

# The tragic hero of julius caesar

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



Works of tragedy have been around since the earliest times of Greece, if not longer. In these tragedies, the downfall of the “tragic hero”, or the main character destined to fall, is portrayed to the audience. In one of the most famous tragic plays ever written, Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare gives the downfall of many characters. Given the case, there have been many arguments about who the tragic hero really is. Despite the fact that the play is named after Julius Caesar, the tragic hero of Shakespeare’s play is Marcus Brutus.

As the tragic hero of the story, Brutus faces a tragic dilemma, a situation where every option will result in disaster for the character. These are common in tragic works, and usually help the reader establish who the tragic hero really is. In the events leading up to the assassination of Julius, Marcus Brutus was caught between two difficult choices, both of them with a disastrous result. One choice Brutus could have made was to take no action against Julius, leading to Caesar being crowned as a king (bringing a possible reign of tyranny).

Read more: Someone whom I admire essay

The other option was to kill Caesar, who, at the time, hasn’t done any wrong yet. Brutus had decided to help kill Caesar, exclaiming to the other conspirators “Oh that we then could come by Caesar’s spirit and not dismember Caesar!” (720). Brutus had wished that there was a way to settle this conflict without the death of his friend. This proves that Brutus was in a tragic dilemma, forcing him to be torn between either killing Caesar and his

ambition, or to let him obtain the power of a king, a power possible of bringing the Romans to slaves.

In the tragic story Julius Caesar, Marcus Brutus experiences a tragic dilemma, a problem where every outcome results in disaster for the tragic hero. Because Brutus is the character who has a tragic dilemma, as well as the many other elements of a tragic hero, Marcus Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar. Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar. He contains every element required of a tragic hero, one of them being a hamartia (or tragic flaw). The tragic flaw of a hero is a trait that one would usually admire, but in the tragic hero, is what causes him his demise.

In the story, Brutus had assisted Caius Cassius and many others in a conspiracy to murder his own friend, Caesar. Hesitant at first, Brutus ended up being one of Caesar's murderers. In his explanation to the people of Rome, he gave them the quote " Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more" (747). He then continued to explain to the crowd that he had helped kill Julius for the welfare of Rome. This being said, it is safe to conclude that Brutus' tragic flaw is his love and dedication for Rome. His nobility had led him to kill Caesar, the action which started his rapid downfall.

Marcus Brutus, then, has a hamartia, one of the requirements of being a tragic hero. Therefore, the tragic hero of Julius Caesar is Marcus Brutus. The fate Brutus faces proves himself to be the tragic hero of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Marcus Brutus, like every other main character of a tragedy, goes through a peripeteia, or reversal of action. This peripeteia demonstrates the turning point, or in other words, the inevitable point of downfall for the hero.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-tragic-hero-of-julius-caesar/>

After the death of Caesar, Rome found itself at a war between two powers: Brutus and Cassius versus Octavius and Antony.

Cassius had lost his battle against Antony, while Brutus had won his against Octavius. However, soon it became evident that Brutus would not become the victor of the war. In a final conversation with his allies, Brutus acknowledges to them "Our enemies have beat us to the pit" (791). This signals the turning point of the story where Brutus loses everything. Throughout the entire story, Brutus had lost many things: his position of power, his friends, even his wife. Now Brutus was about to lose the only thing he had left: his life. This demonstrates a complete reversal of events, or peripeteia, for Marcus Brutus.

Marcus Brutus experiences a peripeteia as well as every other component which makes up a tragic hero. Brutus then, is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar. Being the tragic hero, Brutus, like every other hero of a tragedy, eventually finds anagnorisis, or recognition of their situation, and how their actions have led themselves to that point. Brutus contains all of the elements of a tragic hero, one of them being an anagnorisis. In Julius Caesar by Shakespeare, Brutus was caught in a tragic dilemma, forced to either help in a plot to kill Caesar, or allow Caesar to become a king.

Brutus had helped kill Caesar, resulting in a war which he had lost. However, on the verge of defeat, Brutus had had a comrade assist him in his suicide. The final words he uttered were "Farewell, good Strato. Caesar, now be still. I killed not thee with half so good a will." (793). Brutus calls to the dead Caesar and tells him to rest, saying that he killed him half as willingly as he does himself. This shows how Marcus, the tragic hero, has seen his situation

and understands clearly how his actions have driven him to this point in time.

