



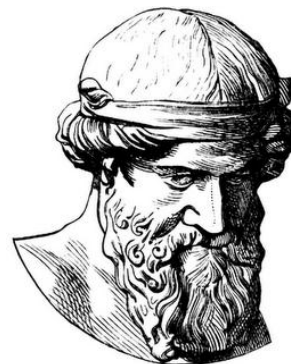
The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

Introduction to Drama, Tragedy & Shakespeare

FRESHMAN ENGLISH CP1
Moeller High School, Mr. Rose

Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy

Aristotle was born in Stagirus, Macedonia, Greece in 384 BC and died 62 years later in 322 BC. He was a student at Plato's Academy and later became one of the greatest philosophers of Ancient Greece. In one of his treatises, *The Poetics*, he outlines the **Six Elements Of Drama**, based on the Ancient Greek belief that **tragedy** was the highest form of drama. This outline has become a guideline for many playwrights throughout history, and is especially emphasized in the works of William Shakespeare.



"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's Six Elements of Drama

1. **Plot** – what happens in a play; the order of events, the story as opposed to the theme; what happens rather than what it means.
2. **Theme** – what the play means as opposed to what happens (plot); the main idea within the play.
3. **Character** – the personality or the part an actor represents in a play; a role played by an actor in a play.
4. **Diction/Language/Dialogue** – the word choices made by the playwright and the enunciation of the actors delivering the lines.
5. **Music/rhythm** – by *music* Aristotle meant the sound, rhythm and melody of the speeches.
6. **Spectacle**– the visual elements of the production of a play; the scenery, costumes, and special effects in a production.

The Modern Elements of Drama

In modern theater, the Elements of Drama have changed only slightly, although you will notice that many of the elements remain the same. The list of essential elements in modern theater are:

- 1 Character
- 2 Plot
- 3 Theme
- 4 Dialogue
- 5 Convention
- 6 Genre
- 7 Audience

The first four -- character, plot, theme and dialogue -- remain the same as Aristotle's list, but the following additions are now also considered essential elements of drama.

5. **Convention:** These are the techniques and methods used by the playwright and director to create the desired stylistic effect.
6. **Genre:** Genre refers to the type of play. Some examples of different genres include, comedy, tragedy, mystery and historical play.
7. **Audience:** This is the group of people who watch the play. Many playwrights and actors consider the audience to be the most important element of drama, as all of the effort put in to writing and producing a play is for the enjoyment of the audience.

Like fiction, drama features **characters** facing a **conflict** that sparks a sequence of events organized by the plot. The conflict reaches a **climax**, or point of greatest intensity, before being solved in the **resolution** at the end. Unlike fiction, however, a drama is a story written to be performed by actors speaking **dialogue**, the characters' words, rather than by a narrator.

Acts and **Scenes** are the basic divisions of drama. A drama may consist of one or more acts, each of which may contain any number of scenes.

The **script**, or text, of a play contains dialogue and stage directions. **Dialogue** is the words the characters say. Stage directions are notes telling how the work is to be performed or staged. Directions are often printed in italics and set off in brackets.

Sets are the constructions indicating where the scene takes place. A set may include such items as painted backdrops and wooden frames.

Props are moveable objects, like a spear or a cup, that actors use onstage.

In performance, these various elements of drama combine to produce the illusion of reality known as dramatic effect. Through this effect, the dramatist explores a theme, or central message about life.

Types of Drama

The ancient Greeks developed drama, creating two basic types of plays:

I. Tragedy

A tragedy shows the downfall or death of the **tragic hero**, or main character. In ancient Greek drama, the hero was an outstanding person brought low by a **tragic flaw**, a mistaken action, defect, or vice of a character. A chorus, or group of performers, sang, danced, and commented on events. The hero's downfall was meant to bring about a **catharsis**, or calming release of tension, in the audience.

William Shakespeare's tragedies differ from Greek tragedies in several ways. In Shakespearian tragedy, the hero has greater free will, or power of choice, and reveals more of an inner life. There is no formal chorus, but one or more characters may comment on the action. Patterns of imagery, or sensory language, reinforces themes.

II. Comedy

In contrast to tragedy, a comedy ends happily after an amusing series of predicaments. If tragedy senses human greatness, comedy emphasizes human faults and the weaknesses of society itself.

How to Read a Play

When you think about a play, you probably think about going to watch the drama being acted out upon the stage, but plays are first written down by the playwright as scripts. The dramatic and verbal aspect of a play is very important, but you can also enjoy reading it. Here's how to read and enjoy a play.

1. Pre-Read: Read any criticism or introduction included in the publication you are studying. They will suggest ideas and approaches to interpreting the play that you may find helpful later. Read them a second time when you've finished reading the play.

2. Identify Genre: Find out the genre of the play; that is, whether it's a tragedy, a comedy, a romance, a satire, etc. You will then know how the play will most likely end.

