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EQ-Abstract

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How virtuous is a tragic hero?

A tragic hero is a character in a book, movie, or play with a tragic flaw. The tragic hero is destined for downfall or defeat. In my paper I will discuss three different characters that could be seen as tragic heroes and I will discuss the virtue of each character. The most common type of tragic hero is noble and virtuous. The three works I will use to address this issue are *Watchmen*, *Gilgamesh*, and *City of God*.

The tragic hero has appeared in literature for as long as literature has been in existence. An unfortunate issue in life is tragedy. We feel empathy for tragic heroes because typically they are virtuous characters that mean well. The characteristic of virtue is difficult to define because in many cases it is subjective. A character may appear virtuous in helping one person, but in helping this person they may not appear virtuous to someone else. How virtuous must a hero be in tragedy to be defined as a tragic hero?

In the comic book, *Watchmen* the character Rorschach could be seen as a tragic hero. It is obvious that Rorschach has a tragic flaw, and it ultimately leads to his death. In order to classify how virtuous he is, it is important to remain as objective as possible. Rorschach has the hardest time of all the heroes in *Watchmen* letting go of his alter

ego. Even after all the other heroes are retired, Rorschach still keeps his mask on and fights for justice which is quite virtuous. However, his methods are questionable at times. For instance, he breaks the man's fingers in the bar when he is looking for the mask killer, and he kills when it may be argued to be unnecessary.

It is argued that Gilgamesh was a tragic hero in the novel *Gilgamesh*. Upon first glance he doesn't fit the criteria of a tragic hero, but when we look further he shows tragic hero qualities. Gilgamesh is not virtuous as the story begins. He is an unjust ruler who sleeps with any woman he wants including other men's wives. Gilgamesh's tragic flaw is that he is more concerned with his own power and fame than the well being of his people. This tragic flaw leads to his downfall in a different way than the stereotypical tragic hero. Gilgamesh's tragic downfall is not his own death but the death of his close friend Enkidu. After Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh goes on a quest for immortality, and eventually becomes a wiser leader. Gilgamesh gains virtue after his downfall. While this may not be the classic example of a tragic hero, it is still an interesting perspective.

In the movie titled *City of God* there is a tragic hero named Knockout Ned. Knockout Ned stands out in the City of God because his life isn't consumed by crime and gang violence. Until his woman is raped by the gang leader in town named Lil Ze. When Ned teams up with Carrot's gang he has a rule not to kill innocent people. This shows Ned's virtue, but when he breaks his own rule it leads to his downfall. Ned's virtue comes into question but I still believe he was virtuous compared to the other residents of the City of God.