

Shakespeare is a well known author who wrote in the 1500's. Many of his plays are classified as tragedies. According to the Oxford dictionary of current English, a tragedy is described as a serious disaster or a sad event. In Shakespeare plays, tragedy is identified as a story that ends unhappily due to the fall of the protagonist, which is the tragic hero. For a play to be a tragedy, there must be a tragic hero. In the play Romeo and Juliet, Romeo is the tragic hero. The theme of tragedy plays a great role in the play Romeo and Juliet. By analyzing Romeo's tragic flaw, his noble birth, his series of poor decisions, the suffering of Romeo that extends beyond himself, it is evident that Romeo and Juliet is classified as a tragedy.

A person must possess certain qualities that classify one as a tragic hero. One of these qualities is the noble birth of a character. In the play Romeo and Juliet Romeo being the tragic hero, possesses that quality. Romeo is a Montague, and in the city of Verona the Montagues are a well known and respected family. It is a known fact that the Montagues are of noble birth when it is said by Benvolio in Act 1, Scene 1, Line 141: "My noble uncle." Benvolio is referring to Lord Montague, who is the father of Romeo. The Montagues are also a rich family, and that is one of the reasons for the respect for Romeo. "Verona brags of him... a bears him like a partly gentleman." This was said by Lord Capulet in Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 65-66. This quote illustrates that even Romeo's enemies know well of him and know that he is respected and talked about by the citizens of Verona. Usually when a character is introduced as being noble, the audience is aware that in the end of the play, the character will have a tragic fall.

Another necessary quality possessed by a tragic hero is the hero's tragic flaw, which in Romeo's case is falling in love too quickly and deeply. "To seek a tragic flaw in either Romeo or Juliet is a foolish and futile." - comments Harold Goddard, a critic from the book: "Modern critical views, William Shakespeare the Tragedies." Goddard supports the idea that having a tragic flaw is a part of being a tragic hero. Another critic states that "if Romeo's character does have a tragic flaw, it is youthful impetuosity; an older or more deliberate man might somehow have managed to avoid the quarrel and would not rush to kill himself as soon as he believed that Juliet was dead." (Phyllis Rackin, author of "Shakespeare Tragedies.") In the play Romeo and Juliet Romeo's tragic fall being he falls in love too quickly and too deeply, brings him to an awful end. In the beginning of the play one is introduced to Romeo being deeply and hopelessly in love with Rosaline. However Rosaline does not feel the same way about Romeo. This is when Romeo is unhappy and says to Benvolio: "Not having that which makes having short." (Act 1, Scene 1, Line 162). This very well illustrates how deeply Romeo was in love with Rosaline. In the next scene the audience realize that Romeo has fallen for another, which is Juliet. "For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night." -Said by Romeo in Act 1, Scene 5, Line 52. The audience can quickly identify Romeo's flaw of falling in love too quickly and deeply when he forgets about his feelings for Rosaline and concentrates on Juliet. Juliet too realizes that Romeo's love for her was too fast when she said: "It is too rash, too undvis'd, too sudden." (Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 117-118). Having a tragic flaw could be foreshadowing of the fall of the tragic hero.

Romeo being the play's tragic hero makes a series of poor decisions. The first decision of many was going to the Capulet's party. "Direct my sail! Oh lusty gentlemen." Says Romeo in Act 1, Scene 4, Line 113. If Romeo did not go to the party he would not have met Juliet. It was unnecessary for Romeo to try to stop the fight between Tybalt and Mercutio. If Romeo did not try to stop the fight, Mercutio would not have been killed, and the fight between Romeo and Tybalt would not have existed. Romeo says in Act 3, Scene 1, Line 94: "Courage, man; the hurt can not be much.", when he tries to stop the fight between Tybalt and Mercutio. Romeo makes the wrong choice when he decides to fight Tybalt for the death of Mercutio. "Either thou, or I, or both, must go with him." (Act 3, Scene 1, Line 1290. This quote refers to Romeo's challenge for Tybalt. If Romeo did not

fight Tybalt he would not have been banished from Verona. Another one of Romeo's poor decisions was the decision to commit suicide, which was also his last decision. "O true apothecary, thy drugs are quick, thus with a kiss I die." Said Romeo in Act 5, Scene 3, Line 120, right before he died. If only Romeo decided not to drink the poison he would have been alive to see Juliet wake. All these decisions caused Romeo, the tragic hero, to end his life tragically.

The suffering of the tragic hero also extends beyond himself. Due to the actions of Romeo, Mercutio and Tybalt died. "When he tries to make peace between them and Mercutio is fatally wounded, Romeo remarks pathetically 'I thought out for the best.' "- Comments Phillis Rackin author of Shakespeare Tragedies. "Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads", remarks Romeo after Mercutio's death, caused by Romeo. Tybalt's death also results from Romeo's poor actions. After Romeo's death Lady Montague dies of a heart attack. Lord Montague says to the Prince in Act 5, Scene 3, Line 209: "Alas my leige, my wife is dead tonight." Because of Romeo, Juliet decides upon her own death. She argues with her father, drinks the potion, and later stabs herself, all for the love for Romeo. Verona's peace is disturbed by all the commotion of the fights between the Capulets and the Montagues, caused mainly by Romeo. There is still no peace in the streets of Verona. The families of both Romeo and Juliet suffer over the loss of their children, and everyone is unhappy. Since Romeo brought suffering upon people rather than himself, he is truly the tragic hero and makes the play Romeo and Juliet a tragedy.

It is obvious that in the play Romeo and Juliet, Romeo is the tragic hero. This is evident when the audience see Romeo's noble birth, his tragic flaw, series of poor decisions he made and the fact that through his actions he brought suffering upon other people. Most plays, stories or novels have a moral. The moral of Romeo and Juliet is not to rush into things like love, hate and important decisions. All people should think twice about every decision they are making. From all the evidence stated in this paragraph along with the paragraphs above it is said that Romeo and Juliet is classified as a tragedy.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Bloom, Nasold. Modern critical views. William shakespeare the Tragedies.1985
Rackin, Phillis. Shakespeare's Tragedies. 1978
Brodley, A.C. Shakespearian Tragedy. 1986

Oxford school Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet. 1982

THE ELEMENTS THAT ESTABLISH THE PLAY AS A TRAGEDY