

Tragedy and julius caesar

Literature, William Shakespeare



Tragic Hero Essay In the play the Life and Death of Julius Caesar (just as in all of Shakespeare's tragedies) there is much death, much tragedy, and of course, a tragic hero. However unlike most of Shakespeare's plays this time the tragic hero is not particularly obvious. Throughout the play a few main characters present themselves as possibilities for being the tragic hero. But as being a tragic hero is not only having a tragic flaw but also entails much more, there really is only one person to fit the mold. The character Brutus is born into power and is higher/better than we are. He has a tragic flaw that causes his downfall and at the end he realizes his mistake (a trait none of the other characters can really claim). Throughout most of the play Brutus is constantly internally conflicted. Does he do what he believes is best for Rome or stay loyal to his friend and leader? Should he assist in the murder of one person to benefit many? Although killing Caesar was in the end a bad choice, Brutus always tries to do what is best for Rome and for the people. However even though all of Brutus' motives are good he still has the tragic flaw of pride, which ultimately leads to his downfall. The reason that Brutus gets caught up in the conspiracy is because Cassius appeals to his pride and flatters him with forged letters from the Roman people saying he is a greater leader than Caesar. This flaw eventually leads to his downfall because of all the bad decisions it causes him to make. The first mistake pride causes him to make is to kill Caesar and the next mistake follows right after. " Mark Antony, here, take you Caesar's body. You shall not in your funeral speech blame us, but speak all good you can devise of Caesar, and say you do't by our permission; Else shall you not have any hand at all about his funeral; and you shall speak in the same pulpit wherto I am going, after my speech is

done." (24) This was said by Brutus to Antony right after Caesar's death. Brutus not only allows Antony to live but then allows him to speak at Caesar's funeral after Brutus speaks, completely unsupervised. This choice of Brutus' is brought about by his pride (and maybe a little bit of shortsighted stupidity). Because of his pride he doesn't believe Antony will oppose him and probably believes he is above anything Antony tries anyway. Brutus also makes a foolish military mistake later in the play not listening to other council because he is so prideful he can only see his opinion as reason. And finally Brutus comes to realize his mistake. At the end of the play after Brutus has lost everything he takes his own life out of despair; and before he dies he makes one last statement. " Caesar, now be still; I kill'd not thee with half so good a will." (44) This final statement by Brutus shows that he finally understands his mistake. That he should not have killed Caesar and that it was his own pride that brought about his downfall. Overall Brutus fits all of the points of a tragic hero much better than any other character. He is a mostly good person who is born into a higher position than the reader. He has the tragic flaw of pride, which brings about his eventual downfall in many different ways. At the end of the play he realizes that he brought about his own downfall; and after his death even Brutus' enemy speaks of his greatness " This was the noblest Roman of them all... His life was gentle, and the elements so mix'd in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world ' This was a man!'" (44) Antony said this speaking of Brutus' value. This is the final proof that shows Brutus is after all the tragic hero.