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## **Looking Closely at the Vampire Diaries and the Originals - Are the Villains Really Villains?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The conventional definition of a villain is the “bad guy” in the story, often employed for morally wrong purposes to destroy a heroic protagonist. Often, things cannot be seen as completely black or white; there seem to exist some grey areas too. On the same lines, characters of stories cannot be fixed completely into the box of being a hero or a villain.

The famous character of Damon Salvatore of the show – “The Vampire Diaries”, is a redeemed antagonist and the deuteragonist. He is one of the characters who can completely change one's views on villains being the bad guy of the story. Niklaus Mikaelson, frequently called as Klaus Mikaelson may have begun as a villain in the franchise but during the course of the show - “The Vampire Diaries” and “The Originals”, the 1000-year-old werewolf- Vampire hybrid evolved in so many different ways. Both of these characters can teach a lot of life lessons and values if seen closely.

This research paper throws light on the said characters of “The Vampire Diaries”, who seem to be the villains of the stories, but if examined closely turn out to be characters who can teach a lot of life lessons and values.

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**Keywords: villains, life lessons, values, vampires, werewolves, character.**

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### **Introduction**

The Popular American supernatural teen drama television series - 'The Vampire Diaries' was developed by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec, based on the book series of the same name written by L. J. Smith. The series premiered on the television network - The CW on September 10, 2009, and came to an end on March 10, 2017, having successfully aired 171 episodes over the course of eight seasons. The story of the series is built around the life of Elena Gilbert, a teenage girl who has just lost both her parents in a car crash, as she falls in love with a 162-year-old vampire named Stefan Salvatore, who she thinks is just a normal human. The story proceeds with the entry of Damon Salvatore, Stefan's elder brother. Both the brothers are vampires. Stefan is the selfless and brave brother while Damon is the gorgeous, selfish and dangerous one.

Dawn Shroff - the antecedent president of entertainment at CW, introduced a spin-off idea in 2010 that she said could happen in a few years. Due to Kevin Williamson's commitment to some other supernatural drama called-' The Secret Circle', the development of the spin-off for the 2011 fall-line-up was put on hold indefinitely. On January 11, 2013, it was announced that a back-door pilot focused on The Originals, with Klaus Mikaelson-The original hybrid as the main protagonist of the show titled 'The Originals' would air on April 25 for a potential series pick-up for the 2013–2014 season of 'The Vampire Diaries'. Julie Place carried out this second spin-off attempt by herself without any involvement of Kevin Williamson.

Damon Salvatore was a ruthless, dangerous, unkind and cold hearted 176-year-old Vampire. He was turned into a vampire in the year 1864 by Katherine Pierce.

Niklaus Mikaelson was a 1000-year old wicked, selfish and power-hungry original vampire. He was one of the five original vampires who were responsible for the creation of the whole Vampire race

Even though Damon and Niklaus both started off as the evil personalities, both achieved their redemption at the end.

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### **Literature Review**

Generally, there are always two main characters driving a story - A protagonist or a hero working for the greater good and the antagonist or the villain working for the greater evil.

A villain is usually the most hated and loathed character of a story because of his evil and diabolical intentions of destroying the heroic protagonist and working against him. A villain is the reason behind a hero being a hero. More a villain tries to create obstacles in the path of the hero, more the hero tries to fight it and win thus portraying more of his heroic personality. A villain is the reason because of which the audience loves the hero more.

Chris Colfer rightly said - "A villain is just a victim whose story hasn't been told." There are very rare instances of a story being told from the perspective of the villain. Moreover, according to George R.R. Martin - "Nobody is a villain in their own story. We're all heroes of our own story." This quote suggests that if the story is told from the perspective of a villain, he would be the hero there and all his actions would be justified. The character development of Damon Salvatore and Niklaus Mikaelson from the television show series - The Vampire Diaries and The Originals ensures the same line of thoughts. According to one of the web pages from the website of IMDb about the show "The Vampire Diaries" specifically talks about the character of Damon Salvatore saying - "He was clearly the villain at the start of the series, and then he seemed to transition into an antihero figure, and by the end, he was almost heroic. Damon was a master of either trying to do the best thing or worst thing in any situation." There are a lot of life lessons which can be learnt from the character of Damon Salvatore. One of the articles published on the website - "EATMYNEWS" elaborates seven such life lessons which can be learnt through Damon Salvatore along with some of his life mistakes.

