

**Objective: Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.**

# Tragic Hero

A tragic hero is a literary character who makes an error in judgment that inevitably leads to his/her own destruction. In reading *Antigone*, *Medea* and *Hamlet*, look at the role of justice and/or revenge and its influence on each character's choices when analyzing any "error of judgment."



## Characteristics

Aristotle once said that "A man doesn't become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall." An Aristotelian tragic hero must possess specific characteristics, five of which are below: **1)** Flaw or error of judgment (*hamartia*) Note the role of justice and/or revenge in the judgments. **2)** A reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*) brought about because of the hero's error in judgment. **3)** The discovery or recognition that the reversal was brought about by the hero's own actions (*anagnorisis*) **4)** Excessive Pride (*hubris*)

**5)** The character's fate must be greater than deserved. Initially, the tragic hero should be neither better nor worse morally than normal people, in order to allow the audience to identify with them. This also introduces pity, which is crucial in tragedy, as if the hero was perfect, we would be outraged with their fate or not care especially because of their ideological superiority. If the hero was imperfect or evil, then the audience would feel that he had gotten what he deserved. It is important to strike a balance in the hero's character.

**6)** Eventually the Aristotelian tragic hero dies a tragic death, having fallen from great heights and having made an irreversible mistake. The hero must courageously accept their death with honor.

## Other Common Traits

Some other common traits characteristics of a **tragic hero**:

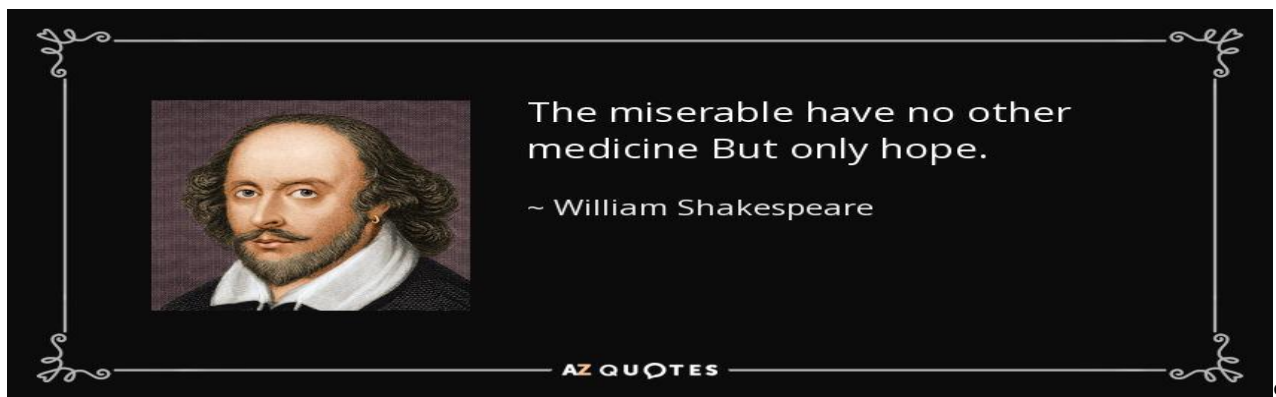
- Hero must suffer more than he/she deserves.
- Hero must be doomed from the start but bears no responsibility for possessing his flaw.
- Hero must be noble in nature, but imperfect so that the audience can see themselves in him/her.
- Hero must have discovered his/her fate by his/her own actions, not by things happening to him/her.
- Hero must understand his/her doom, as well as the fact that his fate was discovered by his own actions.
- Hero's story should arouse fear and empathy.
- Hero must be physically or spiritually wounded by his/her experiences, often resulting in his death.
- The hero must be intelligent, so he/she may learn from his mistakes.
- The hero must have a weakness, usually it is pride
- He/she must be faced with a very serious decision that he/she has to make.

**“Measure for Measure-Act I”**

Character/Tragic Flaw	Evidence from Act I (Include Scene & Line Numbers)	Interpretation (This shows that, This reveals that, This demonstrates that)
<p><b>Angelo / Prideful</b></p> <p>*You can use the same character and tragic flaw for each box in the “Character/Tragic Flaw” column</p>	<p><b>Evidence from play (Include Scene &amp; Line #)</b></p> <p>*You will need 2 different pieces of evidence for this column.</p>	<p>This shows that Angelo... (Summarize the evidence. This also shows that... (Explain how the evidence supports how the tragic flaw caused the character’s downfall.</p>

**“Measure for Measure-Act II”**

Character/Tragic Flaw	Evidence from Act II (Include Scene & Line Numbers)	Interpretation (This shows that, This reveals that, This demonstrates that)



**“Measure for Measure-Act III”**

Character/Tragic Flaw	Evidence from Act III (Include Scene & Line Numbers)	Interpretation (This shows that, this reveals that, This demonstrates that)

**“Measure for Measure-Act IV”**

Character/Tragic Flaw	Evidence from Act IV (Include Scene & Line Numbers)	Interpretation (This shows that, This reveals that, This demonstrates that)



**“Measure for Measure-Act V”**

<b>Character/Tragic Flaw</b>	<b>Evidence from Act II (Include Scene &amp; Line Numbers)</b>	<b>Interpretation (This shows that, This reveals that, This demonstrates that)</b>

**Directions:** Use the **RESEST** strategy to answer the following text dependent question. Make sure you **restate the question** and **provide an answer**. You will also need to use **proper transitions** that show you are **providing evidence** and transitions that show that you are **explaining the significance** of the evidence provided. Furthermore, a transition should be used to show that you are including a closing sentence at the end of your response.

**Why do you consider the character a tragic hero and what tragic flaw led to their downfall?**