

Does and a
desperation towards
the end



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Does man really have free will, or does free will lie within a system of limitations that gradually compose a web of circumstantial fate that ultimately cannot be torn apart? The events in both Oedipus The King and Antigone controversially suggests that man ultimately chooses his own deeds and endures fate and the responsibilities for them. These events brought by fate are unmistakably aggravated by certain characteristics within the characters. Oedipus, from Oedipus The King, Antigone, and Creon, both from Antigone possess such flawed characteristics that lead to their tragic ends. Oedipus possesses a multitude of characteristics, some of them common to other characters, but pride is exceptionally prevalent. This characteristic, which margins with utter arrogance, appears to be one of the dominant flaws that causes Oedipus' tragic downfall.

This is plainly established in the beginning of the play in which he states ' I Oedipus whom all men call the great.'; (p11. 8). This is strengthened by the Priest's replies of '...

Oedipus, Greatest in all men's eyes,'; (p12. 40) and ' Noblest of men'; (p12. 46). However, pride is not the only characteristic which contributes to Oedipus' tragic end. There exists his temper, which is initially presented in the argument between Teiresias and himself. After Teiresias speaks the truth as factual, Oedipus replies ' Do you imagine you can always talk like this, and live to laugh at it hereafter?'; (p26. 367) and then soon after calls Teiresias a ' fool'; (p29. 433).

His temper is also exposed when he threatens to banish or kill Creon after Creon's attempted reasoning. Another contributing factor is his suspicion for

others, this is evident where he questions Teiresias ' Was this your own design or Creon's?'; (p. 27. 377).

He is falsely rationalizing that Teiresias is secretly plotting, in coalition with Creon, to overthrow him. Moreover, Oedipus has an unrelenting pursuit for the truth, which is demonstrated when he finally believes that he is the murderer and that Polybus was not his father. Nonetheless, he continues with his search with an extensive questioning of both his wife Jocasta and the messenger. Furthermore, Oedipus exhibits self-loathing and a desperation towards the end of the play. After the facts have been voiced, he desperately attempts to rationalize the evidence and states, ' You said that he spoke of highway robbers who killed Laius. Now if he uses the same number, it was not I who killed him. One man cannot be the same as many. But if he speaks of a man travelling alone, then clearly the burden of the guilt inclines towards me.

'; (p47. 842). At the end of the play, after all has been revealed, Oedipus expresses self-loathing as he whimpers ' Now I am godless and child of impurity, begetter in the same seed that created my wretched self.

If there is any ill worse than ill, that is the lot of Oedipus.'; (p69. 1360).

Although not as potent as her father Oedipus, Antigone also holds a detrimental sense of pride. This is presented in the speech between Creon and herself, ' How can such as I, that live among such troubles, not find a profit in death?'; (p178. 507). An additional contributing element to Antigone's tragic end is her acceptance and welcoming of death, which is

evident when she states, ' Life was your choice, and death was mine.'; (p183.

610). Creon affirms this by declaring ' In that place she shall call on Hades, god of death, in her prayers.'; (p192. 844). Furthermore, Antigone appears to display righteousness when she states ' But if Creon and his people are the wrongdoers let their suffering be no worse than the injustice they are meting out to me.'; (p196.

984). Not unlike Oedipus once was, Creon was also a proud ruler. In a confrontation with Antigone he states, ' When I am alive no woman shall rule.'; (p181. 579), which suggests that his pride is adamant and unforgiving, more so than Oedipus.

Creon also exhibits stubbornness along with his pride, this is evident when he states ' My enemy is still my enemy, even in death.'; (p181. 575). His pride becomes even stronger when others attempt to defy his will. His argument with his son Haemon demonstrates this where he states, '...

let it be from a man; we must not let people say that a woman beat us.'; (p187. 733) and when he asks ' Should the city tell me how I am to rule them?'; (p189. 794). The flawed characteristics held by both Oedipus and Antigone that lead to their tragic ends are ironically contradictory.

The probable foremost characteristic flaws of Oedipus is his inability to see the situation he has placed himself in, and that he intentionally ignores the hints and prophesies that everyone else knows. Antigone's feasibly leading characteristic flaw is her expectation of pity for the wretched situation she

was born into. In opposition with Oedipus, whereas he does not want or expect pity from those around him partially because he does not realize his calamitous situation. The flawed characteristics of father and daughter are similar to the sides of a coin. On one side, Oedipus is caught in the center of a disastrous situation ignorant to the world around him. However, on the other side of the coin, Antigone is fully aware of the impure situation she was born into. Unlike her father, Antigone wants people to know about her deplorable position so they can show sympathy for her.

The strengths of her father Oedipus, have become her weaknesses, and the strengths of his daughter Antigone, are Oedipus' weaknesses. Creon's flawed characteristic is undoubtedly his pride. A sense of pride as strong as a lion, yet as fragile as a small bird, added with his stubbornness and temper, created a man as unmovable as a mountain. This flawed characteristic prevented him from heeding to the advice of others, primarily his son, and lead to the destruction of all that he held close. Ultimately, Oedipus is guilty in the end, not for killing his father and marrying his mother, rather it is his attempt to raise himself above others, disregarding the facts and wisdom brought to him. Antigone, a woman of nobility and idealism, is guilty of the immature masochistic desire to martyr herself. Creon's guilt, perhaps the most chosen, is his inability to recognize that someone other than himself can be right. These characteristics are fated by man, not by fate itself, and created a web of circumstantial fate.

The events brought on by these characters could have been avoided if the characteristics were not part of their identities. Thus, it is the

characteristics within the character that determines their fate, not fate which determines their character.