

Protagonist

Protagonist Definition

A protagonist is the central [character](#) or leading figure in poetry, [narrative](#), novel, or any other story. A protagonist is sometimes called a “hero” by the [audience](#) or readers. The word originally came from the Greek language, and in Greek [drama](#) it refers to the person who led the chorus. Later on, the word started being used as a term for the first actor in order of performance.

Iago in Shakespeare’s *Othello* could be identified as the protagonist of the novel because he played a central role in all the controversies of the play. The question here would be that, even though he was a central character, was he really the lead character too? This type of indistinctness generally results in completely different interpretations of whether the said character is a protagonist or not.

Examples of Protagonist from Literature

Example #1: *Hamlet* (By William Shakespeare)

Protagonist examples in many stories are not shown to be flawless. They generally undergo some change that causes a turn of events, which makes a story interesting and helps deliver a message. Sometimes, a [moral](#) weakness is highlighted that causes the fall of the protagonist. For example, in William Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*, the protagonist experiences terrible events because of his indecisiveness, which troubles him while murdering his evil uncle. So, Hamlet’s struggle in dealing with the [antagonist](#) is what precedes the story.

Example #2: *Vanity Fair* (By William Makepeace Thackeray)

A protagonist can sometimes be very controversial because of some evil traits. One of the good examples of protagonist who is controversial would be Becky Sharp from William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, who is occasionally be very manipulative in order to achieve her own interests.

Example #3: *As I Lay Dying* (By William Faulkner)

There are ensemble stories that do not particularly highlight either one of the characters more than the rest. For instance, Addie Bundren's demise in the novel *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, results in her family traveling a long way to bury her, and they all tell the story from their own perspectives, which makes them all equally important to the story. Thus, it leaves us with more than one protagonist in the same story.

Protagonist Examples from Cinema

Example #4: *Star Wars* (By George Lucas)

In the movie *Star Wars* the character of Luke Skywalker was developed by George Lucas. He plays an outwardly naïve farm boy. Luke desperately wants a life different from his monotonous existence. After his uncle's and aunt's demise, he has no other choice but to join forces with Obi-wan Kenobe. Luke later matures to understand the customs of The Force. His antagonist in the movie is Darth Vader, who turns out to be Luke's father. They both get into a major [conflict](#) but eventually Luke succeeds.

Function of Protagonist

A protagonist is a very important tool used in developing a story. There are different terms used for a protagonist, such as hero, focal character, central character, and main character. Regardless of what title you give a protagonist, he or she remains the key ingredient in the development of the story, which is why the story revolves around him or her. More often than not the protagonist is fair and virtuous, and is always found supporting the moral good. Further in the plot the protagonist may undergo some change, which will probably be the [climax](#) of the story.

Being the central element puts grave responsibilities on the shoulders of a

who has to work as an emotional heart of the story, helping the audience connect with it on a basic level. A well-constructed protagonist attracts the audience emotionally, and lets them relate to the joys, fears, and hopes of the character in the story.

The events occurring in a story are always viewed from the [perspective](#) of the protagonist. The audience decides whether or not a particular event is favorable in a story. A wedding is an important and positive event in *The Sound of Music* because it is a positive event for the protagonist, Maria. However, the same kind of event in the movie *While You Were Sleeping* would be unfortunate because in that case the protagonist Lucy was marrying the wrong person.

Some stories weave many characters into an ensemble story, but even in such stories there is often one character that is more important to the story than the rest. For instance, in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy there are many characters that have great significance to the story, but Frodo Baggins is the one who stands out, because everyone else's destiny rests in his hands.