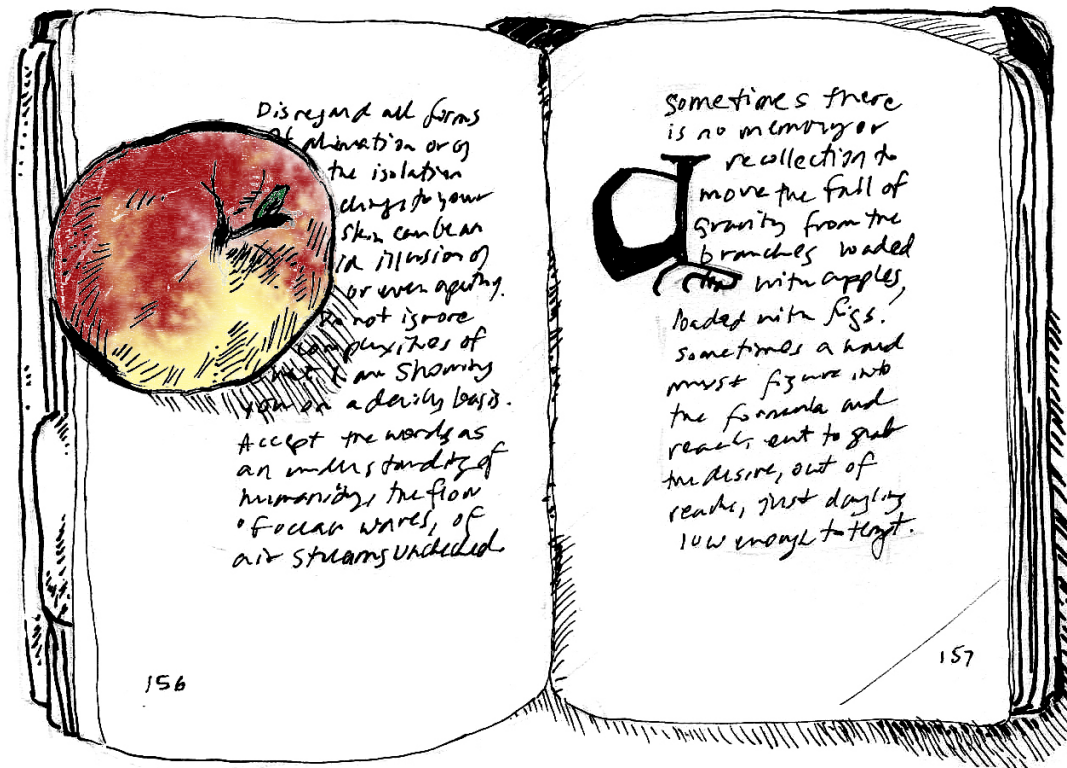


# W. Shakespeare and *King Lear*

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# *Shakespeare's Tragedies*

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**Generally it is accepted that William Shakespeare wrote ten tragedies.**

Although these range in plot, generally the selected plays do adhere to a formula.

The titles of the stories are:

- The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus
  - The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet
  - The Tragedy of Julius Caesar
  - The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark
  - The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice
  - The Tragedy of King Lear
  - The Tragedy of Macbeth
  - The Tragedy of Anthony and Cleopatra
  - The Tragedy of Coriolanus
  - The Life of Timon of Athens
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- The remainder of his plays are divided up into categories of Comedies, Histories, and Romances.

# Shakespeare's Tragedies

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**Many critics have linked the tragedy to Aristotle's views of tragedy.**

There is a possibility however that Shakespeare created his works independent of the Greek philosophies theories.

- Either way, the important factor is that the audience must have some form of **sympathy for the protagonist**. Through the audience's understanding of the character's motivations the plot develops a stronger sense of realism.
- Also, the tragic hero's flaws need to be identified through the plot and easily recognizable by the audience. Building a sympathy based on the **character's flaws** heightens the realism of a story as well.
- Shakespeare will show his characters in the act of choosing their path; this offers the audience a sense of an individual's **free will**. The more successful characters often consider different paths or alternative resolutions to their conflicts— but unavoidably they will chose a tragic end freely. Classic examples are Hamlet and Macbeth.

# *Shakespeare's Tragedies*

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**The hero's tragic flaw is essential for developing a connection to a character.**

Flaws in characterization help keep a figure in proper perspective; humanizing an unusual subject like the Greek Achilles or King Lear.

- The flaw is often considered an oversight or a deliberate action by the protagonist. King Lear for instance deliberately exiles his best advisor from the court and distances himself from his favorite daughter all due to his wounded pride.
- The flaw will bring about the catastrophic closure to the work. In addition, because of element the free will, Shakespeare's tragic heros are shown causing their own fated closure. The audience recognizes the equation sometimes before the character. Although often the character deserves the resulting punishment, as in the case of King Lear, an overwhelming sense of sympathy is given to him due to extreme suffrage he endures.

# Shakespeare's Tragedies

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**There are basic elements which appear in all of William Shakespeare's work.**

Typically, as a great experimenter, Shakespeare shifts these concepts in different directions, testing the material on the audience.

- the majority of passages are written in variations of **iambic pentameter**: five feet of meter, a stress falling on the second syllable of every foot
- although utilizing a controlled meter, he rarely uses rhymes: this technique is called **blank verse**
- some passages are shown in **prose** fashion, for instance when the Fool enters *King Lear* during Act I, scene 4, he talks to the Earl of Kent briefly without iambic pentameter controlling his speech— see page 1376 *Longman*
- often to close out a scene, the last speech will be delivered in a rhyming couplet, achieving a sense of completion for the audience

# Shakespeare's Tragedies

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**Most importantly, all of his plays feature a scene with the central character shown in a moment of intense internalized discussion.**

Termed as **soliloquies**, these speeches allow a greater understanding of a character's motivation or his/her sense of direction in the plot.

- These are generally accepted as **interior monologues** and are not to be seen as literal representation of the protagonist talking out loud.
- There are a few occasions when an actor will address the audience in a Shakespearean comedy— but these are understood to be a satire of the drama viewing experience.
- Edmund in *King Lear* has a moment to himself where he discusses his status as a bastard child; here he is shown contemplating his options, ruminating over his fated in the society.

# Shakespeare's Tragedies

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Furthermore, all of the plays follow a basic pyramid plot analysis.

This diagram, called Freytag's Pyramid is often used now to discuss basic plot construction in all fiction.

