

Agamemnon evokes more pity than Jason does, do you agree?

When considering if we pity someone, the factors that have to be considered are, their personality-because if we like them we are more likely to pity them, their actions and whether we feel that they are right or wrong, their reversal of fortune-because the extent of their tragedy will evoke more sympathy, their relations and contrasts with others and if they deserved what happened to them. With these factors in mind I feel that it is Jason not Agamemnon who evokes our sympathies more.

Overall I feel that Jason's character is far more rounded than Agamemnon's, we see more of Jason in the play. When we first meet Jason he is an instantly dislikable character, he is too rational and dismisses Medea's reasonable complaints against him. He makes the most disgusting comments, 'Think yourself lucky to be let off with banishment' and brushes off her legitimate argument, 'your ridiculous tirades against the royals.' His gift of speaking rationally irritates and alienates a modern audience; therefore we are distanced from him. I feel that I lose any chance of liking him in the beginning scene, when he dismisses everything that Medea did for him, 'your services, so far they went were well enough.' He goes as far to say that Medea got more than out of their relationship than he did, when she saved his life. His ideals are different to ours, he craves fame and glory above happiness and loyalty, 'unless life brings me fame, I long neither for hoards of Gold, nor for a voice sweeter than Orpheus.' He is a male chauvinist 'if only children could be got some other way' and he constantly puts her down and doesn't let her speak. 'No, keep quiet.' Our first impression of Agamemnon is that he is a great leader and king. 'Honoured by Zeus with throned and sceptered power.' He is a military man who has a great deal of pride, '...thought of his great Hellene fleet, and in his pride spread sail to the wind.' When he learns that he has to kill his daughter we do see him in agony deliberating, 'what can I say? Disaster follows if I disobey.' He seems to have different priorities than the average modern audience, he is willing to kill his daughter for the sake of his job, we cannot sympathise with this because I'm not sure many people would have been able to kill their own daughter. I feel that the first impressions of the two men are not very sympathetic although we are given a fuller character with Jason. Although Jason irritates us, I feel that I don't really know Agamemnon at all, and his killing his daughter has totally overshadowed his personality. As the play progresses we see a different side of Jason, we see that a part of him genuinely cares for his family and is trying to fulfil their needs, he would be very sympathetic to a Greek audience's feelings of family life. 'I'll provide for them.' He is willing to forgive and forget when Medea tricks him, 'I do not blame your first resentment' I think he wins over some sympathy here as we see that he isn't 'evil' and he will give her a chance by saying he will ask Creon to except her sons in the palace, 'I don't know if I can persuade him, but I'll try.' Like Jason, Agamemnon is also ignorant to Clytemnestra's plan and is persuaded to fall right into her trap by walking on the carpet and into his doom. He ever refers to her as the 'guardian of his house'; this irony sparks some sympathy with Agamemnon, as he is totally oblivious to the fact that she will bring down his house. We hear Agamemnon cry from inside the house, it is an image of a great soldier dying an unheroic death, this is very sympathetic. The last scenes with Jason show a father who dearly loves his sons, and is tormented by their death; this picture is a sympathetic one. I feel that Jason evokes more sympathy on a personality basis because he is a fully rounded character, and although he irritates us, he does

slowly become a man who demands our sympathy, whereas we are unsure who Agamemnon really is, as his character is based around the Military. Jason abandons Medea after she saved his life, 'willingly deceived' her father and ruined the King of Pelias, he also never gives her the proper thanks for this, 'That credit for my successful voyage was solely due to Aphrodite.' and leaves her after she gave him to sons, who would carry on his family name. He leaves her knowing she has no-where to go as he brought her there and she covered her trail by ruining people for him. I feel that Jason should suffer in some way for this awful crime, and the fact that he does not show remorse for it does not evoke our sympathies. Although he does explain himself later in the play, by showing himself to be a typical Greek man and displaying genuine desire to help promote the future of his family by marrying into royalty. 'I thought it worth while to ensure advantages for those I have.' I feel Jason's crime is far smaller in scale than Agamemnon's crime. He tricks his daughter into thinking she is going to marry Achilles, and then brutally kills her. 'Rough hands tear at her girdle...Limp in her flowing dress the priests attendants held her high.' He stains her innocence and it is heart wrenching for the audience, I feel no sympathy at all for Agamemnon, especially when he ignores her calls of 'father.' Although we do become slightly understanding when we see that he doesn't think he has done the right thing, but had no choice, 'may good prevail, and justify my deeds.' He also shows a lack of judgement and shows his ignorance when he is persuaded by Clytemnestra to walk on the carpet. We feel that had he put his pride aside, he could have avoided being killed.

