

POSITION 4

Analysis: Lit - Antigone.True Tragic Hero

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY:

This analysis accepts an untraditional (to AF) expository style; namely, the assertions are at the *end* of each paragraph (in one case, in two sentences) and that the thesis statement is the first sentence of the conclusion. This is clearly intentional on the part of the writer and directive on the part of the teacher.

With that important distinction considered, this paper scores a 4 for position. It *nearly* meets the criterion for a 5, but is limited by the lack of nuance in the thesis statement.

CRITERION 1: THESIS

The thesis statement (the first sentence of the conclusion) is as follows:

Creon most closely fits with Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero because of his mistakes, his pride, his great downfall, and his suffering.

This thesis statement is certainly defensible and completely addresses the prompt. It is clarified in scope because the reader understands exact *what* about Creon fits the definition of a tragic hero. Ideas and writing are understandable and even clear. However, this thesis statement cannot score a five because it does not contain any nuance. While the thesis statement is fairly specific because it lists the exact criterion that Creon fits, it does not hint at any nuance of analysis that explains why Creon, as opposed to other characters, particularly fits the definition. The criterion listed are stock, pre-determined criterion and do not show nuance of original thought. (While the prompt does not necessarily expect the writer to do this, for the purposes of this analysis, we can still evaluate the thesis statement in this way.) The potential for a nuanced thesis exists; Antigone is most critics' definition of a tragic hero and Creon is a less obvious (and thus potentially more nuanced) choice.

For example, a more nuanced thesis statement might read as follows:

While the tragic Antigone nearly fits the classic example of the tragic hero, ultimately Creon's decisions as king determine the fate of every character in the play. Antigone, Haemon, and Creon alike experience catastrophic downfalls, errors in judgment and exceptional suffering; however, only Creon has the ultimate ability as the monarch to correct his errors and change the fate of his family, making him *Antigone's* true (and only) tragic hero.

The key difference (Creon's power as the monarch) in the last sentence's second independent clause is a *nuance* (subtle variation) that leads to the key point of analysis (that Creon, not Antigone, truly fits the criterion).

CRITERION 2: ASSERTIONS

The presentation of assertions in the paper is also untraditional to the AF model. Namely, the first sentence of every paragraph is *not* argumentative. For example, in the first body paragraph, the first sentence reads as follows: "Ismene, the sister of Antigone, suffers greatly because of the curse her father has placed upon the family by accidentally marrying his mother." Ismene's suffering is simply fact; there is no argument here to defend. However, subarguments do exist in the paper in the form of interpretations at the end of the

paragraph that link back into the thesis statement and overall topic of the paragraph.

For example, in this same paragraph, the last sentence reads as follows:

Ismene's great fall from nobility, her mistake of not helping her sister bury Polynices, and the great suffering she has to endure after having to watch her sister die are some characteristics of a tragic hero, although she does not quite fit the part because these are mostly cause her father's curse; she does not control her fate.

This sentence—the examples of her suffering, the analysis that she did not cause them, the link back to the defined experiences of a tragic hero—is argumentative and the core subargument (assertion) of the paragraph. The same paragraph structure follows in the next two body paragraphs. While this is not traditionally the way we teach paragraph structure at AF, it is a perfectly fine way of writing (done correctly!) and should not receive any penalties.

Each assertion is clarified in scope because they each prove exactly why that character does or does not fit the criterion. The assertions are even distinct and clear, but they are not particularly precise and concise. Graded alone, the assertions could push to a five, but could not score a six because they do not show true complexity of thought.

Mr. Mendoza

English I

January 24, 2006

The True Tragic Hero

At the soul of every classic tragic play is suffering and a tragic hero. Ordinary suffering can be caused ^{specifically - whose?} mainly by death but also by mistakes a character makes, and other things the character loses like relationships and material items. All of the characters will usually feel some degrees of sufferings but none ^{is} are as great as the suffering of the tragic hero. The tragic hero faces not only the death of some of those close to him and mistakes he makes but a great ^{as well} downfall. The tragic hero is usually born as a noble but because of his mistakes suffers a great ^{the} downfall and ^{the} deaths of those close to him; he controls his fate. Usually this suffering leads to a suicide by the tragic hero or the tragic hero becomes secluded and usually ends up dying. The tragedy *Antigone* is no different; each character suffers but only one tragic hero falls from his

place and suffers the most because of the choices he makes. ^{Each of the three characters, Ismene, Haemon and Creon, suffer greatly because of death and a set fate but only one is the tragic hero}