His action of conspirating against his former friend for the purpose of securing the welfare of Rome had instead, erupt chaos throughout Rome. Brutus knows this, and accepts the consequences for his previous actions through ending his own life. It is clear that Marcus Brutus experiences anagnorisis and other aspects required of a tragic hero. Therefore, Marcus Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar. Although Brutus is the true tragic hero, many have had the misconception that Julius Caesar is the tragic hero, as the play itself is named after him.

This is common, as Julius Caesar does possess many of the elements required of a tragic hero. However, the magnitude of his elements compared to Brutus' illustrates how Brutus is the true hero. For example, Caesar's tragic dilemma is extremely weak in comparison to the one Marcus had to face. Before the Ides of March, several omens had appeared in the form of supernatural events. Because of these signs, Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, had become suspicious of what was to become of Caesar on the day of his appearance to the Senate. Fearing for his safety, she had begged him not to go, pleading " Do not go forth today.

Call it my fear that keeps you in the house, and not your own. " (728). At this point, Caesar was presented with his tragic dilemma. He could either choose to not go to the Senate, which would portray him as a coward, or he could ignore his wife's warning, and cause her distress. Comparing this problem with Brutus', which was to either kill his own friend or to allow him a chance at tyranny, demonstrates clearly how Brutus' tragic dilemma is on a much

higher level of terror and tragedy. As stated previously, hamartia, or tragic flaw, is a trait that one would usually admire in a person, but is what causes doom for the tragic hero. Caesar's hamartia is shown moments before his stabbing in his final confrontation with the people who conspired against him. When begged by many men of powerful positions to hear out a case, Caesar had answered them with "I could be well moved if I were as you.." and even compares himself to a mountain by asking "Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" (738). Caesar was stabbed to death afterwards by his conspirators. His arrogant attitude had led to his downfall. This kind of hamartia is commonly called hubris, meaning "sin of pride".

However, many may consider this tragic flaw weak, as too much pride isn't something you would commonly respect a person for having. Compared to the hamartia Brutus had, which was his dedication to Rome, Caesar's tragic flaw of hubris is weak as it is something one would prefer not to have. Caesar's elements of a tragic hero are incredibly weak and less noticeable compared to the ones Brutus has. Therefore, one can argue strongly that Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar, not Caesar. Julius Caesar's tragic hero is Brutus. However, another character some may argue to be the tragic hero is Caius Cassius.

This is not the actual case, as although many have proven Cassius to have all the necessary elements of a tragic hero, Cassius lacks true hamartia. The tragic flaw of Cassius can be found early in the story, in a short time after he starts to plot a conspiracy against Caesar. On the night of a meteor shower, Cassius was discussing plans with a fellow conspirator named Casca when he had started to go into a tirade about Caesar, insulting Rome in his rage, "

What trash is Rome, what rubbish and what offal, when it serves for the base matter to illuminate so vile a thing as Caesar! (710). This shows Caius' true hatred against Caesar, as he would even blame the whole city of Rome for the reason why Caesar has power. Many who argue that Cassius is the tragic hero uses his hatred for Caesar as his tragic flaw (as it was what led to his demise). However, this hamartia is not a true tragic flaw, but merely a flaw in general. Hamartias are traits in a character that someone would usually be respected for, but a hamartia like the one Cassius possesses, a flaw of jealousy and hatred, is not admirable in the least.

Cassius lacks true hamartia, one of the necessary elements to being a tragic hero. Therefore, Caius Cassius cannot be the tragic hero of Julius Caesar. The real tragic hero of Shakespeare's renowned play is Marcus Brutus. In conclusion, Marcus Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar because he is the character who possesses the strongest elements of a tragic hero. His dedication to Rome was his hamartia, or his tragic flaw. It became a key part of his tragic dilemma, as he was pitted to either end Caesar's ambition with death or allow his ambition to roam freely as king.

His love for Rome had him secure its welfare by helping in a plot to murder Caesar. Leading to an enormous fight, Brutus experienced a moment of peripeteia when he acknowledged to his comrades and himself that the war was lost. He then found recognition, or anagnorisis, when he killed himself, showing how he realizes it was a mistake to kill his former friend, Julius Caesar. As the main character who has the strongest aspects of tragedy, it is safe to conclude that Marcus Brutus is the tragic hero of Julius Caesar.