent.
- The death of a hero is not an ordinary death; it encompasses the loss of an exceptionally intellectual, honest, intelligent, noble, and virtuous person. In a tragedy, when good is destroyed along with evil, the loss is known as a "tragic waste."
- Shakespearean tragedy always includes a tragic waste of goodness. Hamlet is a perfect example of tragic waste.
- Even though Hamlet succeeds in uprooting the evil from Denmark, he does so at the cost of his death. In this case, the good (Hamlet) gets destroyed along with evil (Claudius). Neither of them wins. Instead, they fail together.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

- **Conflict**

- Conflict is another imperative element of a Shakespearean tragedy. There are two types of conflicts:

- **External Conflict**

- External conflict plays a vital role in the tragedies of Shakespeare. External conflict causes internal conflict in the mind of the tragic hero. Every tragic hero in a Shakespearean play is confronted with external conflicts that must be addressed. Hamlet, for example, is confronted with external conflict in the shape of his uncle, Claudius. He has to take revenge, but as a result of his uncle's craftiness and effective security, Hamlet isn't able to translate his ideas into action. This external conflict gives rise to internal conflict, which hinders Hamlet from taking any action.

- **Internal Conflict**

- Internal conflict is one of the most essential elements in a Shakespearean tragedy. It refers to the confusion in the mind of the hero. Internal conflict is responsible for the hero's fall, along with fate or destiny. The tragic hero always faces a critical dilemma. Often, he cannot make a decision, which results in his ultimate failure. Again, Hamlet is a perfect example. He is usually a doer, but over the course of the play, his indecision and frequent philosophical hangups create a barrier to action. Internal conflict is what causes Hamlet to spare the life of Claudius while he is praying.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

- **Catharsis**

- Catharsis is a remarkable feature of a Shakespearean tragedy.
- It refers to the cleansing of the audience's pent-up emotions.
- In other words, Shakespearean tragedies help the audience to feel and release emotions through the aid of tragedy.
- When we watch a tragedy, we identify with the characters and take their losses personally.
- A Shakespearean tragedy gives us an opportunity to feel pity for a certain character and fear for another, almost as if we are playing the roles ourselves. The hero's hardships compel us to empathize with him. The villain's cruel deeds cause us to feel wrath toward him.
- Tears flow freely when a hero like Hamlet dies. At the same time we feel both sorry for Hamlet and happy that Claudius has received his proper punishment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

◦ **Supernatural Elements**

- Supernatural elements are another key aspect of a Shakespearean tragedy. They play an important role in creating an atmosphere of awe, wonder, and sometimes fear.
- Supernatural elements are typically used to advance the story and drive the plot.
- The ghost Hamlet sees plays an important role in stirring up internal conflict. It is the ghost who tells Hamlet his father was killed by his uncle Claudius and assigns him the duty of taking revenge.
- Similarly, the witches in *Macbeth* play a significant role in the plot. These witches are responsible for motivating Macbeth to resort to murder in order to ascend the throne of Scotland.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

Absence of Poetic Justice

- Poetic Justice means good is rewarded and evil is punished.
- it refers to a situation in which everything comes to a fitting and just end.
- There is no poetic justice in the tragedies of Shakespeare, rather, these plays contain only partial justice.
- Shakespeare understood that poetic justice rarely occurs outside of fiction. Good deeds often go without reward and immoral people are often free to enjoy life to its fullest. “*Do good and have good*” was considered an outdated ethos in the time of Shakespeare, which is why we don’t find any poetic justice in his tragedies. Good is crushed along with evil. Hamlet dies along with Claudius.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAGIC HERO

- **Comic Relief**

- Comic relief is our final key element. Shakespeare didn't follow in the footsteps of his classical predecessors when writing tragedies. Greek and Roman writers didn't use comic relief. But Shakespeare wanted to relieve the tension for the reader and lighten up the mood here and there.
 - A few examples of comic relief scenes include the grave digger scene in *Hamlet*, the drunken port scene in *Macbeth*, the fool is smarter than the king dialogue in *King Lear*, and the Polonius in the wings speech in *Hamlet*.
 - **We also have the following scene in *Romeo and Juliet*:**
- **MERCUTIO:** "No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door, but 'tis enough; 'twill serve. Ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am pepper'd, I warrant, for this world."
- **HAMLET:** *Whose Grave's this, sirrah?*
- **CLOWN/GRAVEDIGGER:** *Mine, sir....*
- **HAMLET:** *What man dost thou dig it for?*
- **CLOWN:** *For no man, sir.*
- **HAMLET:** *What woman then?*

