

In this essay I am going to address, in detail, three key factors to help me contextualise the play Antigone. The three areas are as follows:

- i) The Context in which the play is set – the reason for the actual plot and the events that occur within the play.
- ii) The Context in which it was written – anything social, cultural or historical which may affect the way the play is written.
- iii) The Context in which it is performed – any factors which may change the way it will be performed.

Before Sophocles, Antigone was a well know myth. Antigone told the story of how you should never betray the Gods; this was the moral of the story. The story was probably exaggerated like most myths, for example the modern myth of Robin Hood is based on a real story although the myth is far from the truth and this is similar to Antigone. Most people would have known the story of Antigone before it was scripted. There is no exact date for Antigone therefore this is the main reason we believe it to be part of Greek mythology.

Sophocles wrote the play as part of an annual festival in celebration of the God Dionysius. There are many factors which may have affected the way he wrote the play, such as society. The society in which he lived was dominated by men and was very religious, so to have such a strong character as Antigone being the main part would have been controversial. The part of Antigone would have been played by a man as women are thought to of not been allowed to go into the amphitheatre never mind act. Women knew there place with society but even though Antigone was controversial and a complicated story, it would have been easier for the spectators to understand as it was a well known myth. In Ancient Greece everyone knew about the social hierarchy (King then the prophet and then highest the Gods). The play constantly challenges this hierarchy with Antigone challenging the King and the King challenging the prophets and the Gods.

The play would also have been affected by the history. At the time there was a large war happening between Sparta and Thebes, this may be what the Polynices and Eteocles war was based on. There was no violence in Antigone as people went to the amphitheatre to get away from the constant wars, so instead of violence they just had a messenger to describe what happened “Haemon is dead, slain by his own”. They also used masks to represent the emotions of each character and to symbolise, to the audience who watched from a distance, who each character was. There was a chorus which was an outside point of view on the play; all of these would have been in previous Greek plays. The only difference was that Sophocles used three protagonists instead of two; this was the first time that this had happened and revolutionised Greek theatre. Sophocles used three protagonists as he wanted this play to be revolutionary and it also allowed him to do more within a scene

The final factor to be considered is the culture, the Greek people were dominated by their belief in Gods. The Religious culture may have been reflected in the moral of the story that you should never disobey the Gods and that Teiresias, who is the prophet, is the main link between humans and the Gods.

When we perform *Antigone* we will have to consider the context in which it was written yet at the same time our main aim is to make sure a modern audience will understand the play and be entertained by it. We will not have to project our voice as much due to the massive difference in audience and theatre size, although if we did have to we could do this electronically using a microphone. With the audience being smaller we wouldn't need to use masks to symbolise our character and this would make our voice clearer as the masks would be very restricting. In Greek theatre there would not have been as big a relationship between characters, because in a large theatre much of this would be unnoticed. I think it would be good if we were to do a lot of characterisation and develop the relationship. I would also like to make the piece visually entertaining for the audience by adding dances, mime and other techniques, I think this would be a lot more interesting than just our class standing and reading the choruses. When we perform it I would like to do it with a semi-circular audience which would give the effect of an amphitheatre. I think it is important not to change too much especially the translation. I would prefer to keep the version which is translated directly into English rather than trying to modernise the language, I think the play would lose the rhythm if we did this, this happened when E.F. Watlings tried to translate it into modern English. I would also like to develop our status, for the scenes we are doing I would use the card method where we pick a number for that character's status (1 = low 10 = high). We could then act out our number and show our status visually by use of body language.

To conclude when we perform our adaptation of *Antigone* I would like to change lighting, costume and movements to make it modern in that way but I think I would have to keep the text the same. I think the audience would be able to understand *Antigone* just through our movement and body language.