3. Count the Acts: Determine how many acts the play has. That will give you clues about what should be happening in each part. Generally, a traditional play will set the scene (exposition), introduce a problem (conflict), follow that problem to its logical conclusion, reach the final conflict (climax) and then offer a resolution. This could happen in anywhere from one to five acts.

4. Get to Know the Characters: Write up a chart of characters and how they are related to one another, particularly if it is a play with representatives from several social strata: keep in mind, for example, who is a king and who is merely a minor duke.

5. Try to Summarize Plot: Write short summaries of the action as you are reading through it; some plays depend on very intricate, twisted plots to reach their resolutions.

6. Visualize the Drama: Imagine costumes, sets, noises and times of day/night as you read.

7. Read Aloud: Read as much as you can of the play aloud; it will help you decide what the character's tone and attitude is.

Elizabethan Drama

Popular drama had its beginnings in England with the miracle, mystery, and morality plays of the Middle English times. But it wasn't until the late 16th century that English drama flourished. Despite being one of the most horrible despots in the history of the Western world, **Elizabeth I** was a strong supporter of the arts. It was during her reign (1558-1603) that drama flourished in England. During her reign, some playwrights were able to make a comfortable living by receiving royal patronage. There was a great deal of theatrical activity at Court, and many public theatres were also built on the outskirts of London.



Theatre was a popular pastime, and people of all walks of life attended. Although women were not allowed onstage, they did attend performances and often made up a substantial part of the audience. The theatre also drew many unsavory characters, including pickpockets, cutpurses, and prostitutes. Because of the perceived bad influence of the theatres, the Puritans were vocally opposed to them and succeeded in shutting them down in 1642. Some of the most important playwrights come from the Elizabethan era, including **William Shakespeare**, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe. These playwrights wrote plays that were patterned on numerous previous sources including the Greek tragedy, Seneca's plays, Attic drama, English miracle plays, morality plays, and interludes.

In Elizabethan drama the dialogue was written in **verse**. All of Shakespeare's plays – except a few comic scenes done in prose – are written in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines (known as **blank verse**). Some scenes close with a rhymed couplet.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564 -1616) was an English poet and playwright, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's preeminent dramatist. He is often called England's national



poet and the "Bard of Avon." His surviving works, including some collaborations, consist of 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly **comedies** and **histories**, genres he raised to the peak of sophistication and artistry by the end of the sixteenth century. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote **tragic-comedies**, also known as **romances**, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare's English

Language changes over time. William Shakespeare was writing over 400 years ago. Thus, we can expect his English to be markedly different from our own. A few basic hints of information about Shakespeare's English will help you to more easily understand the play.

1. Adjectives, nouns and verbs are often interchangeable.

Examples: And after scandal them.
 "Scandal" is a noun, but here it is used as a verb meaning "to gossip about."

 No, it is Casca, one incorporate / To our attempts.
 "Incorporate" is a verb, but here it is used as an adjective meaning "united."

2. The following words appear so frequently in Shakespeare that learning them now will make your reading easier:

anon: soon	hither: here	aye: yes
marry: indeed	betimes: now	prithee: pray thee (please)
e'en: even	sooth: truly	e'er: ever
withal: in addition	wont: accustomed	hence: away from here
hie: hurry	wherefore: why	

3. Questions and negatives could be formed without using "do" or "did."

Examples: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
 We would say, "Don't saints have lips, and holy pilgrims, too?"

 What sorrow craves acquaintance at my hand / That I yet know not?
 We would say, "...that I don't yet know?"

4. Shakespeare and his contemporaries used the pronoun "thou" to represent the second person singular (we say "you").

“You” was used as the plural form – if more than one person was being addressed and in the singular as a sign of respect.

Example: Do not swear at all; / Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self

“Thy” is used as “your.”

5. Some past participles and past tense forms used by Shakespeare seem grammatically incorrect today.

Example: O what a time you have chose out
We would say, “What a time you have chosen.”

6. Shakespeare uses multiple negatives for emphasis.

Example: Nor for you neither.

Shakespeare's Style

In addition to dialogue involving conversations between two or more characters, dramatists use these types of dramatic speech:

Monologue: a character speaks at length to silent listeners

Soliloquy: a character alone on stage reveals private thoughts to the audience

Aside: a character briefly expresses private thoughts to the audience that other characters on stage cannot hear.

Shakespeare also makes generous use of these literary devices:

Pun: Humorous “play on words” indicating different meanings

Examples: Mercutio (on being fatally wounded): Ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a **grave** man.
You have dancing shoes With nimble **soles**. I have a **soul** of lead

Metaphor: Making a comparison between two unlike things, or comparing something in terms of something else

Examples: My life is my foe's debt.
It is the east and Juliet is the sun.
I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes.
(Darkness is a cloak)
The mask of night is on my face
(darkness is a mask)

Simile:

Examples: Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books.

