INTRO TO DRAMA

Get ready to take notes!
Fundamental Differences Between Ancient and Modern Life

- Organization of Society
- Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals
- Material Well-Being
- Spiritual and Psychological Well-Being
Ancient - Little social mobility. Social status, marital partners, and occupations are chosen by or inherited from parents and therefore determined at birth.

Modern – Social status dependent on wealth, which is the reward for achievement valued by others. Therefore social status, marital partners, and occupations for most people are not determined at birth.
Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals

- Ancient – Few or no rights and not much concern for them. Concern is for responsibility to relatives, communities, overlords, or kings.
- Modern – “... the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
Material Well-Being

- Ancient – Nobility uses wealth to maintain power and insulate themselves from such misfortunes as famine and plague. In addition, the authority of kings is bolstered by the role of religious traditions to discourage such threatening enterprises as science, technology, and trade (Creates a new social class)
- Modern – A world of merchants, bankers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, and technicians.
Spiritual and Psychological Well-Being

- Ancient – Little freedom but psychological comfort
- Modern – Pursues his own material happiness but often at the expense of his psychological and spiritual well-being
The modern world is the only world in which ordinary individuals have ever assumed they all had the right to pursue their own happiness. Problem is this pursuit has robbed modern man of his sense of identity, purpose, security, worth, and place.
TRAGEDY AND COMEDY
Perfect definitions and an airtight system of classification are impossible

It is unnecessary that we classify each play we read or see

The quality of experience furnished by a play may be partially dependent on our perception of its relationship to earlier literary forms, and therefore familiarity with traditional notions of tragedy and comedy is important for our understanding and appreciation of plays.

Whether or not tragedy and comedy be taken as the two all-inclusive dramatic modes, they are certainly, as symbolized by the masks, the two principal ones.
Tragedy
A literary *tragedy* presents courageous individuals who confront powerful forces within or outside themselves with a dignity that reveals the breadth and depth of the human spirit in the face of failure, defeat, and even death.
The term Aristotle described as “some error or frailty” that brings about the protagonist’s misfortune is *hamartia*. This word has been frequently interpreted to mean that the protagonist’s fall is the result of an internal *tragic flaw*, such as an excess in pride, ambition, passion, or some other character trait that leads to disaster.
Maybe better to translate the word to mean “mistake.” The protagonist will mistakenly bring about his own downfall, not because he is sinful or morally weak, but because he does not know enough.
Reversal (peripeteia)

- The point when the hero’s fortunes turn in an unexpected direction. Typically, a self-destructive action taken in blindness that leads to a diametrically opposed result from what was intended.
The protagonist recognizes the consequences of his actions – moves from ignorance to knowledge.
Aristotle described *catharsis* as a purgation of the emotions of “pity and fear.” We are faced with the protagonist’s misfortune, which often seems out of proportion to his or her actions, and so we are likely to feel compassionate *pity*. Simultaneously, we may experience *fear* because the failure of the protagonist, who is so great in stature and power, is a frightening reminder of our own vulnerabilities.
Central Features of Archetypal Tragic Figure

- The tragic hero is a man of noble stature
- The tragic hero is good, though not perfect, and his fall results from his committing “an act of injustice” (hamartia) either through ignorance or from a conviction that some greater good will be served
- The hero’s downfall, therefore, is his own fault, the result of his own free choice – not the result of pure accident or villainy or some overriding malignant fate
- The hero’s misfortune is not wholly deserved – the punishment exceeds the crime
- The tragic fall is not pure loss. Though it may result in the protagonist’s death, it involves, before death, some increase in awareness, some gain in self-knowledge
- Though it arouses the emotions of pity and fear, when performed well, the audience should achieve a sense of emotional release, a catharsis, at the end of the play
Because comedy exposes human folly, its function is partly critical and corrective. Where tragedy challenges us with a vision of human possibility, comedy reveals to us a spectacle of human ridiculousness.
Low Comedy

- Lowest form of humor
- Evokes the loudest, longest laughter
- Relies on the body and physical mishaps
- Bathroom humor
- Slapstick
- Tripping, falling
- Any bodily function
Farce

- Characters are controlled by situations - they seem to have no control
- Relies on plot devices:
  - Misunderstandings
  - Mistaken identities
  - Coincidences
  - Mistiming
High Comedy

- Relies on a skillful use of language – verbal wit
- Two Types:
  - Comedy of Manners
  - Comedy of Ideas
**Depiction of Human Nature**

- Tragedy emphasizes human greatness
- Comedy delineates human weakness
- Tragedy celebrates human freedom
- Comedy points up human limitations
- Tragedy: “What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!” - Hamlet
- Comedy: “Lord, what fools these mortals be!” - Puck
THEATER OF DIONYSOS
GREEK THEATER

Theatron
“viewing place”

Parodos
“Passageway”

Orchestra
“dancing space”

Skene
“tent” – building directly behind the stage

Proskenion
“space in front of the skene”

chorus
Vocabulary

- **Machiavel**: marked by cunning, duplicity, or bad faith
- **Xenophobe**: one unduly fearful of what is foreign and especially of people of foreign origin
- **Misogynist**: a hatred of women
- **Pragmatist**: a practical approach to problems and affairs
- **Regicide**: the crime of killing a king or queen
- **Infanticide**: the act of killing a baby
- **Patricide**: the act of murdering your own father
- **Fratricide**: the crime of murdering your own brother or sister
Central Conflicts of Medea

- Husband v. wife
- Moderation v. excess
- Concubine v. Wife
- Barbaric v. Civilized
- Revenge v. Justice
- Man v. woman
- Alien v. native-born citizen
- society v. women
- Bravery v. cowardice
- Indirect violence v. direct violence
Annotate for...

- Literary devices
- Elements of Tragedy
- Characterization
- Lines dealing with the central conflicts
- Confusing and defined terms