

English 11

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



English 11 Fences: Is Troy Maxson a tragic hero? Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) was a famous Greek philosopher who outlined the unique and powerful qualities of tragedy. For Aristotle, tragedy was the most refined version of poetry dealing with grand matters. Oedipus Rex and Antigone are just two examples of famous Greek tragedies. Fences by August Wilson is a contemporary play, and is certainly not considered a classic Greek tragedy, yet the main character has been called a modern-day tragic hero. After analyzing Troy Maxson's conflicts and his character, decide how well he fits the definition of a tragic hero. -----

----- To what extent could Troy Maxson be considered a tragic hero? ----- Guidelines: 1. Include an introduction in which you accomplish the following goals: * Engage the reader. Include a hook! * Give general information about the play (including title and author). * Provide a clear thesis. 2. In the body of your essay, * Analyze how well Troy Maxson fits the characteristics of a tragic hero. Honors students should select at least 3 characteristics to address. Regents students should select 2 characteristics. Refer to the summary on the back of this page. * Support your ideas with specific evidence and explanation. * Incorporate several short quotations. Integrate quotations correctly and effectively. * Analyze literary elements or techniques as you discuss aspects of the play. 3. Write a thoughtful conclusion that returns to the ideas in the thesis, but is not simply a repetition of previously stated ideas. Leave the reader with something to ponder. Consider how Greek tragedies were meant to contribute to the health of the community — consider what we can learn from Troy Maxson. 4. Include careful transitions

between sentences and paragraphs and include appropriate diction. 5. Edit your essay to correct errors in grammar and usage. Other Items: Include a heading. Include a title for the paper. Use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font. Double-space and form one-inch margins. Length: Honors students — three pages. Regents students — two pages. Due date: Tuesday, January 8th Points: 75 Submit your essay to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) and bring a hard copy to class.

Aristotle recorded his ideas about the structure, purpose, and intended effect of tragedy in his book of literary theory titled *Poetics*. His ideas have been adopted, disputed, expanded, and discussed for several centuries now. The following list is a summary of his basic ideas regarding the tragic hero: 1. The tragic hero is a character of noble stature that possesses greatness. The character must occupy a high status position, but must also embody nobility and virtue as part of his innate character. 2. Though the tragic hero is pre-eminently great, he is not perfect; he is human. The audience is able to relate to the tragic hero. 3. The hero's downfall is partially his own fault, the result of free choice, not of accident or villainy or some overriding, malignant fate. In fact, the tragedy is usually triggered by some error of judgment or some character flaw that contributes to the hero's lack of perfection noted above. The hero's error of judgment or character flaw is known as *hamartia* in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The hero doesn't necessarily have to be intentionally committing the "sin" for it to be considered *hamartia*. The word *hamartia* comes from the Greek *hamartanein*, which means "missing the mark." The hero aims his arrow at the bull's eye, but ends up hitting something altogether unexpected. Often the character's *hamartia* involves *hubris* (which is defined as a sort of arrogant pride or over-confidence). 4.

The hero's misfortune is not wholly deserved. The punishment exceeds the crime. 5. The fall is not pure loss. There is some increase in awareness, some gain in self-knowledge, some discovery on the part of the tragic hero. 6. Though it arouses solemn emotion, tragedy does not leave its audience in a state of depression. Aristotle argues that one function of tragedy is to arouse the "unhealthy" emotions of pity and fear and cleanse us of those emotions through a catharsis. It might be worth noting here that Greek drama was not considered simple entertainment; it had a communal function of contributing to the good health of the community.