For this article, Mr. Foster is assessing you on multiple Learning Targets. Instead of him telling you which ones, you will try to answer the question and then identify which Learning Target is being addressed in the question. This article, and accompanying questions, are of the mode and difficulty of those that you will find on the ACT in the first week of March, but address what we are reading in class.

“Comedy vs. Tragedy” by Kaylie Gaedcke, 2013 **(1)**

Shakespeare's plays are all about one impactful central idea: disorder. **(2)**This may sound like a profound statement, but, as we shall see in a moment, it applies equally well to almost all drama. Still, the point is worth stressing, for reasons we shall attend to in a moment, because the major entry into every play we read is going to be an attempt to answer some key questions associated with that notion of disorder: What is the order in this society? How is that order violated? How do the characters respond to the loss of traditional order? How is order restored? Is the new order at the end of the play something healthy or is it shot through with ironic resonance? **(3)**

All dramatic stories always involve conflict. Typically, the dramatic narrative will open with some sense of a normal society: we see people of all kinds going about their business, and in witnessing this initial state of affairs we quickly infer the various ranks of people, the bonds which hold them together, and something about their value system. In other words, we begin with a society which is held together by shared rules. Many of Shakespeare's plays begin with a large group scene (the king and his court, for example) in which everyone has a place and knows his or her place. The scene is offered to us as a symbol of social unity which is about to be broken and will not be restored until the closing scenes (e.g., *King Lear*, *Macbeth, Richard II*). **(4)**

Then, something unusual and often unexpected happens to upset that normality. The event may be something natural, like a ship wreck (as in *Twelfth Night* or *The Tempest*), supernatural (as in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*), a decision made by a particular character (as in *King Lear* or *As You Like It*) or a sudden quarrel (e.g., *As You Like It, Henry IV, Part 1*). Often this event which kick starts **(5a)** the action is given very quickly with no attempt to provide a detailed explanation for it or even, in some cases, instantly plausible motivation (e.g., Cordelia's refusal to answer Lear, Oliver's decision to seek Orlando's death). At all events, this upset (which typically occurs very early in the action) disturbs the normal situation, creates confusion and conflict. Such conflict may be the source of much humor (for example, in the various mistaken identities which occur when a set of twins or, as in *Comedy of Errors*, two sets of twins, unexpectedly get loose in the community), or it may be the source of a political, personal, and psychological tornado **(5b)**. Attempts to understand what is going on or to deal with it simply compound the conflict, accelerating it and intensifying it. Finally, the conflict is resolved.

The terms comedy and tragedy commonly refer to the ways in which dramatic conflicts are resolved **(9)**. In comedy, the confusion ends when everyone recognizes what has been going on, learns from it, forgives, forgets, and re-establishes his or her identity in the smoothly functioning social group (which may return to the original normality or may be setting up a better situation than the one the group started with). Comedies typically end with a group celebration, especially one associated with a betrothal or wedding, often accompanied by music and dancing. The emphasis is on the *reintegration* **(6)** of everyone into the group, a recommitment to their shared life together. If there has been a clearly disruptive presence in the action, a source of anti-social discord, then that person typically has reformed his ways, has been punished, or is banished from the celebration. Thus, the comic celebration is looking forward to a more meaningful communal life (hence the common ending for comedies: "And *they* lived happily ever after").

The ending of a tragedy is quite different. Here the conflict is resolved only with the death of the main character, who usually discovers just before his death that his attempts to control the conflict and make his way through it have simply compounded his difficulties and that, therefore, to a large extent the dire situation he is in is largely of his own making. The death of the hero is not normally the very last thing in a tragedy, however, for there is commonly (especially in classical Greek tragedy) some group lament over the body of the fallen hero, a reflection upon the significance of the life which has now ended. Some of Shakespeare's best known speeches are these laments. The final action of a tragedy is then the carrying out of the corpse. The social group has formed again, but only as a result of the sacrifice of the main character(s), and the emphasis in the group is in a much lower key, as they ponder the significance of the life of the dead hero (in that sense, the ending of a tragedy is looking back over what has happened; the ending of comedy is looking forward to a joyful future). **(7)**.

