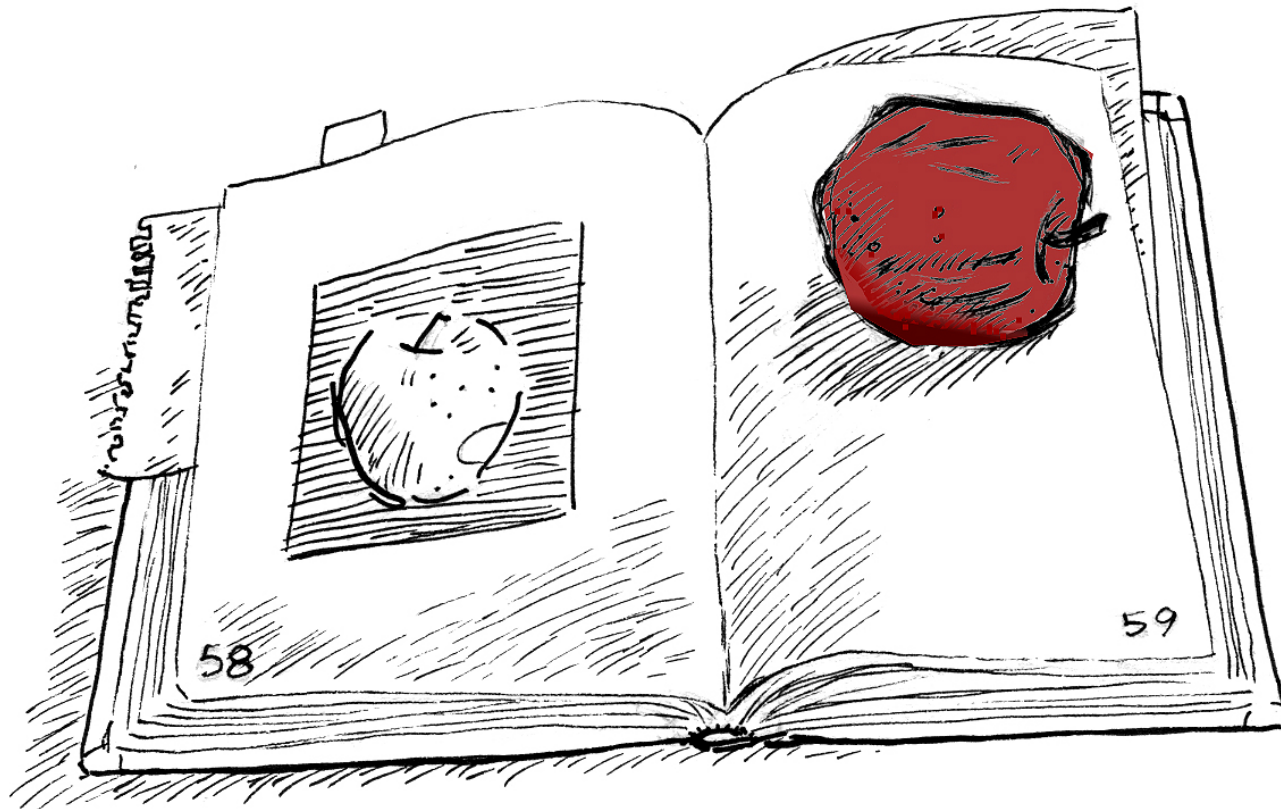


Antihero



Common Traits of Antiheroes:

- are neither 100% good nor 100% evil
- are fated to cause grief to individuals or to the community **or** to self
- are driven and obsessed with past deeds or by fate
-
- do not need to die at close of story; there is uncertain resolution
- can act as a vigilante, even against the self
- act according to their own set of rules, their own values
- *may* have tragedy in their life
- *may* or may not have a tragic flaw
- lack true identity, even to themselves; in some cases they are disillusioned with life, lack strong ideals and goals
- this does *not* define them as a villain
- their actions are merely *reactions* to events
- usually they are not motivated to act *for*, nor act *against* anyone
- they are not fighting fate but present circumstances

Dave in “The Man Who Was Almost A Man”

Do not confuse an anti-hero with a tragic hero.

In Richard Wright’s story “The Man Who Was Almost A Man,” the protagonist *does* endure a dramatic and tragic life, *but* this does not define him as a tragic hero.

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*not malicious, just driven by the need to be a man, no matter the cost,
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hurts his mothers feelings, accidentally kills the mule, runs away

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wants to control his fate and prove himself how to become a man despite the odds of a young African-American with a gun in pre-Civil Rights south surviving with a “happy-ending.”

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8. may or may not have a tragic flaw
naive, lack of self-discipline, proud, emotional

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without strong ideals
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Dave’s actions are merely reactions to events. He is not motivated to act against anyone. He does not have a sense of social interaction skills, only a strong desire. He is not fighting fate but present circumstance as they unfold around him. Even by end of the story, he is identified as a boy; he is shown still seeking to move on and become a man. He wants respect and power, without working for his goal; his definition of what makes a man is based on emotions, not facts.

Discussion Questions

- Can both stories be considered social protests? Why or why not?
- What are common factors between the two anti-heros:
Richard Wright's Dave and James Joyce's unnamed protagonist?
- What drives and obsesses each individual character?

Something to consider: obsession, like addiction, is a human trait which causes the desired object to possess individuals.

- In both stories, what obsession possesses the two boys?
- Who is really in control in their two stories?
- What similar motivations exist between these two boys?
- Why does Joyce allow his protagonist to realize his errors, while Wright leaves Dave blind to his failing?