INTRO to SHAKESPEARE

Part Two:
Tragedy & the Tragic Hero
What's Tragedy?

Discussion:
When we say . . .
- The Tragedy of Venezuela (The Atlantic)
- The Tragedy of Hamlet (by W. Shakespeare)

. . . what's the difference in the meaning of “tragedy”?
What's Tragedy?

When We Experience...

Real life
- Disorderly, random
- Seemingly meaningless

Drama
- carefully crafted work (focused on the essentials)
- the character's experience becomes our own
What’s Tragedy?

How exactly is TRAGEDY different from other Dramatic Art Forms?

What are its features?

What about a Tragedy makes it “Shakespearian”? 

What’s Tragedy?
What’s Tragedy?

**TRAGIC HERO** (Aristotle)

1) *noble* figure, “superior” to us (i.e. social/political/economic status)

2) *suffers* (an extreme) reversal of fortune

3) Recognizes/faces consequence for his/her action(s)
What's Tragedy?

CATHARSIS (Aristotle)

When we see a tragedy and experience what a tragic hero experiences, we get a peculiar feeling...

• pity / sympathy, but also ‘satisfaction’
  – because we undergo a purging (release) of emotions . . .

• E.g. The love story scene in Pixar’s Up (2009)
What's Tragedy?

Tragic Hero?

Given what we know (thus far) about tragedy, does our friend Carl qualify as a tragic hero? Explain.
What's Tragedy?

According to ARISTOTLE...

No!

Remember Aristotle's 3 criteria...
What’s Tragedy?

But What’s the Point?
What’s the interest in seeing human suffering?
What's Tragedy?

The Beauty !!!!

- In spite of all the misfortunes endured by the tragic hero, he/she
  - maintains his/her dignity in the face of great calamity
  - fights till the end

Though not a classic tragedy, it gets to the heart of this paradox
What's Tragedy?
What’s Tragedy?

W. B. Yates once described Tragedy as a “TERIBLE BEAUTY”

Shows us the depths of human suffering

... but also the extent of human potential (in handling that suffering)
What's Tragedy?

Tragedy:

- A dramatic work of art featuring the downfall of a classic tragic hero.
- As outlined by Aristotle, this tragic hero must meet certain criteria (in order to qualify as such),
- and his experience (though depressing) must be intellectually ennobling for the audience.

The 3 Elements of a Tragic Hero

- Catharsis
- Terrible Beauty
Tragedy
Before Shakespeare:

* Classical Greek
* Medieval
Greek Tragedy

Oedipus Rex

• Sophocles
• 5th Century B.C.

Why does it matter?

• Height of Greek Tragedy
• 2000 years later served as a prototype for Great Tragedy
Greek Tragedy

PLOT

• According to a prophecy, Oedipus is born to perform the most terrible of all crimes: *patricide* (kill his father) and *incest* (marry & procreate with his mother).

Video:
Standard Deviants
Greek Tragedy

**Think Pair-Share**
- Is Oedipus a tragic hero, or simply tragic?

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<th>CRITERIA</th>
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Greek Tragedy

**Think Pair-Share**
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<td>Is he a noble figure?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong> He is King (Rex) of Thebes</td>
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<td>Suffers a reversal of fortune?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong> Goes from ruling Thebes, to being banished from it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endures uncommon suffering?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong> He is eternally guilty of patricide and incest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes the consequences of his actions?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong> Punishes himself violently</td>
</tr>
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<td>Does his plight ennoble &amp; enlarge the audience?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong> His peculiar experience shatters &amp; inspires us</td>
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Greek Tragedy

Oedipus Rex: Plot

Uncommon Suffering:

- His suffering (though peculiar) is extreme
  - His story exemplifies the depth of human suffering
Greek Tragedy

Oedipus Rex: Plot

Maintains Dignity:

• Takes responsibility (by punishing himself)

• Confronts the facts of his investigation
  - Does not shrink at them or coward away
Greek Tragedy

Oedipus Rex: Plot

**Inspires us:**

- **Ultimately transforming:**
  - As we join Odp in his self-discovery, we grow by our own discovery of what it is to be human in an otherwise unimaginable situation

- **Economical Presentation:**
  - All events lead to one thing (and serve one purpose)
    - Odp’s self-discovery
Medieval Tragedy
Medieval Tragedy

Tragic Tales

- Teaching stories (not really dramatic works of art)

Q: What might have influenced this change in tragedy?

(Think Medieval)
Medieval Tragedy

Bocaccio’s *De Casibus, Virorum Illustrium*

**Think Pair-Share**

Judging by the image, try to infer its possible meaning.
Medieval Tragedy

WHEEL of FORTUNE

When you're at the top, it's just a matter of time before you fall ...
Medieval Tragedy

De Casibus Tragedies

1) Narrative (story), rather than drama (play)

2) ‘Tragedy’ = simply ...
   the fall of the main character (from a high position)

3) Didactic (taught a moral lesson) e.g. humility
Shakespearian Tragedy

10 Tragedies...

BUT... What makes a tragedy “Shakespearian”?
Shakespearian Tragedy

BUT... What makes a tragedy "Shakespearian"?
Shakespearian Tragedy

Aristotle’s Tragic Hero
- Catharsis
- 3 Elements of the tragic Hero

De Casibus Tragedies
- Fall of a noble figure
- Wheel of Fortune concept

Ancient Greek + Medieval
Shakespearian Tragedy

Top 6 Tragedies...

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo & Juliet
- Hamlet
- Othello
- Macbeth
- King Lear