

Literary Elements Characteristic of Comedy

A Comedy represents the world as it should be. The central metaphors are spring or rebirth.

Setting: The story is set in a world of experience. There may be outside scenes of nature and greenery and flowers.

Characters - The hero or heroine does not possess the outstanding qualities of the romantic or tragic hero. They show the potential good in normal people. They are often young, in spirit if not in years. They display flexibility and wit.

Stock Characters may include some or all of the following:

An Imposter

The straight man (churl) a miserly, snobbish killjoy

The Buffoon (clown)

The blocking force (usually an authority figure)

An Imp or facilitator

There is often a matchmaker

Plot *The plot may show the rise of the common man and the recognition of a new, freer society.*

In romantic comedies there is usually a romantic triangle including the two people who should be together and the third person who must be displaced.

The hero/heroine struggles to make a difference, protect individuality, or get the girl/boy.

There are often double plots.

There is always a happy ending.

Common themes

Conflict between the weak and the strong, the weak wins

Nonconformity

Escape

Revival or renewal

Hope for a better society

The little (common) man overcomes all obstacles

Elements of Humor *Various elements of humor are employed to make the piece funny. These include some or all of the following:*

Incongruity

Language with two meanings (puns)

Surprise

Establishment of superiority

Repetition

Exaggeration

Inversion

Slapstick Violence

Common Motifs or Conventions

Twins or cases of mistaken identity

Coincidence or Mistiming

Clothing used to indicate social status

Imperfections, quirks or faults

Weddings

Parties or celebrations

Family traditions

Misunderstandings