

# Analysis of creon's speech and reflection of his character



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Starting in media res, the audience are informed of the death of Eteocles and Polyneices through the Oedipus' family sisters, Antigone and Ismene's heated conversation. Creon, as the closest blood relative of the throne, succeeds as ruler of Thebes and comes to power. Creon gives a full and honorable burial to Eteocles, praising his loyalty to the state until death, while inflicting Eteocles' brother, Polyneices, non-burial and the eternal punishment of rotting on the battlefield held against charges of treason.

Whoever attempts paying Polyneices full honour after death, including appropriate libations and formal laments, would be entitled to the harsh, violent punishment of public stoning. Gathering a group of central and influential characters in private, Creon gives out his first speech with the context of introducing his principal political beliefs and establishing authority, along with addressing the audience, in particular the Chorus, for the first time and also more importantly, justifying his proclamation of the two adversely different treatments to both brothers of royal Greek blood.

His character is reflected in his speech, colliding with that of Antigone. Also, with the use of dramatic irony and structuring, his speech creates an atmosphere of tension. In general, Creon utilizes rhetoric techniques to persuade his audience, the Chorus. In his speech, Creon employs the use of honorific, so as to politely and persuasively sway the Chorus to accept his point of view. For example, upon starting his speech, Creon addresses his audience courteously, " Gentlemen, after tossing the life of our city on the great waves of the ocean, the gods have safely righted it once more." (159-60)

In the sentence, Creon is civil in addressing the Chorus. In doing so, he enforces a positive image upon himself and outwardly displays his respect towards the Theban Elders. The audience acknowledges Creon's will and eagerness to appear civil and courteous and his reflects his political astuteness as a reinforced ruler of Thebes. In order to persuade the Elders and his audience, Creon employs the use of adros. Throughout his speech, he applies a metaphor on the state of Thebes, comparing it to a ship on seas.

Not only does he compare the state to a great ship during his opening, he later says that, " our city is our safety and it is only when she sails safely that we can make friendships. " The use of adros not only can persuade the Chorus, it also emits an aura of eloquence in his speech, thus, showing Creon's superior ability to rule the state and his confidence to do so. As a demagogue, Creon attempts to appeal to the audience's emotions and feelings over their logical rationing.

The structure of Creon's speech should be noted with the parts joined together by discourse markers. The discourse markers such as " So now," " But," and " Such is my will" makes the audience feel that his decision is reasonable and rational with reason. In the commencement of his speech, Creon starts conventionally as a leader, dutifully crediting the gods with Thebes' delivery from the Argive army and a colloquial metaphor of the state as a stable ship despite rough seas. His doing so reinforces Creon's image as a leader no different in role as any other predecessor.

Since Creon dutifully credits the gods with the salvation of the state, he pleases the Chorus and shows that he will be a steady, reliable ruler who follows the rules and believes in the gods as a Greek should. After

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addressing the audience, Creon shifts his tone to flattering the Chorus and trying to gain their favour as seen in the statement, “ I know that you always respected the power of Laius’ throne, and again, when Oedipus governed the city; and when he died you still stood by his children with unwavering loyalty.”

Creon is heavy on his flattery, praising the Chorus for their dutiful allegiance towards those in power. By reinforcing this, Creon not only recalls the past rulers, he also implies that the Chorus should respect him and show their allegiance as according to their righteous treatment towards his predecessors. After appeasing the Chorus and the audience, Creon justifies his right to rule the state, legitimizing this takeover of power. He states that he “ now possess(es) the throne and all its powers, as I [he] is closet kin to the dead.”

Creon reiterates that his takeover was not due to individual reasons or his greed, but because of his divine rights. By putting his transference of power due to the gods, the Chorus will be less likely to question his right to rule Thebes. Creon, as the new ruler from the gods, showcases his ability to rule by stating his principles as “ a man in command of an entire city. ” His political ideals largely consist of placing loyalty to polis over philos and structuring it before the justification of handing out such a proclamation seems to iterate that his proclamation was not due to his love of kin (philos) but due to his strict political approach and loyalty towards the city state (polis).