The character development of Niklaus Mikaelson and the transition of him from a cruel best to a loving and caring father was depicted perfectly. According to an article published on the website - "The nerdy bookarazzi" -

"It is always good to see a bad character transform into something good, which we would never have anticipated in a million years. He is someone very strong, powerful, narcissistic, manipulative and heartlessly bad but at the same time he is compassionate, sensitive, lovable and extremely emotional. With the commencement of each episode, he turned from an antagonist to a lifesaving hero of the series. If the lead characters are in problem, Klaus will come to their rescue, that's how his character got developed. I would say Niklaus Mikaelson's character is one character which has good character development and appropriate backstory."

Both these great and famous antagonistic characters can completely change one's views on the villains being the bad guys of the story. These characters are of immense character and personality full of life lessons to learn from if seen closely.

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### **Damon Salvatore: The Big Bad Vampire**

Damon Salvatore was a selfish, unkind and dangerous 176-year-old vampire turned by Katherine Pierce in the year 1864.

Damon had a very traumatic childhood experience with an abusive father who used to hit him, his brother and his mother regularly. Later his mother left him and his brother alone to deal with their father which left a deep scar on him. This experience led to the start of the feeling of hatred, anger and betrayal being built up in Damon which was intensified after he once again was tricked and deceived by Katherine Pierce who he deeply fell in love with. She was a vampire and manipulated Damon to turn into one too, so that they could live happily ever after. The tendency of Damon Salvatore was to hide his own pain behind the curtains of being the 'bad guy'. He is one of the protagonists of the show - "The Vampire Diaries". He started as "the big bad vampire" who was very selfish but over the course of the show he transformed completely. He used to have the attitude of not caring about anyone or anything, not even his own brother who was a total antithetical personality to him. Stefan Salvatore contrary to his brother - Damon Salvatore was sympathetic and caring, he had an air of kindness and innocence despite holding a lot of power derived from his status of being a vampire. Later in the show, some good parts of Damon came unravelling too. Even though the story of the show is based upon the love triangle between Stefan Salvatore, Damon Salvatore and Elena Gilbert who is a Patrova doppelganger (a look alike) of her ancestor Katherine Peirce who once tricked both the Salvatore brothers into turning into a vampire; an underlying hint of brotherhood and brotherly love and care between Damon and Stefan can be witnessed.

The character of Damon Salvatore teaches us 'to be our own person' and accept ourselves just the way we are. He makes us believe to be who we truly are and not just an idea of us formed by others. Damon never thought about what other people thought of him or his actions. Sometimes people thought of him as an arrogant and careless man who doesn't care about anyone but this was certainly not the complete truth about him. He loved and cared a lot for his brother and friends but never expressed it much in the way other people did. His actions spoke louder than his words. Another value which can be learnt through this character is to 'shut it off' sometimes. Even though real people or humans don't have the ability to 'turn off their humanity switch' which will make all the human emotions such as pain, anger and sadness go away like vampires but at least one can try to shut it all out by taking a break or something. There is no meaning of the hustle and bustle of life if it cannot give you the peaceful and clean mental space to breathe and live without unnecessary stress.

It is okay to be weak and vulnerable at times but it is not okay to show your vulnerabilities to others. Damon was full of pain, anger and sadness within but he never expressed his feelings completely to anyone instead he portrayed himself to be powerful by being ruthless and dangerous so that people would fear him and not take advantage of his vulnerabilities and weaknesses to destroy him. In this world full of constantly growing competition, people will always try to pull you down by using your weaknesses and vulnerabilities against you so therefore it is advisable to sometimes hide your weaknesses from potential threats.

The overall character of Damon Salvatore convinced all the viewers that there is always a reason behind a villain being a villain in the story and one can learn a lot of values from a villain too.

Shakespeare was right when he said -" All's well that ends well". The story of the life of Damon Salvatore also ended in redemption and peace. After living a life of dead-living beast (vampire) for centuries, Damon finally took the cure for the curse of vampire, turned back to a human, lived a happy normal human life without supernatural world's drama and died peacefully besides the love of his life - Elena Gilbert.

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### **Niklaus Mikaelson: The Wicked hybrid**

Niklaus Mikaelson also called as Klaus Mikaelson was one of the five original Vampire siblings who were created by their mother - Ester Mikaelson (an original witch) by use of witchcraft practises to save her weak human children from any supernatural, powerful entity which might come their way to destroy them. These five siblings were powerful and immortal now but we're forced to feed on blood of living organisms to maintain their power and immortality, they were the start of the Vampire race.

