

*Antigone* Reading Questions

## Lines 1-179

1. How does the play begin? What impact does this beginning have on the audience?
2. What “griefs” has Oedipus handed down to Ismene and Antigone? (List them)
3. What are Antigone’s arguments for breaking the law and burying Polynices? (The ones she gives to Ismene.)
4. What are Ismene’s arguments for obeying the law and Creon?
5. Antigone says Ismene will be a coward if she refuses to help her bury Polynices. Do you agree that this is an act of cowardice? Why/why not?
6. What’s the tone of the chorus’s first speech? Who do they think is responsible for Thebes winning the war?

## Lines 179-416

7. In his opening speech, how does Creon justify his decision to deny Polynices burial rites?
8. What reason does the leader give for showing his allegiance to King Creon? What will happen if he doesn’t?
9. Based on what all the characters (Ismene, Antigone, the chorus and its leader, and the sentry) say and how they act, what kind of leader is Creon?
10. What does Creon believe ruins many men? How does this relate to the “crime” that’s been committed? Whom does Creon blame? (originally)
11. Who does the leader suggest ***might*** be responsible for burying Polynices? What does this reveal about Greek culture? What would that mean for Creon?
12. On pg. 76-7, what does the chorus say about humanity (its strengths and weaknesses)?

## 425-655

13. How does Ismene try to appeal to Creon’s emotions? What is his response?
14. Characterization: Find 2 quotes from or about Antigone and explain what they reveal about her character.
15. Do the same for Creon.
16. Do the same for Ismene.
17. Which character do you agree with the most so far? Why? What do you think is going to happen?

## Lines 656-899

18. The Chorus sympathizes with the House of Oedipus. What does the chorus believe is the fate of the House of Oedipus? Why? How does it relate to Ismene’s earlier plea to Creon?
19. What does Haemon say about his relationship with his father? What does Creon say about a father’s relationship with his son? How does this relate to the way he’s ruling Thebes? Is that problematic for a ruler? Why or why not? How does this compare to Antigone’s ideas about family?
20. According to Haemon, what are the citizens of Thebes saying about Antigone? Creon’s decree? To what extent should a ruler be concerned with the people’s opinion?
21. What advice does Haemon give his father?
22. How does Creon believe a leader should rule a government? In which stage of Kohlberg’s Moral Development does this place him? What stage is Haemon in?
23. Creon says Antigone worships death. Do you agree? What reasons does she have for this?
24. What does the Chorus say about love? What does this have to do with the play?

900-1238

25. Look up Niobe online. How is Niobe's fate similar to Antigone's situation?
26. What are the Chorus's criticisms of Antigone? What does this reveal about Greek culture?
27. Why wouldn't Antigone risk her life to bury a husband or a child? Is this a sound argument? Why or why not?
28. How will Antigone know if her decision to bury Polynices was just or not?
29. There are many allusions to Greek mythology on pg. 108-9. What's the Chorus trying to tell Antigone?
30. What's the bad omen Tiresias reveals to Creon? Who's to blame? What's the punishment (there are 2)?
31. What hope does Tiresias offer? Do you agree with what he says? Is there always a chance for redemption?
32. What accusations does Creon make against Tiresias? How does Tiresias respond? Does his description of Creon match Creon's behavior?
32. Why, even after Tiresias's prophecy and Haemon's wise words, is Creon still hesitant to repeal his decree and free Antigone?
33. Find a couple lines that you strongly agree with. Record them here and explain why you agree with what's being said. (You might include examples from your own life.)
34. Find a couple lines that you strongly disagree with. Record them here and explain why you disagree with what's being said. (You might include examples from your own life.)

Lines 1239-1470

35. What does the Chorus ask Dionysus for? Does it seem like those pleas are answered? Why/why not?
36. According to the messenger, what does Creon possess? What does he lack? What's more important?
37. Who's dead at the end of the play?
38. According to the messenger, what is the worst ill afflicting man? What solutions do the chorus and other characters offer to combat this ailment? (Consider the whole play) Do you agree that this is humanity's biggest problem? Why/why not?
39. Does Antigone get the justice she asked for? Does it matter if she knows that or not? Does she do anything to prematurely seal her fate? What can we learn from Antigone?
40. Look at Antigone's last speech. (pg. 107) Does it seem like she plans to take her own life? Why do you think Sophocles had Antigone (finally) mention the city of Thebes and its kings at this point in the play?
41. What hope, if any, does the Chorus's final speech offer?
42. Did Creon do the right thing? If not, what decision should he have made? At what point? Why?
43. Does Creon's decision remind you of any other instances in history, perhaps our own, where governments or leaders made an example out of "traitors"? For what purpose? What was the end result?
44. What does it take for Creon to fully realize his mistakes? Are we all doomed, to some degree, when it comes to realizing the consequences of our actions and recognizing our own mistakes? Why/why not?
45. How do you think Sophocles wanted us to feel about Antigone? What evidence can you provide to support your opinion?