

# Antigone: development of resistance against creon

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The play *Antigone*, by Sophocles, is the tale of a new leader who starts out with the respect and trust of his land but in the end loses it all. According to the introduction, by Bernard Knox, "the play runs its course as a drama of developing resistance to Creon and his gradual condemnation on all hands." This is the best description one can find about this aspect of the play. When the story begins, Antigone is the sole person lashing out at Creon's harsh edict ruling that Polynices, who is Antigone's brother, cannot and will not be given a proper burial. But as scenes unfold, we see the gradual development of mutiny against Creon, continuing with Haemon, Creon's son and Antigone's fiance, and then with Tiresias, and eventually even the chorus will side with Antigone.

Antigone begins this story by provoking her soon to be father in law, and through her actions cites what becomes somewhat a rebellion. As mentioned earlier, Creon passed a strict law that forbade anyone to bury Polynices (Antigone's brother), who attacked Creon's city. All persons who disobeyed this law were to be stoned inside city walls. Not in ignorance, but in full knowledge of the law, Antigone attempts to bury Polynices. When the news reaches Creon that Antigone has done this forbidden act, he questions her, asking if she knew of the law and if she really had committed such a terrible crime.

Her reply: "I did it, I don't deny a thing!"(492). Thus are the beginnings of a small revolution. Later, while trying to bandy the chorus into taking her side, she asks, "Hasn't Creon graced one with all the rights, disgraced the other?"(27-28). As if this weren't already enough to make it clear she is appalled at Creon and his new law, she questions to Creon's face, "Dishonor  
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the laws the gods hold in honor?"(91-92) Even when Creon finally realizes that she might have a good point, he still stays firm with her punishment sentence of death, but he instead decides to, " wall her up in a tomb" and to " leave her there, alone, where she can choose... death or a buried life with a good roof for shelter."(972-974) Little does he know, however, that by insisting on Antigone's sentence, he has created his own tragedy.

Haemon, Antigone's fiance is the next to turn bitter. When he hears of Antigone's sentence, he goes immediately to the king, his father, Creon. A clever one Haemon is, for he at first tries to gently put it to his father that the people on the street speak only in pity and sorrowfulness of his beloved Antigone. When he attempts to rid Antigone of her sentence and this fails, things get a little rough. When told that Antigone's sentence will remain no matter what, Haemon says to his father, " Death? She deserves a glowing crown of gold!"(782).

This is the turning point in their conversation, for things are beginning to get loud and people begin to argue vigorously. Even after Haemon proclaims, " I'd never suggest you admire treason"(818) to try to slow things back into a less intense feud, thing get worse. As to further intensify his official revolt against Creon, Haemon remarks, " I see my father offending justice"(833). Just before storming out of the palace, Haemon says to Creon that by killing Antigone, he will have created two deaths, foreshadowing his eventual suicide.

Now it is Tiresias's turn to become disgusted with Creon. The old, blind prophet ventures far to deliver Creon a message that is not taken so well.

When Tiresias enters the scene, Creon states that he has always followed his advice. When asked of his prophecy by Creon, Tiresias begins the tale of how this particular foresight had come to him and what it means.

The prophecy tells of a certain evil, and in conclusion, Tiresias wisely proclaims, " And it's you-you're high resolve that sets this plague on Thebes."(1122-1123). Creon is not very acceptant of this prophecy, and says that someone has paid Tiresias to say this, and by no means will Creon change the edict. " Stubbornness brands you for stupidity-pride is a crime"(1136-1137), it Tiresias's reply when Creon says that he will not free Antigone. As Tiresias exits, knowing he has accomplished nothing in the stubborn heart of Creon, he says, " You've robbed the gods below the earth"(1187).

After some deliberation with the leader, Creon decides to free Antigone out of fear of something horrible, and to bury Polynices. He and his men burry Polynices first, and then retreat to the cave in which Antigone has been enclosed. Upon their arrival, Antigone is already dead. Haemon is there, mourning her loss. He sees Creon enter the cave, draws his sword, swings at Creon, misses, turns on himself, and sinks the sword half way to the hilt into his own body.

News travels faster than Creon can reach the palace, and when he arrives home, he finds his wife dead also. She has stabbed herself, and before killing herself is heard blaming Creon for it all. Creon's tragedy is not yet complete. Upon hearing the horrible news, and of the three deaths, the chorus, not so much as revolting, realizes Creon's wrongs. And of those wrongs, they state:

" reverence to the gods must be safeguarded". This is the completed tragedy of Creon, for now his own people have turned aside from him.

Stubbornness finds itself deeply embedded in the roots of evil. Creon brought his " gradual condemnation" upon himself through his stubbornness. Had Creon honored the gods' laws, not the chorus, not Tiresias, not Haemon, nor even Antigone herself would have had any reason to revolt against Creon. Had there been no revolt, there would have been no tragedy. What better story to use to prove that statement than the story of a King, beloved at first, but through his own greed, turns his people against him, resulting in the casualties of his son, wife, and soon to be daughter-in-law.