

# Antigone

1. What is the setting of the play?

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2. Why, according to Antigone, is Zeus tormenting her and her sister?

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3. To whom does Antigone refer as general? Why does she use that term?

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4. What exposition does Ismene provide in her opening speech?

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5. What new suffering must Antigone and Ismene, endure?

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6. What does Antigone plan to do? Why? What will be the consequence of this act?

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7. What further exposition does Ismene provide?

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8. What is ironic about Antigone's calling herself "a holy outlaw"? How does this description of herself introduce one of the themes of the play?

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9. What view does Ismene's hesitance represent?

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10. To what is Antigone responding when she suggests that she could hate her sister?

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11. What is the purpose of the exchange between the Chorus and the Chorus Leader?

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12. Sophocles employs a simile to compare the army from Argos to what? What is the significance this comparison?

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13. Which side in the war does the Chorus favor? Why?

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14. Name the four gods whom the Chorus names. What is each god's jurisdiction?

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15. Why does the Chorus call Creon their “new king”?

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16. So far, Antigone and Ismene have informed the audience of Eteocles’ and Polynices’ killing one another. The Chorus has repeated it, and now Creon again announces it. Why is Sophocles emphasizing this point so strongly?

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17. What is Creon’s attitude toward the Chorus? Why has he called them together?

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18. What turbulence has recently tossed the “ship of state” to which Creon refers?

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19. Why does Creon order that Eteocles be buried with honors, but that Polynices’ body be left to rot on the battlefield where it lay?

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20. Is Creon’s decree just? Why or why not?

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21. What can you infer from the Guard’s hesitance to tell Creon his news?

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22. How does the Guard imply that a human, like Creon, might have the power to alter another human's destiny.

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23. What does the manner in which Polynices was buried suggest about Theban beliefs about death? Of what earlier conversation does this remind the audience?

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24. What does Creon's reaction to the Chorus's suggestion that the symbolic burial of Polynices might have been an act of the gods reveal?

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25. What character traits does Creon reveal in this scene?

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26. What does dramatic irony contribute to this scene?

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27. Characterize the Guard's response to Creon? Why would Sophocles portray him this way?

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28. What does the Chorus's ode—after Creon and the Guard both exit—seem to celebrate? What is the effect of this ode?

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29. When the Guard returns with Antigone, what makes the reader feel that the Chorus cares for her? What are the sources of the Chorus's sympathy?

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30. In what ways is the Guard a comic character?

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31. Why must the Guard narrate the circumstances of Antigone's discovery and arrest? Why doesn't Sophocles dramatize them?

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32. What does the Guard's description of the windstorm suggest?

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33. What is Antigone's tone when she admits to being the one who buried Polynices?

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34. Explain the essence of Antigone's response to Creon.

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35. What does Creon's extreme anger suggest?

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36. What is the irony in Creon's saying of Antigone, "The most stubborn wills are those most prone to break"?

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37. Antigone is accused of two incidents of insolence. What are they?

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38. How does Antigone suggest that Creon is a tyrant?

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39. Explain the ambiguity of Antigone's telling Ismene that "justice will not allow" her to confess to playing a role in Polynices' burial?

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40. What surprising piece of information does Ismene reveal about Antigone? What effect does this revelation have on the reader?

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41. What is Ismene's motivation for wanting to die with Antigone? Is she a dynamic character who is now braver than she was in the beginning of the play?

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42. Compare the tone and subject matter of the second choral ode to the first.

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43. Where is the ambiguity of this ode?

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44. When Haemon arrives, what is the first question that Creon asks him?

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45. How does Creon's address to Haemon about obedience reflect his hubris?

When men succeed, what keeps their lives secure in almost every case is their obedience. That's why they must support those in control... If we must fall from power, let that come at some man's hand...

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46. Is Haemon being sincere in his approval of his father's judgment? Why or why not?

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47. Characterize the Chorus's response to Haemon's speech.

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48. By refusing to listen to his son, what does Creon reveal about himself?

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49. Whose instruction has Creon rejected?

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50. What is Haemon implying when he says, "Then she'll die—and in her death kill someone else"? How does Creon interpret this statement?

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51. What does Creon imply in his description of how he will execute Antigone?

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52. What or who is Eros whom the Chorus praises in this ode?

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53. What does the Chorus's ode on Eros suggest?

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54. What literary device is Sophocles employing in this ode to Eros?

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55. To whom do Antigone's (and the Chorus's) references to the "Bride of Hades" allude?

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56. To whom else does Antigone compare herself? What is the basis of this comparison?

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57. Does Sophocles seem to suggest that fate or free will is at the root of Antigone's suffering and death?

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58. How does Antigone justify her disobedience? Would she have done the same thing for her husband or her children?

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59. What is the intent of the Chorus's response to Antigone's comparison of herself with Niobe?

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60. What is Antigone's attitude toward the decree of Creon? What is her only regret?

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61. To what is Antigone referring when she says, "Alas, too, for my brother Polynices, who made a fatal marriage and then died— and with that death killed me while still alive"?

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62. According to the Chorus, what is Antigone's downfall? How is she actually quite similar to Creon?

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63. How does Creon try to assuage his conscience and abdicate his guilt in Antigone's death?

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64. How does Sophocles violate the unity of place in this sequence?

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65. How do Antigone's convictions seem to be wavering? What is the Chorus's response?

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66. Explain the allusions in the Chorus's response to Antigone.

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67. What relevance do these allusions bear to Antigone's situation?

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68. Explain the ironic symbolism of Tiresias' blindness.

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69. Why might Creon heed advice from Tiresias?

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70. What omens have caused Tiresias to approach Creon? What does he say the omens mean?

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71. What logic does Tiresias offer for Creon to relent?

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72. How is Creon's reaction to Tiresias' advice typical of his character?

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73. What does Tiresias predict for Creon?

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74. What dilemma does the Chorus acknowledge for Creon?

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75. Who are the Amphion and Cadmus the Messenger mentions?

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76. With what philosophical point does the Messenger begin his message?

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77. How has Tiresias' prophesy come to pass?

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78. Why, according to Aristotle's theories about tragedy, would Sophocles make the Messenger's description of Haemon's suicide so graphic?

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79. Why must the Messenger narrate the suicide instead of Sophocles' portraying it before the audience?

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80. Characterize the Chorus and the Messenger's reaction to how Eurydice receives the news?

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81. What is suggested by the Chorus's saying Eurydice's reaction might reveal a "vain excess of grief"?

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82. What is the significance of Creon's speech as he enters carrying Haemon's body?

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83. What does Creon's accusation to the Messenger echo?

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84. Who was Megareos?

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85. What did Eurydice's do with her last breath?

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86. Does Sophocles agree with Creon's assessment: "on my head fate climbs up with its overwhelming load"? Why or why not?

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