**Sophocles  
Antigone  
442 BC**

**Background Note to the Story**

When Oedipus, King of Thebes, discovered through his own investigations that he had killed his father and married his mother, Jocasta, he put out his own eyes, and Jocasta killed herself. Once Oedipus ceased being king of Thebes, his two sons, Polyneices and Eteocles, agreed to alternate as king. When Eteocles refused to give up power to Polyneices, the latter collected a foreign army of Argives and attacked the city. In the ensuing battle, the Thebans triumphed over the invading forces, and the two brothers killed each other, with Eteocles defending the city and Polyneices attacking it. The action of the play begins immediately after the battle. Note that Creon is a brother of Jocasta and thus an uncle of Antigone, Ismene, Eteocles, and Polyneices.

**Sophocles  
Antigone**

**Dramatis Personae**

**ANTIGONE**: daughter of Oedipus.  
**ISMENE**: daughter of Oedipus, sister of Antigone  
**CREON**: king of Thebes  
**EURYDICE**: wife of Creon  
**HAEMON**: son of Creon and Euridice, engaged to Antigone.  
**TEIRESIAS**: an old blind prophet  
**BOY**: a young lad guiding Teiresias  
**GUARD**: a soldier serving Creon.  
**MESSENGER**  
**CHORUS**: Theban Elders  
**ATTENDANTS**

*[In Thebes, directly in front of the royal palace, which stands in the background, its main doors facing the audience.   
Enter Antigone leading Ismene away from the palace]*

ANTIGONE  
          Now, dear Ismene, my own blood sister,  
          do you have any sense of all the troubles  
          Zeus keeps bringing on the two of us,  
          as long as we’re alive? All that misery  
          which stems from Oedipus? There’s no suffering,  
          no shame, no ruin—not one dishonour—  
          which I have not seen in all the troubles  
          you and I go through. What’s this they’re saying now,  
          something our general has had proclaimed  
          throughout the city? Do you know of it?                                      10  
          Have you heard? Or have you just missed the news?  
          Dishonours which better fit our enemies  
          are now being piled up on the ones we love.                                        [10]

ISMENE  
          I’ve had no word at all, Antigone,  
          nothing good or bad about our family,  
          not since we two lost both our brothers,  
          killed on the same day by a double blow.  
          And since the Argive army, just last night,  
          has gone away, I don’t know any more  
          if I’ve been lucky or face total ruin.                                               20

ANTIGONE  
          I know that. That’s why I brought you here,  
          outside the gates, so only you can hear.

ISMENE            
          What is it? The way you look makes it seem                                          [20]  
          you’re thinking of some dark and gloomy news.

ANTIGONE  
          Look—what’s Creon doing with our two brothers?  
          He’s honouring one with a full funeral  
          and treating the other one disgracefully!  
          Eteocles, they say, has had his burial  
          according to our customary rites,  
          to win him honour with the dead below.                                       30  
          But as for Polyneices, who perished  
          so miserably, an order has gone out  
          throughout the city—that’s what people say.  
          He’s to have no funeral or lament,  
          but to be left unburied and unwept,  
          a sweet treasure for the birds to look at,  
          for them to feed on to their heart’s content.                                          [30]  
          That’s what people say the noble Creon  
          has announced to you and me—I mean to me—  
          and now he’s coming to proclaim the fact,                                    40  
          to state it clearly to those who have not heard.  
          For Creon this matter’s really serious.  
          Anyone who acts against the order  
          will be stoned to death before the city.  
          Now you know, and you’ll quickly demonstrate  
          whether you are nobly born, or else  
          a girl unworthy of her splendid ancestors.

ISMENE  
          Oh my poor sister, if that’s what’s happening,  
          what can I say that would be any help  
          to ease the situation or resolve it?                                                 50       [40]

ANTIGONE  
          Think whether you will work with me in this  
          and act together.

ISMENE  
                                                             In what kind of work?  
          What do you mean?

ANTIGONE  
                                                   Will you help these hands  
          take up Polyneices’ corpse and bury it?

