



## Examples: Tragedy

### Othello

Although he loves her, Othello murders Desdemona. He allows Iago to work on his love and turn it into jealousy, so that he murders her believing that she has been unfaithful with Cassio. When Emilia, Iago's wife and Desdemona's faithful servant, discovers her husband's plot, she denounces him. Othello, realising his tragic mistake, after asking to be remembered as one who "lov'd not wisely but too well", then commits suicide.

### Macbeth

Two victorious generals, Macbeth and Banquo, are accosted by three witches, who prophecy that Macbeth will become the King of Scotland and that Banquo's sons will sit upon the throne. Macbeth's wife, Lady Macbeth, hears of the prophecy and urges Macbeth to kill Duncan, the present King of Scotland, and caustically reproaches Macbeth for his scruples.

Macbeth reluctantly acquiesces, murders Duncan, and is declared King. Fearing the second part of the prophecy Macbeth then engages two assassins to kill Banquo and his son Fleance, but Fleance escapes. When Macbeth hears that the Scottish thane, Macduff, has joined Duncan's son, Malcolm, who is raising an army in England to proceed against him, he orders the death of Lady Macduff and her children. However, Lady Macbeth, driven mad by her conscience, finally commits suicide, while Macbeth himself is slain by Macduff, who has returned to Scotland with English forces. Malcolm is then proclaimed King.

So, driven on by his lust for power and his wife's ambitions, Macbeth destroys everything he loves, his best friend, his wife, and finally himself.

### Oedipus

Having learned from an oracle that he would be killed by his own son, Laius thrust a spike through the infant's feet and left him exposed on Mt. Cithaeron. However, the child was rescued by a shepherd and was raised by the childless king Polybus of Corinth and his wife Periboea as their own son.

When he grew to manhood, Oedipus was warned by the Delphic oracle that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Fearing this he avoided Corinth, but in so doing he met Laius on the road and, not knowing him, killed him in an argument. He proceeded to Thebes, which was then being ravaged by the Sphinx. When Oedipus answered her riddle, the Sphinx killed herself and the regent, Creon, offered him the throne of Thebes and the hand of Laius' widow, Jocasta, who was Creon's sister.

Later, to ease the famine that had struck Thebes, the Delphic oracle advised Creon to cast from the city the slayer of Laius. When the seer, Tiresias, and an old shepherd revealed Oedipus' identity, Jocasta committed suicide, and Oedipus blinded himself with her brooch. Banished from the city and shunned by his sons, he cursed them and wandered, an outcast, for many years.



## Romeo and Juliet

Romeo, the young heir of the Montagues, attends the great ball of the Capulets in disguise and falls in love with Juliet, the daughter of the house. Because of the deadly feud between the Montagues and Capulets, the two are married secretly in the cell of Friar Laurence.

During a street brawl Romeo's friend, Mercutio, is killed by Juliet's cousin, Tybalt. Enraged by his friend's death, Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished from Verona. In desperation Juliet, who is about to be married to Paris against her will, takes a sleeping potion given her by the friar to bring on a semblance of death. But before the friar's explanation can reach him, Romeo, hearing of her death, returns and drinks poison at Juliet's tomb. When she awakes a few moments later to find him dead, she stabs herself to death.

Realising that their hatred had caused the tragedy, the two houses make a sorrowful peace.

## Van Gogh

Despite his enormous talent and influence on modern art, particularly on Expressionism, Van Gogh only painted for a few brief years. He began painting in the 1880s, but his life was stricken by mental instability and, after spending some months in a mental institution, he took his own life in 1890 at the age of just 37.

## Emergency worker

An emergency worker rushes to the scene of an accident only to find that his own family are among the dead.

## The reunion

After years of searching, a man finally discovers the whereabouts of his father, whom he has never seen. He takes a flight to meet him, but as the plane lands he suffers a heart attack and dies.

## Accidental death

A man backs his car out of his garage, but, unknown to him, he runs over and kills his young son, who is playing in the drive behind the car.

## Assisi

In the early 1990s the chapel at Assisi, which contained many irreplaceable works of art, was destroyed by an earthquake, along with all its contents.



## September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001

Terrorists destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York by flying two passenger aircraft into them with the loss of those on board and nearly 3,000 in the towers. Aware of what was taking place, many on board the planes made last minute phone calls on their mobile phones to say goodbye to their loved ones.