

Othello as a tragic hero critique essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Shakespeare uses techniques, characters, language, structure and form to present Othello as a tragic hero. He exposes his tragic flaw, which consequently leads to his downfall. Othello conforms to the Aristotelian principles of tragedy, of the noble protagonist who undergoes ceaseless manipulation and endures suffering, resulting in his ultimate downfall due to hamartia. All of these techniques combine to provide a different perception of the protagonist, as more of an atypical victim, exposed to the harsh reality of the society he longs to fit into, rather than a typical hero.

A tragic hero is a person who initially is well-respected and holds a high esteem within society. They are of high moral worth and are highly ambitious in what they set out to achieve. A single mistake or character flaw can, however, bring them to ruin, with a loss of everything that they possess. In the discussion of whether Othello fits the role of a tragic hero, the following concepts need to be considered. Firstly, as befitting a tragic hero, Othello holds an important role.

He is well-respected and admired by all. Secondly, through a character flaw and the added complication of external forces working against him, he suffers a dramatic fall from grace. He loses all that he held dear- his wife, his status, his position, and the respect held by others of him. The tragic hero comes up against a force or events which serve to bring this fatal flaw to the surface. In Hamlet, it is his indecision which comes to the surface as a result of his mother's 'o'er hasty' remarriage.

It is interpreted that Othello's fatal flaw is in fact jealousy. But jealousy is not an emotion or state of being that can exist on its own. It requires other

things to feed it and in Othello's case this is insecurity. Othello is in fact set in an extremely racist period and this does cause him to feel insecure and vulnerable, which renders him more open to Iago's manipulation. Iago does not prey on Othello's jealousy, he preys on his insecurity and uses Othello's race and colour to place Othello in a bad light.

In Othello, it is the force of Iago's ruthless manipulation and accusations against Desdemona and Cassio which bring Othello's gullibility to the surface. Hamartia is a very important aspect of the play and Shakespeare uses it to better the audience's understanding of the events that are unfolding. Othello is oblivious to the fact that Iago is taking advantage of his fatal flaw of jealousy. "Oh beware jealousy: it is the green-eyed which doth mock that which meet it, feed on. The cuckold lies in bliss".

This quote from Iago proves that he knows Othello more than Othello knows himself, and so, takes advantage of his personal flaw, using it to his own, deadly advantage. Despite Othello's actions, there is a lesson to be learnt and the audience are compelled to maintain some feeling of sympathy towards him. The sympathy of the audience towards Othello's character is largely due to his lack of understanding of the unforeseen evils in the world around him. These evils are personified by Iago. Othello's nobility, morals, values and ideals, all play a part in the unravelling of his personality.

Iago who's equivocal but evil deception and manipulation of Othello's emotions presents the audience with a strong-willed but fragile character. Othello appears ill-equipped to understand a character such as Iago, and this gains the audience's sympathy. If we are to accept that a tragic hero is one

that possesses the image of valour, nobility and honour, but in weakness cannot contain the manipulation of those mannerisms, then in the end we must come to the conclusion that he is indeed a tragic hero.