

Write yourself as the Antihero



What is an Antihero and why do we love them?

The best way to define an Antihero is to define what an anti-hero isn't.

An Antihero is not the traditional hero.

A hero often has no flaws. Yes, Superman has his kryptonite, but if it were not for that, nothing would stop him.

Antiheroes are **more flawed than heroes** simply because they are **malleable** and **human**.

And, typically, their greatest flaw is what makes them relatable to readers and fun to write.



Is an Antihero a Villain?

Often people confuse the Antihero with the villain. Because Antiheroes might lie, cheat, murder, and steal, some say the line between the two and distinction might be subjective. Experts say that the stark difference between the Antihero and the villain is their **end goal**.

Villains often just want to watch the world burn, or they are only out for themselves.

Antiheroes usually have a justification for their choices or a noble objective that the reader can get on board with.

You can make your character (YOU) both likeable and unlikeable by presenting a story that generates empathy and justifies their/your choices.

Examples of Antiheroes

The three types:

Morally Grey



Is Jack Sparrow a protagonist? (Why or why not?)

Choices not favored by reader.
Still likeable in his own right.
Can be humorous if done right.

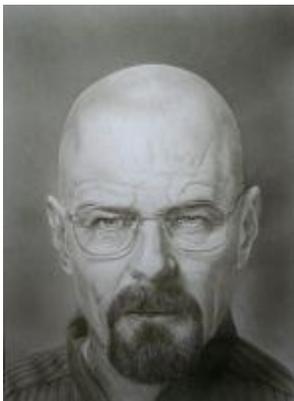
Nonthreatening



Character arc of Tyrian Lannister

Low expectations from other characters.
Little desire to be effectual.
This changes over the course of the story arc.

Villainous



Walter White vs Lisbeth Salander

Someone who does things what we cannot/
would not/might not do.

Someone with just cause or a reason that
justifies villainy.

How would we feel in their circumstances?

And how far would we go to get
revenge/survive?

Possible Antihero tropes and how to use them

try to answer the questions below without judgement:

The Homewrecker (Peggy Olson/Joan Holloway/Severus Snape)

Under what circumstances is “homewrecking” acceptable?

Often an Antihero is put in a position of loving someone who is with someone romantically who is villainous/the villain.

Or they simply have a justification for their feelings.

In either case, in their mind they are neither the hero nor the villain but live in that morally grey middle.

Explore these issues.

Fighting fire with fire (Lisbeth Salander)

When fighting the villain, the antihero is often forced to behave just like the villain, the only way to get revenge.

As a writer can how you justify this idea of fighting fire with fire and making the distinction between the two?

Comic Relief (Jack Sparrow/Tyrian Lannister)

The Antihero can often be a great tool in pointing to how the hero lacks depth.

It is impossible for the hero to be funny because he is too morally pure and sees the world in a black and white way.

Often humor comes from the ability to look at a situation and see it from a different perspective than the hero. Explore this in your writing.

4 journaling exercises to find your Antihero protagonist:

Exercise #1-Exploring the concept of choice:

Think about some of the events in your own life that you wish to write about.

What choices were made?

If you made a poor choice, how did you justify it?

If someone else made a choice that backed you into a corner, how could you justify your response?

How did others in the situation react to you and your choices?

Exercise #2-What kind of anti-hero are you?:

Characterize yourself as an Antihero.

Where on the Antihero spectrum do you land?

If you are a combination, explore that. What makes you distinctive?

Remember the objective is to not explore your potential to be a villain but rather explore your humanness.

What are your deal-breakers, boundaries, things you feel passionately about?

These are the things that usually raise stakes and force you to make choices only you can justify.

Exercise #3-Do things in reverse:

Imagine yourself as a “hero” type. (Remember this is often an unrealistic, all-powerful, larger-than-life type person who also manages to be squeaky clean and morally superior.)

Would you consider yourself a hero?

If not, consider why you fall short of that? (Hint: We all do.)

What are your weaknesses? (It's okay to say cupcakes as a start but try to dig deep.)

How do your weaknesses (flaws) inform the decisions you make?

Exercise #4-Find your Antihero story arc:

One final exercise is to imagine yourself at different stages of your life. This is a good way to understand your own story arc or if you are writing about another person's arc, you can invent your answers.

Describe yourself during childhood, adolescence, young adulthood (looks, personality, interests).

Pick the part of your life when you felt the most emotionally conflicted and explore how you have evolved since. This is the arc of your life story. You may still be very similar to who you were before, so try to home in on the subtle changes and how they occurred. What choices did you make before these changes occurred?

