

Final Paper Sample

Sample 1:

A Broken Marriage Vow

Talk about broken promises, and the waves of retribution that befall a family! Although the theme of shattered oaths runs throughout the Greek Classic, “Medea,” there is one, former, broken oath that sets the stage for the rest of the play: the wedding vows between Medea and her husband Jason. The broken vow initially affects Medea but grows and affects the other characters in the play. The play, “Medea”, by Euripides, revolves around the repercussions of this initial broken promise and Medea’s accelerating response.

In the beginning of the play, Medea is depicted by her nurse as a devoted wife who has been loyal to her wedding vows. However, in an attempt to elevate his status, her husband decides to break this vow and take a new bride, the king’s daughter. The nurse addresses the broken vow and how the betrayal of the oath has consumed Medea. Medea’s initial response to this broken vow is devastation and she alone suffers the consequence.

“in her disgrace, (Medea) cries out, repeating his oaths, recalling the great trust in that right hand with which he pledged his love. . . She just lies there. She won’t eat – her body she surrenders to the pain, wasting away.” (Medea: E-text: 260-33).

As the daily realities of this “divorce” become evident, her demeanor begins to change from a pitiful scorned woman to one who is out for revenge.

As her awareness of this ultimate rejection and “divorce” develops, so does the plot which is ultimately driven by her anger and vengeful nature. Medea’s response to Jason’s broken vow escalates, and she begins to justify her evil thoughts

“If I find some way to punish for these injustices, and his bride, as well, and father, too. . .

when she's hurt in love, her marriage violated, there's no heart more desperate for blood than hers.”

(Medea e-text: 301 – 307)

Jason wronged Medea by breaking his wedding vow, but his new father-in-law, then takes it a step further by banishing Medea. Soon after, her murderous thoughts move to tangible action, as she plots the deaths of Jason, his new wife and her father. This desire to shed blood becomes the overwhelming drive of the rest of the play.

“When I'll turn three of my enemies to corpses—father, daughter, and my husband.

Now, I can slaughter them in many ways... The best method is the most direct, the one at which I have a special skill—I'll murder them with poison.”(Medea: E-text: 374-375, 384-385)

The pain that the broken vow has given Medea, is no longer limited to her. She decides to take revenge and spread this pain, even beyond the three who wronged her. Medea, a sorcerer, is now going to use the skills she used initially to help Jason in battle to destroy him. She now sees even her own “abandoned” children as part of this broken promise, and their deaths as an ultimate repayment for Jason’s scorned oath. The effects of this initial broken promise continue to grow like a black hole, and to consume everything in Medea’s path. It even drives her to enter new vows, as with Aegeus.

Their marriage oaths, didn’t seem to hold any weight for Jason, as he disposes of them when he marries Creon’s daughter, hoping to advance himself as Creon’s successor. He also seems little affected by his decision and thinks that it is for the best. However, the oath held great weight with Medea and its disloyalty deeply affects Medea and drives her to blind anger, in which even her children fall victim to murderous plot. Although the oath involved only the two and their marriage,

the breaking of the oath affect everyone, even the innocent. Although this initial promise is broken before the play even begins, we see how Medea's response to Jason's broken marriage oath progresses throughout the play, setting the stage for the entire tragedy of "Medea" by Euripides.

<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/medea.trans.shtml>

Grade: 8.75/10

Comments:

The introductory paragraph indicates a clear direction for the paper; the passages cited are relevant, useful choices for the argument you make; this paper clearly indicates a thoughtful engagement with the tragedy.

I would like to see a stronger thesis. You write, "The play... revolves around the repercussions of this initial broken promise..." True. But a stronger thesis would say how: "Jason's failure to keep his marriage oath ultimately leads to the death of his own children." See how this is more specific?

I would also have liked to see more analysis of the quoted passages. You give them, and seem to think that they speak for themselves. Remember: you are trying to persuade your reader of something. You need to discuss the passages you cite thoroughly.