
Antigone: Analysis Of Plot Structure

Antigone, the final play in the trilogy "Three Theban Plays" was written by Sophocles in 441 B.C. Antigone focuses on two main characters within the same family, Antigone the daughter of Oedipus the previous king of Thebes, and Creon the brother of Oedipus's wife Jocasta. After Oedipus dies, his sons inherit the throne and kill each other. Antigone is a tragedy based after the death of her brothers, and where Creon is the new king of Thebes. Throughout the play Sophocles doesn't really use attributes of character and plot that conform with Aristotle's Poetics, however the play Antigone has some elements that align with Aristotle's Poetics. Therefore, Antigone effectiveness as a tragedy is moderately low according to Aristotle's poetics.

The plot of Antigone lacks in the area of complex plot, specifically relating to reversal and recognition. Aristotle's poetics states, "By complex, I mean one in which the change of fortune involves reversal/recognition or both" (Aristotle Poetics 6.2.) What Aristotle means by this is that the best complex plot should include a reversal and a recognition. A reversal in this case is when an action that has good intents leads to the opposite outcome. Recognition is the change from ignorance to knowledge. Aristotle goes on to say, "Recognition is best when it occurs simultaneously with a reversal" (Aristotle Poetics 6.4.) When analyzing Antigone there is only one possible reversal that can be found, Creon's attempt of creating order by sentencing Antigone to death for her disobeying him and that ultimately leading to the death of his family which leaves him in disorder. Creon sentences Antigone to death on page 1096, and the death of his family occurs on pages 1103-1105 of Antigone. The reversal in this case is very spread out and because of this the recognition doesn't occur simultaneously with the reversal, it happens in between the two parts of the reversal, if the story was written where the reversal was more of a unit rather than two separate events then the recognition could happen simultaneously, the reversal being so spread out ultimately leads to it being moderately ineffective as a reversal, because a recognition cannot happen simultaneously with this reversal. The recognition occurs on page 1101 when Creon says "Oh it is hard to give in! But it is worse to risk everything for stubborn pride" (Antigone 1101.) This quote is where he acknowledges that he was ignorant however, Creon says "give in" which suggests that he knew what he was doing was wrong, but only just now decides to change his mind and do the right thing. He never went from ignorance to knowledge, he went from ignoring the truth to accepting the truth. Regarding plot Antigone is erratic, the reversal even though it occurs, is moderately ineffective because of its structure, and the recognition doesn't really occur because

Creon was never ignorant, he simply ignored the truth and facts, until he finally decided to comply with the reality of the situation. With this it can be concluded that regarding simple and complex plot Antigone does technically have a complex plot, however it is a very bad complex plot, this aids in the eventual outcome of Antigone being moderately low in its effectiveness as a tragedy according to Aristotle's Poetics.

The character Antigone defies everything that Aristotle's Poetics claims a woman can do and be. Aristotle says referring to goodness that women and slaves can be good however they are inferior to an average man (Aristotle Poetics 8.1.) Goodness is needed in tragedy to create the

feelings of pity and fear when something bad happens, for example if a good character ends up dying people would feel pity because a character like that doesn't deserve death. Antigone shows goodness on page 1071 when she says, "But I will bury him: and if I must die, I say that the crime is holy: I shall lie down with him in death, and I shall be as dear to him as he to me" (Antigone 1071.) This means that she doesn't care if she dies, because she knows that is the right thing to do, this also suggests at Antigone being courageous, she knows that she could die by fulfilling her brother's proper burial, and yet she does it anyways. According to Aristotle's Poetics women cannot be as courageous as men (Aristotle Poetics 8.1.) Despite being a female Antigone displays goodness and courageousness at the level that men should only be allowed to, this makes a bad female character according to Aristotle's Poetics. Antigone as a character adds confusion to the story she does not conform with Aristotle's Poetics and is out of place for a woman character in a Greek tragedy, because of her levels of goodness and courage she ultimately is a bad character that makes the story not comply with the Poetics, this is a major reason why the Story Antigone effectiveness as a tragedy is moderately low.

Even though Antigone lacks in some areas, the structure of Antigone plot is the most effective that it can be. Aristotle explains in section 7.2 of the poetics that, the character which the tragedy revolves around should be male, they should be respected, morally average, their downfall is caused by a mistake rather than moral defect, their fortune goes from good to bad, and typically based around a household. Antigone has a character like this which is Creon, Creon's character is the perfect example of all the things Aristotle listed, he is in a family of respected royals, he is morally average, and his downfall is caused by need for order not moral defect, and he goes from a king that has everything to a king with no will to live and no family, therefore the structure of Antigone's plot meets Aristotle's Poetics standards of the best structure of a tragedy. The structure of Antigone's plot is what makes the effectiveness of Antigone not all the way ineffective, because of its perfect structure it adds to the effectiveness as a tragedy according to Aristotle poetics.

To conclude Sophocles Antigone effectiveness as a tragedy is moderately low, this is because of character and parts of the plot. Regarding simple and complex plot Antigone is the worst kind of complex plot, however structurally Antigone has the best kind of tragedy structure. On the other hand, Antigone as a character is not good, her courage and goodness at the levels that they are is not allowed for a female. Overall Antigone's ineffective components out way the effective ones, this leads to the conclusion that Antigone's effectiveness as a tragedy is moderately low according to Aristotle's Poetics. This leaves the question if Antigone wasn't being graded according to the Poetics, but rather just to today's standards would it be an effective tragedy?