ISMENE  
          What? You’re going to bury Polyneices,  
          when that’s been made a crime for all in Thebes?

ANTIGONE  
          Yes. I’ll do my duty to my brother—  
          and yours as well, if you’re not prepared to.  
          I won’t be caught betraying him.

ISMENE  
                                                                       You’re too rash.  
          Has Creon not expressly banned that act?                                    60

ANTIGONE  
          Yes. But he’s no right to keep me from what’s mine.

ISMENE  
          O dear. Think, Antigone. Consider  
          how our father died, hated and disgraced,                                             [50]  
          when those mistakes which his own search revealed  
          forced him to turn his hand against himself  
          and stab out both his eyes. Then that woman,  
          his mother and his wife—her double role—  
          destroyed her own life in a twisted noose.  
          Then there’s our own two brothers, both butchered  
          in a single day—that ill-fated pair                                                 70  
          with their own hands slaughtered one another  
          and brought about their common doom.  
          Now, the two of us are left here quite alone.  
          Think how we’ll die far worse than all the rest,  
          if we defy the law and move against                                                      [60]  
          the king’s decree, against his royal power.  
          We must remember that by birth we’re women,  
          and, as such, we shouldn’t fight with men.  
          Since those who rule are much more powerful,  
          we must obey in this and in events                                               80  
          which bring us even harsher agonies.  
          So I’ll ask those underground for pardon—  
          since I’m being compelled, I will obey  
          those in control. That’s what I’m forced to do.  
          It makes no sense to try to do too much.

ANTIGONE  
          I wouldn’t urge you to. No. Not even  
          if you were keen to act. Doing this with you  
          would bring me no joy. So be what you want.                                       [70]  
          I’ll still bury him. It would be fine to die  
          while doing that. I’ll lie there with him,                                        90  
          with a man I love, pure and innocent,  
          for all my crime. My honours for the dead  
          must last much longer than for those up here.  
          I’ll lie down there forever. As for you,  
          well, if you wish, you can show contempt  
          for those laws the gods all hold in honour.

ISMENE  
          I’m not disrespecting them. But I can’t act  
          against the state. That’s not in my nature.

ANTIGONE  
          Let that be your excuse. I’m going now                                                  [80]  
          to make a burial mound for my dear brother.                               100

ISMENE  
          Oh poor Antigone, I’m so afraid for you.

ANTIGONE  
          Don’t fear for me. Set your own fate in order.

ISMENE  
          Make sure you don’t reveal to anyone  
          what you intend. Keep it closely hidden.  
          I’ll do the same.

ANTIGONE  
                               No, no. Announce the fact—  
          if you don’t let everybody know,  
          I’ll despise your silence even more.

ISMENE  
          Your heart is hot to do cold deeds.

ANTIGONE  
                                                             But I know  
          I’ll please the ones I’m duty bound to please.

ISMENE  
          Yes, if you can. But you’re after something                                   110       [90]  
          which you’re incapable of carrying out.

ANTIGONE  
          Well, when my strength is gone, then I’ll give up.

ISMENE  
          A vain attempt should not be made at all.

ANTIGONE  
          I’ll hate you if you’re going to talk that way.  
          And you’ll rightly earn the loathing of the dead.  
          So leave me and my foolishness alone—  
          we’ll get through this fearful thing. I won’t suffer  
          anything as bad as a disgraceful death.

ISMENE  
          All right then, go, if that’s what you think right.  
          But remember this—even though your mission                           120  
          makes no sense, your friends do truly love you.

*[Exit Antigone away from the palace. Ismene watches her go and then returns slowly  
 into the palace. Enter the Chorus of Theban elders]*

CHORUS  
          O ray of sunlight,                                                                                    [100]  
          most beautiful that ever shone  
          on Thebes, city of the seven gates,  
          you’ve appeared at last,  
          you glowing eye of golden day,  
          moving above the streams of Dirce,[**\***](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#note1)  
          driving into headlong flight  
          the white-shield warrior from Argos,  
          who marched here fully armed,                                                    130  
          now forced back by your sharper power.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Against our land he marched,                                                                 [110]  
          sent here by the warring claims  
          of Polyneices, with piercing screams,  
          an eagle flying above our land,  
          covered wings as white as snow,  
          and hordes of warriors in arms,  
          helmets topped with horsehair crests.

