Laura Paoletti , Ali Smith

The Story of Antigone [La Storia di Antigone]

Italy

TAGS: Antigone Chorus Creon Eteocles Fate Gods Haemon Ismene Polyneices / Polynices Sophocles





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General information	
Title of the work	The Story of Antigone [La Storia di Antigone]
Country of the First Edition	Italy
Country/countries of popularity	Italy; United Kingdom
Original Language	Italian
First Edition Details	Ali Smith, *La Storia Di Antigone*. Roma: Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso S.p.A, 2011, 100 pp.
ISBN	9781782690894
Genre	Adaptations, Fiction, Illustrated works, Myths
Target Audience	Young adults
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Laura Paoletti , b. 1985
(Illustrator)

Paoletti is an illustrator and artist who lives and works in Civitanova Marche, Italy. She has illustrated and collaborated on a number of Italian Projects.

Source:

Official website (accessed: February 19, 2018).

Bio prepared by Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, sadlerc2929@gmail.com



Ali Smith , b. 1962
(Author)

Smith was born in Inverness, and received her first degree from University of Aberdeen. Smith attended Newnham College, Cambridge, studying for a PhD in American and Irish modernism, but due to her work writing plays she did not complete her PhD.

In 1995 Smith published her first book, *Free Love and Other Stories*, which won the Saltire First Book of the Year award and Scottish Arts Council Book award. She has since published four short story collections, nine novels and one nonfiction title. In addition Smith also writes for *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *New Statesman* and the *Time Literary Supplement*.

Smith was awarded Commander of the Mothe Excellent order on the British Empire (CBE) in 2015 and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (FRSL) in 2007.

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Additional information

Translation	English: *The Story of Antigone*. London: Pushkin Children's Books, 2013.

Summary

Ali Smith's *The Story of Antigone* follows the familiar plot of the play by Sophocles. Prior to the beginning of the play, Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, are leading the opposing sides in the Theban civil war. The two brothers kill each other at the same time and Creon declares that Eteocles was the rightful king of Thebes and will be honoured and that Polyneices is a rebel and will be denied holy rites of burial. After the death of her brother, Antigone goes against the wishes of her king and uncle, Creon, and prepares and buries her brother's body. In punishment for her crime she is condemned to die. However, not wishing to take responsibility for her death, Creon sentences her to being closed up in a cave, meaning that her death will be by natural causes. However, Tiresias curses Creon for ignoring his warning and killing Antigone, leading to the death of Creon's son and wife. Smith's adaptation only differs significantly from Sophocles' play through the addition of the Crow and the Dog. The Crow is the narrator of the story and the dog a companion of Tiresias. The addition of these two does not stray far from Sophocles however, for, as Smith notes in the epilogue, imagery of crows and dogs is evident throughout the play.

Analysis

The classical components of *The Story of Antigone* are clear in its close adherence to the text of Sophocles. Smith's active engagement with both critical discussion on the text and her interaction with mythology makes it both a good point of entry for adolescents interested in classical civilisations and literature as well as an engaging read for those less interested in Classics.

The story of a seemingly powerless girl standing up to a seemingly all powerful man will resonate with today's younger generation, mirroring images of contemporary individuals such as Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani activist for female education who was shot in the head by the Taliban for attending school, or Ahed Tamimi, the young Palestinian activist who was imprisoned for eight months

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for slapping an Israeli soldier. One image is particularly striking in displaying a small girl versus the patriarchy: Creon speaks of taming horses with a bit. Such language connects with the trope common though history of 'breaking' women, training them to be submissive

Smith engages with the Sophoclean play through the use of the Chorus. The Chorus in *The Story of Antigone* is made up of a group of old men who come across as out-dated, unfashionable and a little cowardly. This puts them in direct opposition to Antigone, who stands up for what she believes in; they cower under Creon, try to appease him and attempt to avoid his wrath at all turns. The cowardly Chorus offers a play on gender expectations, a trope picked up elsewhere in Smith's adaptation through the strength of Antigone and the weakness of Creon. Smith also uses the chorus to update the concerns of Sophocles' play, keeping the topic of many of the Chorus' songs but changing the content to affect the overall sentiment of the songs. Smith uses the Chorus' song about being unable to escape fate but rather than include the words of the Chorus, the Crow mentions the song and its content in a disparaging tone, inviting the rather modern suggestion that humans can be masters of their fates. For a reader familiar with ancient literature, this provides a clear opportunity to discuss or think about the nature of fate, and differing attitudes across time. This updating of attitudes visible in the play can also be seen in the way that Smith leaves out the Chorus' proclamation that the burial was perhaps the will of the gods. Instead, the Chorus sing of all the things that man has conquered but they also sing that man cannot conquer the grave.

Smith displays her interest in gender and sexuality through some of the subtler choices in her adaptation. Playing with notions of gender and sexuality is a trope in many of Smith's works, including by presenting characters who consciously reject gender. In this work, Smith mentions that Tiresias has been both male and female. Though a fairly well known aspect of Tiresias, it is not mentioned in Sophocles' play. The decision to include it creates a launch point for further investigation for readers who are interested in gender.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Antigone Chorus Creon Eteocles Fate Gods Haemon Ismene Polyneices / Polynices Sophocles

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Authority Conflict Death Disobedience Family Justice Morality

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