

F

Iago acts as an agent of evil to manipulate other characters and reveal the nature of evil in humanity.

In the novel *Othello* Iago manipulates Othello into believing that his wife, Desdemona, is cheating on him with Cassio. Now Iago is only does this out of pure jealousy and hate because Othello did not choose him. Iago uses this cruelty to get Othello to kill his right hand man and his wife so the only person left is Iago. By using this cruelty Iago faith was not happy because he is paralyzed for life. Sometimes revenge and cruelty does not work and you end up getting a taste of your own medicine.

D

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, we see how the use of having a main character with a split personality can act as a catalyst to actions that further develop the plot of the book. These actions include the murder of the land lady and the after effects and how it was done as the colder more distant version of Raskolnikov and how his other half does not know why he just did something, and another example is when he finds the girl assaulted and tries to help her but he is also repulsed by what she is now.

In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the tragic hero Othello is taken down by and a victim of Iago's cruelty. Iago's cruelty drives the entire play and leads to the downfall and suicide of Othello. Through manipulative lies and maneuvers Iago's evil personality reveals his true motives.

During the time of the witch trials in Salem, many people were wrongfully accused of witchcraft, solely based off hysteria that began to fester in the community. The community tries to strictly follow their religious beliefs, but in actuality ends up tarnishing their beliefs with deceit and lies. John Proctor is one of the accused. John Proctor is the catalyst in disproving the fallacy of theocracy in this community by standing up for what is right. He refused to give into the corruption of the society with the accepting of his death. John Proctor shows the true values of the communities religion by choosing to die unlike those who lied to save their own lies. Proctor reveals the true puritanical beliefs through dying for his sins.

C

Said from Mahfouz's *The Thief and the Dogs* comes out of prison a better man than he was before, however his laziness prevents him from suppressing his anger, which leads him to plot revenge, which inevitably leads to a quick decline and turns Said back into the man he was before prison.

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, a potent combination of resentment and insecurity drives cruelty throughout its five acts, ultimately crushing the most redeeming values of its characters.

The cruelty toward Desdemona and Emilia in *Othello* does more than demonstrate gender inequality—it also highlights the shallow values of the male perpetrators like Othello, Iago, and Cassio, providing deeper insight into Shakespeare's work.

B

“My wit’s diseased,” jokes Hamlet with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, trying to throw them off the scent after the play-within-a-play scene. But what if there were more truth in Hamlet’s joke than he’s aware of? Even he acknowledges sincerely in the “To be or not to be” soliloquy that during times requiring action and will, “the native hue of resolution is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.” Indeed, overthinking plagues Hamlet throughout the play, preventing him from committing the act of revenge his father requested. The problem in *Hamlet* is that Hamlet rots with a diseased will until the infection had spread so far that nothing can reverse the course of the spreading. It’s no coincidence, I think, that the final blow is not dealt with a mere weapon, but one that’s laced with a potent poison to “o’ercrow” Hamlet’s spirit.

In his book, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, Tolstoy writes the story of a man driven by reason to the point of abandoning his own emotions. Ivan Ilych has rejected his own happiness in favor of a life and career driven by rationality only at the end of his life realizes his mistake—that by his removal of emotions from his life, he, himself, has engineered his own unhappiness.

The long-standing debate over nature versus nurture focuses on whether innate, inborn traits occurring naturally as a result of evolution and other biological factors determine human behavior and character traits, or whether environment, upbringing and societal factors do. In his novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, author Robert Louis Stevenson uses his characters, setting and plot to make a strong argument that, while the two are intricately entwined, nature inevitably wins out.

One might think that obviously Chinua Achebe, an Igbo man that has lived to see the latter end of British colonization, would probably maintain a vehement stance against colonialism and conversely maintain an affectionate stance towards his own Igbo traditions and cultures. However, reading the book *Things Fall Apart* suggests otherwise. Yes, things do fall apart in Umuofia and its Igbo sister villages, but is it for the better? Could it have been a good thing that a group of Europeans found Igbo people to colonize in the name of religion. Surely Christianity must have been better than believing in “ogbanjes.” However, a group of people encroaching on an already made civilization still seems the perfect way to install an oppressive regime. *Things Fall Apart* by renown writer Chinua Achebe traverses this question of the vices in colonialism and also in tradition. *Things Fall Apart* not only highlights the negative effect of colonialism but also the serious problem with vehement insistence on tradition. Achebe uses the character Okonkwo as a manifestation of intense Igbo culture to inspire and somewhat resolve the conflict of tradition versus colonialism.