TRAGI-COMEDY PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

- **Tragicomedy** is a **literary** genre that blends aspects of both tragic and comic forms. Tragedies are usually focused almost exclusively on the central character, the tragic hero can sometimes be a double tragedy, with two tragic heroes like Romeo and Juliet. The audience has insights into his mind and goes deeply in, as with Macbeth or Hamlet.
- In the Renaissance, **tragicomedy** became a genre of play that mixed tragic elements into drama that was mainly comic. Notable examples of **tragicomedy** by William **Shakespeare** are The Merchant of Venice (1596–97), The Winter's Tale (1610–11), and The Tempest (1611–12).
- All of Shakespeare's plays in varying degrees and in various ways combine tragic and comic elements, two groups of plays -- the so-called "problem plays" or "dark comedies" and the so-called "romances" -- integrate tragic and comic effects in such complex ways that the plays' meanings depend on an understanding of how their comic and tragic elements work with or against one another.
- The tragicomedy was hailed centuries later by the nineteenth-century Romantic writers as a form of art that most closely mirrors nature. In life, rarely are our experiences exclusively tragic or comic. Indeed, we laugh hardest at jokes that are tinged with sadness and suffer most when events take a cruel and unexpected turn.

FUNCTION OF TRAGI-COMEDY

- The main purpose of tragicomedy is to describe the dual nature of reality, where both modes can coexist, perhaps simultaneously. Therefore, the interweaving of both aspects gives both a comic and tragic view of life. Tragicomedy is mainly used in dramas and theater. Since tragic plays focus exclusively on protagonists, while comic plays are devoid of focus and concern, therefore plays that fell between these two categories were developed. These types of plays present both modes of life through absurdity and seriousness.
- Traditionally, many of us think of a play as being either a comedy or a tragedy. But for William Shakespeare, comedy and tragedy were not clear cut. In fact, merging these two genres was one of his favourite tricks.
- A stalwart proponent of so-called 'tragicomedy', Shakespeare incorporated comedic elements into his tragic plays and vice versa. For example, 'The Merchant of Venice' has a comic structure but Shylock, a central character, appears to be a tragic figure. And, although the play has a comedy ending with the lovers pairing off, Shylock is destroyed by a combination of his own faults and the persecution of the happy lovers.
- Similarly, whilst 'Romeo and Juliet' has a decidedly tragic ending, it is peppered with comic moments. Indeed, until the death of Mercutio, the play leans more toward comedy than tragedy, with bawdy exchanges throughout the first and second acts.

FEATURES OF TRAGI-COMEDY

- Shakespeare constructed his tragicomedies by combining core elements of both comedy and tragedy. In Shakespeare's comedies, the story revolves around a number of characters – often a pair of lovers. Misunderstandings and playful deceptions are central to these storylines.
- Shakespeare's tragicomedies typically have improbable and complex plots populated by characters of high social class. Contrasts between villainy and virtue; treachery; dramatic surprises; and danger are central to the storyline, which often has love at its core.
- For instance, in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', tragic elements are present: Prospero's fall from power, the villain Caliban, Sebastian and Antonio's plot to murder Alonso. However, the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand, and the humorous subplot assigned to the lower-class Stephano and Trinculo, brought together with harmless magic, introduce comic elements to the play.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

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- *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare is considered one of the most popular traditional tragicomedy .
- Though it has a comedic structure, there are tragic characters, such as Shylock (who is a central character, and tragic events, such as Antonio's "loss" of life (because he is not really dead)).
- Although the play ends on a happy note with the union of the lovers in the story, and Antonio is saved from a tragic incident, readers are left with a taste of Shylock's sufferings. Hence, the feeling and mood of the play at the end is neither happy nor gloomy. Though, this play definitely has a comic structure, it also has a strong tragic story. Therefore, it can be classified as a tragicomedy

THE WINTER'S TALE.

- One of his perfect tragicomedies is The first three acts are both tragic and serious.
- While the final two acts are based on pastoral romance, roguery, songs, humour, and reunion.
- A sheep-shearing celebration with the elegant, innocent Perdita serving as a hostess, dancing and singing with shepherds, is suggestive of rural life in England. The blend of suffering, sorrows, humor, romance, forgiveness, and reunion in the play confirms its label as a tragicomedy.
- There are different aspects of the tragicomedy in the play that include: tragic elements, comic elements, romantic elements, and a happy ending.

SHAKESPEREAN COMEDY

- Comedy plays, on the other hand, remove that focus whilst the concerns are diversified so that the action is made up of the stories of several characters, particularly pairs of lovers. The shadows in human emotions are usually minor in the comedies: they are such things as misunderstandings, playful deceptions and so on.
- “Comedies,” as one of William Shakespeare’s contemporaries wrote, “begin in trouble and end in peace.” This is certainly true of the four masterworks selected for this collection, each of which represents a significant stage in the development of the world’s greatest dramatist. Reading these plays, we sample the whole comic spectrum of the Elizabethan world—from the satiric comedy that portrays a world of people whose unreasonable behavior is ludicrous and in need of reform to the romantic comedy that takes us into a dreamlike holiday world whose inhabitants, for all their folly, are still endearing characters.
- Four of the Bard’s most famous comedies:
- *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*.

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