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# The rise of the anti-hero

READING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_1063R\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English

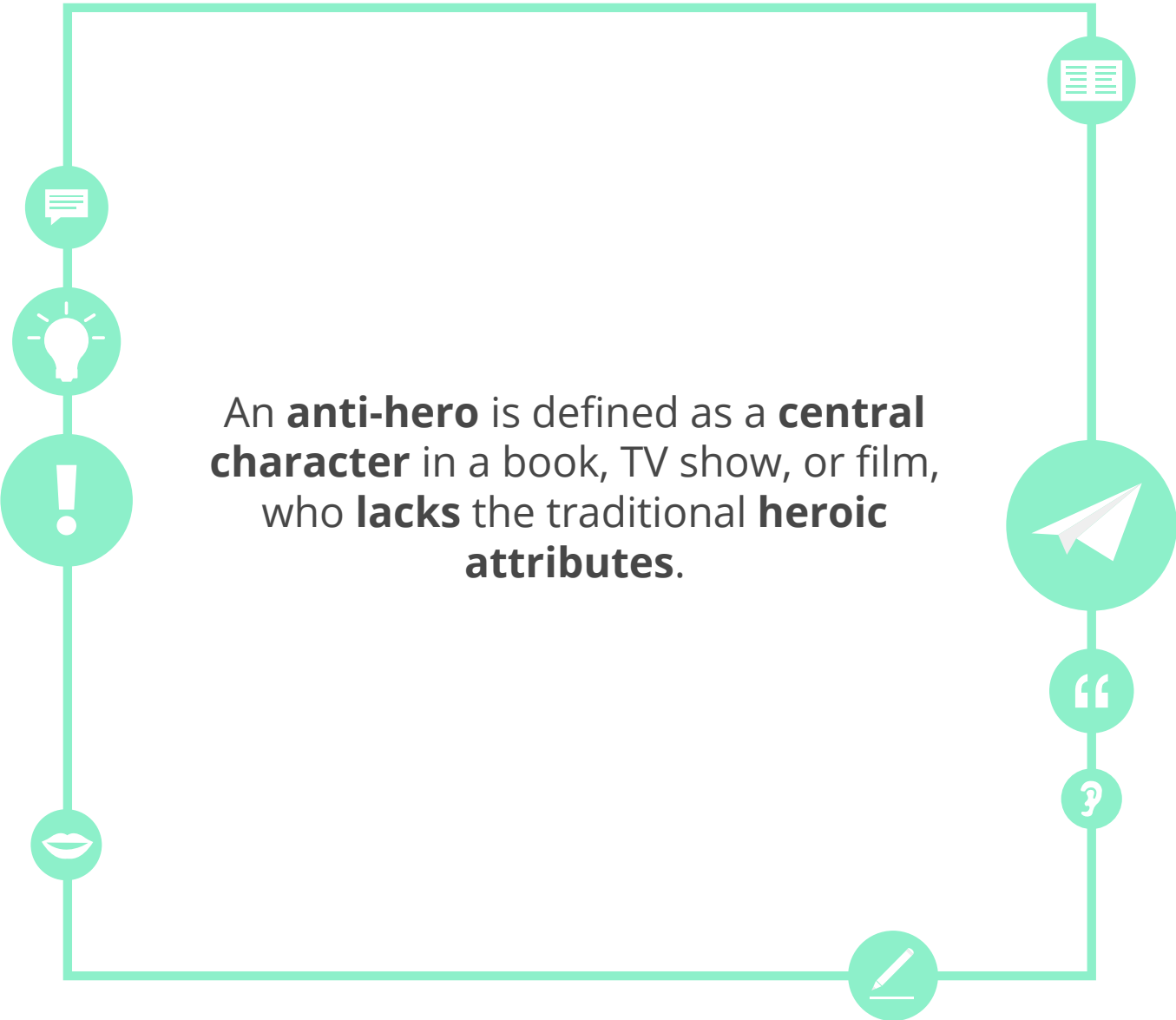




## Goals

- Can read and understand a complex text about the rise of the anti-hero.
- Can compare the anti-hero to conventional heroes and villains in depth and successfully present my own view on the topic.





An **anti-hero** is defined as a **central character** in a book, TV show, or film, who **lacks** the traditional **heroic attributes**.



## Heroic acts



What kind of acts do you consider heroic? Do you think you've ever done anything heroic?



