

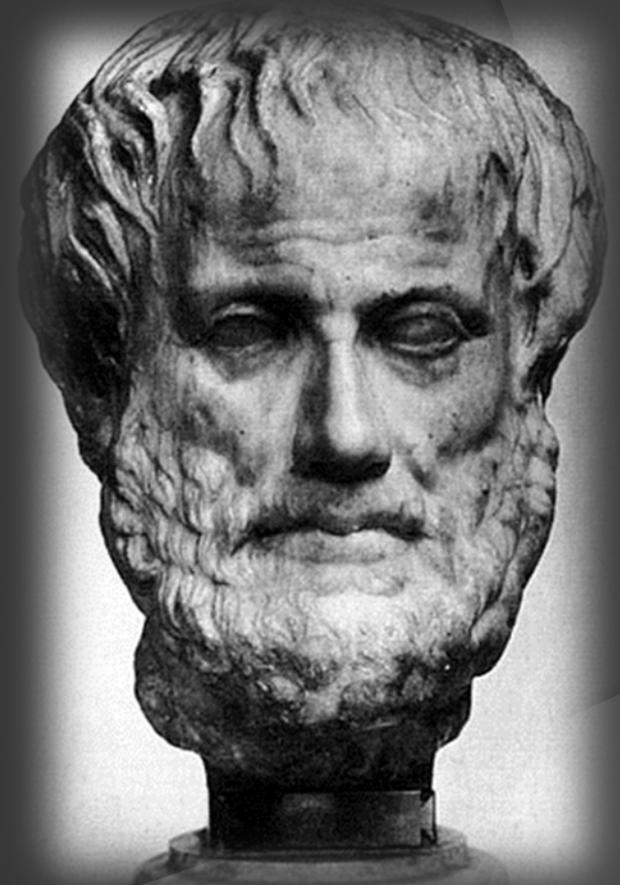


Greek Tragedy?

THE SCARLET LETTER
BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Who is Aristotle?

Aristotle was a famed Greek writer and philosopher who lived from 384 to 322 B.C.E. He devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge in several realms, including zoology, biology, mathematics, meteorology, and, of course, writing and philosophy. In his *Poetics* he defined and classified the dramatic genre of tragedy, information which writers still adhere to this very day.



What is a Tragedy?

Simply, a dramatic tragedy must tell of a person who is highly renowned and prosperous and who falls as a result of some error or frailty because of external or internal forces, or even both.

Aristotle, in his writings, furthered this definition by elaborating on the plot, or the soul, of a tragedy.



What is a Tragedy?

- ◎ The chief characteristics of a Tragedy:
 - Action is essential to tragedy.
 - The entirety of the tragedy, beginning, middle and end, revolve around the central theme related to a transformation in the protagonist's fortunes.
 - The tragedy will illustrate matters of universal, rather than personal significance.
 - The incidents which occur are beyond the control of the "hero."
 - These incidents serve to arouse pity and fear to accomplish a catharsis of emotion.

What is a Tragic Hero?

This character is of high renown, prosperity, or nobility who, through a serious character flaw or error in judgment, suffers through a great downfall or even one's own demise.



What is a Tragic Flaw?

Also referred to as “hamartia” in Greek tragedy, this is the major character flaw or serious error which leads the tragic hero to the downfall. The most common type of tragic flaw is hubris, or excessive and overwhelming pride.



FULL SPEED AHEAD

What's The Worst That Could Happen?

The Scarlet Letter?

Given all of the aforementioned information, analyze *The Scarlet Letter* for its tragic elements. Focus on the following:

- Who is the tragic hero and what major flaw(s) does this person suffer?
- How does the novel adhere to the definition prescribed by Aristotle?
- Does the novel diverge from this tragic archetypal design, and, if so, how does it?