***ENG3U “Macbeth” – TRAGIC PLAY TERMS***

*Wilson*

**Tragedy** A tragedy is a drama in which the protagonist or hero fails or is destroyed. It contains incidents which arouse feelings of pity or fear, and it leads to a catharsis (the coming together) of these emotions.

**Tragic Flaw** The tragic flaw is the moral weakness or error of judgement which causes the tragic hero to fail. It is often connected to an error of judgement (like too much self confidence) which leads a character to disregard the warning signs that they are violating moral laws.

**Tragic Hero** The central character of a tragedy should be a mixture of “good” and “evil”. The character should be of high moral worth, but possess a flaw. The audience feels sorry for the character, since he/she is not inherently evil and their misfortune is greater than they deserve. A tragic hero makes the audience consider the potential for their own downfall.

**Comic Relief** Comic relief is the use of humorous speeches, characters, or scences in a serious or tragic work. They may alleviate tension, add variety, and (in the best plays) be made integral to the plot in a way that counteracts the tragic elements of the play.

**Foreshadowing**  A technique in which future events are suggested to the audience

**Pathetic** Pathetic fallacy occurs when nature acts in accordance with the thoughts and/or

**Fallacy** actions of the characters.

**The Tragic Hero:**

* Is one with whom the audience identifies
* Is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil (just like the rest of us)
* Experiences a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of a **tragic flaw** in character
* Because of this tragic flaw, it is inevitable he/she will experience a decline in fortune, caused by a lack of insight within the character
* Most tragic heroes in Classical and Shakespearean literature were kings or rulers, or those on whom a State depends. The tragic hero has a potential to be great. This makes his/her downfall more tragic. The tragic hero must have reached a certain **maturity** and **height** so that his/her fall is tragic.

**Catharsis:**

* A tragedy must produce a **purging of emotions** of fear and pity in the audience. The audience must feel completely drained of emotions at the end of the play. This purging is known as catharsis.
* Pity – the audience feels pity because the tragic hero receives misfortune greater than he deserves.
* Fear – the audience feels fear because people recognize similar possibilities and consequences for themselves.

**Elements of Shakespearean Tragedy:**

* The hero is always an extraordinary and admirable man. He is usually good and noble, but even when evil, he has compensating traits such as strength, courage, or ambition in epic proportions.
* The hero is a person of high rank, whose fate affects the destiny of his country, city, or family.
* The character of the hero has a basic flaw, bias, or fixation which with the help of outside circumstances leads the hero to a terrible end and even death, which contrasts sharply with the hero’s former glory and happiness.
* A dual conflict generates the play’s action: the external conflict between persons and groups, and the internal conflicts of the hero himself.
* Good always triumphs in the end, even though the tragic hero has pulled his flawed world down on his head.
* There is a period of false hope in the play, where it looks like everything will turn out all right.
* Action is performed by the hero of his own free will.
* Typically, the hero dies in a Shakespearean play.
* Other elements include the use of the supernatural; the use of coincidence and luck; and the abnormal
* Psychological states of the main character do not affect the action.