

**Warmer – ‘Tragedy’ headlines: the meaning of tragic**

*Work with a partner. Decide what you think these newspaper stories are about.*

**JORDAN’S TRAGIC LOVE SPLIT LEAVES STAR HEARTBROKEN  
SCHOOL CLOSURE ‘TRAGEDY’ FOR LOCAL KIDS SAYS HEAD  
GWYN’S RED CARPET LOOK ‘FASHION TRAGEDY’**

*What is the meaning of the word ‘tragedy’?*



**Task 1 – Features of a tragedy**

*Which of the following would you expect to find in a tragedy?*

- a. Death
- b. Lots of jokes
- c. Madness
- d. An uncomplicated hero
- e. Violence
- f. Strong emotions
- g. People living happily ever after

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**Task 2 – Reading: recipe for a Shakespearean tragedy**

*Read the article and answer the questions.*

- a. Is it written in the style of ...
  - a covering letter?
  - a poem?
  - a recipe?
- b. Underline the parts of the text which helped you to choose your answer.
- c. Who is this article written for?

**Reading: how to make a Shakespearean tragedy**

Do you feel that the word ‘tragedy’ has lost its flavour in the modern world? Don’t worry – making a traditional Elizabethan tragedy is not as hard as you might think. Why not impress your friends with this easy dish?

1. Begin by choosing your tragic hero. Please select carefully: for an Elizabethan\* tragedy you need a hero **of noble birth**. Common people may be easy to find, but they are not the stuff of real Elizabethan tragedy. For best results, choose a hero with a strong and attractive character.
2. Add a **fatal character flaw**. **Hubris** is a popular choice with many chefs, but feel free to experiment. Stir the flaw in well: you must make sure it will result in your tragic hero’s downfall.
3. Next, make sure that your hero has a **reversal of fortune** by adding a large catastrophic event.
4. Sprinkle in plenty of suffering and **anguish**. Beat your hero with it until he can take no more.

When your hero is just about ready to die, mix in a moment of **self-awareness**. Your hero should suddenly recognise his tragic flaw. Time this moment of self-awareness carefully: it should come just a few moments too late.

5. Kill your tragic hero. Make sure that you have a nice sweet dessert for your guests to enjoy so that they feel there is hope for the future.

\* The word ‘Elizabethan’ refers to the years Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne (1558–1603).

**Task 3 – Check your understanding**

*Are these sentences true or false?*

- a. Elizabethan tragic heroes are often from poor families.
- b. The best tragic heroes are totally wicked.
- c. Many tragic heroes get into trouble because of their pride.
- d. Tragic heroes need to experience a change in luck.
- e. For a hero to be truly tragic he needs to see what he has done wrong.
- f. The audience should feel totally depressed at the end of a tragedy.

**Task 4 – Defining words**

*Match the meaning of the words and phrases in bold to their definitions.*

- a. pride
- b. terrible pain and suffering
- c. coming from the top level of society (e.g. prince, duchess, etc.)
- d. knowledge about yourself and who you are on the inside
- e. a change in luck
- f. something bad about your personality which will result in your downfall

**Task 5 – Ready, steady – tragedy!**

*Your teacher will give you some ingredients. Work with your group to create an Elizabethan tragedy.*

*Use the recipe you have read to help you. Tell your class about your tragedy or act it out.*

**Task 6 – Talking about tragedies**

*Your teacher will give you a very short summary of an Elizabethan tragedy. Complete the table with information about the four main characters in your tragedy, and then answer questions **a-d**.*

*Fill in the table.*

Name of character				
Good, bad or neither?				
Role in story				
Most dramatic moment?				

*Now answer the questions:*

- a.** Is there a tragic hero?
- b.** Does anyone die?
- c.** Which 'ingredients of a tragedy' can you identify?
- d.** Does anything positive happen at the end of the tragedy?

*Ask your partner about his/her tragedy, using the questions above to help you. How is it similar to the tragedy you read? How is it different?*