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William Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the worlds pre eminent dramatist. Shakespeare is often known as Englands national poet and sometimes people uses refers him as the Bard of Avon. He is perhaps most famous for his tragedies. All in all Shakespeare wrote 10 Tragedies. The 10 plays generally classified as tragedy are as follows: 1. Antony and Cleopatra 2. Julius Caesar 3. Timon of Athens 4. Macbeth5.Romeo and Juliet 6. King Lear7. Othello 8. Hamlet9. Titus Andronicus 10. Coriolanus
SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY:A tragedy is essentially a tale of death or suffering. Shakespearean tragedies are also powerful tales of death and suffering but the Shakespearean tragedy is something more than a mere story of death and suffering. A Shakespearean tragedy generally consists five acts which ends with the death of most of the major characters. The expression of one of the great paradoxes of life is the essence of Shakespeares tragedies. Defeat, shattered hopes, and ultimately death fate the major characters. The disasters in the life of the hero do not merely happen nor are they sent by heaven. They are not even the result of the anger of God. They arise out of the action and lead towards the fate of the hero. It is not rigid in moral teaching. In it destiny is not character. Character is destiny. Men himself is responsible for his tragedy. There are combination of tragedy and comedy. They are romantic tragedy. They do not follow classical rules the three unities of time, place and action.CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY:(1) Noble Hero or Protagonist of a High Order: Shakespeares tragedy is concerned with the fate of persons of High Degree often with kings or princes and with leader in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus and Antony. The dramatist does not concentrate on the lives of ordinary person, nor does he recall the sufferings of the layman. In modern drama Tragedy is the story of suffering of a common man but Shakespeare was mediaeval in his conception of tragedy. In his tragedies he made conspicuous (noticeable) persons suffer so that the tragedy may have a powerful effect on readers or viewers mind. (2) One Hero: Shakespearean tragedy though consisted of numerous characters is the story of only one person, the hero or almost of the two, the hero and the heroine. Heroine is given the same portion as that of the hero, if she too undergoes the same sufferings and contacts as that of the hero throughout the play. (3) Suffering and calamity: Shakespeares tragic protagonist are not only great men, they also suffer greatly. The hero has to pass through thorns of excruciating pain and suffering. The sufferings intensity is so high that it staggers and shakes the man and the hero from within. Hamlet in the state of vacillation is literally on the rack. Othello in the disturbed state of mind finds a house divided within himself. Macbeth feels the pang of murdering the king deep down in his heart till he feels that life is meaningless for him. (4) Flaw in the character: The cause of tragedy in Shakespeares plays is some flaw in the character of the hero or the heroine. In the mediaeval concept of the tragedy. Fate is the major factor in bringing about the tragedy, but Shakespeare made his protagonist or man responsible for his own action and he believed in the principle of Character is destinyHamlet meets his tragedy due to his vacillating nature. Macbeth meets his end due to his overwhelming ambition. (5) Abnormal conditions of Mind : Shakespeare represents the abnormal conditions of mind such as insanity as in the case of KING LEAR, hallucination as in the case of MACBETH. These abnormal states of the hero and the heroine deeper the gloom of the tragedy.(6) The struggle between good and Evil: The end of Shakespearean tragedy is the struggle between good and evil. It results in serious worry, disturbance and sorrows, suffering and death. The themes are sensational. In King Lear the struggle is there between the good daughter and two elder sisters. In Othello also there is the struggle between Othello and Iago, the villain. (7) Tragic waste: Tragic waste is one of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy. All the exceptional qualities of the protagonist are wasted. At the end of the tragedy the evil does not triumph, it is defeated but at the cost of good and admirable. The fall of Macbeth does not only mean the death of evil in him, but also the waste of much that is essentially good and noble.(8) Supernatural Elements: The supernatural is placed in closest relation with character and it definitely contributes to the action. Ghost, wishes, wizards do appear in the tragedies. The ghost of King Hamlet is seen not only by Hamlet but by other people also. In Macbeth also the witches wish his desire to achieve power. They are the main reason for the fall of the hero. Had they not been there, the hero would not have been tragedy. They influence the minds of characters. (9) Plot seems to depend on chance and accident: In most of Shakespeares tragedies, chance or accident exercise an appreciable influence at some point in the action. It may be called an accident, for example, the pirate ship attack Hamlets ship so that he was able to return Denmark. Desdemona drops her handkerchief at the most fatal of moments. Edgar arrives in the prison just too late to save Cordelias life.