Jason's reversal of fortune happens in a very short space of time, which I feel evokes more sympathy for him rather than Agamemnon who loses it gradually. Jason loses his new bride, his two sons and by extension of that the future of his house and he loses his ex-wife Medea. Agamemnon has already lost his daughter by his own hand and although he is jubilant from the victory at Troy, he is killed fairly quickly. Jason is left to suffer for the rest of his life, as he will be alone, 'I go- a father once, now childless.' Whereas Agamemnon is the one who is killed, his life is over.

In the beginning of Medea, we are more inclined to sympathise with Medea, as all the other characters are denouncing Jason and pitying Medea. 'Poor Medea.' 'Jason has betrayed his own sons, and my mistress.' We also relate more to Medea's passion and her human emotion, which Jason seems to lack in the beginning of the play. But as the play progresses and we see how devious Medea can be, we are more inclined to sympathise with her enemy, Jason. When she kills her children and doesn't allow Jason to hold them one last time, as he pleads, all our sympathies are directed toward him. We relate to Jason's sadness at losing his children and cannot believe Medea's cruelty at not letting him touch them one last time. Agamemnon is pitted against Clytemnestra, who is on the whole a dislikable therefore the audience may look for another figure to sympathise with. Although we sympathise with her anger over her daughters death and we find it hard to sympathise with Agamemnon's military loyalty over family loyalty. Although the scene where he deliberates killing his daughter, we see him become more human and we see his decision was not instantaneous. We sympathise with Agamemnon when we can clearly see how ignorant he is to her manipulation, we also may sympathise with him when we see that the chorus has changed their minds about him, 'We thought you were wrong...those times are past.'

Although we would like to see Jason punished for his treatment of Medea, I feel that the punishment he does get is far too severe and more than he deserved. Although he was wrong in leaving Medea and from a female's point of view I feel that he should have not tried to marry into the royal family and should have listened to Medea's argument. But from the point of view of the Greek Audience, he was right in trying to secure a good future for his sons and his future line, he wasn't marrying the princess just to hurt or humiliate Medea, although the outcome did so. The crime that Agamemnon paid out was the crime that was paid back to him; 'the killer will be killed.' Therefore it is difficult not to believe that he deserved to be killed in the same way he brutally killed his innocent daughter. Although, the issue of the curse allows us to sympathise with the fact that he had no choice, the curse would have destroyed him some way. He doesn't come across as an evil man and he is a military man, defending his country therefore he deserved a respectable death. (His wasn't, especially since he was killed by a woman.) Therefore I do feel pity for him in his death scene, but I feel more sympathy for Jason in his final scene.

Jason's personality, although very hard to deal with at first, becomes far more sympathetic than Agamemnon's personality ever is. We are allowed to hate Jason, for who he is, whereas we don't really see Agamemnon's 'personality.' Jason's actions are far less drastic than Agamemnon's, and we see that he genuinely believed that he was doing the right thing for his sons, even though he didn't do it in a very pleasing manner, whereas Agamemnon would know that sacrificing a human is sinful and wrong- he puts his job first while Jason is putting his children first. Jason will suffer more in the future, as he lives alone for the rest of his days, mourning his children, whereas Agamemnon is dead already. Considering all these points I feel that overall both men evoke our sympathies in the play, but it is Jason who we pity the most, as his personality, actions, reversal of fortune lend themselves to evoke out sympathy.