

How does the
playwrite create and
maintain the dramatic
force of the play
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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

' The mighty words of the proud are paid in full with mighty blows of fate, and at long those blows will teach us wisdom' Essentially, one of several dramatic force of the play Antigone is built and maintained through pride, excessive pride and hubris within the characters of Antigone and Creon has led them to fall great lengths, resulting in a tragedy. Both Antigone and Creon are incredibly proud, making it impossible for either one of them to back down once they have taken a stand. Pride is part of what makes Antigone heroic in the Greek sense.

Ultimately, the whole play is based on Antigone's struggle against Creon's edict, the confrontation between an individual and the state; Antigone's struggle against the decree underlines the fact that the power of conscience is very often above and more powerful than the law; shown by the fact that Antigone sticks to her ideals even before the face of death for ' that death will be a glory'. Antigone's heroic qualities of excessive pride, only dieing with glory and honor helps create the dramatic force.

Conversely, Antigone's struggle against Creon shows the struggle between democracy and autocracy. Creon's attempts to establish autocracy to maintain order and stability, but with Antigone it has turned out to be a tyranny. His attempt to bring order and stability to Thebes by removing opposition ironically backfired him, because his unjust law denying the proper burial of Polynices led to the death of Antigone which in turn led to the death of his only son Haemon and his wife Eurydice, and ultimately resulting in chaos.

The play also has love as one of its central themes, Antigone's struggle against Creon's unjust decree and the fact that Ismene was willing to take the blame for Antigone outlines the love within the family for nobody 'has the right to keep me from my own'. Moreover, there are sexual signs within the language that suggests the curse of incest has been carried on through the generations due to the repetition of 'my own' when Antigone refers to her brother Polynices.

Haemon's suicide after finding out Antigone's death also shows the love between two individuals, but perhaps more importantly links in with the theme of death. Perhaps Antigone and Haemon might reunite when they go to the underworld, in the play Antigone and Creon also have conflicting beliefs about death. As we can see, Antigone only obeys the Gods as she believes the Gods were more superior, she also believes in the glorification of death and how the legacy must live on as she 'will suffer nothing as great as death without glory'.

Other ideas also include the possibility that there is another life after death¹, perhaps explaining why she wants to die in the play as life in the underworld is more certain and she can live forever with her brother, or maybe it was her way of expressing her heroic qualities. In Antigone, the themes contribute to the dramatic force and are further maintained through the continual change from one theme to another.

Furthermore, the use of literary techniques such as stichomythia helps create as well as maintain dramatic tension in the play as the line sharing creates pace and a sense of anxiety within the audience but most

importantly it brings out conflict. The playwright effectively uses stichomythia to create tension (in lines 560-590) during Antigone's and Creon's verbal tussle as it showed uncertainty and power struggle which is one of the underlying theme of this play, as well as the universal theme for all mankind.

Antigone and Creon both exchange short phrases to try to assert control over one another, and the fact that neither one of them is able to have long speeches shows the loss of control. In the play Antigone the Chorus also plays a large role in maintaining dramatic force as the Chorus is omniscient and acts like the narrator as it assumes different roles at different times (necessary for the development of tragedy) and provides a contrast to central figures. The choral song (stasima) serves as interludes as well as commentaries to create mood and foreshadows the downfall of those who have excessive pride, therefore maintains dramatic conflict.

In addition, the Chorus is used to provide graphical images of battles as death and violence was 'obscene' in Greek plays. The Chorus comforts Antigone as she leaves for her execution and reassures her that her death will bring her great honor. Moreover, the use of dramatic irony helps heighten the effect of tragedy in the play, for example, Antigone's idea of noble death. Before her final exit, Antigone appears to be courageous and steadfast and was ready to face death. But as soon as death became inevitable she begs for her life and lost her calmness revealing her weaknesses, her *harmartia* (tragic flaw) is 'self-willed passion'.

Antigone's remorse is a representation of human weakness when faced with death. Antigone (before her death) has lost her heroic qualities that made

her 'rush to their extremes' and becomes a pathetic character as she begs for life. Arguably, although Antigone begged for her life before her final exit, she is in fact a tragic hero (depends on the audience's interpretation) because she committed suicide and shows that she had control of her life and chose to die, therefore making her a tragic hero because her death affected Haemon, which in turn affected Creon and the whole of Thebes.

Furthermore, Creon's fall is also ironic because the in the beginning he firmly believes that he rules destiny but later admits that even the best rulers is powerless when faced with destiny. Perhaps, the biggest irony of all is that people who have pride and believe in themselves end up falling furthest. However, the most significant 'dramatic theme' is tragedy, as tragedy is also the genre of this play. Antigone who has heroic temper runs through a set path like all other tragic Greek heroes.

Antigone is making destiny when she believes that Creon 'had to right to keep her from her own' but the paradox is that destiny cannot be controlled and those who are in a battle to fight destiny are in a never ending fight against inevitability, Antigone was 'wrong from the start' as she was 'off on a hopeless quest' but her heroic qualities meant that she went on struggling until she died and therefore heroic temper is essential in expressing tragedy.

Conversely, Creon seems to be the candidate for becoming a tragic hero in the start cause of his excessive pride but fails because he does not die in the end and succumbs when he realizes his flaws. He paid a heavy price for his rashness, perhaps tragedy lies in the fact that realization (anagnorisis) came

too late for Creon. All tragic heroes must die in their struggle for their ideal, even when they know their flaws, they keep on struggling.

Tragedy illuminates the limitations of life and the ultimate failure (death), and the use of elevated language such as hyperbole helps bring out the element of tragedy within the play. Overall, dramatic force is maintained by different conflicts. The moral of this play is that everybody should have a balance of everything, religion and rational behavior is essential for a man.

For Creon, pride has only brought him disaster, yet, without pride he would have not have been a hero in terms of the Greek as pride gives heroic qualities. Lastly, we learn from this play that nothing can control fate and destiny, we should accept who we are and be content with what we are given for the struggle against fate (as shown in this play, the characters are not in control of their lives) is useless because those who are in a battle against fate and destiny are ' off on a hopeless quest'.