CHORUS  
          Standing above our homes,  
          he ranged around our seven gates,                                               140  
          with threats to swallow us  
          and spears thirsting to kill.  
          Before his jaws had had their fill                                                            [120]  
          and gorged themselves on Theban blood,  
          before Hephaistos’ pine-torch flames  
          had seized our towers, our fortress crown,**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note2)**          he went back, driven in retreat.  
          Behind him rings the din of war—  
          his enemy, the Theban dragon-snake,  
          too difficult for him to overcome.                                                150

CHORUS LEADER  
          Zeus hates an arrogant boasting tongue.  
          Seeing them march here in a mighty stream,  
          in all their clanging golden pride,                                                            [130]  
          he hurled his fire and struck the man,  
          up there, on our battlements, as he began  
          to scream aloud his victory.

CHORUS  
          The man swing down, torch still in hand,  
          and smashed into unyielding earth—  
          the one who not so long ago attacked,  
          who launched his furious, enraged assault,                                  160  
          to blast us, breathing raging storms.  
          But things turned out not as he’d hoped.  
          Great war god Ares assisted us—  
          he smashed them down and doomed them all                                        [140]  
          to a very different fate.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Seven captains at seven gates  
          matched against seven equal warriors  
          paid Zeus their full bronze tribute,  
          the god who turns the battle tide,  
          all but that pair of wretched men,                                                 170  
          born of one father and one mother, too—  
          who set their conquering spears against each other  
          and then both shared a common death.

CHORUS  
          Now victory with her glorious name  
          has come, bringing joy to well-armed Thebes.  
          The battle’s done—let’s strive now to forget                                         [150]  
          with songs and dancing all night long,  
          with Bacchus leading us to make Thebes shake.

*[The palace doors are thrown open and guards appear at the doors]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          But here comes Creon, new king of our land,  
          son of Menoikeos. Thanks to the gods,                                        180  
          who’ve brought about our new good fortune.  
          What plan of action does he have in mind?  
          What’s made him hold this special meeting,                                          [160]  
          with elders summoned by a general call?

*[Enter Creon from the palace. He addresses the assembled elders]*

CREON  
          Men, after much tossing of our ship of state,  
          the gods have safely set things right again.  
          Of all the citizens I’ve summoned you,  
          because I know how well you showed respect  
          for the eternal power of the throne,  
          first with Laius and again with Oedipus,                                      190  
          once he restored our city.[**\***](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#note3) When he died,  
          you stood by his children, firm in loyalty.  
          Now his sons have perished in a single day,  
          killing each other with their own two hands,  
          a double slaughter, stained with brother’s blood.                                    [170]  
          And so I have the throne, all royal power,  
          for I’m the one most closely linked by blood  
          to those who have been killed. It’s impossible  
          to really know a man, to know his soul,  
          his mind and will, before one witnesses                                        200  
          his skill in governing and making laws.  
          For me, a man who rules the entire state  
          and does not take the best advice there is,  
          but through fear keeps his mouth forever shut,                                     [180]  
          such a man is the very worst of men—  
          and always will be. And a man who thinks  
          more highly of a friend than of his country,  
          well, he means nothing to me. Let Zeus know,  
          the god who always watches everything,  
          I would not stay silent if I saw disaster                                         210  
          moving here against the citizens,  
          a threat to their security. For anyone  
          who acts against the state, its enemy,  
          I’d never make my friend. For I know well  
          our country is a ship which keeps us safe,  
          and only when it sails its proper course                                                   [190]  
          do we make friends. These are the principles  
          I’ll use in order to protect our state.  
          That’s why I’ve announced to all citizens  
          my orders for the sons of Oedipus—                                            220  
          Eteocles, who perished in the fight  
          to save our city, the best and bravest  
          of our spearmen, will have his burial,  
          with all those purifying rituals  
          which accompany the noblest corpses,  
          as they move below. As for his brother—  
          that Polyneices, who returned from exile,  
          eager to wipe out in all-consuming fire                                                   [200]  
          his ancestral city and its native gods,  
          keen to seize upon his family’s blood                                           230  
          and lead men into slavery—for him,  
          the proclamation in the state declares  
          he’ll have no burial mound, no funeral rites,  
          and no lament. He’ll be left unburied,  
          his body there for birds and dogs to eat,  
          a clear reminder of his shameful fate.  
          That’s my decision. For I’ll never act  
          to respect an evil man with honours  
          in preference to a man who’s acted well.  
          Anyone who’s well disposed towards our state,                           240  
          alive or dead, that man I will respect.                                                    [210]