## Famous heroes

**Do you know any famous heroes from literature or film? Why are they heroic?**





## Vocabulary



The **protagonist** is the central character in literature or film.

The **antagonist** is the enemy of the central character in literature or film.



A person who commits a serious crime may be **plagued by** guilt.

Our **traits** are our personal characteristics.





## Vocabulary



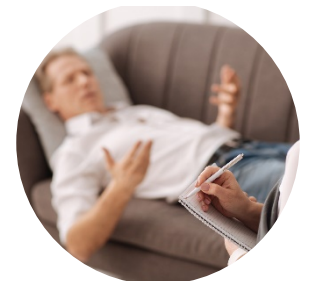
A person who is **cowardly** is not brave.

Are you aware of the **nuances** of local English dialects?



Someone who is **bewildered** is confused and indecisive.

A person who is **amoral** lacks a moral conscience.





## The rise of the anti-hero

Most films, TV shows, and books nowadays don't tend to have a strict line of **demarcation** between hero and villain. In the past, the hero was a character without **flaws**, acting from a position of moral superiority, while the villain was pure evil. A more **nuanced** drawing of character in recent times has created the anti-hero: a complex, darker hero.

But what is an anti-hero, and how can we separate him from the villain? It may be easier to call characters **protagonists** and **antagonists**, so as to avoid the **emotionally charged** language of hero and villain. But this does not solve the problem of identifying when a character crosses a line. In the historical, literary sense, an anti-hero was a character who did not possess the **traits** of a hero. Such characters were ugly, **cowardly** and **plagued by** self-doubt while the hero was brave, handsome, and radiated confidence. This type of anti-hero has appeared in literature since Ancient Greece, one of the most famous examples from literature being Don Quixote.





## The rise of the anti-hero

These historical anti-heroes lacked the sympathetic traits that we associate with modern ones, and they also lack the cool factor that often comes with contemporary anti-heroes.

So, what are the traits we look for in an anti-hero? Usually they are morally complex, and the motives for their actions may be determined by something less than moral, such as **vengeance**. They may be **loners** and have a dark history. Sometimes they are **bewildered** by society, and sometimes they are **amoral** and **apathetic**. There is often no prospect of converting an anti-hero into the traditional definition of a hero, and no chance of reforming his moral character. This definition however looks dangerously close to that of a villain (this moral ambiguity that anti-heroes carry, however, is usually a big part of their draw for an audience).



## True or false?

	TRUE	FALSE
1. The line between hero and villain is becoming blurred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Traditional anti-heroes possessed many of the same traits as heroes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Modern anti-heroes are often cool.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Anti-heroes' motives are usually moral.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Anti-heroes are often apathetic towards society.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. There is always a chance of reforming the anti-hero's character.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## New vocabulary: discuss

The text mentions **emotionally charged** language.  
What do you think this means?





## New vocabulary: fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with the words from the text.

flaws

demarcation

vengeance

loners

cowardly

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a poor motive for someone's actions.
2. Characters who are \_\_\_\_\_ can never become heroic.
3. There is usually a strict \_\_\_\_\_ between hero and villain in fairy tales.
4. Our \_\_\_\_\_ and weaknesses are what make us human.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, people who are often alone, are always apathetic towards society.





## Agree or disagree?

Now, tell your teacher whether you agree or disagree with the statements on the previous page. Use some of the phrases below to help you.



I think that's partially true...

I can't see that at all.

There's definitely some truth to that.

That statement is spot on.



## Defining an anti-hero

**This is the definition of an anti-hero which you saw on the first page. Can you add something to or change the definition now that you have read the first part of the text?**

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A central character who lacks the traditional heroic attributes.

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## The rise of the anti-hero

A villain in modern writing is often someone we love to hate. They may be the best characters in a book or a film, with a dark history like the anti-hero. They are often very funny with some of the best lines in a film, and they are always memorable. The audience often holds a **grudging** respect for a villain, perhaps because of their **cunning** or their shameless pursuit of evil. We often have mixed feelings towards villains, just as we do towards anti-heroes.





## The rise of the anti-hero

The difference between an anti-hero and a villain lies in their goals. For an anti-hero, their goals are good, though their **means** of reaching those goals may be evil. The anti-hero does heroic deeds, and has a moral code, though that code may be different from the traditional one held by you or I. The audience **roots for** an anti-hero, hoping he will achieve his aim. On the other hand, a villain's goals are bad, and we want them to get their **comeuppance**. The villain is the **antagonistic** force in a movie personified.

