

Batman and creon:
denied the glory?



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A little boy went to the corner store to pick up the newest edition of his favorite comic; Batman. The boy entered the store and despite his efforts to withhold his excitement, dashed straight to the massive stack of magazines the store had received at nine that morning. He scanned the comics and magazines until his eyes marked his target. He slowly removed the comic from its place, cautious not to bend any edges. But when he took a closer look, his wild-eyed expression changed to one of confusion. The title wasn't Batman: The Masked Avenger, as advertised in the last issue, but rather: Robin: A True Hero! He sighed, and despite his upsetting discovery, sat on the tile floor and read the comic. As he read, he was increasingly disturbed as the character of Robin, whose name had proudly been marked as the title, wasn't nearly as much of a main character as Batman. And he was jolted severely when only halfway through the adventure, Robin was captured by the wily Joker, and didn't appear at all until the child closed the comic, done with his reading. This situation may sound familiar. Throughout the Greek play *Antigone* by Sophocles, there exists a dispute as to who should receive the designation of main character. Antigone, the daughter of the cursed King Oedipus, as well as Creon, stately king of Thebes, both appear as the key figures in this historic play. I believe that Creon, king of Thebes, should be considered the main character in this work of Greek theater. Three points can be used to make this argument: Creon suffers greatly, he learns a lesson, and is a tragic hero. Creon, like all main characters in Greek drama, suffers many losses and undergoes emotional pain and anguish. A target of the curse on the House of Oedipus by relation, Creon was already a victim of fate. His destiny has already been predetermined by the curse on the house of Oedipus, so he must either undergo suffering, death, or even both. He

loses his future daughter-in-law, Antigone, by initiating her death, his son through suicide, and his wife by suicide as well. Antigone broke a decree of Creon's: not to bury the traitor Polynices. The sister of Polynices, she breaks this new law because she knows that in order to please the gods she must do the right thing and bury Polynices. When she does Creon sentences her to death by sealing her in a cave. After realizing that he has made a critical error, he and his followers unseal the rocky tomb to find that Antigone has taken her own life. Creon's son, Haemon, the to-be husband of Antigone, rushes into the cave in mourning. He attempts an attack on Creon, but fails to connect with his sword thrust, and in anger and remorse kills himself with his weapon beside his dead love. Creon, overwhelmed with anguish, returns to the castle. But when Creon's wife, Eurydice hears of her son's death, she slips away quietly and stabs herself in the heart with a dagger before Creon's return. Creon realizes that all of the blame for these deaths rests on him alone, and undergoes great suffering, just like other central figures in Greek tragedies. For example, in the play *Medea*, by Euripides, Medea suffers the loss of her family, friends, land, and children. Creon faces this same kind of suffering, and wishes for his life to end to stop his suffering. He poetically states in the play, "Come, thou most welcome Fate, Appear, O come; Bring my days' final date, Fill up their sum! Come quick, I pray; Let me not look upon another day!" (51). So with all this suffering, one might ask what the purpose of such a depressing play might be, or what lesson Sophocles attempts to teach us. This brings up the concept of morality. Creon did not get out of this sticky situation without getting something from it. Creon learned valuable lessons of morality, moderation, piety, reverence, wisdom, and humility. Throughout all Greek dramas, myths, and even architecture,

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the idea of moderation has always been the front-runner in lessons. Creon, a rather overconfident king, wants his authority and power in the polis to not be challenged. New to the job, he makes his first judgment against the body of Polynices, instructing that his body is not to be buried and left for the dogs, threatening death by public stoning if one dared to disobey him. After making his decree, he boldly stated, “ No man shall bury, none should wail for him;...His body shall be left to be devoured / By dogs and fowls of air.” (9) But his bad attitude gets ahead of him when Antigone warns, “ If the sin / Belong to these-O may their punishment / Be measured by the wrongfulness of mine!” (34) Even so Creon seals her in the cave. He is further warned by the wise seer Tiresias who tells that he must release Antigone immediately as well as perform the proper burial rituals for Polynices. Creon refuses to comply, accusing Tiresias of taking bribes, but the lead speaker for the Chorus persuades him to do so because of the fact that the seer has never been wrong. He does so, but he suffers the consequences of his stubbornness. The Chorus of Theban senators puts Creon’s lesson in words well. Wisdom first for a man’s well-being Maketh, of all things. Heaven’s insistence Nothing allows of man’s irreverence; And great blows great speeches avenging, Dealt on a boaster, Teach men wisdom in age, at last. (52). Creon learns that a boaster will surely exceed the boundaries of being a moderate person, which surpasses the normal for modest living. He says sadly, “ Ah yes, I have learnt, I know my wretchedness!” (48). In the end, he knew of all his errs and learned from them. At the center of every Greek tragedy exists a tragic hero, and Creon is just that. He fights for the right, makes a choice that results in suffering, tries to reverse an injustice, has a character flaw, and despite his efforts, becomes one of fate’s victims. Creon

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was crowned king when the current king Eteocles was killed in the Battle for Thebes, which was initiated when Polynices attacked the city. Creon took the throne with a sense of aggression towards the enemy of Thebes. He punished a traitor, and punishes anyone who sided with the traitor. Creon's sentencing of death to Antigone was a choice that resulted in great suffering. The decision to execute her set off a chain reaction that ended with a body count of three and one remorseful king. When Creon realizes that his actions against both Polynices and Antigone are terribly immoral, he immediately makes an attempt to correct them by burying Polynices and attempting to free Antigone. He therefore tried to change a wrong, his judgments against Polynices and Antigone, to a right. Creon has a character flaw that reinforces his role in this difficult situation; his arrogant attitude. His arrogance, or hubris, gets him into heated debates, arguments, and confrontations with his followers, such as the Sentinel, his victims, Antigone, and even the wise seer Tiresias who has never been wrong. When done talking with Creon, Tiresias says, " And let him vent his spleen on younger men, And learn to keep a tongue more gentle, and / A brain more sober, than he carries now" (40). And finally, Creon suffers the wrath of fate. Throughout all Greek tragedies and myths, people and even Gods have attempted to evade their fate, but have never been able to do so. Creon is affected by fate through the curse of Oedipus. The Chorus recites: The stress of a Fate is hard; Nor wealth, nor warfare, nor ward, Nor black ships cleaving the sea Can resist her, or flee. (35). Creon may not wear a black cape, cowl, and jumpsuit, but he could be compared to Batman in the situation described earlier in the paper. Despite the fact that the play's name stands as Antigone, I still believe that Creon should be recognized as the central character in this play. He lives longer,

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has more lines, stands in the middle of many moral arguments, and doesn't pull a disappearing act in the middle of the play. Provided with this knowledge, maybe a reader will read the play Antigone with a new perspective, and look at the story from both point-of-views. Not placing Antigone as the 'good-guy', and Creon as the 'bad-guy', but thinking of the pair as good people fighting for the right in conflicting situations.