^{because he controls his fate, bringing on his own great fall and many mistakes that cause the sufferings of those around him along with himself}

^{is} Ismene, the sister of Antigone, ^{specify} suffers greatly because of the curse her father has placed upon the family by accidentally marrying his mother. This curse causes her entire family to die

^{in various ways}, leaving Ismene with great suffering as the only remaining family member After her two brothers kill each other she suffers greatly because her brother Polynices, "is not to be

buried" (127). This disrespect and disregard for traditions and honor ^{is what} causes some of

Ismene's suffering. When Ismene finds out that Antigone is sentenced to death for burying her brother she tries to die along with Antigone claiming, "I am as much to blame as she is" (140). By ^{speaking} ~~doing this~~ she is ^{expressing} ~~expressing~~ her sorrow but is denied her death and forced to bear her sister's, leaving Ismene as the only remaining family member. Ismene's ^{which was what?} great fall from nobility, her mistake of not helping her sister bury Polynices, and the great suffering she has to endure after having to watch her sister die are some ^{there are experiences - events, but not characteristics} characteristics of a tragic hero, although she does not quite fit the part because these are mostly caused by her father's curse; she does not control her fate.

^{This topic sentence needs work on form - better this and the previous topic sentence to be about someone else other than the named character.}
Haemon, the son of Creon, ^{and} suffers greatly from his father's mistakes. He suffers greatly when he finds out his fiancée, Antigone, is going to be killed, he even tries to change Creon's mind, something no one in the city dared to do, "Only because I know you are wrong, wrong / What sort of respect tramples on all that is holy?" (146). ^{At this point} he is ^{trying to express} his sorrow, but his father's mistake ^{his mistake ignores him?} dampens him by ignoring him. His despair ^{soon} drives him to

take his own life so that he can be with his bride in death. When Creon tells him he must watch

Antigone die, Haemon responds, "That sight I'll never see. Nor from this hour / shall you see me again" (147). This expression of sorrow shows Haemon's noble aspects and the extent to which

he suffers. Haemon's tragic end seems to fit perfectly with what Aristotle would define as a

tragic hero; his suffering leads him to die beside his bride, waiting till Creon was in sight before stabbing himself with his sword. But Haemon's death was not caused by his own mistakes but those of his father, which excludes him from being the tragic hero. Haemon does not control his

own fate.

^{over to a true topic sentence, it still needs to be more specific.}
Creon, the king of Thebes, falls from his place and suffers his family's death because of ^{Specify} his own mistakes. One of these mistakes is his failure to honor Polynices with a burial. Creon

also is too prideful, "No other touchstone can test the heart of man, / the temper of his mind and spirit, till he be tried / in the practice of authority and rule." (131). He considers himself higher than all the others which could possibly be his biggest mistake. Sentencing Antigone to death is also a mistake that leads to his downfall. [This act]angers his son which causes Haemon to go to dire measures to avenge his father. Creon finally realizes his mistake when the blind prophet, Teiresias, shows it to him, "Pay to the dead his due. Wound not the fallen. / It is no glory to kill and kill again." (153). Creon is finally able to see that Polynices deserves his respect, and without it Creon is doomed. He immediately goes to bury Polynices but his fate is sealed and he is forced to witness his son dying because of the mistakes Creon has made. When informing his wife of the news she in turn kills herself. His own mistakes cause his own downfall along with those around him. Creon's great fall, pride, sorrow, and mainly his control over his fate are the characteristics that fit with Aristotle's view of the tragic hero.

Creon most closely fits with Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero because of his mistakes, his pride, his great downfall, and his suffering. He does realize his mistakes as he nears the end but it is already too late to repair what he did. But according to Aristotle's view on tragic heroes it is not just those characteristics that make the hero; it is his control over his own destiny. Creon controlled his own fate through his actions and pride and is therefore the tragic hero of *Antigone*. A tragic hero does not suffer because of the mistakes of those around him or because of destiny, or he suffers because of himself. to humanity in general?

On my honor, I have not violated the honor code in any way on this work. *Pattin Ford*

St. John's School, 9th grade English, Antigone essay