


Aristotle's Traits of a Tragic Hero

Common characteristics of
a tragic hero according to
Aristotle



Quick Write

What is the difference
between a sad story and a
tragedy?



In a true tragedy, **the hero's demise must come as a result of some personal error or decision.**

There is no such thing as an innocent victim in tragedy, nor can a genuinely tragic downfall ever be purely a matter of blind accident or bad luck. The tragic hero must always bear at least some responsibility for his own doom.



Basic Definition of Tragedy

A drama in which a character (usually a good and noble person of high rank) is brought to a disastrous end in his or her confrontation with a superior force (fortune, the gods, social forces, universal values), but also comes to understand the meaning of his or her deeds and to accept an appropriate punishment.



Characteristics of the Tragic Hero

- 1. A Tragic Hero**
- 2. Hubris**
- 3. Hamartia**
- 4. Peripeteia**
- 5. Anagnorisis**
- 6. Nemesis**
- 7. Restoration of Social Order**
- 8. Catharsis**



Characteristics of the Tragic Hero

1. **A Tragic Hero**
Usually of high standing
2. **Hubris**
Excessive pride
3. **Hamartia**
a.k.a. the tragic flaw that eventually leads to his downfall
4. **Peripeteia**
a reversal of fortune brought about by the hero's tragic flaw
5. **Anagnorisis**
actions result in an increase of self- awareness and self-knowledge
6. **Nemesis**
Poetic Justice
7. **Restoration of Social Order**
Society is back to normal / at peace
8. **Catharsis**
the audience must feel pity and fear for this character



Trait **One**: A Tragic Hero

A Tragic Hero - Usually of high standing

Admirable, Good, and of Noble Birth

1. Typically not an ordinary man
2. Outstanding quality and greatness about him.
3. **His own destruction is for a greater cause or principle.**

The fall of a scoundrel or villain evokes applause rather than pity. Audiences cheer when the bad guy goes down. The nobler and more admirable the person is, the greater our anxiety or grief at his or her downfall.



Trait **Two**: Hubris

Hubris - Excessive Pride

Typically, the character will be shown to have excessive pride or confidence.



Trait **Three**: Hamartia

HAMARTIA –the **tragic flaw** that eventually leads to his downfall.

1. A **fatal error or simple mistake** on the part of the protagonist that eventually **leads to the final catastrophe**.
2. The tragic hero **recognizes his or her flaw** and its consequences, but only after it is **too late to change the course of events**.



Trait **Four**: Peripeteia

PERIPETEIA - a reversal of fortune brought about by the hero's tragic flaw

Once the transgression is realized, the character enters the stage of recognition and will undergo a reversal of fortune or fall from high to low.



Trait **Five**: Anagnorisis

ANAGNORISIS - actions result in an increase of self-awareness and self-knowledge

1. His actions result in an increase of self-awareness and self-knowledge
2. A moment of insight or understanding in the mind of the tragic hero as he suddenly comprehends the web of fate in which he is entangled.



Trait **Six**: Nemesis

Nemesis - Poetic Justice

the good characters are rewarded for their virtues and the evil characters are punished for their vices.

The character's fate must be greater than deserved.



Trait Seven: Restoration

Restoration of Social Order - Society is back to normal / at peace

1. The play cannot end until society is, once again, at peace.
2. This is why the Tragic Hero *often* dies!

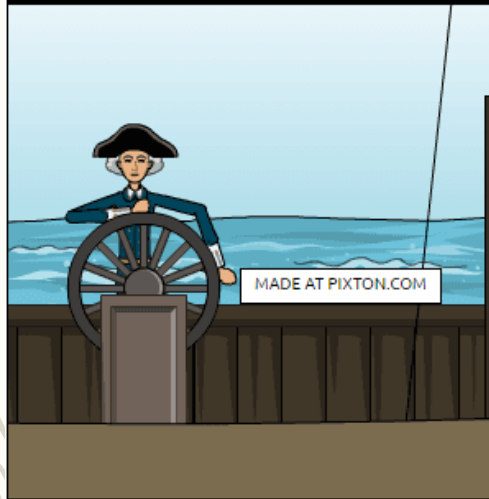


Trait Eight: Catharsis

CATHARSIS - the audience must feel pity and fear for this character

1. A feeling of emotional purging on the part of the audience during a tragedy--The audience feels pity and fear at first, only to feel relief and exhilaration at the end through catharsis.
2. The audience must feel pity and fear for this character. Pity and fear are the natural human responses to pain and suffering – especially to that which can strike anyone at any time.

Tragic Hero



A wealthy ship captain who has sailed the world, survived many storms, and has a feeling of invincibility on the ocean.

Hubris



The ship captain has extreme pride in his sailing ability and a complete disrespect for the natural order of the world. He feels no fear despite the real dangers of the ocean.

Hamartia



The ship captain's tragic flaw that leads to his downfall is his refusal to acknowledge the ocean's ability to defeat him. He will not surrender even in the face of death.

Peripeteia



The ship captain experiences a reversal of fate and fortune when his crew loses faith in his ability to keep them safe on a stormy ocean, yet he still doesn't back down.

Anagnorisis



The ship captain makes an important discovery when he finally realizes his human weakness and inadequacy in the face of a life-threatening wall of water.

Nemesis



The ship captain meets his unavoidable fate, caused by his refusal to acknowledge his own mortality and the dangers of a storm. His ship sinks and his crew drowns.



Catharsis



The audience feels pity for the fate of the brave crew, but they realize the captain could have avoided tragedy. They fear the tragedy that their own pride may cause.

