



Outside the Book

Tragedy

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Long before tabloids and twitter meltdowns, your best bet for a diverting bit of schadenfreude was Renaissance Tragedy.

Renaissance Tragedies are usually based around one big character, whose name will probably be in the play's title and who (spoiler alert!) will be collapsed in a big heap of blood, tears and former friends' swords by the end.

Like Comedy, Tragedy is based around some kind of breakdown: it could be a personal one, like dithering Prince Hamlet's, or a social or political breakdown, like the fallout from Kebabbing poor old Caesar.

Beyond the despair-fest though, Tragedies have strong moral messages that might warn the powerful against tyranny and the vicious against, well, being themselves.

They also criticise the dominant social order.

The hero's fairly reasonable needs for love (like the Duchess of Malfi) or revenge (like Othello) will be so at odds with the social order that it'll, quite literally, *be the death of them*.

But when it comes to the ending, Comedy and Tragedy are distant cousins. Tragedy doesn't leave you with the warm, fuzzy glow of a happy end.

Instead you get to gorge on a delicious spectacle of madness and violence as the play hurtles towards the title character's certain doom. It's great fun!