A Tragic Hero In The Tragedy Of Julius Caesar

Throughout many of Shakespeare's plays, there has to be a tragic hero. A noble character possesses a tragic hamartia and this hamartia is what eventually leads to his downfall. There have been many arguments in The Tragedy of Julius Caesar about who the tragic hero is. Numerous people concluded that Brutus is the tragic hero of the play. However, others argue and name Julius Caesar as a tragic hero. After learning more about these two characters' lives a conclusion can be easily drawn. 'Caesar is in a sense the dominating figure in the story, but Brutus is the hero.' (The Tragic Hero in Julius Caesar by Anne Paolucci) Brutus is indeed the tragic hero in this play, as he was the character who possessed such heroic qualities, and these qualities contributed to his downfall and his death. For a character to be a tragic hero, he must have at least one tragic hamartia, and Brutus has many. (Roy, Maithree. The Tragedy of Brutus in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar) Nevertheless, I suspect that Brutus' main hamarita and the primary reason for his downfall is his love towards Rome. Brutus tells Cassius that he “had rather be a villager than to repute himself a son of Rome under these hard conditions”. Some background knowledge is very much needed to understand the basic conflict between Brutus and his thoughts surrounding Caesars death. Despite the politics conflicts, Brutus has considered Caesar as a friend for a very long time and Caesar does indeed trust Brutus. But Brutus has a great loyalty to his mother country, Rome, and Brutus thinks that Caesar will destroy Rome if he becomes its dictator overthrowing the republic nation which has been standing for a long time. Brutus believes that unless someone murders Caesar, he will become a dictator. Thus, Brutus' conflict between passion and responsibility arose. Despite the fact that Brutus is a noble man, it is easy to affect him and Cassius will take advantage of this since he is aware that Brutus' weakness lies in his honor and the good of Rome. “For who so firm that cannot be seduced?”

Thus Brutus is tempted by both his honor and Cassius' manipulation.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is set during a time of intense political rivalry, thus the choices and decisions that Brutus acted upon were thought of amid the fear of an entrenched dictatorship. In Brutus, Shakespeare gives us a very subtle portrait of a man divided against himself – “with himself at war” to use Brutus' own phrase. Even before his first encounter with Cassius, Brutus has been torn by conflicting passions. He wants to do the right thing for the good of Rome but he does not want to betray his friend. “I do fear, the people Choose Caesar for their king.” Brutus' goes on saying: “What is it that you would impart to me? If it be aught toward the general good”

Brutus tells Cassius that he would only listen to him and approve to his conspiracy against Caesar if it is for the good of Rome. “For let the gods so speed me as I love the name of honor more than I fear death.” (The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare I. II) This shows how Brutus is an honorable man as he justifies joining the conspiracy and murdering Caesar as his responsibility towards Rome and the republic nation. Though Brutus is Caesar’s friend and a man of honor and nobility, he still joins in the conspiracy against Caesar’s life, convincing himself that Caesar’s death is for the greater good of Rome and the republic. Brutus professes to be motivated by his patriotic love of Rome and principles allegiance to his country more than friendship. He argues, “And therefore think him as a serpent’s egg / Which, hatched,

would, as his kind, grow mischievous; / And kill him in the shell.” It is at Brutus’s knife thrust that the dying Caesar utters the famous “Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar!” ('Marcus Junius Brutus' by E. Badian)

He fears that if Caesar becomes king, he will become like a poisonous snake able to sting, so that when he pleases he can be dangerous. Hence, he decides to save Rome from Caesar. Like this Rome shall be preserved, so he joins the conspirators for the good of Rome.

This soliloquy highlights the tragedy of Brutus with his own moral choice. Brutus is debating with himself whether Caesar will be an unjust ruler. He has no personal feelings against him but decides that Caesar must die before he can gain absolute power.

“It must be by his death. And for my part

I know no personal cause to spurn at him,

But for the general. He would be crowned:

How that might change his nature, there’s the question.

Crown him that,

And then I grant we put a sting in him

That at his will he may do danger with.

Th’ abuse of greatness is when it disjoins” (The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare II.I)

These words mirror the conspirator's republican principles of liberty and freedom. The morals and principles Which Brutus killed Caesar for.

Cinna: “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!”

Caesar has died, as he deserved, for his ambition. In other words, Brutus explains that Caesar had to pay for his ambitions and so they made him pay.

Brutus: “People and Senators, be not affrighted.

Fly not; stand still. Ambition’s debt is paid.” (The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare V.I)

Brutus telling Antony and assuring him that they will not kill him “O Antony, beg not your death of us!” and explaining that they killed Caesar for the good of Rome.

Our hearts are not bloody. We pitied Rome's condition more than Caesar. The true motive behind murdering Caesar is that we love Rome more than Caesar. We killed him for the good of Rome.

“Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;

And pity to the general wrong of Rome

(As fire drives out fire, so pity pity)

Hath done this deed on Caesar.” (The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare V.I)

Brutus addresses the common people in Prose to get close to them and appreciated and understood by them. Brutus says that he indeed loved Caesar but his love for Rome was even bigger, that he could not let Caesar follow his ambitions and become a dictator. Brutus explains to the mob that Caesar's murder was preventive to save Rome lest he turns into a tyrant. He even suggests that amongst them is Caesar's friend, Antony, whose love for Caesar was no less than Brutus'.

'If there be any in this assembly, any dear

friend of Caesar’s, to him I say that Brutus’ love

to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend

demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my

answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved

Rome more.”

Brutus shows his nobility during his speech at Caesar's funeral in saying that ''As Caesar loved me, I weep for him....'' he shows signs of compassion and sorrow, but at the same time he convinces the mob that it was the right thing to do for the sake of Rome. Although Brutus had great appreciation and love for his dear friend Caesar, he still followed on with his responsibilities towards Rome and the Republic. Brutus continues his speech and persuades the Caesar was murdered for the good of Rome & to save Rome from his ambition and tyranny. 'But, as he was ambitious, I slew him.

There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honor

for his valor, and death for his ambition.'

(The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare III. II)

Mark Antony gave Brutus an honorable burial.

Shakespeare's tragic play, The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is set during a time of intense political rivalry, thus the choices and decisions that Brutus acted upon were thought of amid the fear of an entrenched dictatorship. It focuses on Julius Caesar’s rule up until his death in 44 BC at the hands of a group of conspirators who purportedly fear Caesar’s ambitious motives.