

Shakespeare's Genres

History

- Seek to answer the question: What are the qualities of a perfect king?
- Portray the country's transition from medieval to early modern.
- Depict the lives of the commoner in direct contrast to that of the king.
- Shows the dangers of a divided country.
- Shows the role of providence in England's history.
- Uses juxtaposition to highlight differences both in characters and in situations.
- Each individual play is a part of a longer narrative.

Comedy

- Trace the course of young love that ultimately triumphs despite obstacles
- Begin in trouble, end in peace
- Depict romance and end in marriage or the promise of marriage
- In comparison to the tragedies, they employ character types rather than fully individualized characters
- Thematically concerned with the nature of identity
- In comparison to the tragedies, they emphasize female experience
- Exclude death
- Reward virtue and punish vice
- Revolve around a contrast of "worlds," often youth vs. age or country vs. court or city
- Bring renewal to particular characters as well as society
- Fundamentally light-hearted and verbally exuberant
- Meant to make us laugh at ourselves as human beings in all our absurdity

Tragedy

- Blend genres together.
- Develop through carefully interwoven plots
- Trace the lives of important people from comfort to despair
- Dramatize the struggle between full self-actualization and acquiescence to social norms
- Dramatize the abuse of women and portray that abuse as evil
- Present a vision of stoicism in the face of suffering and failure
- Show that human weakness is inevitable and the most anyone can do is learn from the experience
- Dramatize moral ambiguity
- Evoke catharsis--horror, pity, elation, fear

Romance

- Events occur over a long period of time.
- Plots involve restoration after loss, suffering and repentance. Joy comes only after the profoundest despair.
- Providence/ the occult has a more obvious role than in other plays
- The family rather than the individual become the center of focus--particularly the relation between father and daughter
- Technological advances allowed greater production innovations