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Self-editing Assignment

Cultural Comparisons and Contrasts for World Literature

The values and behavioral patterns in the texts of *Antigone* and the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* are two different works, but have some similar ideas. Though both Antigone and Douglass lived in two very different worlds, they face some of the same resentment, show the same quality of strength, and attempt to obtain justice for those that cannot.

*Antigone* was a fictional Greek tragedy that was written by Sophocles around the year 442 BCE. *Antigone* is the story of *Oedipus* carried on. Oedipus was the son of Laius and Jocasta who was sent away due to the prophecy that he would kill his father. The prophecy was fulfilled by Oedipus. He then married his mother and had two sons and two daughters with her.

Oedipus’ children were doomed from birth. Ismene –Antigone’s sister—stated the curse that was brought upon the family in one of the opening scenes. Ismene said “...when sins bared by his own search had moved him to strike both eyes with self-blinding hand; then the mother wife, two names in one, with twisted noose did despite unto her life; and last, our two brothers in one day, -each shedding, hapless one, a kinsman's blood, -wrought out with mutual hands their common doom.”

The two brothers killing each other is what set this story into motion.. Because Polyneices was seen as a traitor, King Creon of Thebes outlawed a burial for him. The other brother, Eteocles, was permitted to have a burial and was to be honored and to be treated like a hero. Antigone, was very loyal to her family. She did not agree with this law set by Creon and decided to defy it. Antigone tried to manipulate Ismene into helping her do the deed, but Ismene was not willing to break the law. She also pointed out that they could never go through with it or get away with it due to them being women. “Nay, we must remember, first, that we were born women, as who should not strive with men.” This argument did not stop Antigone, and she followed through with her plan of burying Polyneices and defying the law.

After Antigone gave Polyneices a burial, tragic events started to happen. Antigone was married to Haemon--Creon’s son. When Antigone was sentenced to death for burying “the traitor”, someone had to tell Haemon about what his beloved wife had done. After Creon realized that his decision to execute Antigone was a mistake, it was too late. Before being stoned to death, Antigone died by hanging herself, which then caused Haemon to stab himself, and Eurydice--Haemon’s mother and Creon’s wife-- to cut her throat. Oedipus’s curse and Creon’s lack of leadership are what unraveled these tragic events.

*Antigone* is a play that reflects Greek cultural values, such as putting the gods before humans, honoring family, self-sacrifice, and even the idea of feminism. In the Ancient Greek culture, honoring the gods before man was extremely important. Antigone upheld that by defying Creon’s law and burying Polyneices anyway—because it is what the gods want her to do. Antigone also upholds another Greek value about honoring family. She cares about her family and was willing to lay down her life in order for her brother to go into the afterlife. Antigone also shows her strength of being a woman and going up against Creon--a man--to do the right thing. She showed that even though women are submissive in Greek culture, that she will defend and honor the gods before a mortal man.

Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography in 1845. He starts his narrative from the day he was born by talking about his parents. He goes into grave detail about the “relationship” between his mother and father, and discusses that even if his father was not his master, it was still very common during that time for slave owners to have sexual relationships with their slaves: “...and this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable”.

Douglass continues to discuss his life, chronologically, by talking about growing up as a slave and what the slave living conditions were like. He recounts about his jobs, the minimal food supply, regular beatings, and even the horrific murder of a slave girl. “She had been set that night to mind Mrs. Hick's baby, and during the night she fell asleep, and the baby cried. She, having lost her rest for several nights previous, did not hear the crying. They were both in the room with Mrs. Hicks. Mrs. Hicks, finding the girl slow to move, jumped from her bed, seized an oak stick of wood by the fireplace, and with it broke the girl's nose and breastbone, and thus ended her life.”

When Douglass was seven or eight, he was sent to Baltimore to live with the Auld family. It was there that he learned to read and write from Mrs. Auld, until she was scorned by her husband for teaching a slave how to read. Even after Mrs. Auld stopped teaching, Douglass continued to teach himself. It was also there in Baltimore when he first heard about the Abolitionist movement, which set into place his legacy.

Just like other slaves, Douglass was moved around a lot. He was lent to a man named Mr. Covey. Covey was a poor farmer and a harsh man, who would beat and whip his slaves constantly. One day Douglass had enough and fought back. Douglass feared for his life and begged to be sent somewhere else, but Covey never whipped Douglass again. “From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.”

