

I Can Fix Them: 8 Most Misunderstood Villains in Film and TV

By Rebecca Carlyle | Last modified: January 12, 2024



Severus Snape (Alan Rickman) protecting Hermione (Emma Watson), Ron (Rupert Grint), and Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban." (Image: Warner Bros.)

When I think of villains, I picture a superhero's archnemesis, but they come in all shapes and sizes. Every story has an antagonist, otherwise, it would be too boring. Each villain's backstory is riddled with injustices and traumas, which result in their corruption.

For instance, Severus Snape (Alan Rickman) in the [Harry Potter franchise](#) grew up in an unstable home and was bullied at school, eventually siding with Lord Voldemort. Of course, he realizes his misdeeds and spends the rest of his life trying to make up for them. Not every villain is this self-aware, though. Below are misunderstood antagonists who deserve a second chance.

Need the short version? Watch our YouTube Short:



Harley Quinn — 'Suicide Squad' (2016)



Harley (Margot Robbie) passing the time in prison. (Image: DC Entertainment)

The name Harley Quinn is familiar to those who grew up with Batman cartoons on Nickelodeon or the DC comics. Some of us — the casual fans — didn't know her back story, just that she was the Joker's sidekick. In "Suicide Squad," Harley (Margot Robbie) kicks off the shackles and becomes the protagonist in her own story. We learn that she grew up in a volatile environment that gave her "daddy issues." Add on top of this the manipulation she received at the hands of the Joker. Harley just wants to be in control of her own life and have her voice heard.

"Suicide Squad" is [streaming on Max](#). While the movie does miss the mark, Robbie's performance as Harley is worth the watch.

Kylo Ren — 'Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens' (2015)

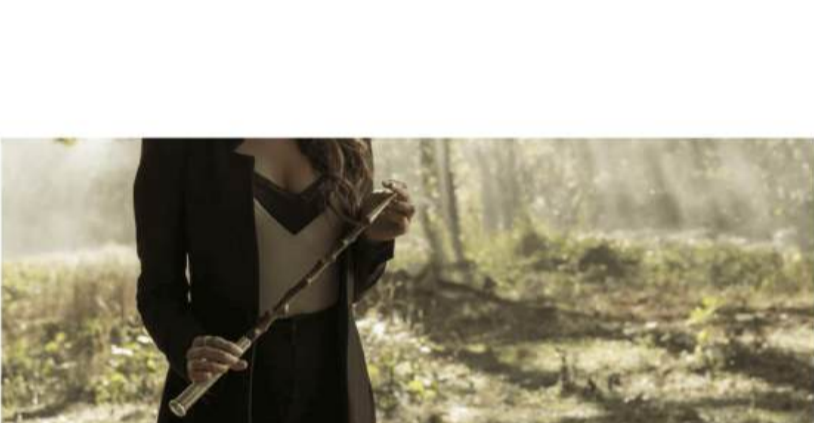


Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) with his lightsaber during a battle. (Image: Lucasfilm)

Not everyone loved the new trilogy of the [Star Wars franchise](#), but we all agree on one thing: Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) was pushed to the Dark Side. Born from Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford), Kylo was raised with high expectations. With all this pressure on his shoulders, Kylo was sent to Jedi training with Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill). Things got worse when Luke sensed darkness in Kylo and tried to kill him during training. Sure, Kylo went overboard with the revenge part, but his teacher tried to kill him!

"Star Wars: Episode VII: The Force Awakens" and the rest of the trilogy are [available on Disney Plus](#).

Julia — 'The Magicians' (2015 to 2020)



Julia (Stella Maeve) stands in a forest with a wand. (Image: McHamara Moving Company)

[Syfy channel audiences](#) know exactly what I mean when I say Julia (Stella Maeve) is an antagonist. At the beginning of the series, we're led to believe she's a protagonist with her sweet and innocent demeanor. However, she lets herself get swept up in anger and angst when she doesn't get into Brakebills University with Quentin (Jason Ralph). She gives into her greedy, power-hungry side and learns her magic elsewhere. While she's an unlikeable character, we must remember that she was left out even though she's a talented magician.

All five seasons of "The Magicians" are on Netflix.

