

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## Characters in Michelangelo Antonioni's Films

### **ALDO** (in "the Cry") Emotional

**Character** Aldo is a nice-looking, working-class man with traditional values and little else. He is taciturn and gloomy, yearning for something he doesn't know and can't define, as if a mysterious inner destiny is moving inexorably toward an end he cannot see. Although he is broody and occasionally strikes someone, his basic nature is kind and compassionate.

**Proud** When the big crisis comes in Aldo's life—the news that Irma is leaving him for another man—he reacts with disbelief, shock and then anger. Unable to control his emotions, he would have struck her inside the house but was interrupted by a knock at the door. Later, though, he confronts Irma in the street and slaps her hard, knocking her against a wall. She staggers out into a square, where, with a crowd watching, he strikes her again and again, a dozen times. When he's finished, he commands her to go home. She walks away and he shouts, 'Did you hear me?' Aldo's pride has been wounded. He has been rejected by the woman he loves and everyone in the town will soon know it. The only way he knows to restore his pride, and his public image, is to humiliate Irma in front of others.

**Passive** One of the casual remarks that Aldo makes reveals another key aspect of his character. He has just met Virginia, who runs the petrol station, and she is flirting with him, asking if he's made up his mind about leaving in the morning. He shrugs, lights a cigarette and says that it depends on many things: 'money, willingness and a job.' Winking at him, she asks which of those three he lacks the most. Without hesitation, he says it's willingness (*voglia*, also translated as 'desire' and 'wish'). He does sometimes get work and he sometimes has money, but what he can never gain is the desire to make something of his life. Losing Irma has knocked the stuffing out of him, leaving him limp and passive.

**Inconclusive** Another curious conversation, this time with Adreina, illustrates a related quality, his inability to finish anything. He is walking with Adreina along a vast stretch of dry land, empty, desolate and grey. All of a sudden, with no preamble, he tells her a story about the past. 'I was with a girl name Irma,' he says, 'Everyone wanted to go dancing. But she said let's go the museum instead. So we went there.' Like us, Adreina wants to know what happened next. 'And then?' she prompts. 'Nothing,' he says. 'We went to the museum.' 'What kind of a story is that?' she cries in exasperation. 'How does it end?' He doesn't reply because he doesn't understand that his story is inconclusive. Like his whole life, it drifts aimlessly, without a destination.

**Compassionate** For all his flaws, Aldo is a compassionate person. In his interactions with people (all four women, his daughter and many others), he is ready to give support when needed. That innate quality is what first brings him into contact with Adreina. He is drifting along on the river bank when he sees her trying to put a distress flag on the roof of her shack to indicate that she is ill. Immediately, he goes to her, guides her inside and makes her go to bed. She refuses to be treated like a patient, but he persists and puts up the flag. A doctor stops but is too busy to examine her and only asks question from the road above the house. Not satisfied with this cursory treatment, burly Aldo drags him down the slope and into her house. It turns out that she has malaria. She is fortunate that Aldo happened to cross her path.