



## THE IMPORTANCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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### Abstract

This article is about the tragedies of William Shakespeare, a representative of English literature, a great talent who amazed the whole world with his works, and their significance. William Shakespeare has a special place not only in English literature, but also in world literature. The role and function of tragedy is a key factor, especially in Shakespeare's work. The Stratford-born writer was not just a genius, but a product of his time. His birth and growth during the Renaissance had a profound effect on the content and essence of Shakespeare's works. «Romeo and Juliet», Shakespeare's most famous work of his time, and «Hamlet», his best work, were also tragedies. This means that Shakespeare's tragedies are of great importance not only in his work, but in all English literature. In this article, we will understand the essence of the time in which Shakespeare lived through his tragedies and the true meaning hidden behind the works of the writer, and the mystery of the time in which Shakespeare lived, the importance of tragedy in revealing this mystery.

**Keywords:** Tragedy, Dionysus, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Lear

### Introduction

William Shakespeare, Shakespeare also spelled Shakspere, byname Bard of Avon or Swan of Avon, (baptized April 26, 1564, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England—died April 23, 1616, Stratford-upon-Avon), English poet, dramatist, and actor often called the English national poet and considered by many to be the greatest dramatist of all time.

Shakespeare occupies a position unique in world literature. Other poets, such as Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, have transcended national barriers, but no writer's living reputation can compare to that of Shakespeare, whose plays, written in the late 16th and early 17th centuries for a small repertory theatre, are now performed and read more often and in more countries than ever before.

The prophecy of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time," has been fulfilled. Tragedy is a word derived from the Greek language, which is studied in literature as a major genre. Tragedy is usually associated with human suffering, especially the protagonist's suffering, which eventually ends in the death of the protagonist. The history of this word is very interesting. In ancient Greece, a feast was held in honor of Dionysus, the god of harvest, where goats were slaughtered and served. The amateurs, on the other hand, wore goatskins and performed various plays, which were called tragos. The word "tragedy" itself means a goat's song. Today, the term tragedy is used to refer to works that end in death. Tragedies always raise the most pressing issues, including life and death. He usually reveals that the protagonist's intentions, worldview, and genuinely ugly society are opposed to pure desires. A hero who refuses to live among



such people will eventually die. The spiritual lowliness of the dark forces, which are hindered in the path of the main hero, and the impossibility of their survival at the end of the work are shown. The tragedy originated in ancient Greece and is one of the oldest tragedies, such as Aeschylus 'Chained Prometheus and Sophocles' King Oedipus in Europe, Shakespeare can be cited as a master of writing tragedies. We know 11 tragedies of Shakespeare, and in the article we will touch on some of them.

## Hamlet

It is safe to say that the famous Hamlet tragedy is one of the peaks of Shakespeare's work. It is the longest play and Shakespeare's best play. It is speculated that the play may have been linked to the death of Shakespeare's son. After this incident, Shakespeare often wrote comedies, but then created Hamlet. The world-famous book is about Prince Hamlet of Denmark, his unfaithful friend, traitor and hypocrite mother Gertrude, his lover Ophelia, who was caught between two fires and unable to support Hamlet, and his ruthless uncle who killed his brother for power. This tragedy shows that the lamentation of the unfortunate who did not see the light of his close relatives, loved ones and friends due to the ugly structure of the society in which he grew up. As a child, Hamlet grew up surrounded by loving parents and loyal friends. He begins to look at people, life, the world with love and confidence. But in his imagination, the wonderful ideas created by his father disappear when he encounters the real truth, that is, he realizes that the faith he believes in and real life is something else entirely.