CHORUS LEADER  
          Son of Menoikeos, if that’s your will  
          for this city’s friends and enemies,  
          it seems to me you now control all laws  
          concerning those who’ve died and us as well—  
          the ones who are still living.

CREON  
                                                                See to it then,  
          and act as guardians of what’s been proclaimed.

CHORUS  
          Give that task to younger men to deal with.

CREON  
          There are men assigned to oversee the corpse.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Then what remains that you would have us do?                            250

CREON  
          Don’t yield to those who contravene my orders.

CHORUS LEADER: No one is such a fool that he loves death.                     [220]

CREON  
          Yes, that will be his full reward, indeed.  
          And yet men have often been destroyed  
          because they hoped to profit in some way.

*[Enter a guard, coming towards the palace]*

GUARD  
          My lord, I can’t say I’ve come out of breath  
          by running here, making my feet move fast.  
          Many times I stopped to think things over—  
          and then I’d turn around, retrace my steps.  
          My mind was saying many things to me,                                       260  
          "You fool, why go to where you know for sure  
          your punishment awaits?"—"And now, poor man,  
          why are you hesitating yet again?  
          If Creon finds this out from someone else,                                             [230]  
          how will you escape being hurt?" Such matters  
          kept my mind preoccupied. And so I went,  
          slowly and reluctantly, and thus made  
          a short road turn into a lengthy one.  
          But then the view that I should come to you  
          won out. If what I have to say is nothing,                                     270  
          I’ll say it nonetheless. For I’ve come here  
          clinging to the hope that I’ll not suffer  
          anything that’s not part of my destiny.

CREON  
          What’s happening that’s made you so upset?

GUARD  
          I want to tell you first about myself.  
          I did not do it. And I didn’t see  
          the one who did. So it would be unjust  
          if I should come to grief.                                                                        [240]

CREON  
                                                             You hedge so much.  
          Clearly you have news of something ominous.

GUARD  
          Yes. Strange things that make me pause a lot.                              280

CREON  
          Why not say it and then go—just leave.

GUARD  
          All right, I’ll tell you. It’s about the corpse.  
          Someone has buried it and disappeared,  
          after spreading thirsty dust onto the flesh  
          and undertaking all appropriate rites.

CREON  
          What are you saying? What man would dare this?

GUARD  
          I don’t know. There was no sign of digging,  
          no marks of any pick axe or a mattock.                                                  [250]  
          The ground was dry and hard and very smooth,  
          without a wheel track. Whoever did it                                         290  
          left no trace. When the first man on day watch  
          revealed it to us, we were all amazed.  
          The corpse was hidden, but not in a tomb.  
          It was lightly covered up with dirt,  
          as if someone wanted to avert a curse.  
          There was no trace of a wild animal  
          or dogs who’d come to rip the corpse apart.  
          Then the words flew round among us all,  
          with every guard accusing someone else.                                              [260]  
          We were about to fight, to come to blows—                               300  
          no one was there to put a stop to it.  
          Every one of us was responsible,  
          but none of us was clearly in the wrong.  
          In our defence we pleaded ignorance.  
          Then we each stated we were quite prepared  
          to pick up red-hot iron, walk through flames,  
          or swear by all the gods that we’d not done it,  
          we’d no idea how the act was planned,  
          or how it had been carried out. At last,  
          when all our searching had proved useless,                                  310  
          one man spoke up, and his words forced us all  
          to drop our faces to the ground in fear.                                                  [270]  
          We couldn’t see things working out for us,  
          whether we agreed or disagreed with him.  
          He said we must report this act to you—  
          we must not hide it. And his view prevailed.  
          I was the unlucky man who won the prize,  
          the luck of the draw. That’s why I’m now here,  
          not of my own free will or by your choice.  
          I know that—for no one likes a messenger                                  320  
          who comes bearing unwelcome news with him.

