

# Tragic Flaws: Shakespearean Therapy Sessions



Name:

Date:



## Hamartia - tragic flaw

**hamartia**, (hamartia from Greek hamartanein, “to err”), inherent defect or shortcoming in the hero of a tragedy, who is in other respects a superior being favoured by fortune.

Source: britannica.com

## Activity 1

**Think** about the concept of a **tragic flaw** (hamartia) in literature.

**Pair** up with a classmate and find examples in different pieces of literature.

**Share** with the class to what extent you think the tragic flaw leads to the outcome of the literature you discussed.

## Notes

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## Find the tragic flaws

W	U	N	D	K	I	O	M	R	O	K	J	O	K	N	R	C
W	P	B	Q	W	R	B	T	R	Q	D	F	R	S	O	Z	W
V	V	C	E	O	U	S	H	D	I	P	T	Y	Q	R	F	E
Y	T	U	I	N	D	E	C	I	S	I	O	N	O	Y	T	N
Z	T	T	G	Q	A	S	E	F	S	R	Q	K	R	S	G	V
K	Z	N	U	V	X	S	H	B	B	W	J	B	A	T	K	H
C	O	W	A	R	D	I	C	E	P	K	U	Y	M	K	R	Q
X	Y	J	G	C	Y	O	I	T	O	D	S	W	B	K	H	Z
R	V	U	Z	R	A	N	V	R	V	E	N	I	I	F	U	S
I	M	T	V	Z	X	Z	L	A	R	V	R	J	T	N	B	L
U	J	E	A	L	O	U	S	Y	T	P	J	U	I	O	R	K
E	G	M	S	J	E	E	N	A	J	R	C	B	O	G	I	D
X	K	W	E	I	M	P	U	L	S	I	V	E	N	E	S	S
T	F	I	R	G	B	D	U	S	Q	D	W	P	E	M	U	K
G	J	O	K	U	B	B	W	G	R	E	E	D	N	L	Y	B

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## Activity 2

Analyze excerpts from the Shakespearean tragedy you are reading in class to find the tragic flaw.

Tips:

- Identify key quotes that reveal the flaw.
- Analyze how the flaw drives the character’s actions and contributes to their downfall.
- Find language or behavior that demonstrates the character’s flaw.

**Analyze the character of Macbeth in Shakespeare's tragedy 'Macbeth' by examining his soliloquies and other significant text excerpts. Identify and discuss the tragic flaw that leads to his downfall, providing evidence from the play to support your analysis.**

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## Activity 3

Next, you will create a therapy session for this Shakespearean hero. But first, form groups of 2 or 3 and reflect on the following.

**Analyze how Macbeth's soliloquies reveal his internal struggles and identify moments that could serve as potential starting points for therapeutic intervention.**

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**Debate the role of Lady Macbeth's influence on Macbeth's actions and discuss how understanding this dynamic could be useful in a therapeutic setting.**

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**Reflect on the hallucinations and visions experienced by Macbeth. How might these be interpreted in a modern psychological context, and what therapeutic approaches could address these symptoms?**

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## Additional Resources

In preparation for the next task, it might be useful to do some research on elements of modern therapy. Below, you can find some information but feel free to dive deeper into your own research.

### Sources:

1. [American Psychological Association \(APA\) - Different approaches to psychotherapy](#)
2. [Mind Body Green - 15 Types Of Therapy: How They Work & How To Choose](#)
3. [Positive Psychology - 12 Popular Counseling Approaches to Consider](#)
4. [Psychology Today - Therapy Types and Modalities](#)
5. [Verywell Mind - Types of Therapy: An A to Z List of Your Options](#)
6. [Simply Psychology - Psychotherapy: Definition, Types, Techniques, & Efficacy](#)
7. [Psych Central - What Are the Different Types of Psychotherapy?](#)
8. [Medical News Today - A guide to different types of therapy](#)
9. [Healthline - A Guide to Different Types of Therapy](#)
10. [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - Types of therapy](#)

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## Activity 4

### Write the script for the therapy session

#### Role Assignment within Each Group:

- **Client Role:** One or two students role-play the Shakespearean character. They will “confess” their inner struggles using key lines from the text (modified into modern language if needed).
- **Therapist Role:** The therapist's goal is to diagnose the flaw and offer thoughtful, empathetic advice using both evidence from the text and modern psychological insights.

