

Satan: for this. satan
is marked villain
because



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Satan: Epic Hero or Villain? John Milton wrote one of the greatest epic poems of all time when he wrote *Paradise Lost* in 1667. The book tells about man's creation and fall while detailing characters and the plot beyond what the Bible taught. One of these characters is Satan, which is one of the most argued, controversial, and popular characters in the history of literature. The reason for controversy is the unclarity of whether or not Satan is a hero or a villain.

He contains many qualities that distinguish him as a hero. On the other hand he also has qualities which say he is a villain. Scholars have written over time to support each argument of hero or villain and have explained why Milton decided to create such a character. In *Paradise Lost* there are many times where we see Satan partaking in heroic acts. His bravery and heroism is shown when he encounters Sin and Death at the gates of hell. Whence and what art thou, execrable Shape, That darst, though grim and terrible, advance Thy miscereated front athwart my way To yonder gates? Through them I meant to pass, That be assured, without leave asked of thee. Retire, or taste thy folly, and learn by proof, Hell-born, not to contend with the Spirits of Heaven. (Milton 80) This shows us Satan not being scared to fight.

He looks Death right in the face and says that he doesn't get out of the way he will physically move him out of the way. By this readers are not impressed because it is only Satan, but a great heroic figure like Odysseus would get praised for this. Satan is marked villain because of his reputation. But it is obvious that Satan is a hero for he contains so many heroic characteristics. Another instance in the book in which Satan shows his heroism is when he is leading the charge against Michael.

A regular soldier would stay in the back of the army or linger around in the middle of the pack. But not Satan, he is right there in the front of the swarm leading his men. He has no hesitations even though he knows that he has very little chance to win. He would never show his men fear and by this he leads the charge and gives his men confidence. This is only something in which a hero would do. This is something in which Odysseus a great hero had done. Satan also shows that he was smart and knew what to do in a complicated situation.

This is shown when he is in battle against the good angels, and Satan invents the cannon. We see the genius in Satan but he is still denied the title of hero. Any other person would be considered a hero for doing something great like this, but not Satan.

But it is so hard not to see him as one for all the heroic things he did. In the book we see Satan's heroic qualities when he talks to his devils giving them passion and confidence. I should be much open for war, O Peers, As no behind in hate, if what was urged Main reason to persuade immediate war Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast Ominous conjecture on the whole success.

. Worth waiting, since our present lot appears For happy thought but ill, for ill not worst, I we procure not to ourselves more woe. (Milton 65-67) In this we see that Satan has great leadership qualities.

He has the great leadership as many other heroes of literature. He talks to his men with great passion and desire, this allows them to feel every word that he is saying. When he finally finishes, they are ready to attack heaven.

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He has the attention of the devils so greatly that they feel his words and want to live them out immediately. This great quality is shared again with Odysseus as he had the same great charisma when he rallied his troops before battle in the underworld. Satan's leadership is first seen when he stands up and takes control and leadership over all the devils. By this we see that Satan has the urge to lead and be in control of the situation. He would rather have it in his hands than someone else's. Yet he isn't given the credit he well deserves. Satan possesses another heroic quality and this is pride.

He shows great pride throughout the story and it is most seen when he admits he misses God's grace.... How dearly I abide that boast so vain, Under what torments inwardly I groan; While they adore me on the throne of Hell, With diadem and sceptre high advanced, The lower still I fall, only supreme in misery—such joy ambition finds! But say I could repent, and could obtain.

..(Milton 117) In this we see that Satan admits that he misses God, yet he is still too proud to beg for forgiveness and to return to heaven.

He shows that he would rather rule in hell than to serve in heaven. This great pride is heroic but because he is Satan it is something that is horrible. Satan is also a crafty and wise character. He is able to do whatever is necessary to get the job done. We see this when he lures Eve into eating the forbidden apple. Thou cast who art sole wonder, much less art Thy looks, the heaven of mildness, with disdain, Displeas'd that I approach thee thus, and gaze insatiate, I thus single, nor have fear'd Thy awful brow, more awful thus retired. Darest resemblance of thy Maker fair, Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore,.

..(Milton 248)Satan showed his great charisma and inspiring behavior not only in good timesbut in bad times.

When the devils were losing to the good angels in heaven, Satan was still able to use his great ability and show that he hadn't been rattled. He was still trying to give confidence to his soldiers and he gave a speech which inspired a great number of the devils. Such implements of mischief as shall dash to pieces and overwhelm whatever stands adverse, that they shall fear we have disarmed the Thunderer of his only dreaded bolt. Nor long shall be our labour, yet ere dawn Effect shall end our wish.

Meanwhile revive, Abandon fear; to strength and counsel joined Think nothing hard, much less to be despaired.(Milton 183)This shows that even though they were being defeated greatly Satan was still trying to give confidence to his men and make them believe that they did in fact have a good chance of winning. Scholars have contributed their opinion in the role of Satan that he is a hero in the poem. With the Prince of Hell Milton reverses the functions and correspondingly the characteristics, stressing those appropriate to an epic antagonist and underplaying though incorporating those of an example of evil. (Kaston 58)Kaston is saying in the poem Milton totally reverses the beliefs which have always been associated with Satan.

Everyone has always portrayed Satan as evil and as the villain of everything. But Milton has used him as a hero who was doing something in which everyone thought was evil. Satan's actual attempt to defeat God was evil but all the qualities in which Satan showed us were not evil. All the leadership

qualities and acts are showing us that he is in fact a hero. Another scholar which writes that Satan was in fact a hero was A. J.

