

Antigone: a girl with an oedipus



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Antigone had an Oedipus Complex. Just kidding. She had an Oedipus DAD.

Okay, seriously now: Antigone was the youngest child of the incestuous marriage between Oedipus and Jocasta. All psychology majors know the tale of Oedipus- how, unbeknownst to him, he killed his father, married his mother, and sired children off of her. Freud made this tale famous when he coined the development stage in which all males are in competition with their fathers for their mothers. However, little is known about this daughter of Oedipus, Antigone- a girl doomed by her family to tragedy. Using the tale of her life and death, as told in the play Antigone by Jean Anouilh, one can find an interesting subject for personality study. In this play, Antigone has returned to Thebes (the place of her birth) after traveling with her blind father.

Thebes has just gone through a turbulent period. Oedipus was ousted from the throne, and it was decided that the throne would be shared, on an alternating year schedule, between his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. However the two brothers could not share the throne, went to war against each other, and died at each other's hand. Creon, Oedipus's brother-in-law, was crowned king, and brought peace to Thebes. However, one of his edicts was that the body of the dead Polynices would not be buried and anyone found disobeying this edict would be put to death. Antigone could not tolerate a member of her family being doomed to wander the world as a spirit.

She decided that it was her duty to bury Polynices. So, under cover of night, Antigone stole to the keeping place of Polynices's body, and buried him.

However, through a series of events, Antigone is caught. Creon tries to save Antigone, for she is engaged to marry his son, Haemon. However, Antigone stands fast to her ideals.

In the end, she dies. According to the Five Factor Model, Antigone would score very high in terms of Conscientiousness. This factor is the factor that measures the degree of organization and persistence in goal-directed behavior. A person of high Conscientiousness would be competent, dutiful, self-disciplined, orderly, and deliberate.

All of these describe Antigone. Antigone's personal beliefs stated that she was duty-bound to bury Polynices, despite Creon's edict. Despite the threat of death, Antigone went through with the burial in an organized and deliberate way. She did not just rush in and throw dirt. Instead, she carried with her Polynices's own shovel with which to bury him, and she went through the religious ceremony that ensured Polynices's rest.

Her behavior in the burial, of doing it in a planned, orderly way, suggests a Conscientious person. Her commitment to and self-discipline in performing this task not once, but twice (she returned to rebury him after he was uncovered by guards) show that she is very Conscientious. Antigone would not only be considered Conscientious, but also very manly in terms of her behavior. She is aggressive in achieving her goal of burying her brother. Her ideas on loyalty and duty would be considered male traits.

Also, Antigone is very scholarly. She reads texts, and she is a student of nature. She does not care about her appearance, clothing, or jewelry. She is not very feminine, and she is very in touch with her masculine side. In the <https://assignbuster.com/antigone-a-girl-with-an-oedipus/>

theories of Carl Jung, Antigone would be very much in touch with her animus. The animus, to Jung, is the masculine aspect of personality in the female.

Jung believed the animus and its male equivalent, the anima (or the representation of the feminine aspects in the male), need to be allowed to be free and conscious so that people are not one-dimensional. The animus can express itself in females when they behave with logic, strength, aggressiveness, etc. Antigone's logical actions in burying Polynices, such as going to bury him after dark when she is less likely to be caught, show this aspect of the animus. However, the greatest expression of her animus would be in her aggressiveness.

Antigone openly challenges Creon, the king. Creon, her uncle and the father of her fiancé, wants to try to save Antigone. He tries to reason with her. However, Antigone aggressively attacks Creon and his ideas (calling him a dog, and saying that she spits on his ideas of life and happiness).

This determination and aggressive behavior most clearly demonstrate Antigone's male qualities (her animus). Antigone was, in the ideas of Maslow, a self-actualized person. She was a person who was motivated to develop her skills and talents to the limit. Though her life was short, she managed to find her way to the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Her physiological needs, of food and water, were met by her position as a princess of Thebes.

Servants saw to all her physical wants. The next need, the need to feel safe, was satisfied by the palace environment and by her name. The public knew her as the daughter of Oedipus, and thus a princess- she would never be harmed by an outsider. If she was threatened, she was safe behind the

palace walls and guards. She also had the love of her Nurse and sister, Ismene. Her fiance, Haemon, loved her as well.

She was accepted and loved by these people. And she loved them in return. Antigone was also highly esteemed. She was known for her intelligence and kindness. She was well liked by those in the kingdom, and she was loved by those around her.

She had reached the top of the pyramid- she was self-actualized. She was a person who always wanted to grow and learn. She was autonomous, truthful, good. She had strong ideas of justice and right.

And, it was because she was self-actualized that she felt she had to bury her brother. To be the best person she could be meant doing what she believed was right- she had to follow her ideas of right and wrong. To leave Polynices unburied would be to be untrue to herself. Her ultimate nature, it seemed, was to die a righteous death. Other evidence that Antigone was self-actualized might come in the fact that she is accepting of others.

Though she tries to convince her sister to help her bury Polynices, Ismene refuses. However, Antigone never begrudged her because of her refusal. Instead, Antigone speaks of the good in Ismene, and how it was right that Ismene not help. Antigone is also a detached person. She enjoyed walking alone in nature, reading, and she avoided parties. She was a " loner.

" Antigone was self-actualized, and it was aspects of this self-actualization that lead to her death. Antigone learned from her father, Oedipus. As a child, she was exposed to his ideas of right and wrong- she learned that her father

believed in behaving in a manner of justice. And, during their travels together after Oedipus was ousted from the throne, Antigone learned more.

She observed her father espousing beliefs about doing what was right. She saw her father blind himself because of his actions of killing his father and marrying his mother. She saw her father behave in an honorable and dutiful way, and she learned how to act from that. She practiced what Bandura would call observational learning. Antigone learned through observations of her father's behavior in different situations. Her father was a man she looked up to, a role model for her.

She saw how he acted, learned what he believed, and saw the consequences. Because her father was so honorable and duty-bound, Antigone became the same way. She could and would not allow her belief of doing what is right be superceded by other people's beliefs of doing what is easy or popular. Her father was a man of principle who acted accordingly, and Antigone learned this from him.

Creon even noted the strong Oedipus influence in Antigone, accusing her of speaking with her father's voice and words. Antigone is a product of observational learning. She saw Oedipus's behavior, saw the consequences, and behaved in the same way. Overall, Antigone's main personality aspects revolve around her strong belief structures.

She was a woman of clear mind and goal, who did as she believed was correct and just. Though she might lament her need to do what was right (she in no way had a death wish), she followed through. IN the end, Antigone simply wanted to be happy, and she knew that the only way she could ever

be happy was to follow her instincts and heart. Though these guides led her to death, she was content with that. TO have lived and not followed her ideals would have meant a different kind of death. So, Antigone's main personality trait (her cardinal trait, according to Allport) was her commitment to her beliefs and doing what she saw as right.

However, is Antigone a healthy character? I would say yes. Though her actions led her to death (a consequence she was well aware of), she did not wish for death. She was not depressed or suicidal. No, her death was brought about by her steadfast commitment to what she saw as right and honorable.

She was not psychologically unhealthy. She was just a girl doing the best she could in the given circumstances. Antigone is a strong character, one that can demonstrate any number of personality theories. She is the epitome of the conscientious personality.

She has a strong animus, and is self-actualized. And she is a great example of observational learning. She is also a tragic character, a young girl doomed to die. Hers is a touching story of devotion to duty and belief.

Everyone could learn a lesson in loyalty and commitment from this young girl.