

A comparison between “Caucasian Chalk Circle” and “Antigone”

“Caucasian Chalk Circle” was a play written in 1944 by a playwright called Brecht. Sophocles wrote “Antigone” in 400B.C. The main similarity of the two plays is that they were both written in a time of war and turmoil. “Caucasian Chalk Circle” being written just before the end of world war two, and “Antigone” was written when Greek democracy was just starting therefore had to fight to stay in power.

“Caucasian Chalk Circle” was a very contemporary piece, compared to what had been written at the time suppressed what was happening. This is similar to “Antigone” because, like many other Greek plays written at the time, it was very violent and bloody, much like “Caucasian Chalk Circle.”

In both societies the leadership was both of dictatorship, the leadership of one person without the risk of re-election, however, in “Caucasian Chalk Circle”, you see a breakdown of law and order, because of the lack of control the leaders have over the people, whereas in “Antigone”, there is strict law enforcement, and if anyone, even Rulers, stepped out of line they would be severely punished.

“Antigone” focuses on the conflict of individual belief whereas “Caucasian Chalk Circle” is a story about large-scale issues, for example, civil war, which is the conflict of believers, but a big conflict between very large groups of people. “Caucasian Chalk Circle” is also about social disintegration whereas “Antigone” just shows the fight against authority.

“Antigone” is about a girl, Antigone, standing up against the decree that the king had passed, because she felt that it was unfair and in just, and she felt she needed to fight for justice. “Caucasian Chalk Circle” is about a girl, Grusha, fighting for survival, against the “Iron shirts” who are trying to kill her. In both plays the main character is fighting for survival to stand up for what she believes in.

The Splendid productions rendition of “Antigone” which I saw by a small touring company was a very simple set, with limited props and costumes. Our production of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” also uses very minimal props, and a set only consisting of six flats, a bench, two platforms and some chairs. Splendid Productions use visual aids for their drama; for example, they use a projector with slides music and video footage. Our drama of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” is similar as it also uses a projector, to change scenes, show pictures, and have the element of sound in it.

Both sets have different levels, both show different hierarchy, in “Antigone” Antigone stands on top of the level looking over the other two actors, which show her moral superiority over them. Similarly in our version of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” in the scene with Simon and Grusha, Simon stands above Grusha, as he has a higher status: he is a soldier, whereas she is just a peasant woman.

In “Antigone” by Splendid Productions there are only three actors in total. They compensate for this by having multi-roles and defining who they are by the way they stand or speak. This is also the case in our production of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” as all the actors in that have at least two different characters to play, both of these completely different, for example, the actor playing Natella Abashvili also has to play a servant and a peasant. Because there is little prop use the actor has to define her character to the audience by the way she acts, talks and stands.

The main difference between these two productions is that “Antigone” is adapted, very well, into a completely different play, whereas the script of “Caucasian Chalk Circle” has been kept the same, but with different stage directions, Splendid Production focuses on changing the play to make it interesting, for example, they add songs and dances. Whereas our production focuses on changing the set and the way each scenes are acted out.

Natella Abashvili in “Caucasian Chalk Circle” can be seen as being very self-absorbed and self-centred, this can be seen in the scene where she has to get away from her home and is choosing which clothes to take, as she says: “Where is my wine coloured dress” this shows Natella’s complete absorbance in herself, as, even though they have to get away because there is fire and panic, she only cares about her dresses and does not care if she is taking up valuable time of the servants, when they could be escaping. This is very different to Antigone’s attitude towards herself, as she is willing to face a death punishment for someone else, her brother, so that he can have a safe after life, which is very self-less of her.

Antigone stresses the higher laws of duty to the gods, this means that she feels that the rules of the civilisation are below her, as she follows laws higher above, this could be seen as her thinking she is better than the law, which is similar to the way that Natella feels because as she is the Governors wife, she feels that she does not necessarily have to deal with civilizations rules, this is why she is so shocked when her life gets turned upside down and she is a civilian, therefore she has to abide by those rules.

Both Antigone and Natella are from a family of nobility, Antigone is The King Creon’s Neice and Natella is the Governors wife. Even though this similarity is true, the way they treat their positions are completely different. Antigone does not abuse her position, and does not feel different to the people that are lower than her, whereas Natella is self-important and feels way above her servants and even her colleagues.

The story of “Antigone” is about how Antigone buries her brother, even though the law says that she can’t. This reveals great dedication to her family, as she goes against the law, just for her brother. This is a completely different to the view that Natella has about her family, as it seems that she is not bothered that her husband had just been killed, and near the end of the play, in the story of Azdak, it is revealed that the only reason that she wants her child, Michael, back is so that she can access the grounds and buildings that he would own from his father.

The way things end for each of the characters, in each of the play can be seen as being similar, as they both lose all of their possessions, even if they are in different ways. As Antigone loses them because she kills herself, and makes herself a Martyr, and Natella loses them because she is unable to access them because the Judge, Azdak, does not let her have access to her son, who is the key to her possessions.

These two characters where both from the same background and had the same atmosphere around them, war, however they both are completely different Characters, this could be because of the obvious age difference of these two plays, or it could be the way they had been brought up. The plays have very similar settings, and the atmosphere of the society is also very alike, whereas the law and order are both on very different extremes. The Productions are also very similarly acted out, as they both have the element of visual aids, therefore, there are obvious differences and similarities between these plays and these characters, however there are much more similarities than differences.