

# Creon: a virtuous king? essay



**ASSIGN  
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Creon: A Virtuous King? Antigone is a Greek Tragedy that was written in 441 B. C. by Sophocles who is considered one of the great tragedians of the Greek time period and even today. Antigone is a complex play which centers on the two main characters, Antigone and Creon; Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus and the niece to Creon. This play starts with brothers to Antigone, Polyneices and Eteocles dying in war; they killed each other tragically while fighting over the throne of Thebes.

Eteocles receives a respectable stately burial and Polyneices was considered a traitor and is disgraced, not allowed to receive a proper burial. If anyone gets close to the body of Polyneices or tries to bury him they would be condemned to death by King Creon, who has become the new monarch to the throne. King Creon makes some tragic decisions throughout the story such as condemning his niece to death and ignoring the pleas to overturn his decisions. Is Creon a virtuous King? No. The definition of the word virtuous is to demonstrate moral excellence.

In this play King Creon does not follow the laws of the Gods but follows the laws of man. This does not mean Creon is a bad person, but he is the King. In this position a King makes laws and must ensure that people abide by them and if not set the example of punishment to the lawbreakers. Secondly, Polyneices is a traitor however you look at it. Even today a traitor can be imprisoned or even punished to death in a lot of countries. I will talk about how Creon was a good King but makes some unfortunate decisions in the following paragraphs.

One common attribute of Greek Tragedy is that most of the characters have very good intentions; with this being said, I feel King Creon had the best of intentions as a new ruler. Being new to the position Creon has a lot to prove; the first thing on his agenda is to make the decision that Polyneices is not to receive an honorable burial. Creon decides this punishment not because he is heartless but because Polyneices is a traitor and potentially brought the demise to the city Thebes, which was Polyneices' homeland.

There are many instances throughout history where a traitor has received the same punishment as Polyneices received; also King Creon clearly states that if anyone tries to honor Polyneices with a proper burial they will be punished by death. Antigone steps in and makes the decision to honor her family and the Gods with the burial of Polyneices even though she fully understands the law made by King Creon and the consequence to her action if she is caught (But I will bury him; and if I must die, I say that this crime is holy: I shall lie down With him in death, and I shall be as dear to him as he to me. Page 1329 lines 55-57. King Creon is the ruler and his laws should be obeyed even if Antigone or anyone disagrees and if they break them must pay the consequences. Antigone was ready to give her life for what she believed in. Later in the play Antigone does as she says and tries to move Polyneices body and bury him. The King is faced with the conflict of whether or not to punish Antigone; King Creon's son Haemon first begs him to not kill Antigone who is Haimon's fiance.

Teiresias the blind prophet, also tries to warn King Creon of the upcoming tragedies forced by the Gods if the King does not bury Polyneices; how would it appear to the King's people if he was to just change his mind and not

punish Antigone? It would give the people the impression that they do not have to follow the law and could ultimately lead to complete chaos. Creon is trying to keep the city's best interest in mind by sticking to his decision to punish Antigone with death.

This is not a decision of virtue but a decision a man with authority would make to set an example. I do not feel that the punishment to Antigone was an easy one for King Creon; Antigone was his niece and fiance to his son. I feel King Creon is deeply saddened by what Antigone did and he does not want to punish her with death which is reflected when he decides to bury her in a cave to starve to death instead of outright execution. A virtuous King would have listened with an open heart and open mind to his son, his niece, and the prophet.

Although King Creon eventually heeds to the warning of the wrath of the Gods and rushes to release Antigone from the cave it is too late. In King Creon's late decision to free Antigone and to properly bury Polyneices, the King loses his son, niece, and wife. King Creon realizes his mistakes and mourns for his losses. I feel that this shows he does have a heart underneath the front of being the strong ruler but does not make wise decisions which usually come with experience and age (There is no happiness where there is no wisdom; No wisdom but in submission the gods.

Big words are always punished, And proud men in old age learn to be wise. )  
Page 1352 lines 139-142. Finally, I believe that virtue can come with wisdom and experience and also be gained by tragic loss. References " Chapter 37/  
Sophocles/ Antigone. " Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama,

and Writing. Comp. Dana Gioia and X. J. Kennedy. 10th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2007. 1324-352. Print.