

Antigone college essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As the play begins Antigone is just meeting up with her sister and is telling her about the decree of King Creon. Antigone and her sister, Ismene, had two brothers who had killed each other on the battlefield. One of their brothers, Eteocles, was buried with the military honors of a soldier's funeral, and yet the other, Polyneices, was to be left out to be food for the carrion birds since he died fighting against the city of Thebes. King Creon forbade publicly for anyone to bury the body of Polyneices under the penalty of death. Antigone is now determined to bury her brother and wants Ismene to help her. Ismene does not want to go against what the king has ordered and is fearful of what may become of her if she partakes in this journey to bury her kin. Antigone does not even think of the king as a threat and she does not believe that even he could stop her from burying the body of her beloved brother. Ismene tells her sister that she does not think that it is right to go against men and the powerful laws. She believes that it is not good to get involved in things that will draw attention to you, especially when they involve immediate disrespect for the king's orders. Antigone is offended by this and tells her sister that she would not want her to come if that was the way she felt, even if she did want to join her. She believes that her crime is holy and that her death could only be joyous, as she is to be with her brother and the other dead because she had obeyed the unwritten law of the gods where they desire every man is to be buried. Ismene becomes fearful for her sister's welfare, but her sister only warns her to be fearful for herself since everyone will hate her when they find out that she had known about the plan and did not tell anyone. Antigone firmly believes that she is simply doing what she must do. She has no choice. Her death, if that is what it must come to in order to accomplish the burial of her brother, will be better than the death of

her brother without her bravery, that is to say, a death without honor. When they part Ismene tells her sister that she is unwise, and yet a loyal friend to those who love her. Now when the guards discovered that someone buried the body of Polyneices, the head sentry went to tell the king, whereupon Creon became enthralled with anger. He told the sentry that he judged him to be a bribed soldier and that he could not return unless he found the person who had buried the body or told of whom it was that had bribed him. After this the horrified sentry and his men brushed off the sacred burial dust from the body and kept watch from a distance to see if the rebel would return to bury the body. Sure enough, during a sandstorm Antigone was seen burying the body that she had cared for so well before. The guards grabbed her and she showed no fear. She did not try to evade her pursuers and she was brought before the king. The king first asked her if she had heard his proclamation concerning the burial of her brother. She blatantly told him that she could not have helped hearing it. If she had denied hearing it, she may have escaped death, but she did not want to escape it, and she felt that she had done nothing wrong. She believed that her death would be of no importance, but that the death of her brother would have brought immense suffering upon herself. She then labels Creon a fool since she believes that it is just that which he thinks herself to be. At this, one of the king's advisors remarks that she is just as headstrong and deaf to reason as her father was. The king is furious now and charges the girl with double insolence for breaking the given laws and boasting of it. Creon orders that some of the servants go to acquire Ismene, for he deemed her to be just as guilty as her sister. Antigone now chastises the king telling him that everyone there would see what she has done as an honor, but they remain silent out of fear of him. The king

admits to this, but says that it does not matter since she is the guilty one, and the others are not. In response, she claims that there is no guilt in reverencing the dead. Creon tries to point out the guilt since she is honoring her brothers equally, even though one of them was a traitor. Antigone feels that there is honor due to all the dead and that we cannot say whom the gods hold wicked or respected. Creon becomes enraged again but at this time Ismene enters the room. Creon now asks Ismene very coldly if she confesses to her share of the crime. Ismene does not deny any part of her crime and beckons the punishment of guilt to enrapture her. At this Antigone becomes enraged that her sister would try to take credit for partaking in the honor of the crime that she was too terrified to commit. Ismene protests, saying that it is her duty to the dead to be killed with her sister, since she was too scared to bury her brother. Antigone states that Ismene will not lessen her death by sharing in it. Ismene insists that they are both equally guilty. Creon orders them away to be guarded, but later decides to spare Ismene although Antigone would see no mercy. The next day, when Antigone is brought to her tomb where she will be locked away from life, she begins to break down from her plateau of pride for the deed for which she felt herself so deserving of honor. She becomes angry with her fellow people who have come to see her go. They lend to her no pitying words, or cries of regret at her death which she will endure. They let her know that she has brought it upon herself and she now speaks no more of the honor of her dead brother, but of the horror of the crime of her fathers marriage and how it has ruined her own, since she was to be wed before she was condemned to death. Now she has no desire to live and is depressed at the lack of pity from those around her. She must now venture into the tomb, where she will die a slow

death being deprived of water, food, and light. Once sealed off from the outer world she sees no honor in this and hangs herself with her own garment. And with this completion of the last phase of her life, she can finally receive the long awaited praise from those who she had given her life to reverence.

Bibliography: