

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - ANTIGONE BY SOPHOCLES

Prologue

1. Why does the play open with a mention of the tragedy of Oedipus?
2. Do Antigone's convictions about burying Polyneices mean that she disliked her other brother, Eteocles?
3. What are the main differences between Antigone and Ismene, in terms of personality?
4. How might Antigone's defiance be related to her former job – leading Oedipus around the world in his exile?
5. Why does Antigone say, "If that is what you think, I should not want you, even if you asked to come."? (p. 673)
6. Do you think Ismene feels the same way Antigone does about Polyneices, despite her reluctance to do anything?
7. Ismene says, "Impossible things should not be tried at all?" (p. 673) Is what Antigone plans to do really impossible?
8. Antigone says that the worst death is "death without honor." What might this be a reference to (especially within her own family)?

Scene I

1. How is the way the people see Creon at the beginning of Scene I similar to the way the people used to see Oedipus?
2. In his long speech, Creon says "no Ruler can expect complete loyalty from his subjects until he has been tested in office." (p. 675) However, what is the justification he uses to say that he must be obeyed?
3. Why do you think Creon seems too preoccupied with revolt and strife?
4. "Only a crazy man is in love with death!" (Choragos, p. 675) How might this statement apply to Creon.
5. Respond: "There's nothing in the world so demoralizing as money." (Creon, p. 677)
6. Why do you think the Sentry is afraid to tell Creon that Polyneices has been buried? Are his fears justified?

7. Why does Creon accuse the Sentry of the crime of burying Polyneices?
8. How do you think this line might be prophetic: "How dreadful it is when the right judge judges wrong!" (Sentry, p. 677)

Scene II

1. On page 678, the Sentry who comes to see Creon says, "A man should never be too sure of anything." What else might this statement mean, within the context of the play?
2. Why is Antigone not ashamed when she has to go before Creon and confess?
3. Choragos, speaking about Antigone, says "Like father, like daughter: both headstrong, deaf to reason!" (p. 679) How is this statement true? How is it not true?
4. Is Creon's decision to also arrest Ismene a smart move against potential anarchy, or is it merely a vindictive act?
5. How does Creon say Antigone's act dishonors Eteocles? How does Antigone respond to this?
6. Why does Ismene attempt to assume guilt alongside Antigone? Why doesn't Antigone let her?
7. What does Antigone mean when she says, "Words are not friends."? What do you think it means?

Scene III

1. Creon asks, "If I permit my own family to rebel, how shall I earn the world's obedience?" (p. 686) Do you think he's more concerned with ruling well or appearing to rule well?
2. How does Haimon gradually try to persuade his father?
3. According to Haimon, does the city agree with Creon's actions?
4. Respond to this quote: "It is not reason never to yield to reason!" (Haimon, p.686)
5. How does Haimon defend himself against Creon's verbal attack?
6. What are the fundamental differences in Creon and Haimon's viewpoints?

7. How is their rift between Creon and Haimon similar to that between Creon and Antigone?

Scene IV

1. Does Antigone have any regrets in Scene IV?
2. Antigone mentions the curse on her father on page 689. Why is it appropriate for her to allude to it at this point in the play?
3. Why do you think the Chorus seems to be siding with Creon in its dialogue with Antigone?
4. Antigone prays that Creon's punishment "equal my own." (p. 690) Based on what happened in Scene III, how do you think this will come true?

Scene V

1. Creon appears to revere Tiresias as the scene opens. How does this change?
2. Tiresias says, "A good man yields when he knows his course is wrong and repairs his evil. The only crime is pride." (p. 692) Do you agree? Does Creon agree?
3. Creon says of Tiresias, "The generation of prophets has always loved gold." Tiresias responds by saying, "The generation of kings has always loved brass." (p. 693) What does Tiresias's response mean? How does it especially apply to Creon?
4. Why do you think Creon finally changes his mind? Knowing what you know about Greek tragedy, do you think he will be in time to prevent anything horrible from happening?

Exodos

1. Respond to this quote: "Fate has brought all my pride to a thought of dust." (Creon, p. 698)
2. How were the events which occur in Exodos foreshadowed earlier in the play?