

Antigone fights for her family



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Heroes are virtually always portrayed as courageous, autonomous, and without error whereas villains are depicted as evil, tyrannical, and controlling. This is not the case in Sophocles Antigone. In this play, Sophocles contrasts his hero, Antigone, with another hero, Creon. Both of them compete for honest and justifiable reasons, but they have different motives. Although it may seem that both of them have ethical intentions, Antigone is the true hero because her actions are motivated by religious and family purposes while Creon's are driven by pride and a craving to have power and be King.

Throughout the play, Antigone fights for her family and her beliefs through respect and never arrogance or rebellion. When Antigone first discovers Creon's decree about the burial of her brothers, she wonders why [Creon has] honored only one of [her] two brothers with a tomb and dishonored the other (21-22). This is Antigone's initial reaction to the edict from Creon. This response is honest and true, and its confidence shows exactly what her motives are in all that she does. She does not respond with anger towards Creon, or one that is driven by rebellion for her own personal gain. This proves that her goal is to fulfill her family traditions by honoring both her brothers with a proper burial, not to discredit the king's edict. Antigone and Creon debate the ethics of the edict, Antigone claims that it was not Zeus who made this proclamation, so she does not have to obey it (450).

Antigone feels that divine law by the gods is superior to written law by a king, so she does not see it as necessary to obey the decree from Creon. If this pronouncement had been made by one of the gods, Antigone would have obeyed it, no matter how furious it made her. Her comments about

Zeus prove that she is not acting out of a desire to be rebellious, but rather a desire to honor both her dead brothers. Throughout the play, it is clear that Antigone's actions are done to [join] in friendship, not in enmity, the complete opposite of Creon's intentions (523). Antigone's actions were all done out of love and respect for her brothers. She does not mean to disrespect Creon or Thebes when she disobeyed the proclamation made by Creon. When Antigone says this, she is pronouncing that no matter how many evil crimes her brother committed, he will always be her brother and a friend. Antigone realizes the importance of family, and she will always love him no matter what he has done. This loyalty and determination to show respect to her family perfectly exemplifies the moral and just motivation behind Antigone's actions. As the play evolves, it becomes clear that Antigone values divine law over written law and that all her actions are done to protect and respect her family, not out of pride.

Creon's actions are not blatantly evil in and of themselves, but they are all motivated by selfishness and a desire to become King. Once Creon becomes king, he comments that it is impossible to learn in full the spirit of a man, his purpose or his judgement, till he's shown up by experience of rule and law (175-177). Creon deliberately tells the Chorus that he is going to make all his decisions in a way that helps him become king, this act further proves the fact that he is self-righteous. It shows that he will do anything he can to gain the respect of his people, which is ironic because most of the people in the city do not agree with him. Creon's remark highlights his insecurity and worry that the people will not follow him. This anxiety makes him feel as if he

needs to prove something to the people, rather than being confident that he will be a worthy king.

While Antigone is pleading her case, Creon claims that her argument is invalid because while [he lives] a woman shall not rule (525). Creon feels that since he has not been king for very long, he needs to assert his dominance over Thebes. This mindset causes him to neglect his own family. This abandonment of his family shows that his motives were driven by pride and a longing power, which is the opposite of Antigone, who was motivated by faithfulness and respect. At the end of the story, it is clear that Creon's pride has started to control him when he wants to banish Antigone and have her [led] away as quickly as possible where she can die (885-888). The banishment of a family member is never acceptable, no matter what crime was committed. However, Creon willingly does so, because of his pride and longing for power. He is so engulfed in his arrogance that he allows his own niece to be put to death, and he does not regret it. This perfectly shows the severity to which Creon is caught up in his pride and furthers his self-righteousness. Because of his rejection of his family and his desire for respect, although Creon's actions were not completely evil, the motivation behind them was nothing but pride.

Although both Creon and Antigone strive for fair goals, their conflict is not a matter of noble versus noble, because their motivations contrast one other. Antigone's actions are motivated by respect and honor for her family and a desire to fulfill religious duty. Antigone is the true hero, whereas the self-centered Creon is not. The significance of this is that it demonstrates that although an action may appear to be moral or just, the incentive behind it

may be evil and dark, which shifts the ethics of the action itself. This is demonstrated throughout the entire play as Sophocles emphasizes the importance of honest motivations, which will often lead to honest actions.