To look at an example of an anti-hero we go to Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The novel centres around Raskolnikov's decision to kill an immoral **pawnbroker**, and then his unplanned killing of her sister. Raskolnikov is portrayed as an outsider at the beginning of the novel, and as someone who feels himself superior to those around him. While initially not a hugely sympathetic character, the audience ends up rooting for him as he works through his guilt and eventually finds his love.





## The rise of the anti-hero

The anti-hero has risen in popularity in recent years, and it is almost impossible to think of a TV show or film without one. In contrast to the **remote**, unattainable, impossibly moral hero, anti-heroes are more **relatable**. No human being is wholly good or wholly evil, and this is reflected in the imperfect protagonist. As he struggles with his own **demons**, the audience sympathises with him, and respects him as he carries out the aforementioned heroic acts. As we go deeper into the anti-hero's character, we discover their humanity. Anti-heroes are a product of more realistic characterisation, and their increased inclusion in books, TV and film has always been well-received.



## Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with the words from the text.

1. Foxes are often described as \_\_\_\_\_ animals.
2. We describe far away places – and sometimes characters with whom it is difficult to connect as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. We may earn a \_\_\_\_\_ respect from people who are unwilling to give it.
4. I always \_\_\_\_\_ the underdog in sporting events.
5. The bad guys always get their \_\_\_\_\_ in fairy tales.
6. She was fighting her \_\_\_\_\_ all her life, but eventually they got the better of her.

remote

root for

cunning

demons

grudging

comeuppance



## Memorable villains

**Can you think of any memorable villains from literature, TV or film? What made them memorable for you?**





## Anti-heroes

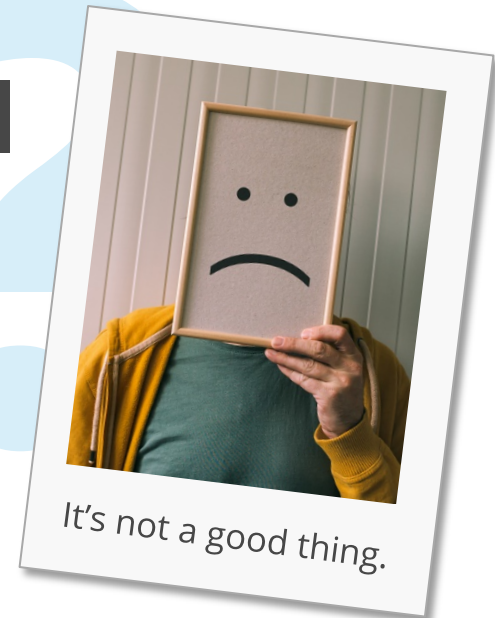
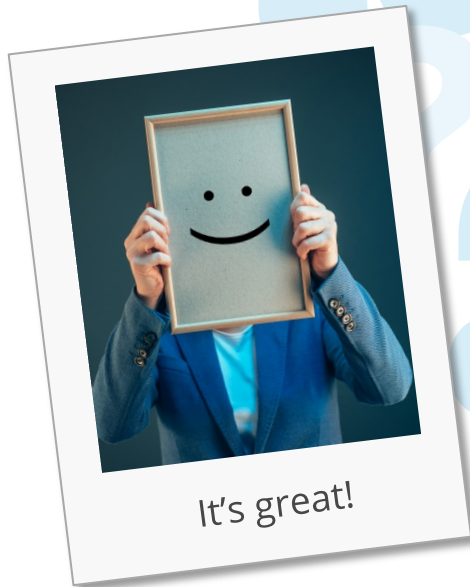
The text mentions Don Quixote and Raskolnikov as famous anti-heroes. Can you think of some other examples from TV and film?





Tell your teacher

Do you agree  
that anti-  
heroes are  
more relatable  
than traditional  
heroes? Is it a  
good thing?







## Build your own anti-hero

Answer the questions in the steps below to invent your own anti-hero. Maybe some day you can include this character in stories of your own!

Male or female?  
Fully human?  
Who are the  
people closest to  
them?



What are their  
most significant  
traits?



What do they do  
with their day?  
What kind of  
goals do they  
have?

Think of 3 different  
situations and  
explain how your  
character would  
react in each one.



Name some  
unusual quirks or  
habits they might  
have.





