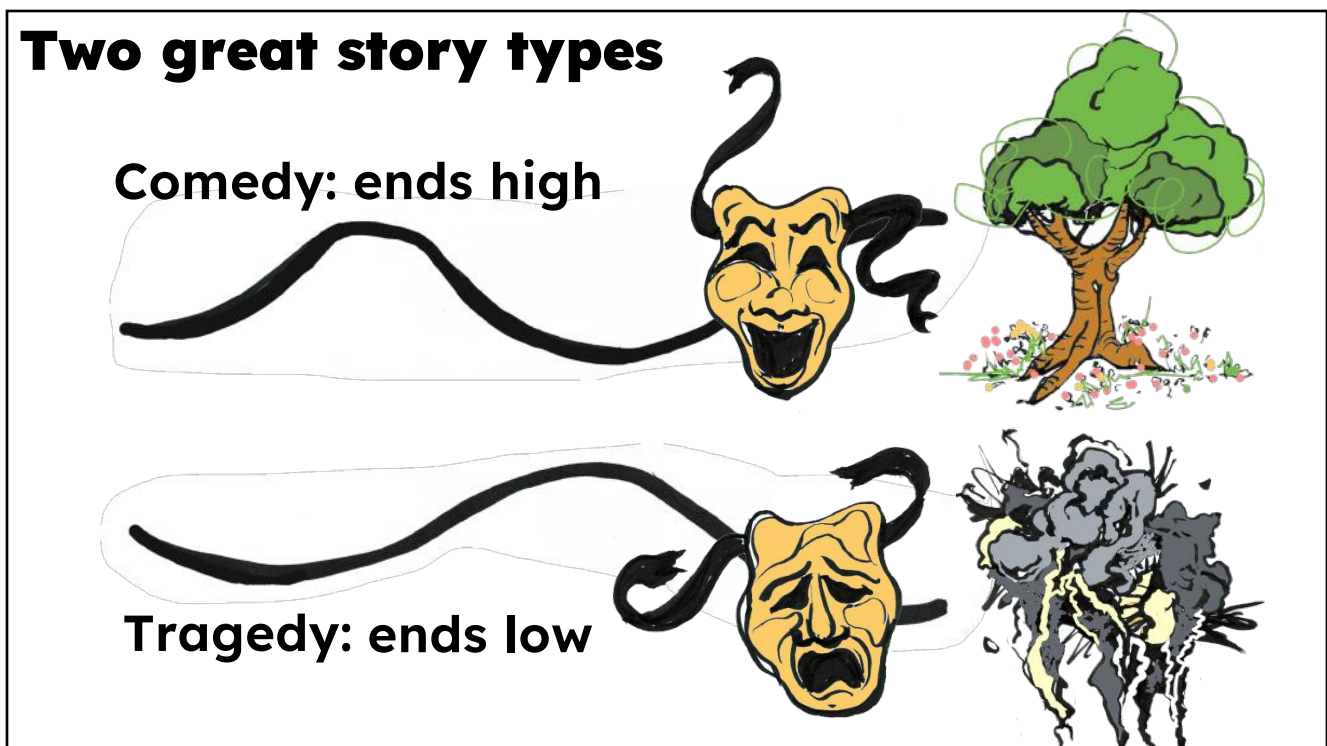


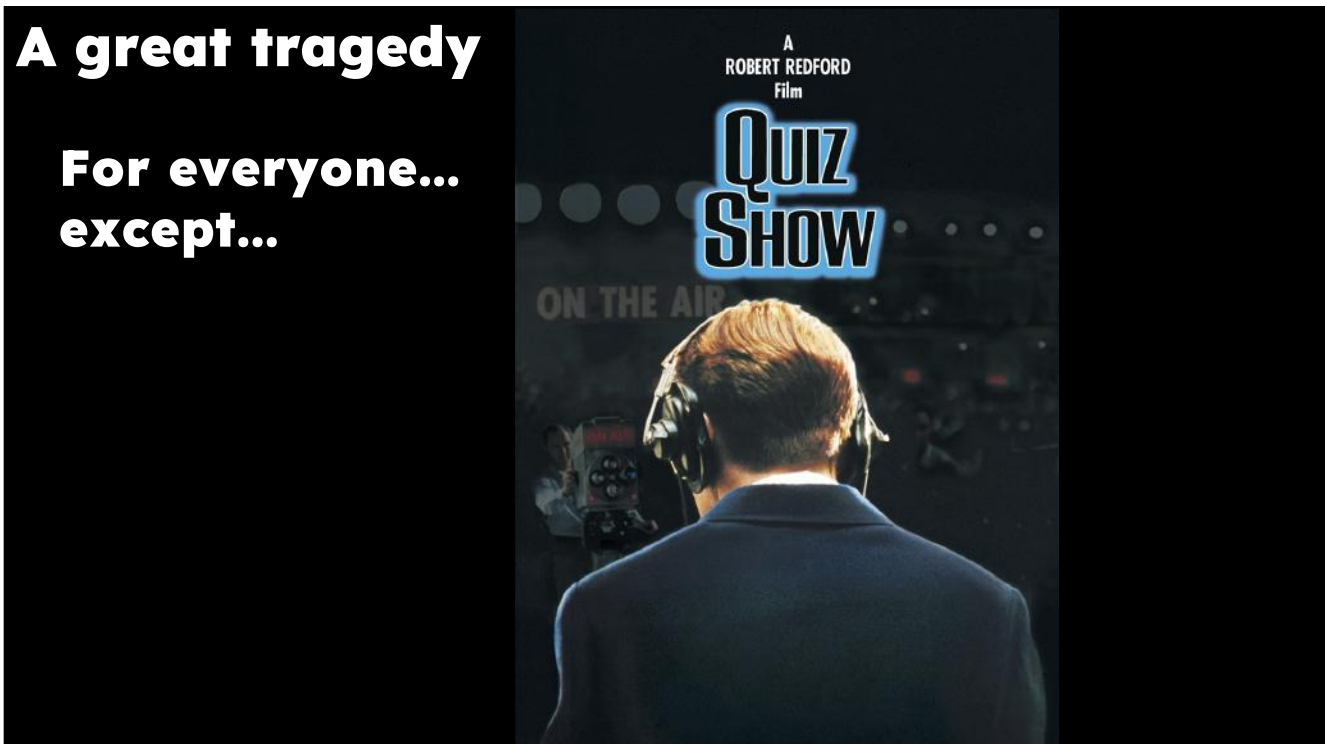
1



2

A great tragedy

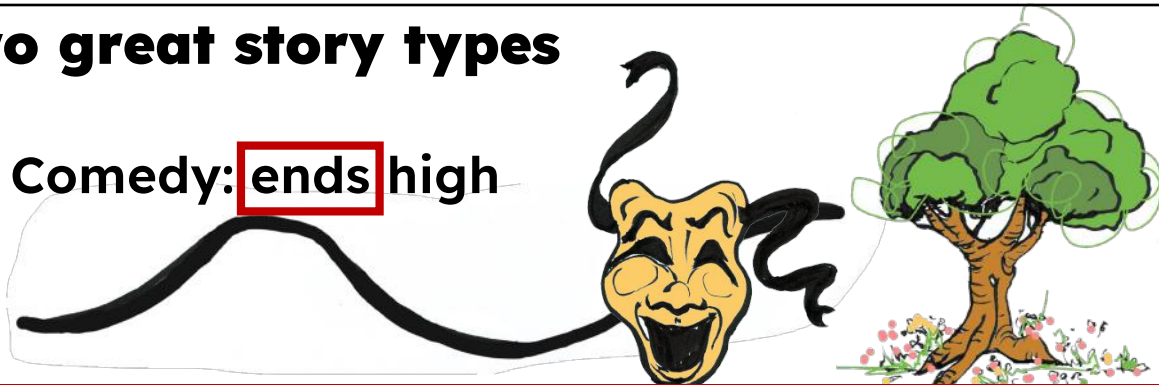
**For everyone...
except...**



3

Two great story types

Comedy: **ends** high



**How will our stories end?
We can't control a good ending**

Tragedy: **ends** low



4

“Show me, Lord, my life’s end
and the number of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
You have made my days a mere handbreadth;
the span of my years is as nothing before you.

**Everyone is but a breath,
even those who seem secure.**

“Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom;
in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth
without knowing whose it will finally be.

