

Creon as the tragic hero of antigone



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Greek tragedy would not be complete without a tragic hero. Sophocles wrote *Antigone* with a specific character in mind for this part. Based on Aristotle's definition, Creon is the tragic hero of *Antigone*.

Creon fits Aristotle's tragic hero traits as a significant person who is faced with difficult decisions. Creon is significant because he is king. This makes him both renowned and prosperous. Creon is not completely good nor completely bad; he is somewhere in-between, as humans are. The audience can relate to this and they admire his qualities of intelligence in political affairs. They can also relate to his ability to make hard decisions with apparent ease. These hard decisions are what lead Creon to fit Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero. Creon faces decisions that lead to a no-win situation, with confidence, and he makes the best decision he can, based on his beliefs. He believes that Polyneices should not be buried because he was a traitor to his family. This decision affected Antigone greatly, and Creon knew that the decision would be hard on some people. Family and burials are very important in society, and Creon is asking Antigone to not consider them, to only consider that Polyneices was a traitor to his home city. Creon is then faced with the knowledge that Antigone went against his will and law, and buried her brother. Again, Creon is faced with a hard decision. He must choose to kill his own family member and uphold the law, or punish her less severely and show that he is not serious about death as a punishment to his law. Creon doesn't want to show weakness, even for family, but he doesn't want to kill Antigone, who is not only his niece and sister, but engaged to his son. The final decision that Creon must make is whether or not to revoke his death sentence on Antigone. Creon would be doing the right thing, but it

would show that he was wrong in a previous decision and he does not want to admit that he was wrong.

Unfortunately, Creon does not always make the correct decision because of personality traits that he possesses. When Creon sentences Antigone to death, he is wrong. This decision is based on Creon's downfall. He has hamartia and he judges wrong, and he also suffers from hubris. He is excessively prideful and believes that his choice is the only correct one. Creon also has an inaccurate view of his place in relation to the Gods. He believes he is in a position to know what They want and know what They feel is best. No mortal truly knows what the Gods want, but Creon believes he does because he cannot imagine that what he believes is wrong, even to the Gods. Antigone's death is a bad decision that Creon makes based on his beliefs that the Gods view Polyneices as a traitor and would not want him honored in death.

Creon's bad decision leads to his eventual downfall and demise. Creon realizes his hubris and his wrong decision a little too late. Antigone is already dead, and he cannot correct his wrong-doing. This makes the audience feel pity for him, for he does try to correct his mistake. As more deaths are realized, the audience feels more deeply for Creon. In the process of going from ignorance to knowledge, he loses Antigone, his wife, and his son. All of his suffering humbles Creon, and he begins to change and view the world differently. He realizes that he was wrong in punishing Antigone for honoring her brother's death and that it is okay for him to admit when he is wrong, and show his weakness, because, in the end, it makes him stronger. All of the suffering that he endures serves for the reason for his death. Creon's

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decisions and their consequences show the audience that he is the tragic hero of the play.

Creon's character meets all of Aristotle's views of a tragic hero. Some people argue that Antigone is faced with tough decisions and a downfall, just as Creon is, but she does not meet all of the characteristics. While Creon realizes his wrong-doing and negative traits, and strives to change, Antigone does not. She does not change, but stays ignorant, even in her death. The only way to grow and improve oneself is to change. Creon changes, but cannot benefit from them because his death so quickly follows his transformation. The audience realizes how short life is, and Creon's downfall causes them to re-examine their values and beliefs. It also helps the audience learn that it is never too late to admit you are wrong, or change.