TRAGIC HERO CLASSICAL DEFINITION

 A tragic hero is a person of noble birth with heroic or potentially heroic qualities.

This person is fated by the Gods or by some supernatural force to doom and destruction or at least to great suffering.

But the hero struggles mightly against this fate and this cosmic conflict wins our admiration.

Because the tragic hero simply cannot accept a diminished view of the self and because of some personality flaw, the hero fails in this epic struggle against fate.

This tragic drama involves choices (free will) and results in a paradox --- Is it Fate or Free Will which is primarily responsible for the suffering in the hero's life (and in our lives in light of our own personal tragedies)? Though fated the hero makes choices which bring about his destruction.

In addition, tragic drama usually reveals the hero's true identity. Oedipus --- instead of being the proud savior of Thebes --- discovers that he is the cause of the city's plague, the killer of his father and the husband of his mother.

The hero's suffering, however, is not gratuitous because through great suffering the hero is enlightened. Such heroes learn about themselves and their place in the universe. Pride is chastened. Though destroyed the hero is at peace intellectually.

Tragic doom is both public (the State) and private (a family tragedy as well) and usually sexual transgressions are involved in some way.

We are energized by witnessing this eternal drama for it encompasses the fate and "stuff" of all humans from kings and queens to paupers. As for paupers, in his famous editorial for the *NY Times*, *Tragedy and the Common Man*, Arthur Miller argues that the common person is also capable of tragic stature in so far as each one of us seeks a true identity and a personal dignity.