

Elements of Classical Tragedy

1. The problem involves someone of considerable rank. (A person of less importance is not considered tragic in the classical sense; his fall will not influence a great number of people.)
2. The fall of the hero must affect many people.
3. Things go well up to a certain point. (This point need not lie within the span of the work.)
4. There must be exceptional suffering directly in connection with the hero.
5. The person's character directly influences the tragedy. It is because the hero is who he is that the tragic events follow.
6. The characteristic of the hero that results in the tragic events must be respectable. (This characteristic is often called a "tragic flaw"; however, the flaw may, in fact, be a virtue, thus adding to the tragedy of the situation.)
7. Tragic accidents occur which are outside of the control of all of the persons involved.
8. There is a degree of inevitability in the tragedy. In spite of circumstances in which the chain of action might be broken, thus preventing tragedy, it marches on toward the conclusion.
9. The tragedy occurs either because the character is influenced by the surroundings and the action or because the surroundings and action are influenced by the character.

In addition, the following aspects also often occur:

1. There may be abnormal conditions of character.
2. There may be an element of the supernatural.
3. There is often both an inner and an outer conflict.