

Othello tragic hero

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According to Aristotle, a tragic hero is a character of noble status and greatness. He is a man who is not entirely good or entirely evil, rather, he is a man who on the whole is good, but also contributes to his own destruction by some moral weaknesses, known as the fatal flaw. Aristotle further explains that the protagonist must be dominated by a 'hamartia' or tragic flaw which leads to his downfall. All tragedies have a hero with a flaw, and in the play Othello, the hero becomes transformed by his tragic flaws of jealousy and gullibility. Othello is the general in the army of Venice and is in love with Desdemona.

He is a Moor of African descent, who has risen through the ranks of the Venetian army through hard work and success in battle. Othello is a cultural and racial outsider, often described as a 'black ram' or 'moor', and his relationship with Desdemona was not accepted by the society at the time, thus resulting in their actions to elope and get married. Othello is an admirable figure and despite of the colour of his skin, was respected by many people in the society. In the play, Othello's central flaw is jealousy, bringing about death and misunderstanding for many of the characters.

His flaw of jealousy was exploited by Iago and manipulated through many incidental events. Othello is a very trusting and noble character and is regarded as Shakespeare's most romantic character. Othello's boundless love for Desdemona makes it unbearable for him to think of another man looking at her. Othello's fatal flaw of jealousy is shown, as due to his suspicious and jealous nature, he believes everything Iago tells him about Cassio and Desdemona. Iago uses Othello's great love through extreme

manipulation to get Othello more and more jealous, this can be seen when Othello is slowly starting to believe Iago, " Damn her, lewd minx!

O, damn her! Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw, To furnish me with some swift means of death For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant. "

Othello later accuses Desdemona of lying to him, " O, devil, devil! If that the Earth could teem with woman's tears, Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile. Out of my sight! " this proves as a surprise for Desdemona as although she is being faithful to her husband, he does not believe a word she is saying due to his flaw of jealousy.

Othello's flaw of jealousy takes him through a series of predicaments, led by Iago, where he makes the decisions to believe Iago's accusations on Desdemona and Cassio. It is then his jealousy that causes him to suspect Desdemona, and piece together irrelevant information that gives him the wrong information about his wife's infidelity. Iago cleverly brings up Othello's flaw in Act 3 Scene 3, warning him to beware of jealousy, as he deceives him about Cassio and Desdemona's affair, while attempting to play with his mind, " O beware, my lord, of jealousy: It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock The meat it feeds on. At the beginning of the play, when Shakespeare introduces Othello as a high-status, noble man, who is in love with his wife Desdemona, the villain is immediately brought out, uncovering the protagonist's fatal flaw of naivety. Iago takes Othello's flaw to his advantage, deceiving him into believing that his wife and his lieutenant are having an affair. To Iago's luck, Othello regards Iago as an honest man who he trusts

very much, showing dramatic irony in the lines, "Iago is most honest" and "A man he is of honesty and trust".

Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony creates a connection between the characters in the play and the audience. Othello's naive and trusting nature allows him to believe anything and everything Iago tells him, despite of his lack of physical evidence, which proved to be a deadly mistake. Othello's gullibility also results in the change in his marriage. As Othello starts to believe Iago's lies, the relationship between Othello and Desdemona changed from respectful and caring to bitter and condescending.

Othello soon loses all respect for Desdemona and even refers to her as a whore, for having an affair with Cassio while she is married. Othello's flaws of gullibility and jealousy combined resulted in his downfall. Another fatal flaw Othello possessed was trusting people easily. Othello trusted Iago very easily soon after they met. Although Iago cannot be blamed for Othello's flaws, he was still responsible for planting the seeds in Othello's mind. Othello also made a mistake of allowing Iago to mess with his mind, planting many accusations of his Desdemona and Cassio. Othello love Desdemona, and she always loved him.

But because of his jealousy and gullibility his speech is juxtaposed and his love killed. After Othello murdered Desdemona for betraying his love, he realises his false accusations of Desdemona and Cassio and finally realises the true villain to be Iago and kills himself. In Othello's last speech in the play, he speaks of the betrayal, remorse and of his lost love. Othello can be seen as a tragic hero, as his flaws are the cause of his death. His fatal flaws

of gullibility, jealousy and easily trusting people can be seen as the cause of his death and others around him.

He recognises his flaws in the end; however it is too late to bring back his wife, whom he had earlier killed. Iago takes Othello's flaws to his advantage, playing with Othello's mind, planting lies and accusations about Desdemona and Cassio. Iago can be seen as the villain as he does not care about the lives of anyone else he has ruined, instead only caring to achieve his own ends, by doing whatever necessary. Aristotles definition of a tragic hero can be compared with the life of Othello, thus making him a truly tragic hero.