Returning to his homeland, Hamlet faces the tragic death of his father, and he becomes aware of his mother's betrayal. Two thoughts arose in him: mind and heart, and Hamlet also played the role of a madman to determine which of them was right for his relatives. Hamlet is deeply saddened by the tragic death of his perfect, exemplary father. Hamlet is frustrated with the world and does not know the true meaning of life. He begins to hate his relatives. Unable to feel kinship, he begins to hate Claudius. He is disappointed in his mother, who was once a real man to him. Ophelia, whom she loved, respected, and revered, also understands that she is no different from the disgusting copies around her. The tragedy of this work is that there is no religion left around Hamlet, and in order to fight evil, one had to dive into the ocean of evil. Hamlet concludes that man is a weak creature in the face of evil. He doesn't want the evil to continue, but the murder brings him down to the same level as his rivals. Hamlet says that with the death of Claudius, evil in this world will not be completely eradicated. In this world, friendship have already given way to envy. At the end of the play, not only Hamlet but also his uncle and mother die. This is a sign that evil in the world has diminished, albeit slightly, spiritually. The events in this work were written hundreds of years ago, but have not lost their relevance even today. The struggle between evil and good has been going on for centuries.

## Romeo and Juliet

Shakespeare's most famous work and is read by all over the world. The work and play about the Montague heir Romeo, Juliet who the youngest daughter of the Capulet dynasty, reflects their love and enmity between their families for abstract reasons. In the play, Romeo is about 16 years old and Juliet is 14 years old. Instead of the hatred that comes from childhood, they feel love for each other and



understand that they have to fight for it. During their struggle, there are heroes who support and help the two young people, as well as heroes who do not want to be together due to hostility. This is the basis of Shakespeare's tragedies, which reflect the struggle between good and evil. Although there is no good at the end of the tragedy, in a relative sense, it means that after the loss, there will be no more evil. For reasons that are not understood in the play, Montagues and Capulets are fierce enemies, so young lovers know that their relationship will anger their families, but the couple is not interested in family quarrels and instead they prefer to continue their passions and believe that they can reconcile their families through marriage. Their young heart wants not only to be together, but also to live in harmony with their families. When Romeo and Juliet secretly get married with the help of their friend and trusted friend Friar Laurence, Juliet's cousin Tybalt kills Romeo's friend Mercutio. Romeo then kills Tybalt in revenge. This incident exacerbates the enmity between them. After that, Capulet decided to marry his daughter to a guy named Paris, whom he liked. Juliet, on the other hand, intended to escape this arranged marriage through a false death. Through Friar Laurence, he tries to inform Romeo about the plan, but the message does not reach him. Romeo, on the other hand, thinks death is real.

## ACT V

SCENE I. Mantua. A street.

Enter ROMEO

ROMEO

If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep,  
My dreams presage some joyful news at hand:  
    My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne;  
    And all this day an unaccustom'd spirit  
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.  
    I dreamt my lady came and found me dead--  
    Strange dream, that gives a dead man leave  
        to think!--  
And breathed such life with kisses in my lips,  
    That I revived, and was an emperor.  
    Ah me! how sweet is love itself possess'd,  
When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!

Enter BALTHASAR, booted  
News from Verona!--How now, Balthasar!  
Dost thou not bring me letters from the friar?  
    How doth my lady? Is my father well?  
    How fares my Juliet? that I ask again;  
        For nothing can be ill, if she be well.



## BALTHASAR

Then she is well, and nothing can be ill:  
Her body sleeps in Capel's monument,  
And her immortal part with angels lives.  
I saw her laid low in her kindred's vault,  
And presently took post to tell it you:  
O, pardon me for bringing these ill news,  
Since you did leave it for my office, sir.

## ROMEO

Is it even so? then I defy you, stars!  
Thou know'st my lodging: get me ink and paper,  
And hire post-horses; I will hence to-night.

In this part of the play we can see that Romeo was unaware of the plan and was in pain, hurrying to the man he loved as much as possible. The work ends with the death of two lovers and the reconciliation of two families after this death. In conclusion, it proves that evil or a bad event can lead to good.