Douglass’ servitude for Mr. Covey wrapped on Christmas day 1833, where he then went and worked for Mr. Freeland--who was the opposite of Mr. Covey. Douglass liked working for Mr. Freeland but, he was sick of being a slave.  “I began to want to live *upon free land* as well as *with Freeland.*” Douglass escaped by canoeing down the Chesapeake Bay, but was caught and was returned to Hugh Auld. Douglass was put to work in a ship yard and soon finds himself as proficient at ship caulking. He began to make money, after settling an arrangement with Mr. Auld, and saved it so he could escape. Douglass was able to escape to New Bedford, Massachusetts. He married and had a hard time finding work, but ended up going to an anti-slavery convention where he is asked to speak.

After Douglass speaks at the convention, he found that he enjoyed working in the public eye and speaking out against slavery. Douglass founded an abolitionist newspaper and wrote his narrative to “... do something toward throwing light on the American slave system”. Douglass’ book does highlight the negatives of slavery, which fed into the culture of the United States during this era. His efforts to bring awareness to the horrors of slavery did not go un-noticed. Many northerners, and some southerners, were beginning to join the movement to fight against involuntary servitude. The issue of slavery quickly became a hot topic in the United States, making Douglass, and many other famous abolitionists, an ever-lasting legacy for the abolitionist movement.

Even though Antigone is a fictional character in a Greek tragedy, and Frederick Douglass was a real life former slave and abolitionist, their stories and characteristics have some amazing similarities, and the two of them are reflections of their cultures of Thebes and of 19th century America.

Both “characters” were weak and subordinate creatures. Antigone was weak and subordinate for being a woman, and Douglass was such for being a slave. They knew what was it was like to be undermined based on their physical appearance. They both overcame those challenges and were not beaten down by them, even though that is what their societies wanted.

Antigone and Douglass also wanted to obtain justice for those who came before them. Their loyalty to their ancestors and relatives are what gave them the ambition and feeling of moving forward with what they believe in, regardless of the consequences. Both looked death in the face and did not fear it—they stayed strong, because they knew that they were right in arguing against their injustices.

They both used religion to justify what they are doing, as well. While Antigone used it to defend her actions for not following the law, Douglass used it to prove what the white, Christian slave-owners were doing was hypocritical—especially when they used the Bible to justify their horrendous wrong-doings to the slaves. Both Antigone and Douglass were making arguments about having, and showing, respect for their fellow beings—dead or alive.

These stories, regardless if it was fiction or fact, show that throughout the world, and throughout time, different battles may be fought, but there are always people to bring light upon issues that are wrong. It also goes to show that even though two people might live in different cultures, there are always challenges to overcome, and the only way you can dissolve those issues, and overcome those challenges, are to show love, honor, and respect to everyone.

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| **What I have trouble with** | **Why I have trouble** | **What I can do to fix it** |
| Present and past tense. | I confuse myself by putting verbs in the present tense, when I need to put them in the past. | Stick to one verb tense and not switch tenses in the middle. Because this is a story in the past, past tense should be used. |
| Pronoun reference error. | I think I have trouble with this because I know what noun I am referencing, but sometimes they (the noun and pronoun) are too far apart. | Instead of writing the pronoun, write the actual noun. |
| Pronoun agreement error. | I have trouble with pronoun agreement because I do not think about the agent that the pronoun is referencing whenever I am writing a sentence. | Pay more attention to the noun / agent in the beginning and use the appropriate pronoun for that agent. |
| Comma splices. | I had a little trouble with comma splices, because when I write and read through my writing fast, I think it makes sense. | Take my time when writing and revising. Make sure that I use a correct conjunction. |
| Misplaced modifiers. | I did not even know that I had trouble with this. I thought I described things accurately, and where it makes sense. | Review the misplaced modifier rules and put them into practice. Make sure that my sentences and descriptions are correctly articulated. |

**Self-Edit Assignment**

During the self-edit assignment, I learned many things about my writing. My editing process took a lot of time, as it should. I carefully looked through each line of my paper and carefully examined it. I did notice I would lose focus occasionally, but I would go back and review the paragraphs that I skimmed over.

While editing my paper, I noticed that my patterns of error were either very consistent or not very consistent. An example of a consistent error pattern would be the verb tense. I think the reason for that is I got carried away with the present tense, even though it should have been past. An example of an inconsistent error would be the comma splice. I think when I wrote my paper, it was just a random mistake. The rest of my patterns of error fall somewhere in between on the consistency scale. I think I did a pretty good job of making sure my paper was clear and concise when I revised it before submitting it for my World Literature class.

The personal style chart was very handy for this assignment and I do believe I will use it in the future. It helped me keep track of the error patterns that I ran across and helped me reflect on why I had those errors. Most of the time it was just negligence and writing / reading too fast. I hope to slow down when revising my future papers, and create style charts so that I can keep track of the errors that I need to improve on for other papers.