

Raskolnikov a tragic hero essay sample

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The character Rodion Romanovna Raskolnikov from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *Crime and Punishment*, is a classic example of a tragic hero. His life as a man of many redeeming qualities takes a turn for the worst as his desires to improve his existence lead him to surrender to temptations that inevitably ruin his life. Fortunately, Raskolnikov's life does not end in tragedy, for he is able to find comfort and peace of mind through the unconditional love of his friends and family. Through Raskolnikov, author Dostoevsky implies that criminals want to be punished and that love is the greatest remedy for even the biggest of problems.

Raskolnikov is the type of person least likely to be suspected of committing a crime. He comes from an educated family and is always the first to help people in need, even if it means giving them his last dollar. For instance, early in the novel, Raskolnikov observes a young girl staggering down the street, followed by a strange looking man. "I don't know that dandy...he is very eager to get hold of her to get her away somewhere while she is in this state...Think how can we keep her out of his hands, and how are we to get her home?" (Dostoevsky, 43) Raskolnikov is so concerned with the safety and well being of the young girl that he is compelled to give the last of his money to an officer for a cab to take her home.

Another example showing his generosity is the time he takes the drunken Marmeladov home and leaves money on the windowsill on his way out. "As he went out, Raskolnikov had time to put his hand into his pocket, to snatch up the coppers he had received in exchange for his rouble in the tavern and to lay them unnoticed on the window." (Dostoevsky, 23) Although

Raskolnikov knows that he cannot afford to be giving out money, he leaves what he has because he feels they are in greater need of it than he is.

It is unquestionable that Raskolnikov loves his family and will do anything for them-including murder. In the novel *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's tragic flaw is his mother and sister. He realizes the bad economic situation they are in as well as his own poverty stricken life. He knows that they cannot afford to send him money for his expenses and feels completely responsible for his sister Dounia's engagement to Luzhin, a rich man.

Raskolnikov believes that Dounia is sacrificing her life in order to provide for her family. Taking these circumstances into account, Raskolnikov takes it upon himself to prevent his sister from what he feels is a mistake, and also to improve his own life. One of his major weaknesses is that he does not always weigh the consequences of an action before he acts.

Thus, after he murders the pawnbroker and her sister, he is appalled by his own inability to deal with what he has done. " I ought to have known it...And how dared I, knowing myself, knowing how I should be, take up an axe and shed blood! I ought to have known beforehand.... Ah, but I did know!"

(Dostoevsky, 238) Raskolnikov knows that murdering people for any reason is wrong, but he chose to ignore his beliefs because his only concern was of getting money to help alleviate some of their family troubles. Never did he expect such a big commotion to arise from the killing of such a sinister woman.

Raskolnikov's overriding weakness is his incapability to live with his guilt. Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov gives off many hints that he is the

murderer because deep inside, he wants to confess. In fact, he went as far as revealing to Zometov the exact way he committed the crime, and even says, “ And what if it was I who murdered the old woman and Lizaveta?” (Dostoevsky, 145) Raskolnikov is suffering so much from his guilt that he feels the only way to relieve himself of it is to either die or serve his time in prison. Dostoevsky believes that deep inside, all criminals want to be punished.

Raskolnikov is no doubt a tragic hero, but what saves him from utter destruction is the love that is poured in from his mother, Dounia, Razumihin, and Sonia. Raskolnikov’s greedy desire to improve his life and his inability to live with his guilt lead him to the brink of death. It is only through the love of his family and friends that Raskolnikov is able to move on with life, and to have hope for a better future.