If one asks others for their opinion on the Catholic Church, or just religion in general, he or she will receive a variety of different answers. Either one will praise the Catholic Church for the many good works it has executed, like feeding the poor or aiding the sick, or criticize it for many of its followers’ questionable actions. Graham Greene answers this question too, but indirectly. In the first few chapters of *The Power and the Glory*, Greene utilizes subtle word choice to hint that the Catholic Church brings great joy to its members. However, as the novel progresses, his praise toward the Catholic Church escalates, as he demonstrates that the Catholic Church does not just merely help one experience happiness but provides a dogma that heals those who are suffering and outlines the ideal way one should live his or her life. Through his novel *The Power and the Glory*, Graham Greene demonstrates that religion proves incredibly beneficial to its citizens, and therefore, is essential for the well-being of a polity.

Ivan Ilyich Golovin is, indeed, a most ordinary man of his society; he is a moderately wealthy bureaucrat, also the son of a moderately wealthy bureaucrat. He is a standard member of Russian high society; he has a nice apartment, speaks with French expressions, supports his family, and plays cards in the evening. But like his country, Ivan Ilyich lacks an identity of his own. In fact, the name Ivan is merely the Russian form of John, one of the most common names. Ivan Ilyich is so intensely generic that he becomes the Russian Everyman: a symbol of society rather than a real man. Tolstoy uses Ivan Ilyich as the Everyman to critique the follies of Russia’s struggle for identity on the individual and cultural scale.

A

Hamartia is a slippery slope, and leads to the demise of many characters in *Crime and Punishment*. Most of the character flaws in *Crime and Punishment* are fatal, except for Raskolnikov’s. Svidrigailov’s high affinity for young women, promiscuity, and crime forges a volatile guilt in his smoldering soul, leading to his suicide. Alyona Ivanovna’s avarice and greed makes her a target for Raskolnikov, leading to her murder. In Russia, vodka drinks you, and Marmeladov’s alcoholism leads to a fatal blunder, as he is killed by a horse-drawn carriage. Raskolnikov’s monomania impels him to perpetrate a murder, which engenders a corrosive guilt that parallels Svidrigailov’s, leading to his confession and internment in a labor

camp. Hamartia leads to some sort of suffering, or pathos, which may be swift or prolonged. Suffering is the demise, the equalizer, the downfall, the tragedy, and the culmination of our flaw. Similarly, we can elude the possible outcomes catalyzed by our flaws until, well, we can't.

"Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do." Get these things right, Aquinas believed, and salvation will almost be guaranteed. Getting just one of them wrong however will spell the demise of the individual. Indeed it does seem that Thomas Aquinas's words ring true for Raskolnikov as he searches for his salvation - salvation for his murders, salvation from his isolation, salvation from his mental torment. Whereas, in the beginning he believes he can obtain his salvation by himself, coinciding with his idea of the extraordinary man, Raskolnikov learns through his interactions with family and friends that the path to salvation encompasses others. In this way, *Crime and Punishment* suggests that fulfilling social interactions, especially those with family, are an integral part of obtaining salvation for the mind and the spirit.

"There is no nobility in being superior to your fellow man, true nobility is being superior to your former self." This quote by Ernest Hemingway illustrates a key theme developed throughout *Crime and Punishment* — Raskolnikov's conversion to a conventional, fulfilling system of morality. He transitions from a character obsessed with utilitarianism and embodying the idea of Nietzsche's "superman," to a virtuous protagonist with intact moral convictions, such as sympathy and basic selflessness. This transition proves that by discovering an objectively good moral basis, Raskolnikov becomes a superior version of himself at the end of the book. Through several interactions with people who Raskolnikov hopes to emulate, such as Sonya, he finally is able to accomplish true nobility and finds genuine moral fulfillment, which is rooted in humility and faith.

