

# Tragicomedy

## Definition of Tragicomedy

Tragicomedy is a literary device used in fictional works. It contains both [tragedy](#) and [comedy](#). Mostly, the characters in tragicomedy are exaggerated, and sometimes there might be a happy ending after a series of unfortunate events. It is incorporated with jokes throughout the story, just to lighten the tone.

## Examples of Tragicomedy in Literature

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### Example #1: *The Merchant of Venice* (By William Shakespeare)

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*The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare is considered one of the most popular traditional tragicomedy examples. Though it has a comedic structure, there are tragic characters, such as Shylock (who is a central [character](#)), and tragic events, such as Antonio's "loss" of life (because he is not really dead).

Although the play ends on a happy note with the union of the lovers in the story, and Antonio is saved from a tragic incident, readers are left with a taste of Shylock's sufferings. Hence, the feeling and mood of the play at the end is neither happy nor gloomy. Though, this play definitely has a comic structure, it also has a strong tragic story. Therefore, it can be classified as a tragicomedy.

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### Example #2: *The Cherry Orchard* (By Anton Chekhov)

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Anton Chekhov's play, *The Cherry Orchard*, turned out to be his final play that has a combination of comedy and tragedy. It is the story of an elite family that is on the verge of losing its inherited estate. As this play is based on an inevitable social change, which came with the dawn of the 20th

century, it presents the end of an aristocratic era, blended with tragic and comic elements. The comic elements can be seen in the behavior, humorous aspects, and lack of responsibility of the characters.

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### **Example #3: *Waiting for Godot* (By Samuel Beckett)**

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Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* can also be considered one of the great examples of tragicomedy. There are many gestures, dialogues, actions, and situations that are filled with pure comedy. All types of musical devices have been used to create laughter.

The overall [atmosphere](#) is that of a dark-comedy. For example, Vladimir is determined not to listen to Estragon's nightmare. However, the latter keeps pleading with him to listen. Similarly, Estragon takes off and puts on his shoes several times while Vladimir plays with his hat again and again. On the other hand, comedy turns into a tragedy due to the haplessness of these tramps. Vladimir and Estragon wait for somebody who does not come, which makes them disappointed. During the course of time, they indulge themselves in meaningless [activities](#).

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### **Example #4: *The Winter's Tale* (By William Shakespeare)**

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Shakespearean tragicomedies have complex and dubious plots. One of his perfect tragicomedies is *The Winter's Tale*. The first three acts are both tragic and serious, while the final two acts are based on pastoral [romance](#), roguery, songs, [humor](#), and reunion. A sheep-shearing celebration with the elegant, innocent Perdita serving as a hostess, dancing and singing with shepherds, is suggestive of rural life in England. The blend of suffering, sorrows, humor, romance, forgiveness, and reunion in the play confirms its label as a tragicomedy. There are different aspects of the tragicomedy in the play that include: tragic elements, comic elements, romantic elements, and a happy ending.

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### **Example #5: *The Caretaker* (By Harold Pinteris)**

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*The Caretaker*, written by Harold Pinteris, is mixed with two modes, tragedy and comedy, and is a fine modern example of tragicomedy. The

the interactions between characters sometimes approach [farce](#). Davies' [repetition](#), confusion, and deceit of the brothers makes the play comedic. However, the tragic element appears in the climatic [monologue](#) of Anton, regarding his shock treatments, at the end of the play and in "that place," although its ending is somewhat ambiguous.

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#### **Example #6: *Marriage à la Mode* (By John Dryden)**

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John Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* is a successful comedy that merges two different plots of restoration comedy of manners and romantic tragicomedy. The double plot encompasses the idea that marriage both creates hope and brings regrets, it both opens possibilities and denies opportunities.

### **Function of Tragicomedy**

The main purpose of tragicomedy is to describe the dual nature of reality, where both modes can coexist, perhaps simultaneously. Therefore, the interweaving of both aspects gives both a comic and tragic view of life. Tragicomedy is mainly used in dramas and theater. Since tragic plays focus exclusively on protagonists, while comic plays are devoid of focus and concern, therefore plays that fell between these two [categories](#) were developed. These types of plays present both modes of life through absurdity and seriousness.