

Antigone and ismene the personalities of the two



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Antigone and Ismene The personalities of the two sisters; Antigone and Ismene, are as different from one another as tempered steel is from a ball of cotton.

One is hard and resistant; the other: pliable, absorbing and soft. Antigone would have been a strong, successful 90's type woman with her liberated and strong attitude towards her femininity, while Ismene seems to be a more dependent 1950's style woman. Antigone acts as a free spirit, a defiant individual, while Ismene is content to recognize her own limitations and her inferiority of being a woman. In the Greek tragedy "Antigone", by Sophocles; Antigone learns that King Creon has refused to give a proper burial for the slain Polyneices, brother of Ismene and Antigone. Infuriated by this injustice, Antigone shares the tragic news with Ismene.

From her first response, "No, I have heard nothing" (344). Ismene reveals her passivity and helplessness in the light of Creon's decree. Thus, from the start, Ismene is characterized as traditionally "feminine", a helpless woman that pays no mind to political affairs. Doubting the wisdom of her sisters plan to break the law and bury Polyneices, Ismene argues: We who are women should not contend with men; we who are weak are ruled by the stronger, so that we must obey.... (346) Once again Ismene's words clearly state her weak, feminine character and helplessness within her own dimensions.

Antigone, not happy with her sister's response chides her sister for not participating in her crime and for her passivity, saying, "Set your own life in order" (346). For Antigone, no law could stand in the way of her strong consideration of her brother's spirit, not even the punishment of an early

death. Ismene is more practical ; knowing the task is impossible, she feels the situation to be hopeless. It is a wonder, which of the two sisters are really guilty of these chronic charges. Of course, Antigone acted so quickly, and failed to take the advice of the moderate sister, Ismene. Instead, going against Creon's words, Antigone rashly goes ahead and breaks the law.

Antigone is a fool, she must learn that such defiance, even when justified, is not conducive to longevity. Although Antigone is foolish, she is also courageous and motivated by her morals. Proper burial of the dead was, according to the Greeks, prerequisite for the souls entrance into a permanent home. Therefore, perhaps Ismene is also foolish for her quick refusal to help Antigone perform the duty of Polyneices proper burial.

Ismene definitely seems hasty in her acceptance of personal weakness.

Perhaps in some way, both sisters are guilty of the same tragic sins. Perhaps it is this rashness, more subdued in Ismene's case, that leads both sisters to their own destruction. To my surprise, there is a strange twist in both sister's character towards the end of the play. Antigone makes a rather contrasting statement, " Not for my children, had I been a mother, Not for a husband, for his moldering body, Would i have set myself against the city As I have done"(368) These words defy rational explanation. To judge from her attitude towards authority and law, Antigone would probably take on any task to preserve family dignity and human justice. In Ismene's final words, she abandons her practical attitudes with a sudden rush of devotion towards the sister she abandoned in time of need.

“ Let me stand beside you and do honor the dead”(358). Ismeneheroically takes a stand and shares Antigone’s crime. The two sister’s were crushed by the vindictive Creon, yet they werewinners in spirit, in their determination , they died together, as one. Nobility shall live in their hearts forever.