(10) Lack of poetic justice: Shakespearean tragedy is true to life so it excludes poetic justice which is rarely found in our life. We feel that Lear ought to suffer for his folly and for his unjust treatment to Cordelia, but his sufferings are out of all amounts to his misdeeds. Othello too does not deserve to suffer all that he does suffer for his unjust treatment to Desdemona. She has been strangled by her husband for the one or two lies she tells out of sheer love for the man who murder her. (11) Conflict:Conflict is the essence of Shakespearean tragedy full stop the conflict is of two type:1. Outward conflict among the various characters. 2. Inner conflict in the mind of the hero.Both these types of conflict exist side by side in Shakespearean tragedy. There is an outward conflict between Hamlet and Claudius in HAMLET (A Play). Hamlet wants to take revenge of the murder of his father by killing Claudius. On the other hand Claudius uses various means to kill Hamlet. The conflict between Hamlet and Laertes is also external. We can see the inner conflict takes place in the mind of Hamlet. It is revealed through his soliloquies. CONCLUSION:Doer must suffer is the main idea of Shakespearean tragedies. One can find that villainy never remains Victorious at the end. It is destroyed root and branch but at the cost of good. Nemesis over takes Macbeth and all evil characters in Shakespeares tragedy. The most important feature of Shakespearean tragedy is his universal appeal. It appeals to all the people of all the ages and of all the lands. The passions and emotions of the characters are universal. Shakespeare gives enough entertainment and pleasure through his tragedies. His stories are borrowed ones but the touches of Shakespeare make them appealing. Shakespeare is perhaps most famous for his tragediesindeed, many consider Hamlet to be the best play ever written. Other Shakespearean tragedies include Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, and King Lear, all of which are immediately recognizable, regularly studied, and frequently performed. In all, Shakespeare wrote 12 tragedies. However, Shakespeares plays often overlap in style and there is debate over which plays should be classified as tragedy, comedy, and history. For example, Much Ado About Nothing is normally classified as a comedybut follows many of the tragic conventions. The following is a summary of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy and the tragic features in 10 of the Bard's plays.The fatal flaw: Shakespeares tragic heroes are all fundamentally flawed. It is this weakness that ultimately results in their downfall.The bigger they are, the harder they fall: Shakespeares tragedies often focus on the fall of a nobleman. By presenting the audience with a man of excessive wealth or power, we experience that character's eventual downfall as all the more tragic.External pressure: Shakespeares tragic heroes often fall victim to external pressures. Fate, evil spirits, and manipulative characters all play a hand in the heroes downfall. In Shakespeares tragedies, the protagonist generally has a flaw that leads to his downfall. There are internal and external struggles present and often a bit of the supernatural thrown in for good measure (and tension). Sometimes, passages or characters have the job of lightening the mood (comic relief), but the overall tone of a tragic piece is quite serious. All of Shakespeares tragedies contain at least one more of these elements: A tragic heroA dichotomy of good and evilA tragic wasteHamartia (the heroes tragic flaw)Issues of fate or fortuneGreedFool revengeSupernatural elementsInternal and external pressuresThe paradox of life A brief look shows that these 10 classic plays all have common tragic themes. 1) Antony and Cleopatra: Antony and Cleopatras affair brings about the downfall of the Egyptian pharaohs and results in Octavius Caesar becoming the first Roman emperor. Like Romeo and Juliet, miscommunication leads to Anthony killing himself and Cleopatra later doing the same. 2) Coriolanus: A successful Roman general is disliked by the play Bienz of Rome, and after losing and gaining their trust throughout the play, he is betrayed and assassinated by Aufidius, a former foe using Coriolanus to try to take over Rome. Aufidius feels like Coriolanus betrayed him in the end, thus he has Coriolanus killed. 3) Hamlet: Prince Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his fathers murder, committed by his uncle, Claudius. Hamlet's quest for revenge causes the deaths of many friends and loved ones, including his own mother. In the end, Hamlet is lured into a fight to the death with Laertes, brother of Ophelia, and is stabbed by a poisoned blade. Hamlet is able to kill his attacker, as well as his uncle Claudius, before dying himself. 4) Julius Caesar: Julius Caesar is assassinated by his most trusted friends and advisers. They claim they fear he is becoming a tyrant, but many believe Cassius wants to take over. Cassius convinces Caesars best friend, Brutus, to be one of the conspirators in the death of Caesar. Later, Brutus and Cassius lead opposing armies into battle against each other.Seeing the failure of all they have done, Cassius and Brutus each order their own men to kill them. Octavius then orders Brutus to be buried honorably, for he was the noblest of all Romans. 