

The Rise of the Anti-Hero



A lot of TV is dark these days. Some of television's most celebrated shows over the past 10 years have taken us deep into the shadiest, seediest—and sometimes scariest—areas of our world, fantasies, and the human psyche. And you know what? Apparently, we love it.

We are hooked on shows like *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Wire*, *Dexter*, *Game of Thrones*, *Weeds*, *American Horror Story*, *The Sopranos*, *True Blood* and *House of Cards*, just to name a few.

[...]What draws us to these stories? And what keeps us coming back? Is it that we have a sick fascination with watching the underbelly of society live out our own secret desires?

Or is it that we waiting for redemptive resolution that affirms our understanding of right and wrong? To answer that question, we must first consider the anti-hero.

The “anti-hero” (also known as the flawed hero) is a common character archetype for the antagonist that has been around since the comedies and tragedies of Greek theater. Unlike the traditional hero who is morally upright and steadfast, the anti-hero usually has a flawed moral character. The moral compromises he or she makes can often be seen as the unpleasant means to an appropriately desired end—such as breaking a finger to get answers—whatever it takes for the protagonist to come to justice. Other times, however, the moral flaws are simply moral flaws, like alcoholism, infidelity, or an uncontrollable and violent temper.

At different points in history, the culture-at-large has preferred stories featuring anti-heroes over those with traditional heroes, and vice versa.

Characters who shine as morally pure and upright don't ring true to us anymore, because it's not who we see around us in the world. Neither is it what we see when we look in the mirror. Brokenness is a part of humanity, and we can more easily relate to the choices that a character makes on a TV show if they are broken too. After all, a believable and relatable character is one of the single-most important elements of an enjoyable story.

(Source : <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/tv/rise-anti-hero>)