A View From The Bridge: The Qualities Of A Greek Tragic Hero Represented By The Character Of Eddie Carbone

In Arthur Miller’s tragedy, A View from the Bridge, the protagonist, Eddie Carbone strongly embodies the qualities of a Greek tragic hero. According to the definition proposed by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, tragic heroes typically make serious mistakes and judgements that lead to their downfall. It is crucial that the tragic hero is neutral on a moral scale to appear more relatable to the audience. Tragic heroes must suffer because of their own flaws and actions, which they have no control over.

The play examines the tragic consequences of Eddie Carbone’s inability to understand himself and his actions. This predominantly takes the form of firstly, the over-protective and inappropriate nature of his relationship towards his niece, Catherine, which can be considered his hamartia. Secondly, his excessive pride and stubborn nature, which represents his hubris. Finally, his peripetia/nemesis which is highlighted through the consequences in which he faces due to his downfall.

Love of one kind or another is the main motivator or Miller’s characters in the play. Eddie’s hamartia is revealed through his deep and obsessive love for Catherine. Our first indication of Eddie’s possessive manner occurs when he comments on Catherine’s choice of clothing, this reveals Eddie’s jealousy and conveys his discomfort as Catherine is getting other male attention. “I don’t like the looks they’re giving you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk – clack, clack, clack. The heads are turning like windmills.”

Miller's use of the similie “heads turning like windmills” creates the comparison of the movement of the heads to the flow of windmills. Not only does this quote highlight Eddie’s possessiveness but the juxtapositioning of the candy store and high heels illustrates how Catherine is caught between adulthood and childhood in Eddie’s eyes. The effect of juxtaposition in this text creates contrasting emotions between the themes of adulthood and childhood, it makes the reader think deeper and therefore creating a more dramatic impact. Eddie’s inappropriate relationship with Catherine is recognised when Alfieri addresses that perhaps there's too much love. “There’s too much [love] … and it goes where it mustn’t. There’s too much love for the daughter, there’s too much love for the niece.” Alfieri is suggesting that Eddie’s inappropriate obsession with Catherine is unhealthy and unnatural. This quote foreshadows the theme of ‘too much love’ as that is the central cause of Eddie’s downfall.

Foreshadowing is used to direct the reader’s attention and create suspense. The technique lets the audience understand that the topic/s discussed is relevant and important to the storyline. Therefore, Eddie clearly embodies the qualities of a Greek Tragic hero through his possessive and inappropriate love for Catherine. One of Eddie’s main concerns in the play is his honour and lack of respect. Eddie’s concept of honour and respect is linked to his reputation, therefore he is deeply affected by the way in which the neighbourhood and community view him. Eddie’s enraged when Marco spits on him and accuses him of turning him into the Immigration Bureau. “That one! I accuse that one...That one! He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children!”

Miller uses repetition with the quote ‘that one’ to reinforce the message that Eddie is to blame and it is solely his responsibility. The action of Marco spitting into Eddie’s face is insulting and highly humiliating as it is a sign of contempt, it takes Eddie’s respect from him. Due to this, Eddie decides that if Marco does not apologise and give his name back he will not attend Catherine and Rodolpho’s wedding and won’t allow Beatrice to attend either. “You walk out that door to that wedding you ain’t comin’ back here, Beatrice...I want my respect. Didn’t you ever hear of that? From my wife?” Miller’s use of rhetorical questions forces the reader to engage, consider and make theories about what they have read. In return, this creates a dramatic effect, making the writing appeal more interesting to the reader. Eddie’s hubris is displayed when he is noticed making a desperate attempt to try and gain back his lost respect.

Eddie believes he has the justification of tearing his family apart, with the line “Didn’t you ever hear of that?” reveals how he believes that Beatrice is in the wrong for wanting to attend her niece’s wedding. Despite his abnormal love for Catherine, he still expects Beatrice to be the perfect wife to him considering the fact that he has been disloyal and unreasonable. Overall, Eddie’s hubris is unveiled when he loses the respect of his community and family because he is so overly defensive and concerned about his own honour. He interferes all situations and argues against those who he believes are disrespecting him. Finally, Eddie’s peripetia is revealed where there is a sudden reversal in his status, from high to low. When the audience is first introduced to Eddie Carbone, he is a charismatic and caring male figure that takes immeasurable care of his family, he is respected by his community and is an honourable man. Beatrice especially has much love and respect for Eddie as he has agreed to host Beatrice’s cousins. “You’re an angel! God’ll bless you.” This suggests that Eddie is a strong figure in the household, it also reveals how grateful Beatrice is for what Eddie has done for the cousins. The term “angel” reflects being kind-hearted and considerable however, this contrasts with Eddie’s true personality as he does not demonstrate the qualities of being an angel further down the track.

The reversal of his status occurs when Marco spits on Eddie’s face and accuses him of turning them in. “Beatrice and first officer rush in as Marco spits into Eddie's face” The effect of stage directions guides the audience in understanding Marco’s actions and intentions. Therefore, Eddie’s status is reversed because the community do not respect him and his honour is taken away from him. In conclusion, throughout the play A View from the Bridge, we see Eddie Carbone deteriorate as a husband, an uncle and a human being. We finally see the type of person his character is when he finds out Catherine is in love with another man instead of him. Eddie’s hamartia, hubris and peripetia outline his gradual loss of control over his emotions, actions and thoughts. Therefore, Eddie Carbone clearly embodies the qualities of a tragic hero.