

The tain: cuculain hero?

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A mythic hero is a story figure that embarks on a journey in order to complete tasks that make them into legends of tales. Cuchulainn is a mythic hero in the Tain, a story of a war between the North and South of the land in Ireland. A hero is a term that can be a homonym with many other meanings. A person can consider a police officer, their mother, or many other examples as a hero. Even with the broad spectrum of the word, every example does surround the feeling of being protected by the person. I consider Cuchulainn to be a war-hero.

Cuchulainn is a well-trained warrior that is able to perform stunts of throwing a javelin, stone, just fighting with his fists, and many more while leaving every opponent dead or too terrified to fight him. But does being able to defeat every opponent make a character a hero or just a person to be feared? Cuchulainn was raised and trained by the best of all the instructors to become a great warrior that would be remembered, and that is just what he did. When Cuchulainn was just a boy he left his mother and went off to join the boy troop where he would train and be protected by the troop.

The war in the tale began at the point where Medb and Aillil, the queen and king of Connacht, had an argument over who had the most possessions. The two were equal until the point came where Aillil owned one great bull more than Medb. Medb was so enraged that she waged war to retrieve the equally great bull from Ulster. At this time, the Ulster army was in their pangs, unable to have the strength to fight. Cuchulainn protected the land from Medb and Aillil's army, killing thousands of their soldiers.

With Medb and Aillil's army becoming weaker, Cuchulainn agreed to fight one great warrior a day. Every day the opponent would be defeated and this

continued until the pangs lifted from Cuchulainn's Ulsterman army. Eventually, Medb and Aillil were defeated and there was peace in the land among the people. During the tale of the Tain, there was a section about Cuchulainn going into a warp spasm and killing men, children, and women the same. " The first warp-spasm seized Cuchulainn, and made him into a monstrous thing, hideous and shapeless, unheard of.

His shanks and his joints, every knuckle and angle and organ from head to foot, shook like a tree in the flood or reed in the stream. "(Kinsella, p. 150) At this point Cuchulainn is transformed into an un-human monster with essentially no emotion or thought other than destruction. " In this great Carnage on Murtheimne Plain Cuchulainn slew one hundred and thirty kings, as well as an uncountable horde of dogs and horses, women and boys and children and rabble of all kinds. "(Kinsella, p. 156) To me this behavior seems more like a murderer's actions than a " heroes".

Almost like a villain in a superhero movie that needs to be stopped because of their unthinkable actions. Cuchulainn was definitely a hero for being able to protect Ulster while they were not able to fight. He was a hero to his people, but was extremely feared by the opponents. Cuchulainn would also be considered a hero because he does not necessarily want to kill all of the people he did. He was just obeying the orders that he was given and obeying his king. There came points in the story where Medb and Aillil had sent people close to Cuchulainn for him to battle.

At these points in the story it is understood that Cuchulainn is not a senseless killer with any type of emotions, even though in those days the value of life was not very high. To fight these men or not was a terrible

decision to have to make because Cuchulainn was aware of the amazing stunts he could perform against an opponent, leaving them dead. If a person is able to defeat every opponent that is placed in battle with them, does that make them a hero or just a person that is feared by all? To answer this question it really comes down to what side of the situation the person giving the opinion is on.

A relatable situation in history would be of Adolf Hitler. He was a dictator that was admired by the people who followed him. The loyalty of the people allowed him to kill thousands, but if he had the strengths of Cuchulainn, he could have done it alone. Similarly, he was feared by one group and considered a hero to the other side. There is not really an answer as to Cuchulainn being a hero or just a crazy mass murderer. The answer would have to lie in which side of the war you were on.