

Katrin the mute and brave



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mute characters play a significant role in plays. They are the characters most people would ignore because they do not say anything; however, mute characters may be the characters who say the most in a play. Within *Mother Courage and Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht, the mute character Kattrin shows us that the bravest and during characters do not have to be the ones who talk the most. Kattrin may be a mute character, but her actions speak a lot, and as the saying goes, 'Actions speak louder than word.' Kattrin is brave, sympathetic, and the one who notices everything in the play, the only thing standing in her way is her incapability to speak.

Brecht's use of the character Kattrin brings out much irony, both dramatic and situational irony. Kattrin may be mute, but she uses her actions to communicate with others. Throughout the play, Kattrin is rarely noticed by other characters, so when she does actions, no one in the play knows what she is doing or what she is trying to tell them which is a challenge for her because she knows what she is saying but is unable to get it through to others.

Situations throughout the play occur and some involve Kattrin as the focal point for these situations. There are many things that happen that the other characters are oblivious to while Kattrin notices it automatically. When Kattrin is casually communicating to her family, they can understand her and communicate back; however, when a bad situation is about to happen, Kattrin notices it and tries to communicate to her family, they have no clue on what she is trying to say. One example would be when Swiss Cheese was about to hide the Cash Box.

As Swiss Cheese is planning to hide the Cash Box in the river, two soldiers stand behind him and he is unaware that these two soldiers are there and that they are listening to what he plans to do with the Cash Box. Kattrin was aware of the soldiers and tried to signal to her brother what was happening but he is only more oblivious to the situation and say, " I wish I could understand you. Poor thing, I know you're trying to tell me something, you just can't say it" (2381) Kattrin's heroic efforts do not do anything to help save her brother because she is unable to speak as he said. This is a form of dramatic irony because the audience is aware of Kattrin's signals and the only person unaware is Swiss Cheese, this would be situational irony that Brecht uses to show how Kattrin's inability to speak comes with many foreshadowing challenges. If Kattrin could speak, her brother may have lived; however, Brecht creating her as a mute character brings more entertainment to the play in both a humorous and suspenseful way.

Another example of Kattrin aware of a situation that others are oblivious to would be when Eilif was being recruited by the soldiers. Eilif wants to join the war, but Mother Courage forbids it, so the soldiers attempt to distract Mother Courage by pretending to be interested in buying a belt, when really the other soldier pulled Eilif to the side to have a drink with him. As Eilif goes off to talk to the soldier, Kattrin notices it and jumps up screaming, calling her mother's attention; however, her awareness of the situation did not help and Eilif has already disappeared into the war, and Mother Courage has lost a child due to this. Kattrin's muteness allows her to listen and observe things carefully, but when it comes to informing others, it always ends up being too late.

What we also may notice is that Brecht uses Kattrin to show the audience that disabled people are not all dumb. This is seen when Kattrin shows how she looks up to Yvette and wants to have the life Yvette has. Mother courage usually call Kattrin dumb because Kattrin is unable to speak, but is she really?

Brecht also shows Kattrin's needs and wants throughout the play; she wants more for her life. Kattrin is not the average beauty, compared to Yvette, and she is also unable to take care of herself because her mother believes the world is dangerous and Kattrin will easily be taken advantage of. Although this may be so, Kattrin wants to get married and have children desperately when peace finally comes and she wants to be beautiful like Yvette.

Therefore, Brecht describes Kattrin placing on Yvette's red shoes and walking around like Yvette, because she admires her beauty and her ability to get men.

Kattrin is incapable of speaking but it does not mean that she is not aware of what life really is. She knows that she must be beautiful if she wants a husband and when she gets hurt by the soldiers and must wear an eye patch, she completely aware of the consequences that come with it; her dreams of getting married may be over. In all, she is aware of life and just because she is mute does not mean she is dumb.

Kattrin's muteness does not stop her from getting involved in the war. At the end of the play, Kattrin is left alone with the wagon and peasants have come and began to pray. Kattrin intervenes to protect the burning city in front of her, by climbing a tree and beating a drum that was in her apron as loud as

she can; she acts in a courageous manner knowing the consequences coming for her are deadly. While the peasants are busy worrying about protecting their farm, Kattrin is willing to sacrifice her own life over the wagon and any materialistic belongings. The peasants as well as the soldiers call for her to be quiet and they all threaten to shoot her and destroy the wagon, but that does not stop Kattrin from drumming. Eventually Kattrin is shot down by one of the soldiers but she was shot down by committing a brave act and not acting as a coward.

Kattrin is a brave character throughout *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Brecht opens the readers to understand more about her role and why she behaves the way she does. Kattrin's mute role does not stop her from making noise and doing what she can to protect the family; however, her mute role is what causes her to die in the end. Her mute role affects many of the other characters badly such as Eilif and Swiss Cheese. Although Kattrin was the mute character she is also the most aware of everything being taken place in the war, even the things that Mother Courage may be oblivious to. Although Kattrin is brave and does not allow her muteness stop her from performing necessary actions, the actions she tries to inform for others to be aware of do not help her and her muteness ends up getting in the way for her to protect her own life as well as her brothers.