

Core 312 Forms Of Literature: Tragedy

Unit 02 :Types of Tragedy

01. Classical Greek Tragedy:

(1) Introduction:

What's a Greek Tragedy ?

->> ****Greek tragedy is a genre of theater that began its development in the 6th century BC Greece. What we know today as the great Greek tragedies written down by playwrights like Aeschylus and Sophocles have their roots in ritualistic celebrations often involving dance and choral singing to appeal to the gods.****

Scholars believe that the Greeks were the first to begin not only performing dramatic works, but also the first to write them down. While primitive theater began with traveling tribes of people who would use ritualized performance for worship and storytelling, the Greeks were the first to expand those early versions of theater to include dialogue and structure.

(2) Definition & History:

“No one is quite sure where the concept of a dramatic tragedy first came from, but it probably had something to do with Ancient Greek celebrations in honor of Dionysius and goats, hence why it’s usually known as Greek tragedy.”

The Greek tragedies mostly began with a prologue, where a character or characters would set the stage for the play. The play itself would have at least three scenes. Between them, there would be a choral interlude that was used to explain or comment on the play. The chorus was normally made up of random citizens. ***According to Aristotle and Plutarch, Thespis was the first playwright and performed at the first competition in 534 B.C.E. He did the acting, too, and it’s his name from whom the word thespian comes from! The first plays involved one actor and a chorus.***

****The father of tragedy, ancient Greek dramatist Aeschylus (c. 525-456 BCE) revolutionized the literary world of drama.****

****(3) Characteristics:****

* (1) Trilogies and Three Act Structures:*

Except for Sophocles, who would later write single-part plays, many were stories told over three plays, a trilogy, devoted to the story of a single hero or family. Each play, in turn, was divided into three acts. The acts usually took place in a single location but involved distinct episodes using either the chorus or actors to move the story along.

* (2) Off-Stage Violence and Action:*

While each play typically took place in a single location like a palace or temple, much of the action, particularly the violent scenes, took place off stage and were relayed either by chorus or dialogues. Aeschylus' Agamemnon features a scene of the king murdered bloodily by his wife in a bathtub, but the action happens offstage.

*(3) A Mix of Singing, Speech, and Dance:*

Greek tragedies were usually performed in the round, in amphitheaters made for theatrical productions. The center "orchestra:" or flat surface was where the action and dance occurred. Because many audiences were seated far away, voice projection was important, as were large masks that would convey the facial expression of actors from very far away. The chorus was usually a body of singing and dancing performers who narrated the action.

*(4) A Mix of Human Characters and Deities:*

Most Greek tragedies presented human figures, usually, the flawed hero, grappling with his flaws (popular ones were: rage, a desire for revenge, and pridefulness.) The plays often featured the intervention of various gods and goddesses, who were presented as characters in the story, either helping or hindering the hero's journey.

****(4) Few Examples:****

1 The Orestiea; Prometheus Bound & The Persians, etc. by ***Aeschylus.***

2 Medea; The Trojan Women & Electra, etc. by *Euripides.*

3 Oedipus Rex; Oedipus at Colonus & Ajax by *Sophocles.*

4 Timon of Athens; Coriolanus & Titus Andronicus, etc. by *William Shakespeare.*

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02. Senecan/ Revenge Tragedy:

(1) Introduction:

Lucius Seneca was a prominent playwright of the first century, famous for helping shape the genre of revenge tragedy with his ten plays. The importance of his plays lies in the difficulty of the period.

The revenge tragedy, or revenge play, ****is a dramatic genre in which the protagonist seeks revenge for an imagined or actual injury.****

****(2) Definition & History:****

Senecan tragedy is body of nine closet dramas, ****written in blank verse by the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca in the 1st century ad.**** Rediscovered by Italian humanists in the mid-16th century, they became the models for the revival of tragedy on the Renaissance stage.

The term revenge tragedy was ****first introduced in 1900 by A. H. Thorndike labels a class of plays written in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras (circa 1580s to 1620s).****

****(3) Characteristics:****

****_(a) Some murder is committed and the ghost of the murdered person appears to some close relative and enjoins on him to take revenge._****

****_(b) Revenge is conceived of as a sacred duty, not as a kind of wild justice. The avenger is moved by a sense of sacred duty and not by any passion greed, hatred or some personal injury._****

*© It is sensational and melodramatic. The appearance of the ghost, the scenes of madness, crude villainy make the drama complete. In the end the stage is littered with dead bodies.*

****(d) There is abundant use of the imagery of violence and horror. Long declamatory speeches are used by the characters.*_***

****(e) There is a Machiavellian villain given to reflection. He is a malcontent type of character.*_***

****(4) Few Examples:****

Lucius Seneca was father of the Revenge Tragedy and also a prominent playwright of the first century, famous for helping shape the genre of revenge tragedy with his ten plays(as under)

****1. Hercules Furens,****

****2. Troades,****

****3. Phoenissae,****

****4. Medea,****

****5. Phaedra,****

****6. Oedipus,****

****7. Agamemnon,****

****8. Thyestes,****

****9. Hercules Oetaeus,****

****10. Octavia.****

04. Romantic Tragedy:

(1) Introduction:

****A romantic tragedy is a drama that deals with a noble protagonist placed in a highly stressful situation that leads to a disastrous, usually fatal conclusion.**** These plays focus on a powerful central character whose most outstanding personal quality is his tragic flaw- is the source of his catastrophe.