5) King Lear: King Lear has divided his kingdom and given Goneril and Regan, two of his three daughters, each a part of the kingdom because the youngest daughter (Cordelia), previously his favorite, would not sing his praises at the dividing of the kingdom. Cordelia vanishes and goes to France with her husband, the prince. Lear attempts to get his two oldest daughters to take care of him, but neither wants anything to do with him. They treat him poorly, leading him to go mad and wander the moors. Meanwhile, Goneril and Regan plot to overthrow each other leading to many deaths. In the end, Cordelia returns with an army to save her father. Goneril poisons and kills Regan and later commits suicide. Cordelias army is defeated and she is put to death. Her father dies of a broken heart after seeing her dead. 6) Macbeth: Due to an ill-timed prophecy from the three witches, Macbeth, under the guidance of his ambitious wife, kills the king to take the crown for himself. In his increasing guilt and paranoia, he kills many people who perceive as against him. He is finally beheaded by Macduff after Macbeth had Macduffs entire family assassinated. 7) The evilness of Macbeths and Lady Macbeths reign comes to a bloody end. 7) Othello: Angry ths was overlooked for a promotion, Iago plots to overthrow Othello by telling lies and getting Othello to cause his own downfall. Through rumors and paranoia, Othello murders his wife, Desdemona, believing she has cheated on him. Later, the truth comes out and Othello kills himself in his grief. Iago is arrested and is ordered to be executed. 8) Romeo and Juliet: Two star-crossed lovers, who are destined to be enemies because of the feud between their two families, fall in love. Many people try to keep them apart, and several lose their lives. The teens decide to run away together so that they can wed. To fool her family, Juliet sends a messenger with news of her death so they will not pursue her and Romeo. Romeo hears the rumor, believing it to be true, and when he sees Juliets corpse, he kills himself. Juliet wakes up and discovers her lover dead and kills herself to be with him. 9) Timon of Athens: Timon is a kind, friendly Athenian nobleman who has many friends because of his generosity. Unfortunately, that generosity eventually causes him to go into debt. He asks his friends to help him financially, but they all refuse. Timon invites his friends over for a banquet where he serves them only water and denounces them; Timon then goes to live in a cave outside of Athens, where he finds a stash of gold. An Athenian army general, Alcibiades, who has been banished from Athens for other reasons, finds Timon. Timons offers Alcibiades gold, which the general uses to bribe the army to march on Athens. A band of pirates also visits Timon, who offers them gold to attack Athens, which they do. Timon even sends his faithful servant away and ends up alone. 10) Titus Andronicus:After a successful 10-year war campaign, Titus Andronicus is betrayed by the new emperor, Saturninus, who marries Tamora, Queen of the Goths, and despises Titus for killing her sons and capturing her. Tituss remaining children are framed, murdered, or raped, and Titus is sent into hiding. He later cooks up a revenge plot in which he kills Tamoras remaining two sons and causes the deaths of his daughter, Tamora, Saturninus, and himself. By the end of the play, only four people remain alive: Lucius (Titus' only surviving child), Marcus (Titus' brother), and Aaron the Moor (Tamoras former lover). Erra is put to death and Lucius becomes the new emperor of Rome. Shakespearean tragedies are among the most powerful and enduring works in the English literary canon. Known for their deep exploration of human nature and the consequences of flawed choices, these plays captivate audiences with their intense emotional impact and complex characters. In this post, we'll delve into the key characteristics that define a Shakespearean tragedy, helping you better understand and appreciate these timeless masterpieces. The Tragic HeroAt the heart of every Shakespearean tragedy is the tragic hero. This central character is typically of noble birth and possesses a high social status, making their fall from grace all the more dramatic. The tragic hero is distinguished by a fatal flaw, or hamartia, which ultimately leads to their downfall. Examples include Hamlets indecisiveness, Macbeths ambition, and Othellos jealousy. The Tragic FlawThe tragic flaw is a fundamental characteristic of the tragic hero. It is an inherent defect or shortcoming in the character that triggers a series of events leading to their ultimate demise. This flaw is often linked to a broader theme within the play, such as the dangers of unchecked ambition in Macbeth or the destructive power of jealousy in Othello.The Supernatural ElementsShakespeare often incorporates supernatural elements into his tragedies to heighten the dramatic tension and underscore the themes of fate and destiny. Ghosts, witches, and prophetic visions play pivotal roles in several plays. For instance, the ghost of King Hamlet sets the plot of Hamlet in motion, while the witches prophecies drive Macbeths actions in Macbeth.The Presence of FateThe concept of fate is a recurring theme in Shakespearean tragedies. Characters often find themselves at the mercy of forces beyond their control, suggesting that their destinies are preordained. This sense of inevitability adds to the dramatic tension, as audiences watch the characters struggle against their fates. In Romeo and Juliet, the notion of star-crossed lovers emphasizes the tragic inevitability of their deaths.Internal and External ConflictsShakespearean tragedies are characterized by both internal and external conflicts. The tragic hero often faces a profound internal struggle, grappling with their conscience, desires, and moral dilemmas. Concurrently, they encounter external conflicts with other characters or societal forces. These dual conflicts drive the narrative and contribute to the heroes eventual downfall.CatharsisAristotles concept of catharsis is central to the impact of Shakespearean tragedies. Catharsis refers to the emotional purging or cleansing that the audience experiences through the unfolding of the tragic events. As the heroes story progresses towards its grim conclusion, audiences undergo a release of pent-up emotions, leading to a sense of relief and introspection.The Tragic EndingA hallmark of Shakespearean tragedy is its bleak and inevitable ending. Unlike comedies, which resolve happily, tragedies culminate in death, despair, and a sense of loss. The tragic hero falls is often accompanied by the downfall of others, amplifying the plays emotional impact. