

# Comparison of antigone and creons leadership essay sample



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The story of Antigone is full of issues regarding leadership and the conflict surrounding these issues. Creon decisions and choices were influenced by his inexperience in leadership. His forceful style leads him straight to disaster which results in losing his son and wife. This disaster was a direct result of his decision to kill Antigone for disobeying his edict regarding the forbidden burial of her brother, Polyneices. He believed his rules were superior, even to those unwritten statutes of the God's which Antigone was committed. In his attempts to justify himself to the other characters, he used rational persuasion. This only revealed his gender bias toward women and his disdain for the views of his youthful son, Haemon. His use of coercive power and ensuing symbolic action of making an example of Antigone was surely made to strengthen his position of power and authority within his kingdom. Creon's inexperience in the field of leadership resulted in unimaginable sorrow and death.

This discussion will address the topics of leadership style, decision making, conflict style, and how the various characters respond to these issues. Both Creon and Antigone will be examined regarding these topics. Antigone's defiance to Creon's edict is the underlying source of conflict. The aspects of leadership presented in the Antigone case are relevant in all areas of an individual's life. By analyzing Creon's and Antigone's opposing view points and how they relevant to today, we can learn by Creon's example to become better leaders ourselves.

## Leadership Power and Influence

### Personalized Leader

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Creon displayed traits of a personalized leader for he was typically selfish, impulsive, and exercised power for his own self centered needs and interest rather than take into consideration what was good for his people. He used Antigone's punishment in a symbolic nature to demonstrate consequences for those who dare defy the rules of his kingdom. Although this symbolic action was not a positive, it certainly served Creon's purpose.

### Conflict Style

Throughout the story, it is evident Creon responds to conflict in a forcing nature. This style does not give much concern for others. Individuals who adopt a forcing style, tend to be on the aggressive side. They are not afraid to use their power and authority to settle an argument. Forcers are not good at human relations and eventually this style rubs many people the wrong way. "Most importantly, relying solely on a forcing style can be dangerous. Forcers find it difficult to admit when they are wrong" (McFarland & Sweeney, 2002, p. 248). In both Creon's dialect with Antigone and later Haemon, it is clear Creon did not consider, even for second, that his edict to refuse burial for Polyneices was morally and ethically wrong. Haemon tried to get his father, Creon, to see a different view point regarding the burial of Polyneices, but Creon dismissed what Haemon says simply as "unwise instructions in wisdom" (Hartwick Humanities in Management Institute [HHMI], p. 12, 1. 48). Only after the prophet, Teiresias, gave his warning of another death to follow Antigone's that Creon began to comprehend the possibility of what others were trying to tell him.

### Use of Rational Persuasion

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Creon's use of rational persuasion in his attempt to justify his decision in punishing Antigone is apparent. In his eyes, Creon uses logical arguments to persuade others to see his edict and the punishment presented for disobedience, is in fact the best way to deal with the situation. Creon firmly believes "there is no evil worse than disobedience" (HHMI, p. 11, 1. 2). This belief is backed by his intention to carry out Antigone's punishment and death, "since I caught her alone of all the city in open defiance, I will not make myself a liar to my city. I will kill her" (HHMI, p. 10, 11. 95-97).

### Moral Leadership

Although Antigone did not hold a ranking leadership position, she demonstrated acts of moral leadership. Persons who demonstrate this style of leadership are familiar with themselves, recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, and have courage to be innovative and stand for what they believe in (Draft, 2002, p. 224). She was not ignoble for her decision to bury Polyneices. Aware of the consequences she accepted them, "I will bury him-it would honor me to die while doing that" (HHMI, p. 5, 1. 10-11).

### Responses to the Use of Power

The characters in this story exhibited compliances, resistance, and commitment to Creon's authority. Obvious from the beginning of the story, Antigone displayed resistance to Creon's authority by deliberately avoiding compliance with his edict and disobeying his instructions. In resisting Creon's authority, Antigone showed commitment to the Gods by obeying their unwritten laws even if death would be the result. The subjects of Thebes showed

compliance with Creon's edict regarding the non-burial of Polyneices. They  
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abided by Creon's edict regardless if they agreed or not and followed through with orders and directions even though they disliked it. Creon's guards who watched over Polyneices' body demonstrated commitment to Creon. These guards adhered to Creon's edict and enthusiastically carried out their orders and reported Antigone to Creon (Draft, 2002, p. 444).

### Decision Making Style

#### Directive

Creon's style of decision making was not behavioral, analytic or conceptual. The style Creon based his decisions on was directive. His character did not cope with a lot of details, contemplate about the larger implications of their decisions, or take the time to reflect on excess information (McFarlin & Sweeny, 2002, p. 126). Creon did not grasp the fact that his actions could produce consequences which would have negative effects on him and others. For that inaccurate assumption, he suffered great losses. Though he tried to undo the punishment on Antigone, he was too late. The damage was done. When Creon went to release Antigone he found that she had hung herself and Haemon in a state of wretchedness. " When Haemon saw his father, in his despair and anger he tried to slay Creon but, failing in his attack, turned the sword upon himself" (HHMI, p. 14, 11. 109-110, p. 15, 1. 1). Upon hearing the grave news of her only son's death, Creon's wife committed suicide.

#### Conceptual

In her decision to bury Polyneices, Antigone's character used conceptual decision making. Conceptual decision makers see the "big" picture. They are able to zoom in and out of specific good or bad situations to arrive at the larger view (McFarlin & Sweeny, 2002, p. 126). Antigone's actions were based on the bigger picture. She was loyal to the unwritten laws of the Gods. She viewed her actions as righteous and therefore disobeying Creon's edict was not immoral. The moral laws took precedence over any mortal edict. Antigone did not feel Creon had the right to impose on the God's laws, "nor did I think that your decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes given us by the Gods" (HHMI, p. 9, 1. 18-21). Antigone understood and accepted the punishment for disobeying Creon. The penalty Creon could inflict upon her was not worse than the Gods, "not for fear of any man's pride was I about to owe a penalty to the Gods for breaking these" (HHMI, p. 9, 1. 23-24).

## Conclusion

Creon was thrust into a leadership position upon the death of his brother Oedipus. He had little leadership experience, was overtly aggressive, and did not fully consider the tragic effect his decisions might entail. It would have been wise for Creon to develop a more compromising approach to the conflicts he faced. There could have been give and take between the parties involved with the conflict. According to Draft (2002), "Leadership occurs among people; it is not something done to people. Since leadership involves people, there must be followers" (p. 6). Perhaps his subjects and peers would have honored him more had he shown the wisdom to seek compromise rather than battle with Antigone's stance for her love and dedication to her

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brother and the Gods. Creon created great sorrow and death and the pinnacle of personal suffering all due to his lack of leadership experience.

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