

The Unknown Hero

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The hero of my life is one whose true beauty lies on the inside; a hero whom has given new meaning to inner beauty. He led a tragic life, a life of pain and abandonment. Like so many heroes who would follow his death, he made due with the cards he had been dealt, but unlike other heroes he was never recognized for his passion, nor any aspect of his life. Vindicated long after his death, he died alone with heartbreak in the streets of Paris, France.

He was the Hunchback of Notre Dame, Quasimodo. Though he never walked this earth, though he is fictional, his story has, as is often with fictional characters, had a profound impact on my life the likes of which no real person can match. Quasimodo was first given life in the pages of Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. His epic story of love, heartbreak, tragedy, and loss has been retold countless times around the world. He was the bell ringer in the Notre Dame cathedral, society's outcast because he was deformed and hunchbacked. Considered a monster, he led a solitary life; all contact with society came in the form of laughter, ridicule, and painful humiliation. Yet beneath his misshapen body was a heart whose love was matched by no other. Quasimodo fell in love with a woman named Esmeralda, a beautiful gypsy. But a deranged priest called Frollo was bent on executing the poor girl. Quasimodo goes to great lengths to attempt to save Esmeralda, but in the end she meets her end at the gallows.

Quasimodo is my hero because he is the embodiment of a kind soul. He was born into poverty and despair, but let none of that effect him. Quasimodo shows that it is not the circumstances in which we live that determine who we are, and that a person's true nature is on the inside. The tragedy of Quasimodo is a tale that has been told in many different forms, each time melting the hearts of the readers or audience. Quasimodo has taught me not to judge others by their appearance, and that one can accomplish anything regardless of their social stature. I look up to Quasimodo because he shows that happiness is a choice, and I try to live my life by that philosophy. Trying to live everyday day without judgment, only with love for life, and to see happiness in all situations. Quasimodo has set an example for me to follow, and I try to pass that example down to the younger kids I work with and tutor. The only negative aspect of his story is that today few youths know it well enough to receive its astounding message. With this essay I hope to bring the qualities of Quasimodo back into the light, so that we may better ourselves and society.