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet, the murder of Desdemona, and Macbeths tragic end are quintessential examples.ConclusionShakespearean tragedies continue to resonate with modern audiences due to their timeless exploration of human nature and the consequences of our flaws and choices. By understanding the key characteristics of these plays, we gain deeper insights into the complexities of Shakespeares writing and the enduring appeal of his tragic works. Whether youre a student, a theater enthusiast, or a casual reader, appreciating these elements will enrich your experience of Shakespearean tragedy. Final Checklist of Shakespearean Tragedy CharacteristicsTragic Hero: Noble birth, high status, fatal flaw.Tragic Flaw: Inherent defect leading to downfall.Supernatural Elements: Ghosts, witches, prophetic visions.Presence of Fate: Inevitability and preordained destinies.Internal and External Conflicts: Moral dilemmas and societal forces.Catharsis: Emotional purging for the audience.Tragic Ending: Death, despair, and profound loss.By recognizing these characteristics, youll have a better understanding of what makes Shakespearean tragedies so compelling and timeless. Enjoy exploring the depths of Shakespeares darkest plays! Shakespeares work, renowned for its profound exploration of human nature, moral dilemmas, and inevitable downfall of protagonists, remains a cornerstone of literary and theatrical excellence. Defined by distinctive features and narrative elements, Shakespeares tragedies continue to captivate audiences and scholars alike centuries after their creation. This article delves into the characteristics that define Shakespearean tragedy, offering insights into its structure, themes, and enduring relevance in literature and drama. Key Elements of Shakespearean TragedyShakespearean tragedies, crafted by the master playwright William Shakespeare, encompass several key characteristics that distinguish them from other genres:1. Protagonists Fatal Flaw (Hamartia)Central to Shakespearean tragedy is the tragic flaw or hamartia of the protagonist, a personal trait or characteristic that leads to their downfall. This flaw often involves a moral weakness, hubris (excessive pride), or a fatal error in judgment. Examples include Macbeths ambition in Macbeth and Othellos jealousy in Othello.2. Conflict and Central DilemmaEach tragedy revolves around a central conflict or dilemma that drives the narrative forward. This conflict typically arises from the protagonists internal struggles, external pressures, or clashes with antagonistic forces, leading to escalating tension and eventual tragedy.3. Rise and Fall of Fortune (Peripeteia)The narrative of a Shakespearean tragedy unfolds through a series of events that result in a reversal of fortune, known as peripeteia. The protagonist may experience initial success or happiness, followed by a sudden turn of events that leads to their downfall and eventual demise.4. Supernatural Elements and FateMany Shakespearean tragedies incorporate supernatural elements, prophecies, or omens that foreshadow the protagonists tragic fate. These elements underscore themes of destiny, free will, and the inevitability of tragic outcomes despite human efforts to alter their course.5. Complex Characters and Moral AmbiguityShakespearean tragedies feature complex characters who grapple with moral dilemmas, conflicting motivations, and inner turmoil. These characters are portrayed with psychological depth, making their actions and decisions both compelling and morally ambiguous.6. Catharsis and Audience EngagementThrough the depiction of profound emotional and ethical dilemmas, Shakespearean tragedies evoke catharsis—the purging of emotions and moral insights—among audiences. The tragic resolution prompts reflection on human frailty, justice, and the consequences of unchecked ambition or passion.Examples of Shakespearean TragediesShakespearean tragedies continue to captivate audiences and scholars alike centuries after their creation. This article delves into the characteristics that define Shakespearean tragedy, offering insights into its structure, themes, and enduring relevance in literature and drama. 