

Creon vs. antigone or
male vs. female?
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Sophocles Antigone, the title character's gender has profound effects on the meaning of her actions. Creon himself says that the need to defeat her is all the more pressing because since she is a woman her rebellion upsets gender roles and hierarchy. By refusing to be passive, she overturns one of the fundamental rules of her culture. Women were subjugated and supposed to be silent spectators to the world around them as men's, such as Creon's, search for power fuels their desire to put women down to lessen the possibility of a threat. Antigone is a woman who firmly believed in humanly burying a dead body and whose actions changed the course of Theban history.

Her brothers have been slain by each other's swords in battle and Creon, the king of Thebes, has made a decree stating that one brother shall be given an honorable burial for his service to the city, while the other will be given no burial because he is considered a traitor to the city of Thebes. In Ancient Greece, if a person died and was not given a proper burial, then their spirit would not be able to pass into Hades. Because of this, Antigone is determined to give her brother a proper burial. At the same time, Creon is determined that no one will bury Polyneices and anyone who tries will be condemned to death. Creon and Antigone's conflicting points of view eventually lead to their own demise.

As befits her, Antigone is a loving and loyal daughter and sister. It is precisely this loyalty that makes her an active rather than a static figure. Throughout the play, Antigone amazingly retains the traditional role of women, while at the same time boldly challenging this depiction. This is precisely where the conflict between the sexes rises. The denial of burial to

her brother directly strikes at her family loyalty, for it was the privilege and duty of the women of the house to mourn the dead man in unrestrained sorrow and consign him to the earth. By refusing to let go of one of her womanly duties she breaks another one. This enormous sense of loyalty leads to her simultaneous violation and abidement to the duty of women at the time. She is an example that disproves the saying that a woman is the "effect" of the "cause" that is man. She independently starts her own fight. When she confronts her sister about her plan, the feminine Ismene replies: "Remember we are women, we're not born to contend with men.

Then too we're underlings, ruled by much stronger hands, so we submit in this, and things still worse," (74-77). These words express her extreme fear of subordination to man. She admits to and accepts committing wrong and suffering due to a woman's subordination to man. Unlike Ismene, Antigone does not care if anyone is willing to assist her in burying her brother, she is willing to do it on her own in spite of the consequences. In order for her to properly mourn her brother, like every sister should, Antigone was forced to boldly challenge the law set forth by her uncle and king, Creon an action or idea that is forbidden by her society. She stubbornly refused to give in to Creon resulting in her tragic death.

Creon becomes furious with his niece for committing such an unforgivable crime because it is out her place. Not only did Antigone challenge the authority of her king, but also the high power of a man. When speaking to his son, Haemon, about his fiance's act, Creon strongly emphasizes the important relationship and obligation of a man to his father rather than to his wife. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of males in a household when <https://assignbuster.com/creon-vs-antigone-or-male-vs-female-essay-sample/>

he says: "That's what a man prays for: to produce good sons- households full of them..." (716-717). "...never lose your sense of judgement over a woman . . . a worthless woman in your house, a misery in your bed," (724-727). By stating this, Creon expresses his belief that a woman's sole purpose is to serve and support her husband. Once this is broken, she is no longer of any use. He is trying to convince his son that a woman is not worth going against your father. Furthermore, pride is strongly evident in Creon making him an even better example of the male stereotype.

He refuses to compromise or humble himself before others especially women. For example, he says: "...never let some woman triumph over us. Better to fall from power, if fall we must, at the hands of a man-never be rated inferior to a woman, never" (759-763). He stubbornly refuses others the right to express opinions different from his own. Creon abuses his power to force others to accept his point of view. This extreme male dominance conflicts head-on with Antigone's bold unwomanlike challenge to Creon's authority. When encountered with his son, Haemon's defiance to his father, Creon proclaimed him a "woman's slave," a man unfortunately sided with a woman. According to Creon, this act was close to, if not already, a sin. Creon succeeded in gaining the common male persona of being brutal in exchange for the loss of his family and happiness.

Antigone and Creon both are unwilling to listen to reason. Ismene reminds Antigone of the consequences of burying their brother by telling her that going against Creon will ultimately result in her death. Even after Ismene's plea, Antigone will not listen to reason. She is determined to give her brother a proper burial instead of thinking of how her decision will affect others.

Creon is equally unwilling to listen to reason. He is unwilling to listen to the pleas of his son to let Antigone live. Creon believes that if he changes his decree, his subjects will see him as a weak ruler, therefore he is unwilling to listen to the reasoning of his son. Stubbornness ultimately leads to their downfall. The bold, tradition-braking character of Antigone clearly clashed with the opepowered, male dominant personality of Creon. This collision of character gave rise to the conflict between the sexes in Sophocles' Antigone.