

Sophocles' antigone: play's tragic characters

Literature



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Antigone Essay: Tragic Character

"Antigone" by Sophocles is a play about a girl who was born cursed to meet a terrible fate. This curse led to a life of misery, and eventually her death. Antigone and her three siblings were fathered by Oedipus, the king of Thebes, and a man who was prophesied to marry his own mother. After learning he had in fact not only married his mother, but had four kids with her, he gouged his own eyes out, while his wife/mother hung herself. Antigone's bloodline was plagued by the repercussions of Oedipus. As a result of Oedipus' mistake, the throne of Thebes was left to be held between his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. They fought for the title of king, and sparked a battle that led to both of their demise. With only her sister and uncle left, Antigone's death was a product of doing what she believed was right for the people that she loved. In "Antigone" by Sophocles, Antigone lived a tragic life as result of her cursed birth.

Antigone was born to Oedipus, whose marriage to his own mother was cursed from the beginning. He blinded himself and was exiled, and his mother strangled herself. As the final remaining byproducts of this curse, Antigone and her sister Ismene are left to piece together their family. The two sisters are both ashamed and exhausted of this, with Antigone stating, "You would think that we had already suffered enough for the curse on Oedipus. I cannot imagine a grief that you and I have not gone through." (Sophocles, 773). As a result of Oedipus's curse, she has been "...a stranger...in my own land all my life." (Sophocles, 797). Antigone is sorrowful that because of her father's cursed fate, her own life has been cursed by unhappiness and shame. She will never be accepted by her community,

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always treated like an outcast due to the circumstances of her birth.

Antigone realizes this, once stating that "...the blasphemy of my birth has followed me." (Sophocles, 797). Antigone is conscious of how flawed her family is, and is aware that her and her siblings existence is a stain in Thebes history.

After Antigone's brothers died at the Seven Against Thebes, only one of them was permitted a burial by the new king, her Uncle Creon. Antigone was forced to secretly bury her brother, and was sentenced to death for defying Creon's orders. Even though her life will soon end, Antigone doesn't regret her actions, and admits it straight to Creon's face, saying " I do. I deny nothing." (Sophocles 783). Antigone doesn't regret giving her brother a proper burial, even at the risk of her own life. This accentuates the tragedy that her life has become, that an act of love towards her brother, and honoring the law of the gods is punished with execution. At one point, Antigone is even told by the chorus that her death will be her own fault for defying Creon, saying "...your death is the doing of your conscious hand." (Sophocles 797). Even when making the morally correct decision, she is punished.

Perhaps that greatest tragedy of Antigone's life was that her suicide.

Moments before Antigone is found dead, Creon makes the decision to pardon her, as he realizes his mistake in not following the word of the gods. Creon "...ran to the vault where Antigone lay on her couch of stone..." (Sophocles, 805). If she had waited just minutes longer she could have prevented her death by "...a noose of her fine linen veil." (Sophocles, 805). After living a tragic and unfortunate life, Antigone died in misery and pain. Her suicide <https://assignbuster.com/sophocles-antigone-plays-tragic-characters/>

eventually caused the death of her lover Haimon, who "...desperate against himself , drove it half its length into his own side, and fell" (Sophocles 806). Haimon stabbing himself in desperation to be with Antigone then led to his own mother committing suicide, via "...welcom[ing] the knife her own hand guided." (Sophocles 807). Even in her death, the repercussions of her actions caused tragedy for her family.

Antigone's tragedy followed her from the moment she was born to her unfortunate end. She was the product of the curse of Oedipus, who was destined from to marry and have children with his own mother. She lost both her brothers as well as her parents, and legally couldn't give her brother a proper burial, as it was decreed by Creon to leave his body to rot. By defying this law, she was sentenced to death. When Antigone was nearly saved from this death sentence, she hung herself moments before. As a result of her cursed birth, she lived a tragic and unfortunate life.