

## AP Literature

### Antigone

1. Describe the structure of the play. How is its plot constructed and developed? Explain the focus of each scene. What is the purpose of poetic odes that punctuate the dramatic action of the play?
2. Sophocles begins his play with two women—Antigone and Ismene—two lonely figures, one of whom proposes to defy the king, while the other counsels obedience to the will of the state. Why is this an effective way to begin the play?
  - 2a.) What expressions in the dialogue highlight the difference in the character and view of the two sisters? What is the spectator's emotional reaction to each of the two sisters?
3. The clash between Creon and Antigone is not only a clash of persons. It is also a clash of principles. How does Sophocles characterize Creon and Antigone? What principles does each figure espouse? Whose principles should assume priority? Consider their speeches, actions, and gestures.
4. What is the chorus's role? What function does the chorus perform when it first appears? What other functions does the chorus perform throughout the remainder of the play? What is the chorus's view of the various events of the play? Single out two important comments made by the chorus and explain their significance. What impression of the chorus does Sophocles wish the reader or spectator to get?
5. The chorus recites an ode, which extols the virtues of man. What are the limits to man's achievements? Under what conditions can he prosper? In what way is the ode a comment to the flaw in Creon's character and a foreshadowing of the tragedy that is to come?
6. Sophocles wishes us to know that Creon is morally insensitive, that he has complete lack of ordinary human sympathy and understanding. How are these qualities revealed in his attitude toward Antigone, toward Ismene, toward Haemon, and toward Teiresias? How does Creon change after his argument with Teiresias? Is the change believable? Before Eurydice dies, she curses Creon. Is she justified in this hatred of her husband before her death? What, if anything, was wrong in the relationship between husband and wife?
7. What is the ironic purpose in Teiresias' prophecy? What relationship is there between Teiresias' prophecy and Creon's subsequent actions? What is ironic in Creon's actions?
8. The episodes in which the chorus sings of the power of love; in which the chorus admires Antigone, yet considers her a rash, headstrong girl; and in which Creon sends a sorrowful and friendless Antigone to her death highlight the clash of the power and love themes in the play. What references to power and to love do you find in these episodes? Are there similar references in other episodes? What makes Antigone's farewell moving? Why is her farewell ironic?

9. How does Antigone differentiate between human and divine law? How is this distinction at the thematic heart of the play?
10. At the start of the play, what motivates Creon? What reasons does he give for his edict? How do his definitions of terms such as “traitor” and “patriot” reveal his concerns?
11. What is Sophocles’ position regarding the actions of Antigone and Creon? How can you tell? What does the play have to say about the conflict between order and civil disobedience and about the nature of justice and injustice? What does it say about the nature of peace?
12. Antigone focuses our attention on the conflict between public and private realms, the divisive impact of war on families, and the consequences of differing views of honor. How do these issues manifest themselves in conflicts we see going on today?
13. How does Sophocles provide exposition to ground the audience in the background of events and the characters? Consider the opening dialogue and the initial speeches of the Chorus and the sentry.
14. How does the Chorus warn against *hubris*, the Greek word for excessive pride? How do the various metaphors and images (the sun, the shield, the eagle, the armor, the chariots, the choirs) contribute to the meaning of this passage? How do the words of the Chorus in this passage foreshadow later events in the play?
15. The sentry uses an analogy comparing Antigone to a bird. Explain why you do or do not find it a fitting comparison to illuminate Antigone’s situation?
16. Discuss the end of Antigone’s final speech. Is it consistent with her character as we have known her throughout the play, or does it mark a shift in her thinking?
17. An antagonist is a character who opposes the protagonist, thus creating a conflict. Ultimately, who is the protagonist of this play, Antigone or Creon? Who is the antagonist? Consider whose tragedy the play enacts. Explain your reasons for your responses.
18. What roles do the secondary characters play: Haemon, Ismene, Tiresias, and Eurydice, for example? Which ones are most important?
19. Is Creon’s rhetoric consistent throughout the play? How does his purpose and tone shift from speech to speech? Compare and contrast the way Creon responds to Antigone, to Haemon, and to Tiresias. Refer specifically to the text in each case.
20. Many interpret Creon’s outrage toward Antigone not as a leader responding to an action defying his decree but as a man in a patriarchal society feeling threatened by a woman who dares to challenge him. Explain this view and cite textual evidence to support this interpretation