

literary terms for Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*

aside

- a brief statement uttered by a character in a play, intended to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on the stage

blank verse

- unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter
- standard form for all Shakespearean drama

dramatic irony

- words or actions of a character carry meaning that is unperceived by the character but understood by the audience

foil

- a character who, through contrast, highlights the distinctive characteristics of another

foreshadowing

- presentation of material that hints at events to occur in later action
- may take the form of an established atmosphere, a parallel action, a physical object, or the revelation of a decisive character trait

heroic couplet

- a pair of rhyming lines, written in iambic pentameter, that expresses a complete thought
- employed in Shakespearean drama to end a scene and to emphasize character or action

soliloquy

- a speech delivered while a character is alone on stage, which calculatingly reveals to the audience the honest thoughts and plans of that character

comedy

- drama that humorously examines human weakness and fault
- begins in chaos and ends with the restoration of order through marriage

Comedy

"Dealing with people in their human state, restrained and often made ridiculous by their limitations, faults, bodily functions, and animal nature, comedy draws its laughter from the spectacle of individual or collective human weakness or failure, hence its tendency to contrast appearance and reality, to deflate pretense, and to mock excess."

Suggestive of the close relationship between laughter and tears, comedies share a common trait with tragedies. Both begin in chaos or disturbance of social equilibrium and end with the establishment or restoration of order. The comedy, however, ends happily, usually with a marriage and a feast that symbolize the end of confusion. Characters who have swapped places or put on disguises reveal their true identities during the final scene.

Low Comedy

"*Low comedy* has been called elemental comedy, in that it lacks seriousness of purpose or subtlety of manner and has little intellectual appeal. Some features are quarreling, fighting, noisy singing, boisterous conduct in general, boasting, burlesque, trickery, buffoonery, clownishness, drunkenness, coarse jesting, wordplay, and scolding."

Commedia dell'Arte

"Improvised comedy; a form of Italian low comedy dating from very early times, in which actors, who usually performed conventional or stock parts, such as 'pantaloon' (Venetian merchant), improvised their dialogue, though a plot or scenario was provided. A 'harlequin' interrupted the action at times with low buffoonery. A parallel or later form of the *commedia dell'arte* was the masked comedy, in which conventional figures (usually in masks) spoke particular dialects."

Farce

"The development in these plays of elements of low comedy is responsible for the modern meaning of *farce*: a dramatic piece intended to excite laughter and depending less on plot and character than on improbable situations, the humor arising from gross incongruities, coarse wit, or horseplay."

Stereotype

"The metal duplication of a printing surface, cast from a mold made of the surface, usually by wet paper pulp. A *stereotype* plate enables the original surface to be exactly duplicated many times. *Stereotype* has come to mean anything that repeats or duplicates something else without variation; hence something that lacks individualizing characteristics. The term is applied to oversimplified mental pictures or judgments. Note that *stereotype*, like cliché and rubber-stamp, comes from the idiom of printing."