

A comparison of
antigone's and
ismene's reactions to
grief in antigone by
sophocles...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The tale of Antigone is one of the oldest pieces of literature that is still being studied today. The play is able to explore the psychology of many different characters as they are all forced to deal with the death Polyneices. While the differences between how Antigone, Haimon, and Creon respond to the situation may be widely discussed, another interesting relationship to analyze in the text is that between Antigone and Ismene. Both sisters experience a tragedy as their brothers kill each other, yet their responses are quite different. Antigone's response to the grief is to focus on the injustice of the situation and risk herself to set things right, while Ismene is filled with sadness, yet fears the ramifications of breaking the law. Both responses are results of love, yet the specifics of each case allow a deeper look into the psychology of these characters.

When reading and discussing the play of Antigone, Antigone herself is most often seen as the heroin. However, it could be argued that Antigone is the reason for the tragedy. If Antigone had expressed her grief with Haimon, it is possible that he could have convinced his father to lift the law against burying Polyneices body. Also, her rash decision to kill herself leads to the death of both Haimon and the queen as they are filled with grief. After thinking through the different endings that could have occurred if Antigone had responded calmer, it is reasonable to conclude that Antigone's plan of rebellion was not the most practical response. Ismene, on the other hand, responds with grief but no action. It could be argued that this is a more practical response as it prevents any further harm, yet with Ismene's response nothing is really fixed, it is all merely pushed aside as if it did not happen.

After analyzing the practicality of the girls' responses, the question of morality is raised. Was Antigone doing the right thing, standing up for her family and offering herself as a sacrifice? Or was Ismene correct in avoiding further conflict and simply grieving for the loss of her brother and his honor? This is a very difficult thing to analyze as the grief in this situation is almost unfathomable. It may be most reasonable to argue that neither girl was in the right mindset to make a moral, practical decision. They have just learned that their brothers have killed each other and one will die with honor, while the other may not. Thinking about this situation, it becomes clear that neither girl responded ethically nor practically, but they both responded emotionally according to their own personalities.

The play *Antigone* by Sophocles includes multiple complex situations and relationships, and that of Antigone and her sister Ismene is one of the most intriguing. Watching these girls deal with the pain of losing their brothers and then deal with the pain of losing each other in disagreement over the situation makes the tragedy more powerful. Sophocles is able to include human nature in this situation as both sisters behave impractically and unethically. This is seen often in life as well as emotions overcome logic and may lead to even more tragic situations as those that occur in *Antigone*.