

# Comedy

## Definition of Comedy

Comedy is a literary [genre](#) and a type of dramatic work that is amusing and satirical in its tone, mostly having a cheerful ending. The [motif](#) of this dramatic work is triumph over unpleasant circumstance by creating comic effects, resulting in a happy or successful conclusion.

Thus, the purpose of comedy is to amuse the [audience](#). Comedy has multiple sub-genres depending upon the source of the [humor](#), [context](#) in which an author delivers dialogues, and delivery methods, which include [farce](#), [satire](#), and burlesque. [Tragedy](#) is opposite to comedy, as tragedy deals with sorrowful and tragic events in a story.

## Types of Comedy

There are five types of comedy in literature:

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### Romantic Comedy

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Romantic comedy involves a [theme](#) of love leading to a happy conclusion. We find romantic comedy in Shakespearean plays and some Elizabethan contemporaries. These plays are concerned with idealized love affairs. It is a fact that true love never runs smoothly; however, love overcomes difficulties and ends in a happy union.

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### Comedy of Humors

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Ben Johnson is the first dramatist who conceived and popularized this dramatic genre during the late sixteenth century. The term humor derives from the Latin word *humor*, which means “liquid.” It comes from a theory that the human body has four liquids, or humors, which include phlegm,

blood, yellow bile, and black bile. It explains that, when human beings have a balance of these humors in their bodies, they remain healthy.

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## Comedy of Manners

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This form of dramatic genre deals with intrigues and relations of ladies and gentlemen living in a sophisticated society. This form relies upon high comedy, derived from sparkle and wit of dialogues, violations of social traditions, and good manners, by nonsense characters like jealous husbands, wives, and foppish dandies. We find its use in Restoration dramatists, particularly in the works of Wycherley and Congreve.

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## Sentimental Comedy

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Sentimental [drama](#) contains both comedy and sentimental tragedy. It appears in literary circles due to reaction of the middle class against obscenity and indecency of Restoration Comedy of Manners. This form, which incorporates scenes with extreme emotions evoking excessive pity, gained popularity among the middle class audiences in the eighteenth century.

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## Tragicomedy

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This dramatic genre contains both tragic and comedic elements. It blends both elements to lighten the overall mood of the play. Often, [tragicomedy](#) is a serious play that ends happily.

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## Comedy Examples from Literature

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### Example #1: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (By William Shakespeare)

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William Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a good example of a romantic comedy, presenting young lovers falling comically in and out of love for a brief period. Their real world problems get resolved magically, enemies reconcile, and true lovers unite in the end.

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In his play *Every Man in His Humor*, Ben Johnson brings a comedy of humors. An overpowering suspicion of, and obsession with, his wife – that she might be unfaithful to him – controls Kiteley. Then a country gull determines every decision of George Downright in order to understand the manners of the city gallant. Kiteley worried for [moral](#) development of his son, tries to spy on him.

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### **Example #3: *The Conscious Lovers* (By Sir Richard Steele)**

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Sir Richard Steele's play, *The Conscious Lovers*, is a best-known and popular sentimental comedy, which is like a [melodrama](#). It characterizes extreme [exaggeration](#), dealing with trials of its penniless leading role Indiana. The play ends happily with the discovery of Indiana as heiress.

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### **Example #4: *All's Well that Ends Well* (By William Shakespeare)**

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Shakespeare's play, *All's Well that Ends Well*, perfectly sums up tragic and comic elements. This tragicomedy play shows antics of low-born but devoted Helena, who attempts to win the love of her lover, Bertram. She finally succeeds in marrying him, though she decides not to accept him until she wears the family ring of her husband and bears him a child. She employs a great deal of trickery by disguising herself as Bertram's other, and fakes her death. Bertram discovers her treachery at the end but realizes Helena did all that for him and expresses his love for her.

## **Function of Comedy**

Comedy tends to bring humor and induce laughter in plays, films, and theaters. The primary function of comedy is to amuse and entertain the audience, while it also portrays social institutions and persons as corrupt, and ridicules them through satirizing, parodying, and poking fun at their vices. By doing this, authors expose foibles and follies of individuals and society by using comic elements.