Creon, as a prudent, astute politician, assigns such a structure to his speech and links the different contexts with discourse markers because in doing so, he first gains the trust and confidence of the Elders, a central party of

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Thebes, then justifies his power and his ability and finally provides an explanation of his proclamation regarding the diverse treatment provided to the bodies of the two brothers.

Creon's constant references to the divine gods and laws is to portray himself as one who is benevolent and a willing ruler and even if Polyneices' dead body was not given the correct rites and treatments, it was not due to disrespect towards the gods but only because Creon values loyalty towards pilos over philos. Creon is portrayed as an excellent, astute ruler in his ways of presentation. Using proleptic irony, Creon is seen as a presumptuous character. In the middle of his speech, Creon defines that " As for a man who considers someone he loves to be more important than his country, I say that he is nothing." (174)

The false dilemma shows that he is declarative in his statement showing his obstinacy and inflexibility in ruling a city state. Not only is he firm, his words also apply to his leadership as at the end of the play, he states that " I who am less than nothing. " He is condemned by his own words. This change of thought shows Creon's shift in character as he goes through a revelation and therefore changes overall as a character. In his speech, Creon reiterates that the weak ruler who fails to punish traitors are worthless.

However, he proves to be the weak ruler as he fails to punish Antigone for defying his proclamation. He experiences a kind of reversal and recognition, seen in the change of his statements and hubris is not evident in the latter as it is in the former. Syntactic patterning is also used by Creon in his speech to explain his decision of the different treatments inflicted on Eteocles and Polyneices. This technique directly compares Eteocles and Polyneices and is <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-creons-speech-and-reflection-of-his-character/>

used to justify Creon's separate treatments of them. Creon describes Eteocles as one " who died fighting for this city, proving himself its greatest spearsman."

The use of a superlative persuades the Chorus to picture Eteocles as a hero and emphasizes on his brother betrayal on the city state, inducing hate against Polyneices in order to rationalize his own proclamation. In contrasting Oedipus' sons characters, Creon uses polarized extremes. Polyneices' description is full of emotive gothic language, " prepared to drink blood that he shared", illustrating Polyneices as a blood-thirsty and wild traitor and therefore " He must be left unburied, a corpse for the birds and dogs to eat, a disgrace in all eyes."

The use of successive sentences contrasted with the praising ones in Eteocles' description seemingly justifies Creon's verdict on such a traitor of the city state. Creon's speech artfully creates tension for the audience. Prior Creon's first speech and justification, the audience learns from Antigone and Ismene's conversation conducted in secrecy that Antigone is keen to give her outlawed brother the proper rituals for a burial. Suspense is created by Sophocles as the audience learns of the punishment Creon and his law would inflict on Antigone if she defied it.

Her determination is evident in their conversation however Creon is just as firm in his proclamation speech. He states that " whoever is loyal to this city will be honoured by me in death as in life," implying that whoever is not loyal to the city state will be punished by him. As the audience learns of both Antigone's and Creon's view on Polyneices' burial, their views are contrasted and tension is created as the audience sympathize with Antigone as they

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foresee the feminist being punished for her firm belief on honouring her two brothers equally. The audience contrasts Antigone and Creon.

Creon in his speech, concisely states that “ a man who considers someone he loves to be more important than his country...he is nothing. ” He believes that loyalty towards polis outweighs philos. His statement of such contrasts with Antigone's values, which are exactly the opposite. Tension is created in the sense that audience foresees later conflict between these two characters who are polar opposites of each other. Creon's speech is structured with care and political intentions to persuade the Chorus to support him and his proclamation. His pride is reflected in his speech so as his astute character as a politician.

He is not a man without principles but sometimes evaluated as inflexible, thus limiting his power and the audiences' sympathy towards him. As it is merely a speech to attempt to gain support of his power, his later downfall is concealed by his determined character portrayed here. Creon's speech is structured so that the audience will sympathize with Antigone. Her tenacious character is not unlikely that of Creon's, which will cause a conflict in the play, creating tension and bringing the play from the exposition to a rising action as the course of the play extends.