

Antigone – essay 9



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Aristotle defines a tragic hero as “ having high estate, nobility of soul, ability to have free will, having tragic flaw, also somebody we are able to empathize with, a person who suffers from reversal of fortune, achieving enlightenment, accepting responsibility for his/her fall and being able to die bravely. ” I am going to use Aristotle’s definition of a tragic hero to support evidence to the character Antigone, in the play Antigone. To me, the tragic hero in the play is Antigone. Antigone, who is the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, becomes infuriated with Creon, who is the king of Thebes and her uncle.

Creon will not allow Antigone's brother, Polynices, to be buried. Antigone tells her sister, Ismene, that she will defy Creon’s ruling even though she knows the consequences, which is death. The first on Aristotle’s tragic hero list is that the character “ should be of high estate/class. ” Antigone comes from high estate; she was considered a princess and was to be married to Creon’s son, Haemon. Though Antigone came from high estate/class, she still did not carry out the power to make changes; therefore, Antigone’s character of having high estate, yet no power, complies a little with Aristotle’s tragic hero.

Second on Aristotle’s tragic hero list, was that the character “ should have nobility of soul or tragic greatness. ” Antigone showed nobility of soul because she stood-up for what she believed in knowing the outcomes would cost her life. An example of her nobility was when she first told her sister, Ismene, of what she was going to do. Antigone said, “ I’ll bury him myself. And even if I die in the act, that death will be a glory. ” I think that this quote shows nobility of soul, as well as, a tragic greatness.

She saw it as glory to die for doing the right thing. (Line 85) Third on Aristotle's tragic hero list, was that the character " should have free will and make important choices. " From the beginning of the play, until Antigone's death, she kept her free will, as well as, making important choices for herself. When Antigone had gotten caught by the guards while burying her brother, she was taken to Creon to announce what she had done. There is a quote in there that shows how free willed of a person she was, Antigone says to Creon " Of course I did it.

It wasn't Zeus, not in the least, who made this proclamation—not to me... These laws—I was not about to break them, not out of fear of some man's wounded pride, and face the retribution of the gods. " This quote by Antigone shows that she was capable of making her own choices, whether she would follow man's law or the gods. She also showed that she was not afraid of the choices she made for herself. (Line 500) Aristotle's fourth tragic hero listing is that the character " should have a tragic flaw or hamartia. Antigone made plenty of mistakes, her first one was defying Creon's ruling. Though it was understandable why she made that choice, it probably would have spared her from going through all this trouble if she would have just asked Creon for a proper burial. Unfortunately, Antigone's stubbornness gets in the way of her thinking and results in her acting off of her emotions. Also, when it comes to Antigone's death, if she would have not taken the matters into her own hand again, Creon had made the decision to free her and give her brother the proper burial.

Yet, it is understandable that she does not want Creon to get satisfaction off of her death, as well as, not knowing that Creon would change his mind and

actually side with her. Aristotle's fifth tragic hero listing is that the character " should be someone with whom we can empathize. " Antigone had this down packed with the audience. The whole city empathized with Antigone and felt that " No woman ever deserved death less, and such a brutal death for such a glorious action. She, with her own dear brother lying in his blood she couldn't bear to leave him dead, unburied, food for the wild dogs or wheeling vultures.

Death? She deserves a glowing crown of gold! " I feel that quote right there sums it up. (Line 775) The sixth tragic hero listing that Aristotle feels is necessary, is that the character " should suffer a reversal of fortune (peripeteia), falling from a pinnacle to the depths. " Antigone was considered a princess and to be married to the king's son, Haemon. After being caught by the guards, she was sentenced to death by the king, Creon. Now she is looked upon as a slave, not as a princess. She is treated like trash and looked down upon. She went from being of royalty to quickly being nothing.

Antigone definitely serves the sixth tragic hero listing. The seventh tragic hero listing that Aristotle has is that the character " should achieve anagnorisis or enlightenment; should accept responsibility for his/her fall. " Antigone takes responsibility when she is first brought to Creon and asked if she was the one to give Polynices a proper burial, Antigone responded with " I did it. I don't deny a thing. " Then Antigone shows her commonality with humanity when she is arguing with Creon about the citizens feeling like she did about his ruling.

For example, Creon says " You alone, of all the people in Thebes, see things that way. " Antigone replies with " They see it that way but defer to you and keep their tongues in leash. " (Lines 492, 570) The last trait that Aristotle has listed that the tragic hero should carry is that the character " should die bravely. " Antigone died for love, for respect and for doing what she and many others believed was right. She did not bravely give her life to defy one man's wants; it just unfortunately came down to her having to do that.

Antigone gave up "...bridal-song, the bridal-bed, denied all joy of marriage, raising children—deserted by loved ones, struck by fate..." just to give her brother, Polynices a proper burial. I think she clearly defines dying bravely. (Line 1009) In conclusion, the tragic hero in the play Antigone is herself, Antigone. Antigone shows how her character meets the requirements of Aristotle's tragic hero, as well as, many other aspects that we find in a common hero. Antigone, from the beginning to the end of the play, lived and died for what she believed in.