

# Year 8 Term 1: The Flawed Self S

A 'flaw' is defined as an 'imperfection'. We all have flaws. And that's because nobody is perfect, despite what some films might suggest!

This term, you will be exploring how writers present us with characters whose flaws often result in tragedy.

The main text that you will read is *Othello*, written by arguably the greatest writer in the English language: William Shakespeare. Shakespeare had the extraordinary ability to create characters who weren't just interesting – they taught us something about ourselves. Othello is one such character and his flaws make him the ultimate tragic hero.

## Shakespearean context

- William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor.
- Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and married Anne Hathaway in 1582. They had three children. He died in 1616.
- We don't know exactly when Shakespeare started writing plays, but they were probably being performed in London by 1592, and he's likely to have written his final plays just a couple of years before his death in 1616. It is believed that he wrote around 38 plays, including collaborations with other writers.
- In 1599, Shakespeare's acting company built the Globe Theatre.
- Shakespeare's plays weren't published in book form during his lifetime – it was only after he died that his friends got together and paid for his plays to be collected. This collection was called the First Folio.
- Shakespeare wrote different types of plays: comedies, tragedies, and histories.
- William Shakespeare is credited with the invention or introduction of over 1,700 words that are still used in English today.

## The Evolution of the Tragic Hero

Aristotle was the first to define a **tragic hero**, believing a good tragedy should evoke **fear and pity**. For him, a tragic hero was a **noble man with heroic traits** whose downfall was caused by a **tragic flaw**—often linked to those very traits.

**Modern tragic heroes** can be of **any gender or background**, and don't need to be conventionally heroic—some may even be **villainous or flawed**. However, two core elements remain:

- They must **gain the audience's sympathy**.
- Their downfall must come from a **personal flaw**, despite good intentions.

### Tragic Hero vs. Antihero vs. Byronic Hero

**Antihero:** A protagonist lacking traditional heroic qualities (e.g., courage or honesty) but still earns the audience's sympathy. May do the right thing for the wrong reasons.

**Byronic Hero:** A type of antihero—typically **male, intelligent, sensitive, cynical, and charismatic** but **deeply flawed**. Rebellious, socially isolated, selfish beneath the surface, and guided by their own values rather than society's norms.

## Tragedies and Tragic Heroes

Term	Definition
<b>Tragedy</b>	A branch of drama that tells the sad or terrible events involving a heroic figure.
<b>Tragic Hero</b>	A noble character who is neither completely good nor evil, central to the tragedy.
<b>Hamartia</b>	The tragic hero's character flaw that contributes to their downfall.
<b>Hubris</b>	Excessive pride or stubbornness that leads the hero to make poor choices.
<b>Anagnorisis</b>	The moment the hero realises something has gone wrong—but it's too late to fix it.
<b>Denouement</b>	The catastrophic ending of the tragedy, often involving many deaths.
<b>Catharsis</b>	The emotional release felt by the audience, such as pity or shock, leading to insight or reflection.

## Conventions of a play

- Act** – separates play's major sections (there are usually 3 or 5)
- Scene** – a 'chapter' in an act
- Dialogue** – what the characters say to each other
- Monologue** – a long speech by one actor
- Soliloquy** – when a character speaks their thoughts aloud to the audience.
- Aside** – dialogue that is said confidentially (secretly) to the audience when other characters are on stage.
- Stage directions** – instructions to the actors and director. In brackets and/or italics.

## Writing Rules

- Persuade:**
  - IAMAFORESTER
  - One-sided
  - Logos, pathos, ethos
- Dramatic monologue:**
  - Stage directions
  - Clear emotions / emotive language
  - A clear purpose
  - Figurative language
  - Clear character voice & attitude
- Letters:**
  - Addresses
  - Date
  - Greeting
  - Paragraphs
  - Sign off

## Othello themes

<b>Prejudice (Race &amp; Misogyny)</b>	<b>Race:</b> Othello is a Black man in a mostly white society. Some characters, like Iago and Brabantio, treat him poorly because of his skin colour. They think he doesn't belong or that Desdemona shouldn't love him because he's different. <b>Misogyny:</b> Women in the play, like Desdemona and Emilia, are not treated equally. Men expect them to obey and blame them quickly, even without proof. Women's voices are often ignored or silenced.
<b>Appearance vs Reality</b>	Iago pretends to be Othello's friend but is secretly tricking him. He lies and makes things look true, even though they're false. Othello believes Iago, not Desdemona, showing how appearances can be misleading.
<b>Love</b>	Othello and Desdemona start with deep love, but it's ruined by lies and jealousy.
<b>Jealousy</b>	Jealousy is the main cause of Othello's downfall. Iago is jealous of Cassio and Othello. He makes Othello jealous of Desdemona, making him believe she's dishonest, which leads to tragedy.

## Othello Characters

- Othello:** The play's protagonist and hero. A Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice, Othello is an eloquent and physically powerful figure, respected by all those around him. In spite of his elevated status, he is easy prey to insecurities because of his age, his life as a soldier, and his race.
- Desdemona:** The wife of Othello. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins. While in many ways stereotypically pure and meek, Desdemona is also determined and self-possessed. She is equally capable of defending her marriage.
- Iago** - Othello's ensign (a low-ranked officer), and the villain of the play. While his obvious reason for desiring Othello's downfall is that he has been passed over for promotion to lieutenant, Iago's motivations are never very clearly expressed – it seems that he is obsessed with manipulation and destruction.
- Michael Cassio** - Othello's lieutenant. He is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago. Truly devoted to Othello, Cassio is ashamed after being involved in a drunken brawl and losing his place as lieutenant. Iago uses Cassio's youth, good looks, and friendship with Desdemona to play on Othello's insecurities about his wife's fidelity.