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







## Answer key

### Exercise p. 10

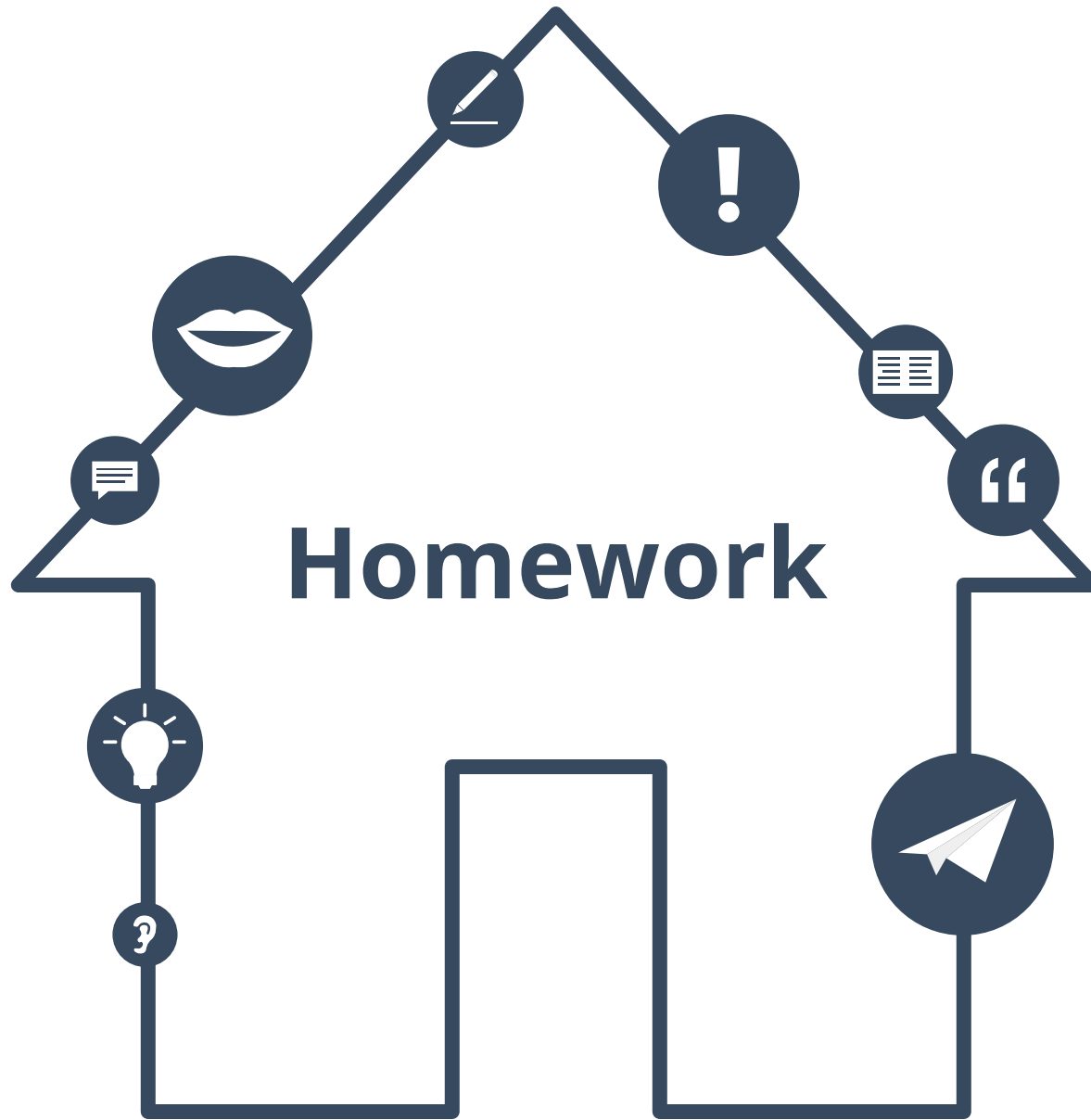
1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. F, 5. T, 6. F

### Exercise p. 12

1. vengeance, 2. cowardly, 3. demarcation, 4. flaws, 5. loners

### Exercise p. 18

1. cunning, 2. remote, 3. grudging, 4. root for, 5. compeupance, 6. demons





## Anti-heroes

**Think of another anti-hero (or use the one you invented yourself) and make two lists of his or her positive and negative traits.**

Positive

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Negative

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