CHORUS LEADER  
          My lord, I’ve been wondering for some time now—  
          could this act not be something from the gods?

CREON  
          Stop now—before what you’re about to say                                           [280]  
          enrages me completely and reveals  
          that you’re not only old but stupid, too.  
          No one can tolerate what you’ve just said,  
          when you claim gods might care about this corpse.  
          Would they pay extraordinary honours  
          and bury as a man who’d served them well                                  330  
          someone who came to burn their offerings,  
          their pillared temples, to torch their lands  
          and scatter all its laws? Or do you see  
          gods paying respect to evil men? No, no.  
          For quite a while some people in the town  
          have secretly been muttering against me.                                               [290]  
          They don’t agree with what I have decreed.  
          They shake their heads and have not kept their necks  
          under my yoke, as they are duty bound to do  
          if they were men who are content with me.                                 340  
          I well know that these guards were led astray—  
          such men urged them to carry out this act  
          for money. To foster evil actions,  
          to make them commonplace among all men,  
          nothing is as powerful as money.  
          It destroys cities, driving men from home.  
          Money trains and twists the minds in worthy men,  
          so they then undertake disgraceful acts.  
          Money teaches men to live as scoundrels,                                              [300]  
          familiar with every profane enterprise.                                         350  
          But those who carry out such acts for cash  
          sooner or later see how for their crimes  
          they pay the penalty. For if great Zeus  
          still has my respect, then understand this—  
          I swear to you on oath—unless you find  
          the one whose hands really buried him,  
          unless you bring him here before my eyes,  
          then death for you will never be enough.  
          No, not before you’re hung up still alive  
          and you confess to this gross, violent act.                                    360  
          That way you’ll understand in future days,                                             [310]  
          when there’s a profit to be gained from theft,  
          you’ll learn that it’s not good to be in love  
          with every kind of monetary gain.  
          You’ll know more men are ruined than are saved  
          when they earn profits from dishonest schemes.

GUARD  
          Do I have your permission to speak now,  
          or do I just turn around and go away?

CREON  
          But I find your voice so irritating—  
          don’t you realize that?

GUARD  
                                    Where does it hurt?                                             370  
          Is it in your ears or in your mind?

CREON  
          Why try to question where I feel my pain?

GUARD  
          The man who did it—he upsets your mind.  
          I offend your ears.

CREON  
                           My, my, it’s clear to see  
          it's natural for you to chatter on.                                                          [320]

GUARD  
          Perhaps. But I never did this.

CREON  
                                                             This and more—  
          you sold your life for silver.

GUARD  
                                                   How strange and sad  
          when the one who sorts this out gets it all wrong.

CREON: Well, enjoy your sophisticated views.  
          But if you don’t reveal to me who did this,                                  380  
          you’ll just confirm how much your treasonous gains  
          have made you suffer.

*[Exit Creon back into the palace. The doors close behind him]*

GUARD  
                                                   Well, I hope he’s found.  
          That would be best. But whether caught or not—  
          and that’s something sheer chance will bring about—  
          you won’t see me coming here again.  
          This time, against all hope and expectation,                                           [330]  
          I’m still unhurt. I owe the gods great thanks.

