

# Anowa- whose fault essay



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African Women Writers Tragic Responsibility Anowa is the second, last, and most accomplished play written by Ghanaian playwright, poet, short-story writer, and novelist Ama Ata Aidoo. Anowa was first published in 1970 and had its British premiere in London in 1991 (Enotes, 2013). It tells the story of a young African woman named Anowa. She is not like any of the other traditional women in the town. Anowa likes to make her own choices and lives by her own opinions. The elders call her stubborn, she won't marry any of the sturdy men in the town, she laughs at her own jokes, listen to her own tales, and follows her own advice (67).

They all believe her vision is clouded. Her mother, Badua, wishes to see her marry a man and her father could care less what she does. She ends up meeting a man, Kofi, in the village and falls in love with him. She irrationally runs off with him and marries him. She completely disowns her family and begins a life with Kofi. Over time, they fall away from each other due to communication issues and fertility issues. Due to the massive pain and heartache from the situation, Kofi and Anowa both kill each other in the end. There is debate within the text about who was at fault for the tragic ending.

Many say that Anowa was the sole reason for their suicides. Although everyone in the society is at fault. Anowa's parents, Anowa, Kofi, and the traditional society are at fault. Badua has spoiled Anowa for most of her life. She has allowed her daughter to act and think as she wishes. Badua states, "how can she come to any good when everyone is always gossiping about her?" (70). The mother is at fault for allowing her child to let her mind run free as a child and into her adolescence. She wanted her daughter to have

control and then when she had it and chose to be with Kofi, her mother became very controlling and angry.

As Badua complains to Osam, Anowa's father, about her daughter not finding a husband, Osam writes her complaining off by saying that his only duty was to create children (71). Osam goes on to explain that he wanted her to become a priestess. Badua would not listen to him. She covered her ears and explained that priestesses' are not people; they are too much like Gods they interpret, they don't feel and they have no shame (72). Osam is at fault because he avoids the situation. He doesn't care what Anowa chooses and he doesn't care to listen to his own wife.

On page 78, Osam states his view about Anowa being immature. Even though he knows this, not once did he do anything to make her a more "mature" woman (78). On page 91, Badua states how she should have "taught (Anowa) to marry a man." It is ironic considering she doesn't have a great marriage and chose a man who doesn't care. Badua and Osam are to blame for Anowa's behavior. Anowa plays a massive role in the tragedy. Although she is not the only one to blame, she is by far one of the main reasons for the suicides. There is nothing wrong with her wanting to think and choose on her own.

Yet she chooses a man she met off the street; A man whom many find to be unsuitable for any woman in town. When she meets him, she has her legs and her breasts exposed (69). While Kofi and Anowa were swooning in the village, a woman looked back at them and falls over. They both laugh, finding the situation hilarious, but it shows the low maturity level they both

have (69). When Kofi proposes, Anowa runs home and is screaming in the streets. Badua tells her she is marrying a “ fool,” a “ watery male. ” Badua explains to Anowa that “ marriage is like a piece of cloth...it’s beauty passes with wear and tear. She was trying to explain that what counts is what is on the inside, not the outside. Anowa immediately responds with, “ I don’t care! ” (77). She is being childish and impulsive. She isn’t thinking about what is best for her. She is thinking about her own desires and is being selfish. No one in the story truly knows what is right or wrong. After she runs off with Kofi, she constantly argues with him. She states that she doesn’t need any protection and that she can take care of herself. She believes she can do everything on her own. She is ignorant. Kofi responds with realism but she always wants to fight him regardless.

There are times when Kofi wants to enlighten her with a new concept, such as medicine, but she immediately shoots him down. She is not open-minded and isn’t willing to sacrifice anything for him (85). Yet she expects everyone else and Kofi to be open-minded. Anowa will talk to herself about Kofi rather than just talking to Kofi about what’s going on in her head. If she does not get her way, she exaggerates her emotions, like saying she was going to “ cut her throat. ” (90). For years, she knows she is unhappy and that she sees no future for herself with him.

Instead of confronting that, she fights Kofi and rebels against everything he chooses. Anowa’s immaturity is seen even at the end of the book when she calls in everyone from town to tell of Kofi’s decision to kick her out of the house and to expose him of his infertility and lack of masculinity (121). You can’t blame people for not having the correct answer to everything, but it’s

obvious that Anowa is partly to blame. Throughout the whole story, Kofi plays the victim. He manipulates the situation to make it seem as if he isn't at fault for anything and that he has made all the best choices he thinks he could have made.

Just like Anowa, he talks to himself often about the problems within their relationship and how he feels but they never communicate those things together. When Anowa speaks her mind, Kofi asks who told her that information, as if she couldn't think for herself. Kofi only lives by what other people say is right or wrong, rather than listening to himself. Anowa wants to keep working but he thinks they have the right to rest. He never makes a compromise with her stating that she could work if she really wanted to. Kofi can tell that Anowa is unhappy but he could care less.

He does nothing to make her feel happier. From the beginning of the story, the question of his masculinity is evolving. The old woman explains how he “combs his hair too much.” (80). When Anowa begins to notice they are not able to have children, she believes she is at fault. When she offers to find Kofi another woman. This is the normal tradition for their culture, yet he becomes annoyed at her help. This is one time in the story where he chooses not to follow traditional ways. At one point, he wants to buy men and Anowa does not like this idea.

She states that she doesn't need help from other men. Kofi says, “if you don't, I do.” (90). Which is still not a good explanation or reason for buying them. He explains that they will be helpers and that they won't be “carrying” him or anything of that sort. By the end of the book, these men are

carrying him. “ But the Kofi of the trade in slavery, who ultimately depends on slave labor, is the Kofi of the excess that corrupts the soul. The new Kofi, who has made a pact with the devil of material success no matter at whose cost, is already dead long before his suicide” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o).

Over time, Kofi begins to dress better and is always with the men he bought. He sees a doctor at one point in the story and finds out that he is unable to have children. Even though he has this information, he still blames Anowa as if it was her fault they couldn’t have children. He never tells her that he is the one with the issue. Anowa brings up the issue again towards the end of the book. She says she wants to find him another wife to have children with and he gets mad at her. Anowa has an epiphany and asks, “ Are you dying? ” (117).

She realizes that he is the one with the fertility problem and has keeping it from her. She states that his has “ exhausted his masculinity,” that he is “ dead wood. ” (122). She does all of this in front of everyone in the community. She humiliates him and he runs off and shoots himself. She then drowns herself soon after. Everyone in the story was blaming everyone else. They all had different reasons and different opinions about who was to blame for the tragedy. Due to Anowa’s untraditional spirit, many of the people blamed her for everything. The truth of the matter is that everyone in the story was at fault.

No one wanted to communicate properly, no one was disciplined correctly, everyone had a huge ego and no one was willing to work anything out. Everyone was irrational and immature. Everyone is to blame for the suicides.

Bibliography Literature of Developing Nations for Students, ©2013 Gale Cengage. Retrieved at: <http://www.enotes.com/anowa>. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Ama Ata Aidoo: A Personal Celebration. April, 2012. Retrieved at: <http://www.newafricanmagazine.com/features/culture/ama-ata-aidoo-a-personal-celebration>. Aidoo, Ama Ata, Anowa, Longman Group, 1970.