Amy Dunne — 'Gone Girl' (2014)



Amy (Rosamund Pike) reflects what people want to see. (Image: Regency Enterprises/TSG Entertainment)

This [book-to-film adaptation](#) truly held up, giving audiences something to ponder. Is Amy Dunne (Rosamund Pike) a victim or not? Did Nick Dunne (Ben Affleck) deserve what Amy did to him? Framing your husband for your murder is a bit extreme, but it could be argued that she had a mental breakdown. She grew up with the "Amazing Amy" books supposedly based on her, although they made her sound more well-behaved than she actually was. What happens if you can't live up to the life you imagined for yourself? Plus, Nick wasn't that good of a husband.

"Gone Girl" is [available on Hulu Premium](#).

Thanos — 'The Avengers' (2012)

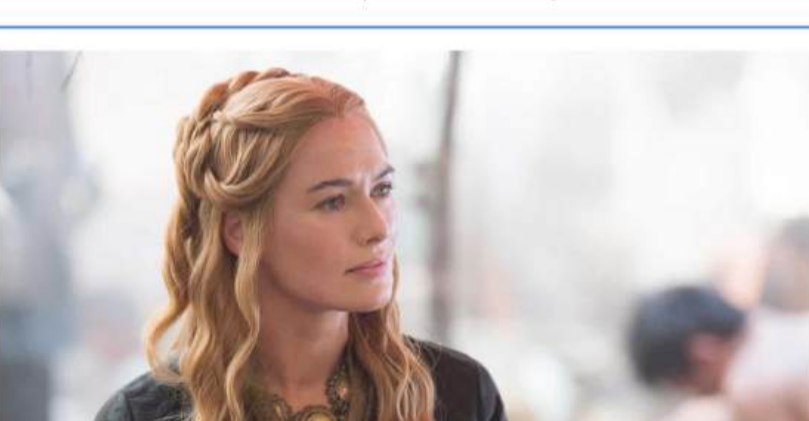


Thanos (Josh Brolin) wearing the gauntlet. (Image: Marvel Studios)

I know, Thanos (Josh Brolin) was committing mass genocide, but hear me out. He lived through the devastation of his planet due to overpopulation. Traumatized from losing his family, friends, and planet, he sets his sights on saving humanity from itself. Yes, he went about it the wrong way, but his heart was in the right place.

All of "The Avengers" movies are on Disney Plus.

Cersei Lannister — 'Game of Thrones' (2011 to 2019)



Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey) is known for her beauty. (Image: HBO)

The Lannisters are an easy family to dislike. They're greedy, cruel, and willing to backstab anyone at any moment — plus have some psychopathic tendencies. However, we should cut Cersei (Lena Headey) some slack. She was born to a father who only wanted male heirs during a time when women didn't have much power over their own lives. She fought hard to get to the top as Robert Baratheon's wife and fought to remain on the Iron Throne once he died. She was ruthless and scheming but wanted what was best for her and her children.

"Game of Thrones" and "House of the Dragon" are [available on Max](#).

Yzma — 'The Emperor's New Groove' (2000)



Yzma (Eartha Kitt) always has a scheme up her sleeves. (Image: Walt Disney Animation Studios)

We all remember Yzma (Eartha Kitt) as a ridiculous, overly dramatic character in "The Emperor's New Groove," and she was. She was fun to watch and laugh at, but if we thought about why she went down such a path of treachery, it was because she was tired for not being young or pretty enough. Honestly, I'd be rather pissed off too.

Don't miss Kronk's (Patrick Warburton) mishaps in "The Emperor's New Groove" on Disney Plus.

Frankenstein's Monster — 'Frankenstein' (1931)



Frankenstein's Monster (Boris Karloff) is chained to a chair. (Image: Universal Pictures)

Some of us have read Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein," but for those who haven't, it's crucial to highlight that Frankenstein's Monster (Boris Karloff) was gentle-souled and didn't want to hurt anyone. His scary-looking demeanor was just too much for the townspeople to overlook. How would you feel if you were pieced together, brought back to life, and chased around by townsfolk with pitchforks?

"Frankenstein" is available to rent on [Amazon Prime Video](#).

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