## King Lear

King Lear is one of the best works of Shakespeare. This work, like many other plays, does not belong to Shakespeare, but is a pre-existing work. It is safe to say that Shakespeare made many changes to the work, and even radically changed it. However, it should be noted that this play is much more successful and better than other versions. There is no exact information about when this play was written and performed on stage. However, it is believed that this work was written in 1603-1606 and was staged in December 1606.

The secret of the success of the work is very big. The work begins with the story of Lear, the old British king, and the story of the king's passing of his inheritance to his three daughters as he grew older. His three daughters, Honeril, Regan and Cordelia, had to express their love for their father in words. Honeril and Regan do this job very well. They praise and flatter their father with all sorts of nice and deceptive words.

When it was Cordelia's turn, Cordelia told her father that her love could not be described in words, and that his words angered the King. Shocked by the unexpected response, the king does not leave an inheritance to his youngest daughter and deprives her of the right to inherit. But the noble King of France falls in love with Cordelia, so he marries her and takes her to France. The attitude of the two heirs to the king will change for the worse and they will be rude to him.



## KING LEAR

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!  
    Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!  
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
    I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

In this part of the work, Lear shows how much he loved his daughter, but realized that the thirst for pride and affection had made him and his daughter so far apart. When the game of fate kills Cordelia, the King realizes that this life is not eternal and that one day everything will die. The main thing is that people share affection with each other. People who have studied King Lear's psychology explain that Lear is only a man thirsty for love, and that the unexpected response of his beloved daughter was a psychological blow to him. Unfortunately, the play ends with the death of Cordelia and leads to irreparable loss. Perhaps this play will help people to understand each other's worth in a timely manner.

## Othello

Shakespeare, like all humanists of his time, wants to see the so-called human being as a person who has only good qualities and is free from all bad qualities. It was in Othello's work that the struggle between virtues and vices, such as good and evil, betrayal and loyalty, crime and trust, nobility and inferiority, began between the creation of the world and the creation of man. Othello is the intersection of the fate of the ruthless with those who believe in goodness in the pursuit of temporary interests and power. General Othello, who had spent his life in battle, recruited the brave Cassio as a lieutenant. Yago, who is looking for this place, gets angry and hates Othello. At the same time, Desdemona, the beautiful daughter of Brabant, rejects the rich Venetian Rodrigo, chooses Othello and married him. This situation causes Yago and Rodrigo to hate Othello and start looking for ways to take revenge. They convince Othello that there is love between Desdemona and Cassio, and Othello, who considers everyone as trustworthy as he is, believes this. Othello reflects a sincere and confident man. Because of his honesty and modesty, he takes his wife's infidelity very seriously and even goes so far as to kill his wife. No matter how difficult Othello is, he doesn't tell people about his pain.

## DESDEMONA

And have your mercy too! I never did  
Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio  
But with such general warranty of heaven  
As I might love: I never gave him token.

## OTHELLO

By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand.



O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart,  
And makest me call what I intend to do  
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice:  
I saw the handkerchief.

In this part of the play, we see that Desdemona tried to convince Othello of her innocence until the last second. But we can see that Othello trusted not those who denied him, but those who tried to deceive him.

DESDEMONA  
O, falsely, falsely murder'd!

EMILIA  
Alas, what cry is that?

OTHELLO  
That! what?

EMILIA  
Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.  
Help! help, ho! help! O lady, speak again!  
Sweet Desdemona! O sweet mistress, speak!

DESDEMONA  
A guiltless death I die.

EMILIA  
O, who hath done this deed?

DESDEMONA  
Nobody; I myself. Farewell  
Commend me to my kind lord: O, farewell!  
Dies

Even at the time of her death, the owner of a pure heart, who did not want to blame Othello, claims that the guilty for her death is her. With this gesture, her love for Othello is unconditional. In conclusion, perhaps this play proves to us once again that overconfidence destroys a person. People need trust but not too much. We need to check the words of even the most trusted person. It is the greatest humiliation that our loved ones suffer because of wrongdoing. The most frightening thing is the irreversible feeling of irreversibility and irreplaceable regret of life.



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