Characteristics of Epic Heroes

Most epic heroes possess most or all of 7 general characteristics you can use to help you determine if a character is, indeed, an epic hero or heroine.

**Trait 1: A Noble birth**

* Most epic heroes will have an above average station in life.
* They will be kings, princes, or nobles of some sort.
* Commoners usually do not become epic heroes.

**Trait 2: Capable of deeds of great strength & courage**

* Basically, this means the hero has the potential for great deeds.
* The magnitude of these actions are well above and beyond what the commoner does.
* While most epic heroes are good, not all are.

**Trait 3: Great warrior**

* Before the hero of an epic does his business in the epic, he has usually established himself in combat during a war.
* Sometimes, as in *The Iliad*, we see the hero at war.
* In most, like *Beowulf* or *The Odyssey*, the hero has spent much time in battle.

**Trait 4: Travels over a vast setting**

* Simply put, you cannot be an epic hero if you stay in your village your whole life.
* The more countries or areas traveled to, the better. The farther away from your own country, the better.
* Distance makes the hero’s actions greater because they aren’t selfish; they are for another country or people.

**Trait 5: National heroism**

* Before a hero can be celebrated by countries the world over, he must first be recognized in his home country as a great and heroic person.

**Trait 6: Humility**

* Even as the rest of the world recognizes the great deeds of the hero, he is never a braggart or even willing to take applause.
* He commits his deeds because he knows they need doing, and the fame and rewards that he receives are only a matter of course, not the reason for completing his quests.

**Trait 7: Faces supernatural foes and/or receives supernatural help**

* Most epic heroes either receive aid from a god or goddess or battle some superhuman enemy.
* This is what makes a hero’ action epic: they fight something mere mortals cannot battle. Beowulf has his Grendel; Odysseus his Cyclops.
* For each hero, the enemy is unique. You won’t see two heroes battling the same foe.

Characteristics of Epic Heroes- NOTES

Most epic heroes possess most or all of 7 general characteristics you can use to help you determine if a character is, indeed, an epic hero or heroine.

|  |
| --- |
| **Trait 1: A Noble birth** |
|  |
| **Trait 2: Capable of deeds of great strength & courage** |
|  |
| **Trait 3: Great warrior** |
|  |
| **Trait 4: Travels over a vast setting** |
|  |
| **Trait 5: National heroism** |
|  |
| **Trait 6: Humility** |
|  |
| **Trait 7: Faces supernatural foes and/or receives supernatural help** |
|  |