**Shakespearean Tragedy **

In *The Friendly Shakespeare* Norrie Epstein states, “In comedy, the parade of human folly is presented through the wrong end of the binoculars, from a perspective of detached amusement. But with the tragedies, the binoculars are turned the other way: everything is up close, intense, and immediate. Shakespeare, like Hamlet, ‘considers’ life ‘too curiously,’ exposing everthing to minute scrutiny, and he takes his examination to the furthest, most terrible limit…. In tragedy we are stripped of the defences that keep us from looking at life’s dark underside. In the process of watching a tragedy, we momentarily forget the details of everyday life, and a world of absolutes – mortality, time, death, decay, good and evil – is revealed.”

Many of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy have roots in Greek Tragedy like Aristotle’s *Oedipus Rex*

**Conventional elements in Shakespearean tragedies:**

1. Tragic Hero –
* High rank or power
* Tragic Flaw (Greek term Harmartia) The tragic hero often has the flaw of too much pride (hubris).
1. Chance

- The hero will often experience some fortune or fate that is out of his/her control.

1. Ends in death and destruction

- Most everyone dies in the end, even the innocent.

1. Catharthis

- The audience feels a cleansing of emotions through pity and sadness for the characters.

1. Plot: Classic narrative Arc – exposition, conflict, confusion, climax, resolution
* Unlike the comedies that have multiple subplots, the tragedies usually focus on one plot throughout.

6. Comic Relief

- The Shakespearean tragedies (unlike Greek) have some humorous low class characters and bawdy puns to break up some of the tension.