



**A mystery and tragedy at sea**

**Tragedy struck after judge put off security system**

**September 11 Tragedy**

**Bigfoot Prank Almost Results in Tragedy**


**Students, faculty gather to mourn tragedy**

**Living With Landmines: the unnoticed tragedy**




In these news headlines, what does the word tragedy mean?


What types of events are considered tragedies and why?



Tragedy is the effort to exemplify what has been called ‘the tragic sense of life’: the idea that human beings are inevitably doomed—through their own failures or errors or even the ironic action of their virtues, or through the nature of fate, destiny, or the human condition—to suffer, fail, and die.



The measure of a person's life is to be taken by how he or she faces that inevitable failure. Thus, the tragic impulse celebrates courage and dignity in the face of defeat and attempts to portray the grandeur of the human spirit.



Broadly defined, tragedy is a literary (specifically dramatic) presentation of serious actions in which the chief character has a disastrous fate. There are many different kinds and theories of tragedy, starting with the Greeks and Aristotle's definition in *The Poetics*: "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself ... with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions."

# Tragedy

- \*drama (usually) that relates the fall of a person of high status as a result of the protagonist's tragic flaw
- \*celebrates courage and dignity as the hero faces inevitable doom
- \*begins in chaos and ends with the restoration of order

# Elements of Tragedy

- \* *Dramatis Personae*: the listing of the characters in the program of a play, often containing brief characterizations of the persons and notations about their relationships
- \* *Hamartia*: the error, frailty, mistaken judgment, or misstep through which the fortunes of the hero of a tragedy are reversed; not necessarily a flaw in character
- \* *Catharsis*: Aristotle asserts the objective of tragedy as being “through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.”