

Roles of women in ancient greece

[Sociology](#)



Women in ancient Greece had little to no rights, they were undervalued and their sole purpose was to procreate with their husbands and give birth, preferably to male children. Needless to say a woman's place was meant to be at home. She needed to be considered a loyal, devoted, woman with no absolutely no opinions in mind. Up until this particular era men were the sole source of superiority, we had no hard evidence otherwise that led us to believe women actually stood up to men and vocalized certain dissatisfactions'. And even though their views may have been voiced many were not taken seriously and some were even put to death for disagreement with a man.

Men were considered public figures hence they were allowed to engage in public events such as politics and entertainment, whereas women were sheltered and not even allowed to attend meals with their husbands. This system of gender inequality has held true in certain aspects of society today. It has not been up until recently that gender roles and the issue of equality has become leveled on the playing field. Upon further consideration of the readings in Antigone, Medea, and Lysistrata I was able to ascertain that the roles of ancient Greek women could be broken into the following categories. The women were meant to be submissive their male counterparts, no ability to hold property or choose who they married, and no political voice.

In reading the play Antigone, it is my understanding that an enormous contributing factor that led to the violent reaction of King Creon's ruling on Antigone's fate was due to the fact the disobedience was coming from a woman. It was unheard of for a woman to be so blatantly disrespectful to not only a man but a king. Antigone was so convicted by the need to bury her

brother that no other rule mattered. She is willing to sacrifice her own life to do what she felt was right. She demonstrated that if someone no matter whether it be woman or man, feels something is not right by the gods they should be free to disobey that command. King Creon advises his son Haemon, “ Turn from this girl with loathing, as from an enemy, and let her go to get a husband the world below. For I have found her openly rebellious ... If I permit disloyalty to breed in my own house, I nurture it in strangers.” (Perry 60). In this aspect she is not only considered to be in open rebellion against the king but also portraying signs of an example of a non-submissive woman.

In the short excerpt reading of Medea, we find that she is grief stricken and cries out about the inequality of marriage for men vs. women. Medea writes, “ We women are the most unfortunate creatures.” (Perry 65). In this one statement she is alluding to the simple fact that husbands can do whatever they want, whenever they want, and with whomever they want. While women stay home upkeep the homes and bear children for their men. Finding a husband required an exurban amount of money but the women did not get to choose who they were to spend their lives with. Marriages were usually arranged and the woman had no say, due to the fact that they were considered property of their fathers – then husbands once married off. Being women during this time meant that they had no control over their own lives, sure they kept the finances of the home but they could not spend it as they pleased. A good and righteous woman was meant to be in the home and if she needed to go out they must be accompanied by their husband, son, or equal male relative.

Finally in *Lysistrata*, meant to be secluded and restricted to the household the females in this play conspired with one another against their husbands in an effort to end an on-going war. With the domestic duties that were expected of them such as cooking, cleaning, and rearing children that meant that the women had no say in politics and war. *Lysistrata* persuaded the women to not sleep with their husbands until peace was made. Since woman essentially had no voice in political rights the only means of a weapon they had was their sexuality. They used this to their advantage by withholding it from the men and taunting them. They were dissatisfied with the husbands and men going off to fight in a war effort that they felt had no value as well as taking their young boys along with them. They were wasting precious time, resources, and funds. So ultimately the women of Greece had, had enough! *Lysistrata* exclaimed, " You took our boys and sent them to their deaths in Sicily." (Perry 69). The attitudes of the husbands throughout this play were that they were disgruntled with the women. The Athenian men believed that the women were plotting this feministic tyranny against them with the Sparten's.

In conclusion, men did not look favorably upon women and their rights were undeniably repressed. They were considered property; and boys were desired above that of a girl. Women were continuously taught to restrain from their natural impulses lest it bring shame to the family name. If you were caught not upholding the family values or knowingly brought shame to your father or husband you could be sold into slavery as punishment and a way to regain your families honor. Your role as a woman was to marry and maintain a favorable household for your husband. Since women were not

allowed to hold property they were married off by their fathers to families / men that were considered advantageous to each other. In the male eye women were inferior therefore had no right to democracy. They relied entirely upon their husbands in these ways. It was improper for a woman to speak their opinion on political matters. This was largely due to the social roles that were played woman were meant to hold house and home and the men were meant to be protectors and go off to fight wars. Generally speaking women had a lower social statuses than their husbands therefore in society they were considered lesser and Greek was considerably male-dominant.