(2) Definition & History:

A tragic romance is a story that is both heartbreaking and beautiful. It tells the story of two people who fall in love, but are ultimately doomed to fail.

The beauty of a romantic tragedy is that it allows us to experience the full range of human emotion.

One of the most important things to keep in mind when writing a tragic romance is that the love story should be the focus of the story. Your reader should feel invested in the characters and their

relationship, and you should take your time developing their connection. Use dialogue and action to reveal their emotions and progress their relationship; don't just tell the reader how they feel.

Another key element is suspense. You want your reader constantly wondering what's going to happen next, what twist or turn the story will take.

****(3) Characteristics:****

****(a) The Meeting:**** The characters meet, usually by chance, and they're instantly drawn to one another. Love at first sight might be overkill, but there's immediate attraction and intrigue.

****(b) Resistance:**** Despite the spark, the characters resist the temptation to be together. They're often pressured to do so by outside circumstances.

****(3) Surrender:**** When they can't take it any longer, they give in to desire. The external (and sometimes internal) forces working to keep them apart create conflict.

****(4) Short-Lived High Point:**** Like a happily ever after ending, but about midway (or a bit more than midway) through the film. The characters are together and beating the odds.

****(5) Reality Check:**** But things go downhill quickly. Tensions flare between the lovers. Either the consequences of their actions catch up to them, or fate strikes, painting a dismal picture of the couple's future.

****(6) Downfall:**** The characters are torn apart, or their relationship significantly changes for the worst.

****(7) Perspective/Reflection:**** The film puts the tragedy in perspective, often through the eyes of one of the heartbroken lovers. It might be a hopeful glimpse of the character moving on or a montage of memories as they reflect on the loss.

4) Few Examples:

1.* *Bad Romance,

2.* *Cleopatra and Mark Antony,

3.* *Heloise and Abelard,

4.* *Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal,

5.* *Ines de Castro and King Pedro,

6.* *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, etc.

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05. Heroic Tragedy:

(1) Introduction:

_In these plays, as in an epic, the protagonist is a large-scale warrior whose actions involve the fate of an empire.* _ A noble hero and an equally noble heroine are typically placed in a situation in which their passionate love is in conflict with the demands of honour and with the hero's patriotic duty to his country.

The most popular writer of heroic plays was John Dryden, whose *Conquest of Granada*, in two parts (1670, 1671), had all the requisite elements of poetry, battle, courage, death, and murder.

(2) Definition & History:

The heroic drama, sometimes called heroic tragedy, is a dramatic genre that involves epic stories of grandeur with noble heroes, lavish, exotic settings, themes of courage, duty, love, war, and usually, a tragic ending.

Heroic Tragedy is a name given to the form of tragedy which had some vogue in the beginning of the Restoration period (1660-1700).

This kind of tragedy was satirized and burlesqued by Buckingham in *The Rehearsal* (1672) and much later again by Sheridan in 1779. Heroic drama was initially written in a closed heroic couplet, and later in blank verse.

****(3) Characteristics:****

****[A] Heroic Couplets:****

Heroic dramas should be composed using the heroic verse form (couplets in iambic pentameter).

****[B] Epic Stories:****

Subject matter should concern grand, important matters, focusing on themes of valour, romance and glory.

****[C] A Noble Hero:****

The protagonist should be honourable, powerful and decisive, usually a decorated warrior with the fate of an empire in his hands. Often, these characters possess superhuman abilities or qualities. Heroic dramas tended to show this hero as he is faced with an impassioned conflict between romantic love and the demands of patriotic duty.

****(4) Few Examples:****

****John Dryden's Heroic Drama/ Play:****

****¹. The Indian Emperour (1665) and ².The Conquest of Granada (1672)* serve to define and establish the genre.***

****³. The Black Prince****

Another important example of a heroic drama was _The Black Prince (1667), written by Roger Boyle, 1st Earl of Orrery._

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06. Domestic Tragedy:

(1) Introduction:

A kind of tragedy in which the leading characters belong to the middle class rather than to the royal or noble ranks usually represented in tragic drama, and in which the action concerns family affairs rather than public matters of state.

(2) Definition & History:

A drama in which the tragic protagonists are ordinary middle-class or lower-class individuals, in contrast to classical and Neoclassical tragedy, in which the protagonists are of kingly or aristocratic rank and their downfall is an affair of state as well as a personal matter.

In Britain, the first domestic tragedies were written in the English Renaissance; _one of the first was Arden of Faversham (1592), depicting the murder of a bourgeois man by his adulterous wife._

(3) Characteristics:

[A] A story that focuses on 'ordinary' people from the middle or lower classes.

[B] Everyday settings, with particular focus on the domestic sphere, i.e. within the home or familial unit.

[C] Subject material concerning ordinary problems, such as family strife, economic injustices, poverty, or civil rights.

[D] Linear structure with few time jumps.

[E] A patriarchal figure, who represents order and power, upholding the structure of the family and society in general. Usually, domestic dramas present a confrontation involving this character, representing family turmoil and Conflict.

[F] Plain, unembellished language reflecting the realistic speech of ordinary subjects. Characters should speak as is appropriate to their environment and socio-economic status.

****(4) Few Examples:****

Famous examples are:

****1. Arden of Faversham (1592),****

****2. A Woman Killed with Kindness (1607),****

****3. A Yorkshire Tragedy (1608),* and***

****4. The Witch of Edmonton (1621).****

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