

# Sophocles' antigone: character depiction essay



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In *Antigone*, Sophocles positions the readers to condemn Creon as a misogynist. In *Antigone*, Creon is the newly appointed ruler of Thebes, and after banishing all burial rights to Antigone's brother, Polynices, Antigone refuses to obey this order and buries him anyway.

Creon is pitted against Antigone who holds up the will of the gods and the honor of her family above all else, and thus he appears to be against these values. His behavior, however, suggests otherwise.

He aggressively preaches the concept of family honor to his son, Haemon. Creon also believes that his decrees are consistent with the will of the gods and with the best interests of the people, whether true or not.

When a legitimate argument is raised against his course of action by Teiresias, he is in fact completely open to changing course, even before he learns of the deaths of his family members. Although ancient Greece was a male-dominated society, Sophocles' work portrays women as being strong and capable of making wise decisions.

In this famous tragedy, Sophocles uses the characters Ismene and Antigone to show the different characteristics and roles that women are typical of interpreting. Traditionally women are characterized as weak and subordinate and Ismene is portrayed in this way. Through the character of Antigone, women finally get to present realistic viewpoints about their character.

The sexist stereotypes presented in this tragedy address many perspectives of men at this time. Creon the arrogant and tyrant leader is, the very character that exemplifies this viewpoint.

Antigone's spirit is filled with bravery, passion and fury; which allow her to symbolize the very essence of women. She is strong enough to do what her conscious tells her despite the laws of the land. Many examples in the play prove that Antigone's character is very capable of making her own decisions in the name of justice. First, Antigone opposes Creon's law and buries her slain brother; because in her mind it was immoral not to.

She does this because she is compassionate and loves her brother very much.

Creon, however, believes that his laws must be upheld and would do anything to prevent any type rebelling. He is even more infuriated when he learns that a woman has broken his laws. He tries to show Antigone who's in charge by sentencing her to a life of imprisonment.

Secondly, Antigone shows how determined she is by accepting her consequences with pride. She does not try to hide that she is responsible for breaking Creon's laws, moreover, she takes all the credit. All the while she maintains her strength because she truly believes in her actions.

These sorts of actions ultimately prove that Antigone is courageous and willing to stand up to men, which was completely against the norm at this time. Her spirit refuses to submit to the role of a helpless woman like her sister Ismene's character does. Ismene is a coward and refuses to help her sister because she feared men.

This fear propels her to turn her head to the disrespect that is been shown to her brother, Polyneices. Her character is a close representation of the

viewpoints of the male gender regarding women. She is subordinate and weak-willed.

She refuses to stand up to Creon even though in her heart she knows that his laws are morally wrong.

This type of demeanor in famous works of art is very common for women to behave like, according to the position of men. Ismene proclaims, " We are only women, we cannot fight with men, Antigone! " Proving that she is unwilling to do the right thing if it means standing up to a man. Another example of how spineless Ismene is portrayed is when she tries to take credit for burying her brother with Antigone. She is so scared that she will be left all alone with out Antigone that she is willing to die with her.

Creon demonstrates his lack of respect for women again when he tries to accuse Ismene of aiding Antigone. Then when he realizes she had no part in the crime does he describes her as, "...

. she never had a mind at all. " The play is also filled with instances of a sexist male viewpoint. Creon is the leader of the Theben throne a position he highly regards.

He believes that he has a divine rule and therefor his laws are just and fair. He rules the kingdom with an iron fist and demonstrates his prejudices towards women throughout the play.

First, Creon is so upset that his laws are broken by Antigone that tries to hurt her as much as possible. He tries to act as prideful as possible. This is proof that Creon does not see women as equal to the authority of men. He feels

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that women have no common sense and, therefore, must be punished for their irrationality.

He eventually realizes that he has offended the Gods with his actions as ruler of Thebes. It is not until his own wife kills herself because of his tyranny against humanity does he realize his mistakes. This of course is way too late to redeem his lost loved ones or take back his contempt toward women. The Greek tragedy Antigone by Sophocles is one of the first dramatic plays that demonstrates the different roles women play in society. The two sisters Ismene and Antigone portray major female characteristics.

While Antigone plays the role of a strong and sensible woman, Ismene portrays the typical meek and mild role. The character of Creon demonstrates through his tyrant rule, the sexist male viewpoint of the ancient Greek world. This play proves that gender difference has always been present in society.