

A red speech bubble with a white outline and a white drop shadow, containing the text "Elements of a Greek Tragedy". The bubble has a pointed bottom and is set against a background of faint, overlapping circles and lines.

Elements of a Greek Tragedy

Tragic Hero

- The main character often die at the end of the play
- The main character generally brings about his or her own downfall
- The main character is the tragic hero
- The tragic hero is usually a person of high birth, neither totally good nor totally evil, whose downfall is brought about by some weakness or error in judgment

Aristotle's elements of a tragedy

- **Hubris**—excessive pride or self-confidence; hubris is often the tragic flaw because it causes the hero to believe the laws do not apply to him
- **Hamartia**—character defect that causes the downfall of the protagonist; tragic flaw

continued

- **Nemesis**—force in the story that requires the main character to face his or her shortcomings, to act upon his tragic flaw, leading to the character's downfall; nemesis is often another character
- **Anagnorisis**—critical moment of recognition or discovery on the part of the hero; the hero changes from being ignorant to understanding
- **Catharsis**—purging of emotions or relieving of emotional tensions

Elements of a Greek tragedy

- Prologue—introductory section of a play
- Parados—first ode sung by a Greek chorus as it first enters the theater
- Choragos—leader of the chorus
- Stasimon—stationary song sung after the chorus has taken its place
- Episode—exchange of dialogue
- Exodus—final scene in a Greek tragedy
- Strophe—part of the ode the chorus chants as it moves across the stage
- Antistrophe—part of the ode the chorus chants as it moves back across the stage
- Ode—song from the chorus; each scene is followed by an ode

Other literary terms to know

- **Archetype**—an original model of a person, object, or concept from which similar instances are derived
- **Aphorism**—a short, wise, clever saying
- **Dramatic irony**—something that occurs when the audience knows information that the characters do not
- **Foil**—a character who serves as a contrast to another character
- **Paradox**—a statement or situation that seems to be a contradiction but that reveals a truth