Conceit: whimsical, extravagant, fanciful ideas

Oxymoron: the purposeful use of two contradictory words occurring one after the other

Examples: parting is such **sweet sorrow**,
beautiful tyrant
dove-feather'd raven
damned saint
honourable villain

Personification: giving human traits (qualities, feelings, action, or characteristics) to non-living objects (things, colors, qualities, or ideas).

Examples: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy
The grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night.
The earth has swallowed all my hopes but she.

Allusion: a reference to a literary event or character outside of the story itself

Example: Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid's wings.

Hyperbole: a purposeful exaggeration to create an emphatic literary effect.

Examples: The all seeing sun ne'er saw her match since first the world began.
My bounty is as boundless as the sea.

Shakespeare wrote most of the dialogue in his plays using:

Blank verse (Iambic Pentameter): Five feet to a line—each beat consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable

Synopsis of Romeo and Juliet

In Verona, Italy, during the Renaissance, two noble families, the **Montagues** and **Capulets**, are locked in a bitter feud. After a series of public brawls between both the nobles and the servants of the two families, **Prince Escalus**, the ruler of Verona, declares that anyone in either family involved in any future fighting will be put to death. Every year the Capulets throw a masquerade ball. The Montagues, of course, are not invited. Capulet and Lady Capulet, hope that this year their daughter **Juliet** will fall in love with **Paris** at the ball, since at thirteen she is almost of marriageable age and Paris would be a good match. But two Montagues, sixteen-year-old **Romeo** and his cousin **Benvolio**, along with their friend **Mercutio**, a kinsman of Prince Escalus, crash the party. Romeo attends the party only because he wants to see **Rosaline**, a young woman he has been unsuccessfully pursuing for quite some time. That lack of success has made him noticeably lovelorn of late. But at first sight of **Juliet**, Romeo falls in love. Juliet is equally smitten. They speak, and kiss. As the party ends Romeo and Juliet separately discover that they belong to rival families, and are both distraught. Yet Romeo is already so in love that instead of leaving the Capulet's residence with his friends, he jumps a wall and hides beneath her balcony. Suddenly she emerges, and tells the night sky about her forbidden love for Romeo. Romeo



jumps out from his hiding place. They exchange vows of love. The next day, with the help of **Friar Laurence** and **Juliet's Nurse**, Romeo and Juliet are secretly married.

That same day, Benvolio and Mercutio encounter **Tybalt**, who is Juliet's cousin. Tybalt is furious that the Montagues crashed the Capulet party (he spotted them). He has challenged Romeo to a duel. While Mercutio mocks Tybalt, Romeo himself shows up. Tybalt challenged him to fight. Romeo, who is now secretly Tybalt's kinsmen by marriage, refuses. Before Romeo can explain his reasons, Mercutio disgustedly steps in. Romeo tries to separate them, but Tybalt stabs and kills Mercutio under Romeo's arm. Mercutio dies cursing both Montagues and Capulets. In a rage, Romeo kills Tybalt.

Because Romeo at first tried to stop the fighting, instead of ordering him executed, the Prince banishes him from Verona. Juliet is devastated when she learns that Romeo killed her cousin, but she decides that her loyalty must be with her husband. That night Romeo comes to her room and the lovers are able to spend one glorious night together before Romeo, at dawn, must flee Verona to Mantua.

The death of Tybalt affects **Lord Capulet** deeply. He decides to marry Juliet to Paris immediately. Juliet refuses. Capulet threatens to disown her. Lady Capulet sides with her husband, and even the Nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris and forget Romeo. Juliet rushes to Friar Laurence, who comes up with a plan: He gives her a potion that will make it seem like she's died but will really only put her to sleep. She will be laid to rest in the Capulet tomb, and there will wake up. Meanwhile, the Friar promises to get news to Romeo so that he'll secretly return from Mantua and be there when she wakes up. She follows the Friar's advice. The next morning the Capulet household wakes to discover Juliet has died. Instead of a wedding, they have a funeral. Juliet's body is put in the tomb.

But the Friar's letter to Romeo goes astray. Romeo hears only that Juliet has died. In despair, Romeo buys poison and, after fighting and killing a grieving Paris, sneaks into Juliet's tomb. In the tomb, Romeo gazes on what he thinks is the dead body of his beloved, drinks the poison, and dies. Seconds later, Juliet wakes. She sees Romeo's body. Friar Laurence rushes into the cell too late. He tells Juliet what happened, but hears people approaching. He begs Juliet to come with him, but she refuses. He flees. In order to be with Romeo, Juliet kills herself with his dagger.

The Montagues and Capulets are grief-stricken when they learn the truth. They agree to end their feud.