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The playwrights tragic works largely draw inspiration from ancient Greece, a society that placed value on lessons drawn from plays concerning its religious, political, and social matters.Literature classes are incomplete without essays on Shakespearean tragedies, and you can benefit from the insight of literature writers at the DoMyEssay paper writing platform.Features of Shakespearean TragediesShakespeares popular tragedies include:HamletOthelloKing LearMacbethRomeo and JulietTitus AndronicusAristotles classic Poetics laid the foundation for Shakespeares tragic plays, where a protagonist, usually of high social standing, encounters a downfall occasioned by their own doing, referred to as a tragic flaw.Looking at Shakespeares tragedy plays, a combination of the nine elements below make up the plot, coming together to make up the most tragic Shakespeares moments.1. A Tragic HeroThe tragic hero describes a male or female royal or virtuous character, who must face adversity, either caused by their flawed persona or sealed by fate. Ultimately, they pay the price with their lives, but after recognizing their mistake. This role is a preserve of princes, military generals, and even kings, whose lives have a significant bearing on their subjects. In the classic Romeo and Juliet, Romeo Montague is the tragic hero, whose undoing is his obsession with Juliet Capulet. Juliets fake death triggers his emotions, leading him to take poison and die right beside his sleeping love.Romeo and Juliet, two of Shakespeares tragic characters2. Good Against EvilGood and evil was as real as it is today in the times of Shakespeare. One reason why the good vs evil theme features so often in tragedy is the ability of the duo to stir the imagination of the audience as these elements existed in society. They could identify with both evil and good characters. Hamlet is an excellent illustration of good and evil forces. He changes from an honorable character to a callous villain when he avenges his fathers death by murdering Polonius. Although he believes this to be an act of justice, it results in the insanity of Ophelia.3. HamartiaTheprotagonists in these tragedies all carry a flaw, also known as hamartia, that leaves them vulnerable and eventually leads to a disastrous end. Once again, Hamlet comes into focus as a perfect illustration of hamartia and its role in tragedy. His indecisiveness and overthinking lead him to overreact, killing Polonius thinking that he was Claudius, his fathers murderer. His obsession with vengeance leads to the senseless murder of the innocent man stirring up tragedy after tragedy. He could have killed Claudius when he was praying at the church but could not act due to his overthinking.4. Tragic WasteLooking at Shakespeares plays, the hero and villain ultimately die. It is this disturbing demise of good characters along with the evil ones that is known as tragic waste. King Lears daughter, Cordelia, embodies courage and empathy by refusing to celebrate her fathers division of the kingdom. His other two daughters, Goneril and Regan, with whom he shares the kingdom, refuse to care for him, leading to his insanity. The two daughters fight each other and cause the death of many civilians in the process. When Cordelia hears of her fathers plight, she returns to save him but is defeated and killed in the end. Goneril slays her sister and later dies by suicide. Their father dies from immense sadness occasioned by the death of his daughters.5. ConflictIn Shakespeares tragedies, two types of conflict take place:External conflict The hero faces a conflict from his antagonists.Internal Conflict The hero faces conflict in their mind.Macbeth struggles internally, wondering whether to take power by force. He has to choose to either remain loyal to Duncan or heed his wife, Capulet. He faces an external conflict with Banquo and Macduff rise to challenge his illegitimate rule.6. The SupernaturalSuperstitious beliefs come to play in some of Shakespeares tragic plays. Ghosts form part of the plot in Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Macbeth. Macbeth, in particular, strongly feeds on societys superstition at the time by including the three witches and Banquos ghost. The witches prophecy about Macbeth and Banquo; two characters with totally opposing attributes. Macbeth acts fast to murder Banquo and his sons and prevents the prophecy of his sons ascending to the throne from taking place. However, Banquos ghost appears after his murder, compelling him to reveal his sins to his guests.7. CatharsisThe audiences immersion in the play leads to an emotional roller coaster, with mixed feelings for the hero and their antagonists. While the suffering of the hero elicits sympathy, the audience experiences anger towards the villain. The death of the hero culminates in the audience experiencing a release of bottled up emotions, including sadness.On the other hand, the death of the villain provides relief, with the satisfaction that their tragic end is justified.8. Lack of Poetic JusticeShakespeares tragedies share a strikingly similar trait; the lack of poetic justice. Poetic justice occurs when both good and evil characters experience justice. In the real world, good deeds do not always beget rewards, and evil may go unpunished. King Lears benevolent daughter, Cordella, dies while trying to rescue her father. Her tragic end depicts the unfairness of life, which is relatively common and relatable to most people.9. FateOthello is a tragedy that depicts the powerlessness of man when it comes to destiny. His love for Desdemona elicits disapproval from her father due to his black skin. He never chose to be born black and cannot change his appearance. His black skin feeds his insecurities, and the fact that he is commonly referred to as the Moor makes it worse. His insecurities eventually lead him to kill Desdemona and stab himself.William Shakespeares The outcome of English literature is great, not only because of his writing skills, but also because of his art of borrowing, combining, and recreating something new with a twist. His true excellence reflects through his tragic plays which are read and performed every today. Let us try to find out the characteristics of his tragedies that made them stand out from other literary works. Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy – F. Scott FitzgeraldI think the above quote applies very well to William Shakespeares work, for he has created such beautiful pieces of literature in the form of tragedies. However, the attempt of putting his works under a category is quite difficult because every work of art created by him is an experiment to create something different from the previous ones, and he achieved success every time. There are certain aspects that he has followed consistently in each of his tragedies and we shall look at each of them in detail for different Shakespearean tragedies.Shakespearean tragedies are highly influenced by Greek drama and Aristotles notion of tragedy. It was Aristotle who had first described the genre in his Poetics which is followed even today to analyze modern drama. Take a look at the following characteristics shared by most Shakespearean plays. Most of the tragedies written by Shakespeare are revenge and ambition tragedies. For instance, Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth are dark tragedies showing revenge and ambition. However, there is an exception to this in the form of a romantic tragedy, which is Romeo and Juliet. Unlike the revenge/ambition tragedy, there are two tragic characters in Romeo and Juliet. Romeo becomes impulsive and acts without thinking about consequences, which causes the separation and ultimately the death of the two lovers. In each revenge/ambition tragedy, there are some noticeable features which are typical of a Shakespearean play.Tragic/Fatal Flaw A tragic flaw, by definition, is a personality trait that leads to the downfall of the protagonist. It can also be a wrong action performed by the protagonist that results in his own ruin. It is the most important element in the tragedy and almost every hero/heroine of a Shakespearean tragedy possesses a tragic flaw. Examples of tragic flaws in Shakespearean plays are: Macbeths obsession with power, Othellos jealousy, and Hamlets indecisiveness. Supernatural Elements Use of super-natural elements is a common characteristic of Elizabethan drama, which Shakespeares plays are no exception. Supernatural powers contribute to the fate of the protagonist. However, they are not solely responsible for the downfall of the hero; it still lies in the deeds/actions of the hero. Usually, these actions arise as the outcome of the protagonists over-ambitious nature (as in Macbeth where he wants to become the king) or the feeling of revenge. Furthermore, they are not illusions in the mind of the hero because they contribute to the action of the play with their presence in more than one or two scenes. The effective use of witches in Shakespeares plays reflect the ancient social beliefs in the evil powers who practice evil rites to affect the central character(s). For instance, in Macbeth, when Macbeth encounters the three witches, he starts believing whatever they say without questioning their existence. This is what the ancient social belief in the evil spirits reflected in Shakespeares tragedy.Internal and External Conflict The external conflict, as we can easily make out, is the conflict between two people, the tragic hero and another main character of the story. It can also be the conflict between two parties, one of which is led by the tragic hero. The result of the external conflict is always in favor of the other party as it is the good party. When talking about the inward struggle of the hero, the conflict represents the struggle of thoughts in his mind. The result of this struggle, many a time is that the hero goes insane (as in King Lear, the king becomes mentally ill). The inward struggle also includes the action of spiritual forces which work against the hero.Fate/Fortune As the tragic hero/heroine is of high estate and is a public figure, his/her downfall produces a contrast which affects not only his/her personal life, but the fate and welfare of the entire nation or the empire. It reflects the powerlessness of human beings and the omnipotence of fate that a personal story of a peasant or a worker cannot produce. The adverse effects of fate on the empire are evident in Macbeth, when Duncans sons Malcolm and Macduff are planning to defeat Macbeth and at the same time trying to support the collapsing kingdom. Macduff suggests that Malcolm take the throne, but Malcolm is not mature enough to hold the falling empire.The Theme of Foul and Revenge As it is a tragedy, foul has to counterfeited fair; an unwritten rule of a Shakespearean tragedy. In fact, fair is foul and foul is fair is the refrain of the play. The entire play revolves around the theme of foul turning fair. The very first line of the first scene of the play spoken by the three witches shows the intensity of the theme. Similarly, in Hamlet, revenge is the theme built cleverly right from the beginning of the play and making it the driving force behind the character of Hamlet. Paradox of Life Shakespeares tragedies reflect the paradox of life, in the sense that the calamity and suffering experienced by the tragic hero are contrasted with the previous happiness and glory. This paradox is very clear in Macbeth. Initially, Macbeth is portrayed as the most brave and loyal soldier of the nation and is rewarded by king Duncan for his bravery and love for the nation. However, Macbeth is not satisfied with whatever he gets and desires more. This desire or over-ambitious nature leads him to think evilly and act on it, which is an extreme end of his real personality.CatharsisAny piece of