



Tragedy

Tragedy is a precise dramatic concept, which was outlined by **Aristotle** in his *Poetics* (330 B.C.) It is more than a play with a sad ending. A tragedy revolves around the character of a tragic hero:

- This character begins the play as prosperous and happy.
- They are said to have a tragic flaw.
- Tragedies always end with the death of the tragic hero.
- The death of this hero can be seen as a relief to the audience.
(Catharsis: from the Greek katharsis meaning to purge or purify)
- A sense of waste, of something valuable being thrown away, is a feature of Shakespearian tragedy.

There are other features of tragedy, which also should be adhered to, such as the unity of time and place *i.e. that the events happen in one place and time.*

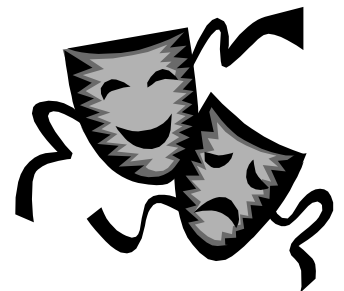
By the time Shakespeare was writing his great tragedies, he manipulated these rules for his own effect. **When reading Antony and Cleopatra, you should consider whether or not you believe it to be a tragedy.**

Task 1: For each of the bullet points above, explain why this is a necessary feature of tragedy.

e.g. The main character in a tragedy begins the play as prosperous and happy, because ...

Task2: Consider the connotations of the word hero.

hero



Task 3: Why is the main character of a tragedy referred to as a *tragic hero*? What sort of characteristics would you expect them to have?