These siblings - Nikki's Mikaelson, Elijah Mikaelson, Rubekah Mikaelson, Kol Mikaelson and Finn Mikaelson took a vow of 'always and forever' to stick together in every challenge which comes their way for always and forever until the end of the time.

Niklaus Mikaelson was the ruthless, wicked beast ever to walk on the face of the Earth. He was the most powerful original because he was also a werewolf (an original hybrid of vampire and werewolf). He was power - hungry, manipulative and short tempered. He wanted to show his power to the world. The roots of this demonic personality dates back to his childhood. His father - Mikael Mikaelson tortured him mentally as well as physically; mentally by always telling him that he was very weak and vulnerable and could never fight strongly like a brave man and physically by hitting him in fights and duels to make him realize that he was a scourge and the weakest among his siblings. The inspiration behind the hunger for power and showing the world that ' Niklaus Mikaelson is the strongest and is scared of nothing ' in him came because of his father's discouraging words at a very young age. There were a lot of beautiful and peaceful parts of Klaus too, one of them was that he was an amazing artist and liked to paint, when asked -'why do you paint?' Klaus's reply was -" Painting is a metaphor for control. Every choice is mine - the colours, the canvas. As a child I had neither sense of the world nor my place in it but art taught me that once vision can be achieved with sheer force of will, the same is true of life."

Niklaus Mikaelson teaches us that there's always a reason behind a monster becoming a monster. The atrocities showered upon Klaus by his father at a very young age was the reason behind his hunger for more and more power and strength. He activated his werewolf gene to become the first original hybrid to showcase his strength and prove his father wrong, even if it meant causing a lot of destruction in the natural working of the supernatural world. He always thought that human emotions of love, care and mercy gave way to weakness.

He was a great king, leader and a mentor; he mentored and raised a great man - Marcel Gerard just like his own son.

Klaus was not a person who could be persuaded by anyone to walk on a better path in life by anyone but Elijah Michaelson his brother was the only one who was able to at least push him a little towards the ray of hope in his life full of darkness and misery. Elijah was the noble brother who always wanted redemption for his brother. The brothers loved and cared for each other deeply and Klaus always respected Elijah's words.

The turning point in Klaus's life came when his miracle baby with Hayley (a werewolf) was about to be born. This baby was a miracle because vampires - the living dead were incapable of producing off-springs. Klaus's baby girl which he later named as Hope Mikaelson was the original tribrid- part werewolf, part witch and part vampire. She was named Hope because she felt like a ray of hope for the Mikaelson Family especially for Klaus. Hope Mikaelson was the path of redemption for her father's cruel, ruthless actions. Klaus after Hope was born wanted to be a good father and 'do right by his daughter' for which he changed his evil ways of living life.

The great evil, cruel and diabolical hybrid - Klaus Mikaelson showed us how sticking to a little ray of hope in life can help a lot to move out of darkness. The selfish, power hungry and manipulative hybrid didn't live a very honourable life but died very honourably saving his daughter; lying on the death bed alongside his noble brother whose life amen of getting redemption for him was finally achieved.

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### **Research Methodology**

Villains of any story are the most hated characters by the audience. Villains are villains because of certain reasons. Moreover, sometimes villains play a more crucial and important role than a hero. This is a secondary research paper which focuses on the character analysis and lessons learnt through the famous villain-ish characters of Damon Salvatore and Niklaus Mikaelson from the television show series - The Vampire Diaries and The Originals.

This research paper is based on views and opinions formed by studying already existing material on the topic.

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### **Conclusion**

People and characters cannot always be the heroes or villains in a story, some can be both or nothing too. Grey areas which are not completely black or white can also be in existence sometimes. Moreover, villains are the most hated characters in a story by the audience despite playing a more crucial and sometimes more important role in a story than a hero does. Villains don't become villains by choice but by certain circumstances in life. These circumstances are not always shown in the story to the audience which makes them hate the villain more because of his unreasonable, cruel and antagonistic actions. The reason behind the cruelty and hunger for power in the two greatly famous and loved antagonistic characters - Damon and Klaus; were there childhood traumatic experiences with their parents and the way life treated them. Despite playing the role of an antagonist in the story both

the characters did a great job to attract a lot of audience. The reason behind this is that the stories behind their behaviour and personality is told in the story which justifies their actions. These characters teach a lot of values and life lessons of how childhood experiences can shape your personality, how to act like a good leader or a king, be your own person and accept yourself just the way you are and many more.

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