literature, or any art form for that matter, is successful when it evokes pity, fear, and other such emotions in the audience. It is known as catharsis, where the audience feels sympathy for the character and empathize with his/her sufferings. If the play has the capacity to move the audience by its plot, people who are reading the play or watching it in the theater can identify with the characters and feel that they have similar experiences in their life.Tragic StructureA tragic story (Shakespearean) can be divided into four parts and they are as follows: Exposition: Exposition is the beginning of the play where the reader/audience gets to know the characters and their traits, the general setting of the story, the major conflict in the story and most importantly, the tragic flaw of the hero. Normally, exposition begins and ends in the first act itself, however, sometimes there are some characters who enter late into the story. Rising Action: Rising action develops through the second act and extends up to the third and the fourth act. This is the time when the plot gathers momentum and the action increases. The plot eventually reaches the crisis where the hero makes a decision that changes the course of the play, sealing his own fate. For example, Macbeth kills Duncan in act II whereas Lears foolish decision to divide the kingdom occurs in act I. This is how the location of the crisis differs from play to play. By the end of the rising action, the hero is left alone for the rest of the story.Falling Action: From the beginning of the fourth act, the opposite forces become active and start an open resist. They also start plotting/the removal of the hero as a result of which the power of the tragic hero starts declining.Resolution: In the last and final act, the opposite forces reach the full power and defeat the isolated tragic hero. This is the time when the hero recognizes his faults, yet, cannot do anything about it.Shakespeare wrote 10 tragedies in all namely, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Timon of Athens and Titus Andronicus, out of which the four dark tragedies, Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, and King Lear are the most admired. Apart from tragedies, important works of Shakespeare include romantic comedies, historical plays and 154 love sonnets. Shakespearean tragedy is a cornerstone of English literature that continues to captivate audiences centuries later. Its enduring appeal lies in its profound exploration of the human condition and its exploration of universal themes. But what elements exactly define a Shakespearean tragedy? This article delves deep into the defining characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy. Definition of Shakespearean TragedyShakespearean tragedy is a play that depicts the downfall of a central character who is usually a person of high social standing. This downfall is often brought about by a combination of factors, including the heroes own tragic flaw (hamartia), external forces, and the machinations of fate or fortune.The play typically ends with the death of the hero and often numerous other characters, leaving a sense of tragic waste and a reflection on the fragility of human existence.Characteristics of Shakespearean TragedyShakespearean tragedies are marked by a distinct set of characteristics that set them apart from other dramatic forms. These elements of Shakespearean tragedy include:1. A Tragic HeroThe tragic hero is the protagonist of the play, who is typically a person of noble birth or high social standing. They are not inherently evil, but they possess a tragic flaw or make a critical error in judgment that ultimately leads to their downfall. The heroes suffering and death evoke pity and fear in the audience and create a sense of catharsis.Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, exemplifies this. His indecisiveness and procrastination are his undoing. To be, or not to be, that is the question. Hamlet, Act III, Scene IThis famous soliloquy reveals Hamlets internal struggle and his tragic inability to act decisively.2. Good Versus EvilThe struggle between good and evil is a central theme in Shakespearean tragedy. This conflict can manifest in various ways, such as the clash between virtuous and villainous characters, the internal struggle within the heroes own soul, or the broader battle between order and chaos. O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on. Othello, Act III, Scene IIIWhile feigning concern, Iago instills jealousy in Othello and highlights his manipulative nature.3. ConflictOne of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy is conflict. It is the driving force of the plot, and it propels the action forward and creates tension. It includes the heroes ambition, love, or desire for revenge. This can take many forms, including internal conflict (the heroes struggle with their own flaws or desires), external conflict (the heroes struggle against other characters or external forces), or a combination of both. Stars, hide your faces; Let not light see my black and deep desires: Macbeth, Act I, Scene IVThis reveals Macbeths internal conflict as he contemplates murdering Duncan.4. Tragic Flaw/HamartiaHamartia is the heroes fatal flaw or error in judgement that leads to their downfall. This flaw can be a character trait, such as pride, ambition, or jealousy, or it can be a mistake in action, such as a hasty decision or a failure to act. I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition, which oerleaps itself And falls on the other. Macbeth, Act I, Scene VIMacbeth recognizes his ambition as his driving force and a potential source of his downfall.5. Tragic WasteThe concept of tragic waste highlights the unnecessary loss of life in the play. This includes the deaths of virtuous and villainous characters who are caught up in the heroes downfall. This underscores the tragic nature of the events and the sense of loss. Howl, howl! O, you are men of stone: Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so That heavens vault should crack. King Lear, Act V, Scene IIILears lament highlights the immense tragic waste.6. Supernatural Elements/MachineryShakespeare often incorporates supernatural elements to influence the plot and create a sense of mystery and fate. These elements include ghosts, witches, prophecies, or omens. These traits can heighten the drama and add a layer of complexity to the play. