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# The Character Traits Of Brutus

## Introduction

The character of Brutus in the drama Julius Caesar written by William Shakespeare is a complex character. The possible problem encountered when discussing the character of Brutus throughout the play of Julius Caesar, is if your opinion and how your opinion of this character has changed. This essay aims to prove why my opinion of Brutus did not change towards the end of the play. In this essay the character traits of Brutus (both good and bad), how his honour lead to his downfall and how his mistake ensures that he will be viewed in a negative light and the fact that he is indeed not a faultless man will be discussed.

## The Character traits of Brutus

Brutus is viewed as a true tragic hero in the play of Julius Caesar. In act three, when Brutus is readying himself to talk to the public, a plebian refers to Brutus as 'The noble Brutus.' We can then assume that to the public Brutus was noble, kind, honourable, idealistic and respected. He has strict moral values and is a man of principle. Additionally, we accept that the actions of Brutus in the play, was made with the well-being of the public in mind.

Antony also referring to Brutus in his monologue as 'the noble Brutus' and mentioning that 'Brutus is an honourable man.' multiple times (Shakespeare, explained by Daniell 1998:257) and although the words were not spoken with kindness and sincerity, the idea that the public saw Brutus as a good man up to that point in time is strengthened for the reader.

Regrettably, Brutus is rather naïve. He struggles to believe that others might not share his ideas about the importance of honour and honesty. As such, he is overly trusting, which ensures easy manipulation and exploitation by Cassius and the other conspirators. Brutus is also a victim of pride, blatantly refusing to listen to his fellow conspirators. (Pheto. 2020)

## Honour

As mentioned previously, honour is important to Brutus. Ultimately, his fight to preserve honour and save the romans from what he is convinced would be tyranny he is easily convinced to be a leader of the conspirators. To achieve this preservation of honour, he commits murder along with his fellow conspirators. While realistically he did commit murder, at the time he saw it as a sacrifice he was willing to make for the Romans and their continued wellbeing. When Cassius suggests that they should kill Antony as well, Brutus insisted that it is not necessary. Brutus most likely didn't see Antony as a threat and wanted to prevent any unnecessary bloodshed. His honourable intentions lead him to be ignorant to Antony's importance in the situation.

Antony then defended Julius Caesar and used Brutus's well-intended actions to convince the public that Brutus was no better traitor and a murderer. With the evidence supporting Antony's perspective and the fact that the public doesn't understand the motivation behind his actions, this puts Brutus in a bad light.

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Towards the end of the play, when Brutus realises his mistake, he commits suicide. Brutus felt that his suicide – instead of asking someone else to kill him – would be a final act of honour.

## **Not a faultless man**

While his actions were fuelled by honour, his pride and idealism stood in the way of it being effective. His actions, however well intended they may be, proved to harm instead of promote their cause.

Therefore, Brutus was not a faultless man. He was noble, honourable, loved and respected, but also proud, trusting and naïve. Like a true tragic hero, he had to fail and learn through error. (Piotrowska. 2020) It can be argued that his hubris and his obsession with honour was his hamartia which lead to his downfall.

## **Conclusion**

The probable problem encountered while discussing the character of Brutus, is if and how one's opinion of this character changes.

To summarise, Brutus is a man like any other. He has good and bad traits, some of which blind him to the reality of the situation. Although his actions were well-intended – wanting to help his people escape the possible tyranny – he ultimately does more harm than good. Brutus truly believed that his actions were necessary. When he realised that he made a mistake (his hamartia), he accepted responsibility and the consequences. Although the decisions made were not the right decisions, at the time he believed they were.

Thus, my opinion of the character of Brutus in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar did not change toward the end of the play. His fundamental characteristics did not change throughout the play. Brutus was a good man who only wanted what was best for his people, but unfortunately went the wrong way about achieving his goal.