*[Exit the Guard away from the palace]*

CHORUS  
          There are many strange and wonderful things,  
          but nothing more strangely wonderful than man.  
          He moves across the white-capped ocean seas                            390  
          blasted by winter storms, carving his way  
          under the surging waves engulfing him.  
          With his teams of horses he wears down  
          the unwearied and immortal earth,  
          the oldest of the gods, harassing her,  
          as year by year his ploughs move back and forth.                                   [340]

          He snares the light-winged flocks of birds,  
          herds of wild beasts, creatures from deep seas,  
          trapped in the fine mesh of his hunting nets.  
          O resourceful man, whose skill can overcome                             400  
          ferocious beasts roaming mountain heights.                                           [350]  
          He curbs the rough-haired horses with his bit  
          and tames the inexhaustible mountain bulls,  
          setting their savage necks beneath his yoke.

          He’s taught himself speech and wind-swift thought,  
          trained his feelings for communal civic life,  
          learning to escape the icy shafts of frost,  
          volleys of pelting rain in winter storms,  
          the harsh life lived under the open sky.  
          That’s man—so resourceful in all he does.                                   410      [360]  
          There’s no event his skill cannot confront—  
          other than death—that alone he cannot shun,  
          although for many baffling sicknesses  
          he has discovered his own remedies.

          The qualities of his inventive skills  
          bring arts beyond his dreams and lead him on,  
          sometimes to evil and sometimes to good.  
          If he treats his country’s laws with due respect  
          and honours justice by swearing on the gods,  
          he wins high honours in his city.                                                   420  
          But when he grows bold and turns to evil,                                             [370]  
          then he has no city. A man like that—  
          let him not share my home or know my mind.

*[Enter the Guard, bringing Antigone with him. She is not resisting]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          What this? I fear some omen from the gods.  
          I can’t deny what I see here so clearly—  
          that young girl there—it’s Antigone.  
          Oh you poor girl, daughter of Oedipus,  
          child of a such a father, so unfortunate,  
          what’s going on? Surely they’ve not brought you here  
          because you’ve disobeyed the royal laws,                                     430  
          because they’ve caught you acting foolishly?                                         [380]

GUARD  
          This here’s the one who carried out the act.  
          We caught her as she was burying the corpse.  
          Where’s Creon?

*[The palace doors open. Enter Creon with attendants]*

CHORUS LEADER  
                                                  He’s coming from the house—  
          and just in time.

CREON  
                               Why have I come "just in time"?  
          What’s happening? What is it?

GUARD  
                                                            My lord,  
          human beings should never take an oath  
          there’s something they’ll not do—for later thoughts  
          contradict what they first meant. I’d have sworn                                    [390]  
          I’d not soon venture here again. Back then,                                  440  
          the threats you made brought me a lot of grief.  
          But there’s no joy as great as what we pray for  
          against all hope. And so I have come back,  
          breaking that oath I swore. I bring this girl,  
          captured while she was honouring the grave.  
          This time we did not draw lots. No. This time  
          I was the lucky man, not someone else.  
          And now, my lord, take her for questioning.  
          Convict her. Do as you wish. As for me,  
          by rights I’m free and clear of all this trouble.                               450       [400]

CREON  
          This girl here—how did you catch her? And where?

GUARD  
          She was burying that man. Now you know  
          all there is to know.

CREON  
                                                             Do you understand  
          just what you’re saying? Are your words the truth?

GUARD  
          We saw this girl giving that dead man’s corpse  
          full burial rites—an act you’d made illegal.  
          Is what I say simple and clear enough?

CREON  
          How did you see her, catch her in the act?