A Waldorle. He wrote: Dryden thought the Devil was Milton's hero, and we must agree that he was, if we are thinking in terms of if he was a saint who foils the knight and drives him out of his stronghold. (Waldorle 1) Waldorle is saying that Satan is a hero in terms of someone who was a great knight and was able to become a great leader. According to Tertivillain, the Devil was good until the day when he was jealous of Adam's destiny, and it was jealousy that was his first sin.

(Coulange 10) In this Coulange is saying that Satan was a hero until he was jealous of Adam. But it still shows that he was a hero before this. Before this was the Satan's great attempt to take over the realm of God and to be the ruler in heaven. As epic antagonist, the Prince is above all an impressive leader, as general of the army of Hell and as director of the Stygian Council. Almost everything about him bespeaks a great epic warrior; he gains additional stature by being the leader of an army which although recently defeated is presented as greater by far than any human force. (Koston 58) Here we see that Koston is saying that Satan was a great epic warrior and leader by leading an army which was greater than any human force.

Even though he was defeated Satan is a hero because of the great leader in which he was. The loss in the war is overshadowed by how great a leader Satan was. The obdurate pride and steadfast hate of the prince characterize him far more convincingly than they do the archangel. His sense of heroic action, honor, and glory mixed with ferocity and anger filled revenge make

him an Achilles magnified a hundredfold, so that as he steps from the stygian Council he not the archangel is the true epic antagonist in Heaven. (Lewis 121) This shows that Satan is the hero in the poem. He compares Satan to Achilles but a hundred times greater.

This is a great compliment to the heroism of Satan. The greatness of Satan is so great that it compared to a hundred times that of Achilles. Now that is some great company which tells us Satan belongs as the hero. Even though there is all this evidence of Satan being a hero there are still many people who feel that Satan was in fact the villain of Paradise Lost. Satan is said to be the villain mainly because he goes against God and tries to overthrow the most powerful being in the world. Satan's own determination allows him to feel that he is greater than God and able to take over allows him to become the villain in people's minds and this gives him his bad reputation forever.

Maximilian Rudin, a scholar, writes, "The downfall of the Devil is, according to the Church authority, attributed to self conceit." (Rudin 6) This can not be considered something that would go against the idea of Satan as a hero because pride is a trait of every hero so it can not be used against Satan. Father Louis Coulange is convinced that Satan is a villain. "The Devil of the Christian Church is an evil being" (Coulange A) Although this is true, it can not be considered in the case of Paradise Lost because this is a conventional view of Satan and does not take into consideration all of Satan's actions in the poem. Coulange also states that "Since his fall, the former prince of the heavenly spirits has used his power only for evil.

" (Coulange 29) This is true depending on what angle you look at it from. It is true that Satan went to Eden with the intention of deceiving Eve and he did go to war with heaven. He is also considered the villain because of his first sin: jealousy. Coulange writes " the Devil was good until the day when he was jealous of Adam's destiny, and it was jealousy that was his first sin."

(Coulange 10) This can be considered a valid point but all humans have committed this sin and not all humans are considered villains so it is not really that strong of an argument. Reverend Jewett also has the notion that Satan is a villain. The devil is the implacable enemy of the human race and especially of believers whom he desires to devour.

(Jewett 84) Jewett feels that Satan is a villain because he is the enemy. He is the enemy to the human race and to everyone who is a believer in him. Satan is a villain because he lures people into believing him and the bad things in which he represents. Anyone who refuses to accept the tradition of the four canonical gospels and despises companions of the lord despises Christ himself, he even despises the father, and he is self-condemned, resisting and refusing his own salvation, as all the heretics do. (Forsyth 348) This says that anyone who goes against God is a villain. This is what Satan has done and is why he is a villain no matter what other qualities he may have. The more Satan rejects the order of things by asserting his own angelic nature, the more he accomplishes his own unfulfillment the more the demons attempt to respond, the more they achieve their own self-damnation. (Jewett 20) This says that the more Satan rejected the order of things the more he became a villain.

The more and more he began to want things his way the more of a villainous character he became. Even the being of nature of Satan as originally created was thus met as physically considered good. But from self-determination and choice of opposition onto God, and the conservatious of holiness in his nature morally considered has become changed. (Jewett 91) This states that Satan was originally good but from his own choice and decision to go against God he then turned into the villain.

If he had not made that decision he would have been a good person but once he chose to go against the great God he had turned into the villain and will always be looked at as the villain. The Devil of the Christian Church is an evil being. But he has not always been such. His perversity is his own personal fault. He was good in the beginning and it was a sin which made him what he is now.

(Coulange A) Coulange is saying that the devil was good until his own mistakes made him into the villain he is. If it were not for his own personal fault he would have stayed good and would never have been the villain. His original sin is what has made him into the villain which he is in everyone's mind. The original sin that he made has allowed him to be given such a stereotype for all this time. From the fact that the Devil sinned from the beginning and that pride is the beginning of all sin it was inferred that the Devil's sin was pride.

(Rudwin 91) Here is another example in which Satan's fault was his original sin and this is what led him to be labeled the villain time and time again. There is nothing he could have done about it once he let out his original sin,

from there he just took off and never looked back and will be considered villain in many people's minds forever. Many people have mixed views of what Satan was in Paradise Lost. Even though there were examples trying to prove him as a villain I feel that he was the hero of the book. He had many courageous and brave scenes where only a hero could have done some of the things he did. A regular person would not have been able to make an army feel that they can defeat God. Only a hero could do such a thing and only a hero would be willing to lead the charge against the greatest power in the world.