

How do the methods  
used by Lysistrata to  
accomplish her plight  
differ from those ...



Lysistrata is a play about one woman's plan to end a war by calling on all the women of Greece to perform a sex strike. She uses this to blackmail the men into ending the war, but her method involves various tactics that enable her to win the respect of the men and ultimately resolve the conflict on her terms. It is not simply a case of persuading all the women to adopt temporary celibacy with their husbands. The Father also involves a woman who is in conflict with her husband, but of course its most obvious difference from Lysistrata is that it is more focused, as it only involves one man and one woman, it is domestic rather than public.

Both plays start with a conflict (in Lysistrata, the women's opposition to war; in The Father, a dispute over the education of their daughter) and go on to show how the female character is able to achieve dominance and get their way. Both Laura and Lysistrata use a number of methods to outwit the men in the plays and in this essay I aim to examine these and decide in what ways they are similar and different. The main success of the Lysistrata's plan is based on exploiting the sexuality of women. She knows that by denying the men/soldiers the thing they want, they will be tempted away from war and allow her to manipulate them.

At the beginning of the play she claims that all hope of ending the war lies with the women, which for many of her companions is a surprising idea as they have adapted to the female stereotype that they have been branded with. Ironically Lysistrata believes that women's ability to attract and allure men and to look beautiful is their most powerful attribute. By playing to the males stereotypical view of women, and by exploiting the women's sexuality

she is able to train the other women how to act and what to say to their husbands.

Lysistrata is the instigator here, as she does not take an active role in either the sex-strike or the capture of the Acropolis, she takes a back seat as she has already trained the women for what they should do. Lysistrata also manages to separate herself from the other women, which is Max Webster important to the way in which male characters perceive her rank and power. She does this by not exhibiting any sexual desire, as she has no obvious lovers, and she does not purposely flirt with men as the others do.

This apparent detachment seems to make the Commissioner and the delegates give her more respect as she has broken away from the stereotype, this in turn makes her appear above the other women. This is both similar and completely different to Laura's method. Laura also uses her knowledge of what is important to the Captain in her plan to drive him insane and ultimately destroy him. First, she uses his desire to have a say in Laura's upbringing against him and later, more importantly, his desperation when he becomes uncertain of whether he is Laura's father.

The differences here are that Lysistrata's method is not entirely cruel in that unlike Laura, she does not subject the men to cruel paranoia about an incredibly personal subject. Lysistrata organises this plan for the good of the people and granted as a small attack on men for their stereotyping, but it is obvious that she is 'in the right' as she is trying to stop a war and also fighting for women's rights. Laura however is scheming for one sole purpose

and that is for 'control' of her daughter, although this also conveniently ties in with her wish to always get her own way.

Pastor: 'If she (Laura) set her mind on anything when she was a child, she used to lie like a corpse till she got it, and then as likely as not she would give it back, explaining that she didn't care about the thing, whatever it was, but about getting her own way' This shows a lot about the way in which she thinks and works. Laura, it seems, acts with malice and to some extent, with a wish to cause pain for the Captain, though this happens as she loses sight of her motives. Both Lysistrata and Laura have accomplices in their plans, though for different reasons.

Lysistrata needs all the women's help as her plan is only possible on a large scale with all Max Webster the women involved. Laura needs the support of people in official positions such as the doctor in order to be able to convince everyone that her husband has gone mad. The ways in which they manipulate these other characters into helping them also differ. Lysistrata persuades the women in the first scene by creating first excitement, 'Myrrhina: From what? Speak on.' which upon the mention of abstention is turned to near horror at the prospect of it, 'Myrrhina: I cannot do without it, let the war drag on! .

Lysistrata then explains to them what they should say to their husbands, what they should do if their husbands try to force them to have sex. She convinces a couple of them at first, but as with all things, when they are well planned and plausible a little spark of excitement is the only thing needed.

Laura cultivates the support of the doctor in the first conversation she has

with him, using deceit and trying to gain his sympathy by presenting a side of her which is quite different to that which we see when she speaks to the captain.

To the doctor she feigns the weak wife who has had to deal with her troubled husband, ' Ah, if you only knew what a life I have endured with him.... if you only knew'. From this she appears hard done by and things do appear difficult for her, in the doctor's view as, ' We have been married for twenty years and he has never yet made a decision without changing his mind afterwards'. As we see from this Laura outright lies to the doctor with the audacity to use some of her own personality traits.

From this we see that again as with the motives, Lysistrata tells the truth and uses careful planning as her way of convincing people, yet Laura does nothing but lie and twist the truth. Lysistrata also uses the method of changing her language and manner depending on who she is talking to, for instance when she confronts the commissioner, ' Just listen to me, and try to keep your fingers still', she patronises him and treats him as though he is a child, which in ancient Greece would be unheard of that a woman would say this to a man of high status or attempt to intervene in a socio-political manner.

Max Webster Both Laura and Lysistrata also face the task of keeping the support they have found from the other characters. Lysistrata actually has to stop people leaving the Acropolis as they even start making excuses, ' I want to go home: I have a Milesian fleece at home which is getting moth eaten'.

From this we can see that the group of women are becoming restless and

are starting to regret their 'vows', Lysistrata manages to contain this by a reading from the oracle, which she has fabricated.

Laura keeps talking to the Doctor constantly assuring him of the Captain's illness and portraying herself as the weaker sex, she exploits her stereotype to get sympathy from the doctor. The main differences between the methods used by Lysistrata and Laura are that, Laura uses lies and deceit to persuade those around her that she is telling the truth; in short she is lying to convince those around her of another lie, that the Captain is insane.

Lysistrata on the other hand tells the truth, explains the situation and only lies about one major thing, the oracle, yet it is all a means to a happy end. The differences in the methods are also caused by the different motives behind Lysistrata and Laura's plights. Laura, to an extent, loses sight of her original motives about schooling her daughter as her realisation of her ability to destroy the Captain overshadows it. Lysistrata, however, is concerned with creating peace between countries and with living in harmony with men.