This apparently simple structural difference between comedy and tragedy means that, with some quick rewriting, a tragic structure can be modified into a comic one. If we forget about violating the entire vision in the work, we can see how easily a painful tragic ending can be converted into a reassuring comic conclusion.. If Juliet wakes up in time, she and Romeo can live happily ever after. If Cordelia survives, then Lear's heart will not break; she can marry Edgar, and all three of them can live prosperously and happily for years to come. And so on. Such changes to the endings of Shakespeare's tragedies were commonplace in eighteenth-century productions, at a time when the tragic vision of experience was considered far less acceptable and popular by the general public. **(8)**.

1. Why is the title “Comedy vs. Tragedy” put in quotation m**a**rks?
   1. Titles of “small” texts are put in quotation marks
   2. Titles of “big” texts are put in quotation marks
   3. Titles of nonfiction narratives are put in quotes
   4. Titles of articles with the wrong author are put in quotes

Learning Target that I think this question most specifically addresses:

1. How likely is it that this first sentence of the text is the thesis of the entire article?
   1. Very likely, nonfiction authors always start with the central idea of the piece as the first sentence
   2. Likely, usually key ideas are in the introduction of nonfiction pieces
   3. Not all that likely, this is an important idea, **b**ut more of an “attention grabber” than a thesis
   4. Not likely at all, this first sentence contradicts the rest of the article

Learning Target this question most specifically addresses:

1. What is the author’s purpose or desired effect with using multiple rhetorical questions?
   1. To engage the reader by providing a list of details about the central idea while using strong syntax
   2. To entertain the reader by asking questions to which there are no answers
   3. To confuse the reader by interrogating him/her about ironic resonance
   4. To mislead the reader by questioning them **a**bout traditional order

Learning Target addressed:

1. Which is the most accurate depi**c**tion of a paraphrase for this paragraph?
   1. Shakespeare’s plays start with social order then corrupt it, never to be resolved
   2. The resolution of the corrupt social order is foreshadowed at the beginning of Shakespearean plays
   3. Most of Shakespeare’s plays establish a social order, disrupt it, then resolve it in the end
   4. Unified under a social order, Shakespearean characters always resolve their conflict tragically at the end of the play

Learning Target:

1. In the two underlined phrases, the author is using the technique of…
   1. Metaphor
   2. Simile
   3. Irony
   4. Personific**a**tion
   5. Foreshadowing

LT and justification:

1. By using the word *reintegration*, the author most likely means…
   1. Reinterpretation, new understanding
   2. Emphasis, focus
   3. Recommitment, **d**evote one’s self again
   4. Inclusion, reunion

LT and justification:

1. How **a**re the last two paragraphs you read (“The terms…” and “The ending…”) related?
   1. They are two opposite details of the article’s main idea
   2. They are two separate main ideas that are unrelated
   3. The central idea of the first paragraph is the cause of the central idea of the second paragraph
   4. The central idea of the first paragraph is the effect of the central idea of the second paragraph

LT and justification:

1. The most common and prominent stylistic, syntactic approach used **b**y this author was…
   1. Appositives
   2. Listing details
   3. Dashes to repeat ideas
   4. Rhetorical questions

Three Learning Targets addressed in this question:

1. Use the sentence that precedes the number (9) (“The terms…”) to write a question (and answers) that addresses a specific Learning Target. The right answer is letter A. Wrong answer B should be the “opposite” of the right answer. Wrong answer C should be a “kinda not really” answer. Wrong answer D should be an answer that includes words from the text but does not answer the question. Share these in your group, pick the best one, and write it on the board but mix of the answer order so the class can try to answer it.

Consult your Learning Targets log & add feedback about specific learning targets that will help you in the future