

NOTEWORTHY FEMALE ANTAGONISTS

MASHIYAT IQBAL



A morally twisted or grey female antagonist, when done right, can make for an interesting read; adding complexity to the story, and usually bringing a fresher take on a profoundly evil motive. Here are some of the well-written, quality female anti-heroes that not only won over the audience but also left an impact.

Miranda Priestly, *The Devil Wears Prada*

Miranda Priestly, Editor in Chief of *Runway* fashion magazine, comes on to the screen with a flaring intensity that draws in attention from the very first minute. We see her as a dictatorial boss ruling with an iron fist, we see her as a doting mother willing to hand her children the world, and we see her standing rock steady against all odds that come up in her personal life. She resonates power, walking past her employees who quake in her presence with a weird combination of fear and respect. A character mostly shrouded in mystery, she's shown to be ruthless and indifferent, not hesitating to make decisions that may prove to be detrimental for her own people. But in the rare moments that there are transitory glimpses of her softer and more humane side, it's a pleasant surprise and a treat to the viewers.

Morgana Pendragon, *Merlin*

Morgana's story, perhaps, echoes one of the most tragic character evolutions in this list. Introduced as the beautiful, poised and cheeky ward of King Uther, Morgana not only locks horns with the prince whenever he acts up, but also challenges Uther head on when she thinks he's siding with injustice. Morgana is intricate, headstrong, and likable in the beginning. But as the story progresses, we see her gradual downfall. She's robbed of her faith, her perception of justice, her confidence, her sense of security, and her trust in her friends. We see a vivacious, righteous girl transform into an isolated, forlorn, and vengeful witch who craves nothing but destruction to fill her grief. In the midst of a violent war, she's cunning and manipulative and terrifying, as she meticulously calculates every step that would win her the crown of Camelot.

Azula, *Avatar - The Last Airbender*

Azula, the daughter of the Fire Lord, is portrayed to be somewhat of a psychopath with a nearly absent EQ. She's a ruthless commanding leader, powerful fighter and a strategic political leader. But in her mission to capture the Avatar, we're shown shards of her weaknesses that cut through her image of perfectionism. She's

driven by her own paranoia throughout her journey. She's unable to relate to other people, feels insecure about her significance in her parents' affections with her brother there to overrule her, and constantly tries to trample people's happiness for her own satisfac-

tion. Her mental afflictions are portrayed in bits and pieces, and they finally cumulate at her coronation, causing her to break down completely at the face of unexpected and brutal betrayal.

Annie Leonhardt, *Attack on Titan*

One of the most enigmatic anti-hero of the anime world would be Annie Leonhardt, a graduate of the 104th Training Corps of the military force. She's a silent brooder, who's shown to be lazy, blasé, and insensible. But she's also direct, tactical, and clever in her approach to surviving in the fight against the titans. Annie is showcased as a distant friend and an excellent observer, often stepping up to help her friends overcome their weaknesses. It's these small acts of kindness that deceive the viewers. Her story stems from a dark past, filled with haunting memories of a father who was obsessed with training her to survive in their world. She's inexplicable – jumping from trying to help her friends in the middle of an intense fight to quietly assassinating them to keep her secrets. From an objective point of view, it would seem she feels a lack of emotion for anything outside of the concept of survival, willing to unwaveringly face her friends in the battlefield without a hint of remorse or reluctance.



Dolores Umbridge, *Harry Potter*

This list would not be complete without the inclusion of one of the most universally renowned characters for outright evilness, Dolores Umbridge. Author Stephen King described her as "the greatest make-believe villain to come along since Hannibal Lecter". From an outsider's viewpoint, she'd seem like the perfect lady, ever smiling, put together, and dynamic in her work. In reality, she possesses a twisted personality that intends to cause harm in the guise of doing good. Her demons are hidden behind sugarcoated smiles, and her indifference to morals have her taking actions that merely help to add to her overall unpleasantness. She's irredeemable, intolerable, and frustrating as a character. And that is what makes her such a captivating read – the ease with which she can evoke emotions of the readers.

Mashiyat Iqbal is a procrastinator, a coffee-addict and an insomniac whose friends say she is hopelessly optimistic but she begs to differ. Send her some much needed luck at tenfinance10@gmail.com