

2015 Higher Level Exam Question

Parenthood is a central theme of Euripides' play 'Medea'. Discuss this statement supporting your answer with reference to the play.

Parenthood is evident throughout the play *Medea*. There are different relationships that highlight the complexity of family and parenthood. For example, the relationship between Medea and her two sons. It is clear that Medea loves her children and wants to protect them “like a lioness guarding her cubs.” When Creon tells Medea that she must take her sons and go into exile, she begs Creon to show some mercy. She manipulates him by taking advantage of his weakness; his daughter. “Show some pity: you are a father too, you should feel kindly towards them.” Medea knows that Creon loves his child and can sympathise with Medea, as a parent. For this reason, he changes his mind and allows Medea to stay in the city one more day. Due to the fact that parenthood is so important to Creon, this is the only reason he is persuaded to change his mind. If he did not care for his daughter as much, Medea would not have been allowed to stay which means she would never have completed her scheme to get back at Jason for leaving her. This is an example of the importance of parenthood in the play.

Although Medea disagrees with Jason's actions, he believes that by marrying into a royal family, it will give her and their children a better future. Jason is trying to provide for the family as men were supposed to do and also expected to do. This shows the type of father Jason is and how he is putting them first. “To ensure your future and to give my children brothers of royal blood and build security for us all.” It is clear here that Jason wants to look after his children and give them a worthwhile future despite Medea's beliefs. Parenthood is an important theme here because if Jason had not left Medea to provide a better future for their boys, Medea would not have become angry or upset. She would not have decided on her terrible plan to get revenge on Jason which causes heartbreak for many other characters in the play.

While Medea is very affectionate and loving towards her children, she is also the opposite of this as the play progresses. As she continues to plot her revenge, it is clear that her anger and sadness overpower the love she has for her children. She begins to pretend to care about them to persuade others to believe her and take her side. She is very convincing when she tricks Jason into thinking she cares immensely

for them. "To buy my sons from exile I would give life not just gold." It is evident that Medea is not a typical mother because she is willing to kill her children and lie about her true feelings for them just to seek revenge on her husband.

Before Medea goes through with killing her boys, there is a moment of weakness where she questions whether or not it is the right thing to do. We see her acting lovingly towards them. "Women all my courage is gone. Their young bright faces, I can't do it... Why should I hurt them to make their father suffer?" This allows us to see that Medea is still affectionate and caring. But she soon reminds herself of the task at hand and forces herself to gain focus and strength. She realises she must not let her enemies laugh at her and that she has no choice but to follow through with her despicable plan." What is the matter with me? Are my enemies to laugh at me? ...my hand shall not weaken." Clearly, Medea is not the model parent as she is willing to take the lives of her only offspring. This highlights the idea of parenthood and how Medea contradicts all the typical qualities a mother should have.