Antigone: A Greek Tragedy Essay, Research Paper

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The play Antigone is often thought to be a Greek tragedy because each of the tragic heroes is neither extremely good or bad, their fortunes change from good to bad, their misfortunes do not result from their own wrong doings, and they arouse pity within the audience. Antigone and Creon are the two tragic heroes of this play; however, I believe Creon to be main one.

In the play Antigone there can be seen a struggle between two forces: god’s law verses man’s law. A woman, Antigone, who strongly believed in the god’s law, opposed a king, Creon, who believed in the man’s law. Antigone disobeyed Creon’s law, about burying Polyneices, simply because she felt it to be her duty to the gods. Although both Creon and Antigone suffer greatly in the play, I believe that Creon is the tragic hero.

Creon was a king who made a fatal mistake, he didn’t listen to other people. In the beginning of the play Creon decided not to bury the body of his dead nephew Polyneices. He proclaimed throughout his city that whoever buries Polyneices will be stoned to death. Creon hoped that by making such a threat he would stop any disagreements and would establish peace in Thebes. But Creon was wrong. Antigone, a relative of Creon, decided to bury Polyneices, because she felt that Polyneices’ soul didn’t deserve an eternity of suffering and wondering (Greeks believed that if a person wouldn’t be properly buried his soul would wonder forever and will never be at ease). Unfortunately she was caught while performing the burial for her brother and brought to the king. Creon, even though Antigone was part of his family, sentenced her to death. Creon’s fortune changes here from good to bad; it was good because he was king and everything seemed to be going well until Creon gets lost in his pride, which is when everything takes a toll for the worse.

One of Creon’s main weaknesses was his pride. He always believed that he was right and everyone around him was wrong. When Creon’s son came to him and asked him to listen to other people, Creon only looked at him and said, “…Am I supposed to learn from a boy ?…”. Creon was like a stubborn tree unwilling to bend during the flood. And just like a stubborn tree he paid the price for his pride. Creon felt that if he would allow a woman to go unpunished for disobeying his laws, people would think of him as a wimp. Being afraid of the gods (but still unwilling to yield) Creon decided not to kill Antigone himself. He ordered his guards to lock her in a vault. That way he thought it would be the decision of the gods whether she dies or lives. Creon didn’t realize that he had already angered the gods by not burying Polyneices’ body. Soon after that, a blind prophet, named Teiresias, came to the Creon’s palace to warn him about the danger that awaits Creon. Teiresias told him that the gods were angry at Creon, and he shouldn’t fight with a dead corpse. Teiresias also told Creon that the only crime is pride, but Creon still refused to yield to his pride; later he realized that Teiresias might have been right. Creon said to Choragos, “Oh it is hard to give in! But it is worse to risk everything for stubborn pride.” Unfortunately it was too late. By the time Creon buried Polyneices, Antigone hanged her self. Later Haimon, Creon’s son, stabbed himself in his grief for Antigone. When Creon came back to his palace broken hearted, he found out that his wife, Euridice, also had killed herself. So Creon ended up a very unhappy man. Creon was not extremely good or bad, but he maintained a tragic flaw or pride; in most cases, pride would not be considered a horrible trait, but Creon had too much pride, which is why it is called a tragic flaw.

Even though Creon did not physically die in the play, he died spiritually and mentally. Almost all of his family members died, and he was responsible for their death. Creon said, “Lead me away. I have been rash and foolish. I have killed my son and my wife. I look for comfort; my comfort lies here dead. Whatever my hands have touched has come to nothing. Fate has brought all my pride to a thought of dust.” Creon had nothing to live for anymore, and he had no one else to blame for it but himself. Had he not been so proud and power hungry none of the above would have happened. This is when the audience pities Creon the most because most of his family is now dead, and he has to live with that until his death.

The Greek tragedy, Antigone, shows how pride can hurt a lot of people. Without his pride, Creon wouldn’t end up the way he did. It’s very important to overcome your pride and to work out a compromise with other people. Only a tree that bends survives.