**“But now, Lord, what do I look for?
My hope is in you.**

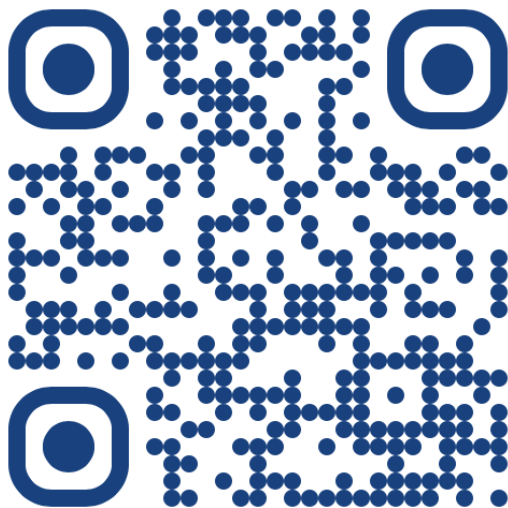
Psalm 39:4-7

5

Eternity in the Human Heart

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

bib.ly/Ec3.NIV



6

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

- Merism: Beginning and ending includes everything in between**
- ¹ There is a time
for everything,
and a season
for every activity under the heavens:
- ² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- ³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
- ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

7

Ecclesiastes 3:1-9

- ⁵ a time to scatter stones
and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace
and a time to refrain from embracing,
- ⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

8

Ecclesiastes 3:1-9

⁹ What do workers gain from their toil?

Cycles of activity, but no progress

- *Chapter 1: in the natural world*
 - *Chapter 3: in human experience*
- “Everything is frustratingly out of our control”

9

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11

¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

An awareness of time without the power to understand it or control it is a heavy burden from God

10



11

God has set eternity in the human heart
but no one can figure it out

- We know...
 - there is a bigger picture than here and now
 - and we are connected to it
 - and there are appropriate times for things
- Dogs & cats & the other animals...
 - don't regret the past
 - don't worry about the future
- **The past & future often dominate our present**
 - **We can't fix the past**
 - **We can't be sure what is right in the present**
 - **We can't know the future**

So we struggle

12

The story of humanity

- Humans are made in the image of God
 - Made for eternity **Peace (Shalom) with eternity**
 - In the Garden of Eden: **Tree of Life**
- Sin/rebellion spoiled the good design
 - Humanity expelled from the Garden of Eden
 - No more access to the **Tree of Life**
- New Heaven & New Earth through Jesus
 - Abundant, monthly crops from **Tree of Life** for all who live there

13

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.

¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.

Without eternity (the Tree of Life)...
 Resignation, not enthusiasm
 Better to ignore time
 and seek happiness in the moment
 Yet God controls that too

14

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. **God does it so that people will fear him.**

¹⁵ Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.

**We can't change God's design
What to do? Find our place in God**

15

Access to Eternity through Jesus

“This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time**, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**”

2 Timothy 1:9-10

16

The Big Idea

Joyful, meaningful, full **human** life
is only found
in relationship
with God
through Jesus



17

**We know there is a story line
But we can only see a tiny portion
“God gave us a desire for something that is
well beyond our reach”**



**God can see it all and control it all
He invites us to ‘fear’ Him: admit our
smallness and our need for Him**

18

The Big Idea

Joyful, meaningful, full **human** life
is only found
in relationship with God through Jesus

19

Application #1

Admit our time problem

- We want eternity, but can't reach it
- We can't determine the times
 - Birth $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ Death
 - Is it time for grace or severity?
- Yet we keep trying! [as if we could]
 - Rehearsing the past
 - Fearing the future
 - Worrying what is appropriate for today
- Or we just give up and live for today
- We need help!

20

Application #2

Find eternity in God

- “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” John 17:3
- Jesus “has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10

21

Application #2

Find eternity in God

- He can work **the past** together for good
- He holds **the future** in His hands
 - “Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” *Psalms 139:16*
- He knows what is appropriate for **today**
- **And He works it all together for our good!**

22

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, **neither the present nor the future**, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” *Romans 8:38-39*

23

When we are troubled by time...

Remember:

- **Jesus said: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”** *Revelation 22:13*
- **God can see and manage all time**
 - **He is with us in the present**
 - **He can work the past for good**
 - **He has already worked out the future in His love**

24

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