***Pericles***

Five problems with this play

Characters: one-dimensional and static (or inconsistent) – not realistic

Plot: episodic and either unmotivated or divinely dictated – not unified

Setting in time: pagan; interrupted for 14 years – neither realistic nor unified

Setting in place: all over the eastern Mediterranean – neither realistic nor unified

Modes of presentation: choral narration, mime, and drama – neither realistic nor unified

Possible reasons for these problems

Lack of unity produces variety, which is one form of entertainment.

Lack of realism may call attention to literary and theatrical techniques for aesthetic or critical purposes; OR it may hide subversive topical, political, or religious messages; OR it may be due to the habit of conveying moral meanings in allegorical (fabulous) forms; OR it may be merely escapism.

Themes

The play is *about* reality, even though its elements are unrealistic; the play’s themes are the nature of rulers in the macrocosm of the state and the nature of family in the microcosm of the household.

Genre

It is like the comedies of Shakespeare in (a) its unrealistic coincidences, disguises, etc., (b) its stereotypical or stock character types, and (c) the poetic justice at the end of the play.

It is like the tragedies of Shakespeare in (a) the formidable forces of evil, (b) real and/or just-missed deaths, and (c) setting in remote times and/or exotic places.

All six characteristics are derived from Early Modern narrative romances, because comedy and tragedy both borrowed from romance; in addition, the episodic nature of this plot resembles romance plots.