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! Macbeth, Act I, Scene IIIIn Macbeth, the witches prophecies set the plays tragic trajectory.7. CatharsisOne of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy is catharsis. Catharsis is the emotional release experienced by the audience as they witness the heroes suffering and downfall. This release of pity and fear allows the audience to purge their emotions and gain a deeper understanding of the human condition. O, Desdemona! dead! Dead! O' Othello, Act V, Scene IIOthellos grief and realization of his mistake evoke pity and fear in the audience.8. Lack of Poetic JusticeUnlike many other forms of drama, Shakespearean tragedy does not always adhere to the principle of poetic justice. In his play, the virtuous are rewarded, and the wicked are punished. Instead, the play often reflects the complexities and injustices of life, where good people can suffer and evil can sometimes prevail. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! Hamlet, Act III, Scene IThis lament for Hamlet shows the tragic loss of potential and the lack of simple justice.9. Issues of Fate or FortuneThe role of fate or fortune in human affairs is a recurring theme in Shakespearean tragedy. The heroes downfall is often portrayed as being influenced by forces beyond their control and raises questions about free will versus destiny. O, I am fortunes fool! Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene IRomeos exclamation after killing Tybalt highlights the role of fate in his life.10. Greed/Greed is often depicted as a destructive force in Shakespearean tragedy in its various forms. Whether it is the greed for power, wealth, or revenge, it can lead to corruption, betrayal, and ultimately, the heroes downfall. Now is the winter of our discontent Made glorious summer by this sun of York; Richard III, Act I, Scene IRichards opening lines reveal his ambition and lust for power.11. Foul RevengeThe theme of revenge is a common motif in Shakespearean tragedy. The hero or other characters may seek revenge for a wrong committed against them. In his play, revenge is often driven by anger and a desire for justice. But the pursuit of revenge often leads to further violence and tragedy. Now could I do it pat, now he is praying; And now Ill dot. Hamlet, Act III, Scene IIIHamlets contemplation of revenge reveals the consuming nature of this theme.12. The Paradox of LifeShakespearean tragedies often explore the paradoxes of life and highlight the contradictions and uncertainties of human existence. This can include the coexistence of good and evil, the fleeting nature of happiness, and the inevitability of suffering. How sharper than a serpents tooth it is To have a thankless child! King Lear, Act I, Scene IVLears realization of the ingratitude of his daughters highlights the bitter paradoxes of human relationships.13. Comic ReliefComic relief is the inclusion of humorous scenes or characters to provide a contrast to the tragic events and offer emotional respite for the audience. These moments of levity can also serve to highlight the tragedy by emphasizing the contrast between joy and sorrow. A pickaxe and a spade, For and a shrouding sheet. Hamlet, Act V, Scene IThe gravediggers banter, though macabre, provides comic relief.Features of Shakespearean TragedyBeyond these general characteristics or elements, several features further define the Shakespearean tragedy:1. Five-Act StructureShakespearean tragedies typically follow a five-act structure. It includes:Exposition introducing the characters and settingRising action developing the conflictClimax marking the turning pointFalling action leading to the catastropheResolution providing a sense of closure2. Elevated LanguageShakespeares use of language is a hallmark of his plays, with poetic verse, soliloquies, and asides used to convey the characters thoughts and emotions.3. Exploration of Universal ThemesShakespeares tragedies grapple with timeless themes that resonate with audiences across generations. It includes love, loss, ambition, revenge, and the nature of good and evil.4. Complex CharactersShakespeares characters are multifaceted and complex, with both admirable qualities and flaws that contribute to their downfall.5. Intricate PlotsThe plots of Shakespearean tragedies are often intricate and interwoven, with multiple subplots and characters contributing to the overall narrative.ConclusionShakespearean tragedy is a complex and multifaceted dramatic form that continues to resonate with audiences today. By understanding the key elements that define Shakespearean tragedy, we can gain a deeper appreciation for their artistry and their enduring exploration of the human condition.Recommended: Significance of the Willow Song in Othello and its Symbolism