

Book review:
antigone written by
sophocles



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Antigone written by Sophocles, speaks about the power struggle between Antigone and her Uncle Creon who is the King of Thebes. Both characters seemed to have their own beliefs in how Antigone's brother Polyneices should be buried. With both Creon and Antigone being strong-willed individuals, they refrain from changing their morals for anyone. As the play progresses to the end, it can be shown that both characters play part as the tragic hero. They can both be seen as characters that made judgmental errors leading to their downfall. However, there seemed to be one character that played the real tragic hero of the story. With Creon's authority, stubbornness, nobility and flaws, he is the real tragic hero in the play.

Creon is known as the King in the play Antigone. An example of Creon's antagonist actions is quoted: "...Polyneices, I say, is to have no burial: no man is to touch him or say the least prayer for him; he shall lie on the plain, unburied; and the birds and the scavenging dogs can do with him whatever they like" (Sophocles 1. 43-46). Though he is perceived negatively, he is still perceived as superior to Thebans. Antigone was known in the society as the princess; but, was not known as a grand person. Creon is very proud of his status in society and is prideful of his city and his decisions. Creon said proudly, " You forget yourself! You are speaking to your King!" (Sophocles 5. 66) Creon shows his level of his status in this quote. Antigone is widely known for being the princess of the former king and disobeying Creon's intentions of giving her brother an improper burial.

Creon and Antigone are similar in nobility. Creon was the brother of Oedipus. Quoted, " But now, at last, is our new King is coming: Creon of Thebes, Menoikeus" son." (Sophocles 1. 1-2) This quote shows that Creon was raised

in a noble family and had a higher status compared to other Thebans.

Antigone was also born into nobility, as she was the daughter of Oedipus, but Creon was still in a higher position than she was. As addressing his servants, "Unfortunately, as you know, his two sons, the princes Eteocles and Polynices have killed each other in battle; and I, as the next in blood, have succeeded to the full power of the throne" (Sophocles 1. 15-19). This shows Creon's notability. Creon's nobility made him a very greedy person but his character fits a part of the definition of a tragic hero.

One of the many characteristics that can thoroughly describe Creon is prideful. Throughout the tragedy, Creon reveals he has a flaw: Self-pride. Antigone is considered to have the tragic flaw of too much ambition. : "...Is less of importance; but if I had left my brother lying in death unburied, I should have suffered. Now I do not" (Sophocles 2. 79-81). In this quote, she is shown to have the ambition to disobey Creon. On the flipside, characters have the ability to obtain the ambition trait; whereas self-pride is a trait unique to certain individuals. Creon's pride put him in a bad situation and caused him to pay for his own consequences, but a tragic can learn from their own mistakes. Creon learned from his actions. It is not clear if Antigone learned from hers. This quote from Creon helps support this.: " Good. That is the way to behave: subordinate-- Everything else, my son, to your father's will" (Sophocles 3. 13-14). Creon's flaw of self-pride explains why he is the tragic hero of the Greek tragedy, not Antigone.

Why would readers or viewers of this play assume that Antigone is the tragic hero of Antigone? When readers start reading the Greek Tragedy, you assume that Antigone is the main character because the play is named after

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her, therefore making it reasonable why people assume that she is also the tragic hero. To her family and to the gods, she might be a hero but she is not the tragic hero. "I should have praise and honor for what I have done. All these men here would praise me- Were their lips not frozen shut with fear of you" (Sophocles 2. 113-115). This quote explains Antigone's belief that she is a hero. Readers, after reading the play, think that Antigone was such a great character, and she should be deemed the Tragic Hero. Lastly, readers often feel that since Antigone is the protagonist, then she is automatically the tragic hero. This quote shows that she is the protagonist: "Creon is not strong enough to stand in my way" (Sophocles Prologue. 36). This quote definitely shows that she is a protagonist, but there is a difference between the protagonist and tragic hero.

A tragic hero is said to have the following: superiority, near to perfection, a tragic flaw, a noble birth, or he discovers that the person's downfall is a result of their own actions. As stated in previous sections of this argument, Creon fits the mold of a tragic hero more than Antigone. For instance, did most Thebans look more up to King Creon or Antigone? This quotation answers the question: "This is my command, and you can see the wisdom behind it. As long as I am King, no traitor is going to be honored with the loyal man" (Sophocles 1. 47-49). This shows Creon's power. Antigone at one time may have been superior, but when her father, Oedipus was forced to exile all of that went away. Creon's proves that he is the tragic hero by his nobility. Who is nobler: the current king, or the daughter of the former king? Creon's family background defeats Antigone's in nobility. As shown in other parts of the argument, the self-pride is more unique and it is less common to

characters. Whereas Antigone's flaw, excess ambition is more likely to be given to main characters in a story in an attempt to make the character look more heroic. Sophocles made Creon the tragic hero of this play because he wanted to illustrate that not all heroes have to be necessarily pleasant. At the end of the story Creon says, "...I have been rash and foolish. I have killed my son and my wife" (Sophocles Exodus. 142-143). This illustrates Creon's realization of his decisions. He sees that his decisions were costly to the people he cared most about. Based on the tone of his voice, he seemed to be regretful in what he has done since he has inflicted pain upon himself.

Creon and Antigone were both vital characters of the play. These two characters make the play relevant. Creon's stubbornness to provide an improper burial for Polyneices due to his own beliefs led to his downfall. His decisions and choices had affected everyone around him which in turn affects him. Antigone believes to give Polyneices a proper burial to please the Gods led to her downfall. Due to her beliefs, she leaves the play as a character who committed suicide. Creon, being alive, suffers through the guilt and pain he acquired through the decisions he made. He will live with the pain and guilt that he caused upon himself which is a very hard thing to do. With Creon's status in society, his flaws and characteristics, he appeared to be more of a tragic hero in comparison to Antigone.