

Literary Analysis: Tragedy and Motive

A **tragedy** is a drama in which the major character, who is of noble stature, meets with disaster or great misfortune. The tragic hero's downfall is usually the result of one of the following:

- *fate*, or the idea of a pre-planned destiny
- a serious character flaw
- some combination of both

Motive is an important element of a tragic hero's character. A character's motives guide his or her thoughts or actions. Often, the hero's motives are basically good but misguided. As a result, the hero suffers a tragic fate that may seem undeserved.

Although tragedies are sad, they can also be uplifting and instructive. They can teach us about ourselves. They can show the greatness and nobility of the human spirit when faced with grave challenges. As you read the final act of *Romeo and Juliet*, consider what positive message the tragic events ultimately convey.

Reading Skill: Summarize

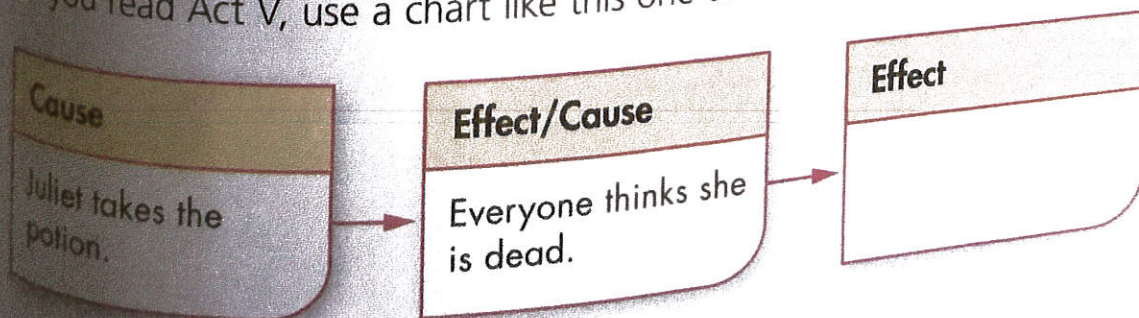
Summarizing is briefly stating the central ideas in a piece of writing. In summarizing the action, it is useful to first **identify causes and effects**.

- A *cause* is an event, action, or emotion that produces a result.
- An *effect* is the result produced by the cause.

Tragedies often involve a chain of causes and effects that advance the plot and lead to the tragic outcome. Recognizing the sequence will help you summarize plots like the one in this play.

Using the Strategy: Cause-and-Effect Chart

As you read Act V, use a chart like this one to record causes and effects.



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