## Tragic Heroes in Literature:

**Romeo and Juliet – William Shakespeare**  
A romantic tragedy about two young lovers from feuding families whose impulsive love and secret marriage lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and ultimately their deaths.

**Tragic Hero – Romeo:**  
Romeo is passionate and idealistic but acts impulsively. His intense emotions drive his decisions, from falling in love quickly to taking his own life. His downfall comes from a tragic flaw — rashness — which leads to fatal consequences.

**The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald**  
Set in 1920s America, this novel follows Jay Gatsby, a wealthy man obsessed with rekindling his past love with Daisy Buchanan. His pursuit of the American Dream ends in betrayal and death.

**Tragic Hero – Jay Gatsby:**  
Gatsby is charming, ambitious, and deeply in love, but his tragic flaw is obsession with the past. He believes money and status can win back Daisy, but this illusion blinds him to reality, leading to his downfall.

**A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens**  
Ebenezer Scrooge, a bitter and greedy man, is visited by three ghosts on Christmas Eve. They show him his past, present, and future, leading to his transformation into a kind and generous person.

**Tragic Hero – Scrooge (a redeemed tragic figure):**  
Unlike traditional tragic heroes, Scrooge avoids complete ruin. His tragic flaw — *greed and lack of compassion* — isolates him, but through self-awareness and change, he overcomes it, showing that *tragedy can be reversed*.

**Hamlet – William Shakespeare**  
Prince Hamlet seeks revenge after learning his uncle murdered his father to seize the throne. His indecision and obsession with justice spiral into madness, betrayal, and death for nearly everyone, including himself.

**Tragic Hero – Hamlet:**  
Hamlet is intelligent and thoughtful but *overthinks* and delays action. His tragic flaw is *indecisiveness*, which allows corruption to spread and causes many unnecessary deaths — including his own.

## Y7 Recap

**Subject:** Does the action in a sentence or clause

**Noun types:**

- **Concrete** – A noun we can see, hear, touch, smell or taste
- **Abstract** – A noun which we cannot experience with any of the 5 senses e.g. happiness, tension

**Verb:** a word used to describe an action or state. E.g. Action: The girl was jumping. State: The girl knew the answers.

**Main clause** – A clause which makes sense on its own as a sentence

**Subordinate clause** – A clause which does not make sense on its own as a sentence – it needs a main clause to make it make sense – it starts with a subordinating conjunction.

**Coordinating conjunction** – A conjunction which joins 2 main clauses **FANBOYS** – for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so

**Subordinating conjunction** – A conjunction which joins a subordinate clause to a main one – e.g. while, as, because, since, if (**ISAWAWABUB**)

## Key Language, Structure & Form Techniques:

**Imagery**  
When the writer creates a vivid picture in the reader's mind through their description. E.g. "Glittering white, the blanket of snow covered everything"

**Personification**  
Giving human features to non-human things. E.g. "The moon watched over us"

**Symbolism**  
When objects or characters are used to represent bigger ideas.

**Simile**  
Comparing two things using 'like' or 'as'. E.g. "The snake moved like a ripple on a pond"

**Metaphor**  
Describes something by saying it **is** something else. It's not literal, but it helps create a vivid image or understanding. **DOES NOT** use "like" or "as". E.g. "The world is a stage"

**Zoomorphism**  
Giving animalistic features to non-animal things. E.g. "The wind howled"

**Motif**  
an image, sound, word, object, or idea that appears repeatedly for a certain effect.

**Foreshadowing**  
When the writer hints at events that could happen later in the text.

**Iambic pentameter**  
a line of writing with five iambs each containing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Essentially, it's a line of verse with ten syllables that follow a "da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM" rhythm.

**Dramatic irony**  
When the audience knows more than the character in the play.

### Perfect Paragraph

- Answer sentence
- Embedded evidence
- Inferences
- Techniques (language, structure, form)
- Effect of techniques
- Reader response

## Y8 Grammar & Sentences

• **Pronoun Power**  
**They** watched. **They** waited. **They** knew I didn't belong here.

• **Lightning List**  
The forest gave me **silence, shade, secrets, solitude.**

• **Relentless Rhythm**  
I ran through the trees **and** over the roots **and** past the shadows **and** into the unknown.

❖ **Asyndetic listing:** A list without conjunctions e.g. 'old, decaying, broken, scratched'

❖ **Polysyndetic listing:** A list using consistent conjunctions e.g. 'old and decaying and broken and scratched'

❖ **Pronouns:** words that replace a noun. E.g. he, him, them, us, I

❖ **Adjectives:** a word that describes a noun or pronoun: E.g. "big", "boring", "purple", and "obvious"

❖ **Adverbs:** a word that describes or gives more information about a verb, adjective, adverb, or phrase. E.g. 'cheerfully', 'quickly', 'next week', 'extremely'