To the Christians in *The Merchant of Venice* Shylock is ever the Jew—greedy, envious, vile. They see him not for the person he is but as a vicious racist stereotype. For them he is an animal, not a human being and therefore unworthy of even the most basic human kindness and understanding. But their own racism blinds them. Shylock's actions and attitudes are more reactions to his own powerlessness and lack of standing than the immorality and innate evil that "Jewishness" connotes for the Christian characters. Indeed, throughout the play Shylock is a man "more sinned against than sinning," to use a famous phrase from King Lear. He's not evil by nature but, as he says, by teaching. So much so, that once the sins of racism are understood, Shylock's vengeful actions and self-serving attitudes show him to anything but the blood-thirsty, cruel and hostile Jew Christians make him out to be. They show him to be a sympathetic victim whose attempts to maintain his dignity find the only path open to him: the expression of hatred to his oppressors. In this sense, *The Merchant of Venice* is not a play that glorifies the hatred of the other but one that categorically condemns it.

Polonius's seemingly empty advice to his son, Laertes, at the beginning of the play might be less empty than we originally thought. It seems that so many in the court of Elsinore don't adhere to Polonius' advice about being on the outside what you actually are on the inside. Not being as you seem is particularly troubling for Hamlet; even at the outset of the play he calls out his mother and his father-uncle on having real human emotion far beyond what his outward closely shows. Hamlet's use of the metaphor of play-acting allows him not only to catch Claudius in the act but to realize not to trust those around him. In this essay I'd like to show the extent to which Hamlet uses the metaphor of plays as inspiration, to show what he recognizes in others as harmful pretending, and to show his ultimate conclusion that being that which you are not has potentially deadly effects.

One of the great ironies of Shakespeare's Hamlet is that it takes the play within the play, a fiction, to give Hamlet the truth he needs in order to carry out the revenge. This idea of pretending to be something he isn't runs deep in nearly every scene in the play: Hamlet puts on an "antic disposition" and the First Player inspires Hamlet with his emotive portrayal of the death of Priam. Even the ghost appears as a "questionable shape" that Hamlet thinks could "be the devil." This metaphor of performing, of playing a part in life rather than being as you seem, both plagues Hamlet to the point of actual madness and inspires him to fulfill the revenge against his uncle. By the end of the play Hamlet becomes the very thing he hated at the beginning—someone going through life wearing a mask, pretending to be something he's not.

Does Hamlet really not see the irony in his chastisement of Ophelia—"God has given you a face and you make yourself another"—all while he, himself, pretends to be something he is not, while he, himself, finds direction through "indirection"? This is a play, it seems, so devoted to the analogy of playacting that its ultimate conclusion comes as a result of its main character being so false to himself that he even belittles one of the only characters in the play for whom he feels genuine emotion. Shakespeare's Hamlet pits being against seeming in order to show that Polonius' adage that we cannot "be false to any man" does, in fact, hold up in real life. Those who maintain on the outside who they are on the inside are the ones who ultimately survive the harsh, unforgiving court of Elsinore.

Marcellus got it wrong: There's not something rotten in the state of Denmark but beneath it, and it's the rotting flesh of a wrongfully killed king. As Old Hamlet's body decomposes underground, fertilizing the literal weeds, his unsettled spirit continues to plague the poisoned state, where an unlawful king, Claudius, rules the throne. That Hamlet condemns Denmark as an "unweeded garden" where "things rank and gross in nature grow to seed" is oddly prophetic as, at that point, he's unaware of just how badly the seeds of corruption will germinate and spread. Hamlet uses the metaphor of the garden to suggest that reversing the course of corruption requires weeding out the infection until the root cause, the original diseased germ, Claudius, is killed. In this way, Hamlet argues revenge is, indeed, justified.

In *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro, Mr. Stevens finds himself in the same dilemma as Ovid in his own self-imposed exile, having desired love pitted against guarding his dignity. Mr. Stevens is in constant turmoil trying to fight his internal urges and feelings so that he can be the perfect butler in the eyes of his employer, especially his coworkers and other butlers he encounters. Throughout the novel, Mr. Stevens' quest to be the impeccable, dignified, and respected butler leads him to lose sight of what matters most, the love for those around him and the relationships that form with that love. With his past experiences revealed in his thoughts, Mr. Stevens fails to realize that his focus on being the perfect butler leads him to sacrifice both personal relationships and love in his life.

