1. Which is more important in a tragedy according to Aristotle – plot or characters?

Ans: Because Aristotle defined tragedy as mimesis, loosely translated as the "imitation of action," and this action must be either probable or necessary, and it must have serious implications and be complete. The primary principle of tragedy, given Aristotle's argument that tragedy imitates action, is the plot, which he defines simply as how the author arranges incidents—not the story itself but how the author presents plot elements to the audience:

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Aristotle goes on the elaborate on the nature of a successful plot: it must be complete, that is, have a beginning, which begins a cause-and-effect chain of events; a middle, essentially the high point in the action that precipitates the following action; and the end, which finally provides a resolution to the problem created at the beginning of the plot.

Perhaps the most important element of a good plot is that one action inevitably and logically leads to another action in a linear fashion. The audience should be able to follow the plot from the beginning to the end, with no episodic elements thrown in to disturb the linear development of the plot.

According to Aristotle, characters in tragedy were of secondary nature to the plot—they support the plot but they do not, in and of themselves, determine how the plot progresses. Aristotle argues that, among the six formative elements, the plot is the most important element. He writes in The Poetics. The plot is the underlying principle of tragedy'. By plot Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. Incidents mean action, and tragedy is an imitation of actions, both internal and external. That is to say that it also imitates the mental processes of the dramatic personae. In answering a question once he said that a tragedy could be written without a character but not without a plot. Though his overstatement on plot, he accepts that without action there cannot be a tragedy. The plot contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is "not posterior to another thing," while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end "there is nothing else."

The characters serve to advance the action of the story, not vice verse. The ends we pursue in life, our happiness and our misery, all take the form of action. Tragedy is written not merely to imitate man but to imitate man in action. That is, according to Aristotle, happiness consists in a certain kind of activity rather than in a certain quality of character. As David Daiches says: "the way, in which the action works itself out, the whole casual chain which leads to the final outcome." Diction and Thought are also less significant than plot: a series of well-written speeches has nothing like the force of a well-structured tragedy. Lastly, Aristotle notes that forming a solid plot is far more difficult than creating good characters or diction. Having asserted that the plot is the most important of the six parts of tragedy, he ranks the remainder as follows, from most important to least: Character, Thought, Diction, Melody, and Spectacle. Character reveals the individual motivations of the characters in the play, what they want or don't want, and how they react to certain situations, and this is more important to Aristotle than thought, which deals on a more universal level with reasoning and general truths. Diction, Melody/ Songs and Spectacle are all pleasurable accessories, but the melody is more important in tragedy than spectacle.

2. Can Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads be considered to be the pronouncement on Romantic Literature? Comment.

Ans: Wordsworth’s Preface to the Lyrical Ballads declares the dawn of English Romantic Movement. Wordsworth and Coleridge, with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads, break away with the neo-classical tendencies in poetry. As the reading people are not familiar with his new type of poetry, Wordsworth puts forward a preface to this book. In this preface, he tells us about the form and contents of this new type of poetry.

Wordsworth, in the beginning, states the necessity of bringing about a revolution in the realm of poetry as the Augustan poetry has become cliché. He painfully notices that the Eighteenth century poets have separated poetry from the grasp of common people. He resolves to liberate this poetry from the shackles of so-called classical doctrines. He, in collaboration with his friend Coleridge, begins to write poems for the people of all classes. Wordsworth thinks that the language of the Augustan poetry is highly artificial and sophisticated. That is why he suggests a new language for Romantic poetry. This is why he suggests a new language for Romantic poetry. This is why he suggests a new language for Romantic poetry. These attempt chiefly deals with Wordsworth’s views of poetry. Wordsworth thinks that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. To him, the intensity of feelings is more important than the form.

To make poetry life like, he wants to use the language of common people as the common people express their feeling unfeignedly. But he tells about a selection, because common people use gross and unrefined language. So, he will purify the language of rustic people until it is ready for use.

Wordsworth seems to contradict his own views as he prefers a selection to the original language spoken by the rustic people. T. S. Eliot, in his The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, objects to Wordsworth’s view. Eliot tells that a poet should not imitate the language of a particular class because he ought to have a language of his own. Eliot’s view gains ground as Wordsworth in his later poems, fails to use his prescribed language. His diction is, in fact peculiar to him.

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