

# Creon as a tyrant in antigone, by sophocles



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Corruption because of power has been a constant theme of mankind since the dawn of humanity. "Antigone", by Sophocles, is an excellent example of an author's attempt to portray this theme in a play. This theme is evident throughout the poem, but is especially clear in the dialogue between Creon and the Sentry, and eventually Antigone, beginning on line 248 and ending on line 594. Tyranny is defined by Merriam Webster's online dictionary as "oppressive power exerted by government (Merriam-Webster).

This scene begins with the Sentry entering from the side and slowly describing to Creon that his decree forbidding the burial of Polynices has been broken. The Sentry seems to be afraid of Creon, wondering aloud that "if somebody get the news to Creon first, what's to save your neck? "

(Antigone lines 256-257) This mood of fear continues throughout this scene, with the Sentry dragging out into many lines what might have only taken a few lines to tell. He obviously appears to be afraid of Creon, and rightfully so.

Creon threatens him with violence and death, saying "simple death won't be enough for you, not till we string you up alive and wring the immortality out of you." (Antigone lines 348-350) Creon has been in power for a very short period of time and seems to be paranoid that his power is being undermined by this violation of his decree. He doesn't appear to be concerned that his decree goes directly against the law of the Gods. Tyranny is sometimes born out of insecurities.

Once it is discovered that Antigone is the culprit in the crime, she and Creon begin to have a discussion on the morality of his decree and her guilt in this crime. She freely admits that she has committed the crime, but believes that

she is justified in her actions, even going so far as to call Creon a “ lucky tyrant. ” (Antigone line 566) It is possible that Creon deluded himself so far into believing he is protecting the state that he completely dismisses Antigone’s claims of righteousness.

Tyrants very rarely care how the people they are ruling feel and he seems to have forgotten that Antigone is mourning the loss of both her brothers and is probably having a mental breakdown of sorts. His single-minded focus on the safety and security of the state is leading him down a path towards a rule filled with citizens who loathe and fear him, rather than respect and love him.

I chose to focus on the idea of Creon as a tyrant in this play because there is a direct correlation between his use, or abuse, of absolute power and some of the events happening in our society today. It is impossible to know what Sophocles was thinking when he wrote the play, but it is entirely possible he was using it as a vessel to make a point about his government without being openly critical of them. Either way, an examination of this section of the play is important because it is important not to repeat the mistakes of the past.