**Characteristics of classical and Shakespearean tragedy**

* The hero, who is high in social station, suffers from an excess or imbalance of a character trait (e.g.,pride, ambition, curiosity) that causes his or her undoing and death.
* The action is often precipitated and/or exacerbated by female transgression of the social order (e.g., a women disobeys her father or other male “superiors” about such behaviours as marrying for social mobility and refraining from premarital sex).
* The plot features serious incidents of social disorder such as sedition, adultery, regicide, fratricide, or incest.
* The tragedy asserts that humans are culpable, and that the “wages of sin [wrong-doing] is death,” which falls indiscriminately on the innocent and guilty, before there can be a restoration of the social order.

**Characteristics of classical and Shakespearean comedy**

* There is a love conflict, often a quarrel or misunderstanding between lovers or parents/obstacles who stand in the lovers’ way.
* Frequently there are elements of disguise: for example, women pretend they are men, and masters pretend they are servants in order to get what they want.
* The comedy features humorous incidents of social disorder. Frequently the social order is turned upside-down: slaves, servants, or lower-class characters, in disguise and often in order to do the superior’s bidding, end up ruling and enjoying the experience of their liberty. Conversely, upper-class characters find themselves bound or unfree in certain ways.
* Often the servants/slaves/lower-class characters are shown as smarter or more sensitive than their masters and therefore better able to resolve a problem.
* In the end, the social order is restored: often the slaves are granted their freedom for their help.
* The lovers experience reconciliation ending in marriage.
* The comedy often takes place outside of an urban centre or “civilized” space: in a forest, garden, on an island, or other green world.

**Characteristics of tragi-comedy**

* Like tragedy, tragic-comedy is concerned with serious incidents and interactions signalling human culpability, profound personal loss, and social disorder.
* As in comedy, no one ever dies, although there is the potential for death and the fear that loved ones have died.
* Tragi-comedy emphasizes mercy, grace (undeserved pardon), the potential for reconciliation, and positive transformation or restoration of what was lost.
* The plot often returns the characters to “civilization” from the green world in which much of the action takes place.