#### Developing the Session Script:

- Each group creates a brief script or outline for their therapy session. Be creative. You can include modern elements such as “mindfulness techniques,” “cognitive reframing,” or “crisis intervention” strategies.
- Ensure that the session touches on:
  - An opening where the character explains their internal conflict.
  - A middle segment where the therapist asks probing questions and discuss possible turning points.
  - A closing where the therapist summarizes key insights and suggest ways the character might have changed course.

### Create a script for a therapy session for the tragic character.

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## Activity 5

Reflect on the therapy session

**How did the therapy session highlight the character's tragic flaw?**

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**What modern insights resonated with you?**

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**Could the character's fate have been altered if they had addressed their internal conflict?**

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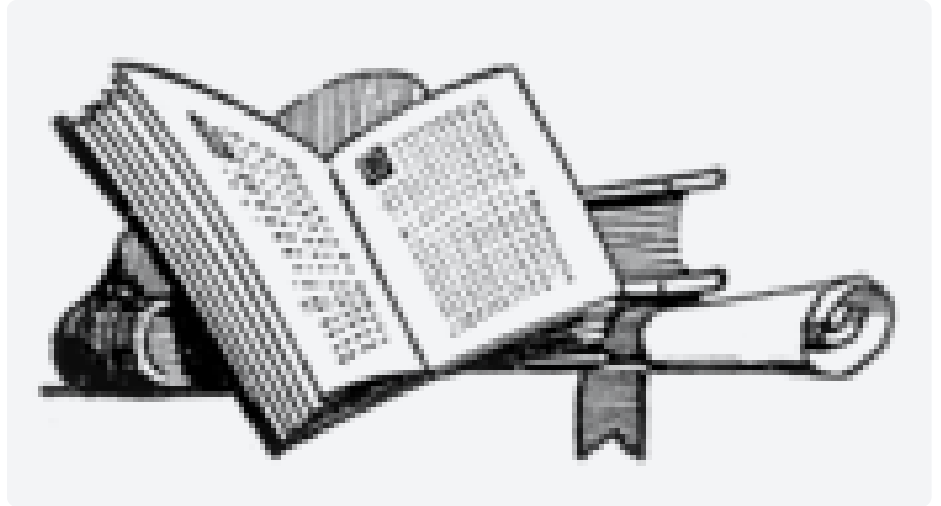
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## The Timeless Tragic Flaw: A Critical Examination

The concept of the tragic flaw, or "hamartia," has been a cornerstone of literary analysis since Aristotle's "Poetics." This term, originating from the Greek word for "to miss the mark," encapsulates the protagonist's error or inherent defect leading to their downfall. In Shakespeare's tragedies, hamartia is vividly portrayed through characters like Macbeth, whose unbridled ambition leads to ruin, or Othello, whose jealousy results in tragedy. These flaws are not mere moral failings but complex attributes that intertwine heroism and vulnerability, making the characters profoundly human.

Critics have long debated the relevance and utility of the tragic flaw in contemporary literary studies. Some argue that focusing on a singular flaw oversimplifies characters and undermines the multifaceted nature of human psychology. Others, however, see it as a valuable tool in understanding the moral and ethical dimensions of a narrative. Shakespearean tragedies, with their rich character studies and intricate plots, offer a fertile ground for this debate. The tragic flaw serves as a lens



*Books and Scroll Ornament with Open Book - Source: Wikipedia*

From a modern perspective, the tragic flaw remains a potent concept. It resonates with contemporary audiences, who can see their struggles and imperfections reflected in these timeless characters. The notion that a single, often minor, characteristic can lead to one's undoing underscores the fragility of human existence. Whether viewed as a critical framework or a storytelling device, the tragic flaw continues to captivate and provoke thought, proving its enduring

In conclusion, the tragic flaw is not just a relic of classical literature but a dynamic and insightful concept that bridges the past and present. Shakespeare's tragedies, with their complex characters and moral ambiguities, exemplify the power of hamartia to engage and enlighten. As we delve into these works, we are reminded of our vulnerabilities and the thin line between greatness and downfall, making the tragic flaw an indispensable element of literary discourse.



through which we can explore the perennial themes of fate, free will, and the human condition. relevance in the study of literature.

**Discuss your opinion on the relevance of the tragic flaw in modern literary analysis.**

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## Homework

Select one of the two options

**Option 1: Imagine the character had attended the therapy session. Imagine how this would change their behavior and rewrite the end of the play.**

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**Option 2: You are speaking at a psychology congress and are presenting this interesting case you've come across recently. Write a speech about the character's diagnosis, causes and therapy.**

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