GUARD  
          It happened this way. When we got there,  
          after hearing those awful threats from you,                                   460  
          we swept off all the dust covering the corpse,  
          so the damp body was completely bare.                                                  [410]  
          Then we sat down on rising ground up wind,  
          to escape the body’s putrid rotting stench.  
          We traded insults just to stay awake,  
          in case someone was careless on the job.  
          That’s how we spent the time right up ’til noon,  
          when the sun’s bright circle in the sky  
          had moved half way and it was burning hot.  
          Then suddenly a swirling windstorm came,                                   470  
          whipping clouds of dust up from the ground,  
          filling the plain—some heaven-sent trouble.  
          In that level place the dirt storm damaged  
          all the forest growth, and the air around [420]  
          was filled with dust for miles. We shut our mouths  
          and just endured this scourge sent from the gods.  
          A long time passed. The storm came to an end.  
          That’s when we saw the girl. She was shrieking—  
          a distressing painful cry, just like a bird  
          who’s seen an empty nest, its fledglings gone.                              480  
          That’s how she was when she saw the naked corpse.  
          She screamed out a lament, and then she swore,  
          calling evil curses down upon the ones  
          who’d done this. Then right away her hands  
          threw on the thirsty dust. She lifted up  
          a finely made bronze jug and then three times                                        [430]  
          poured out her tributes to the dead.  
          When we saw that, we rushed up right away  
          and grabbed her. She was not afraid at all.  
          We charged her with her previous offence                                    490  
          as well as this one. She just kept standing there,  
          denying nothing. That made me happy—  
          though it was painful, too. For it’s a joy  
          escaping troubles which affect oneself,  
          but painful to bring evil on one’s friends.  
          But all that is of less concern to me  
          than my own safety.                                                                                [440]

CREON  
                                         You there—you with your face  
          bent down towards the ground, what do you say?  
          Do you deny you did this or admit it?

ANTIGONE  
          I admit I did it. I won’t deny that.                                                      500

CREON *[to the Guard]*  
          You’re dismissed—go where you want. You’re free—  
          no serious charges made against you.

*[Exit the Guard. Creon turns to interrogate Antigone]*

          Tell me briefly—not in some lengthy speech—  
          were you aware there was a proclamation  
          forbidding what you did?

ANTIGONE  
                                                       I’d heard of it.  
          How could I not? It was public knowledge.

CREON  
          And yet you dared to break those very laws?

ANTIGONE  
          Yes. Zeus did not announce those laws to me.                                      [450]  
          And Justice living with the gods below  
          sent no such laws for men. I did not think                                    510  
          anything which you proclaimed strong enough  
          to let a mortal override the gods  
          and their unwritten and unchanging laws.  
          They’re not just for today or yesterday,  
          but exist forever, and no one knows  
          where they first appeared. So I did not mean  
          to let a fear of any human will  
          lead to my punishment among the gods.  
          I know all too well I’m going to die—                                                    [460]  
          how could I not?—it makes no difference                                    520  
          what you decree. And if I have to die  
          before my time, well, I count that a gain.  
          When someone has to live the way I do,  
          surrounded by so many evil things,  
          how can she fail to find a benefit  
          in death? And so for me meeting this fate  
          won’t bring any pain. But if I’d allowed  
          my own mother’s dead son to just lie there,  
          an unburied corpse, then I’d feel distress.  
          What going on here does not hurt me at all.                                 530  
          If you think what I’m doing now is stupid,  
          perhaps I’m being charged with foolishness                                            [470]  
          by someone who’s a fool.

CHORUS LEADER  
                                                             It’s clear enough  
          the spirit in this girl is passionate—  
          her father was the same. She has no sense  
          of compromise in times of trouble.

CREON *[to the Chorus Leader]*  
          But you should know the most obdurate wills  
          are those most prone to break. The strongest iron  
          tempered in the fire to make it really hard—  
          that’s the kind you see most often shatter.                                   540  
          I’m well aware the most tempestuous horses  
          are tamed by one small bit. Pride has no place  
          in anyone who is his neighbour’s slave.  
          This girl here was already very insolent                                                  [480]  
          in contravening laws we had proclaimed.  
          Here she again displays her proud contempt—  
          having done the act, she now boasts of it.  
          She laughs at what she’s done. Well, in this case,  
          if she gets her way and goes unpunished,  
          then she’s the man here, not me. No. She may be                        550  
          my sister’s child, closer to me by blood  
          than anyone belonging to my house  
          who worships Zeus Herkeios in my home,**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note4)**  
          but she’ll not escape my harshest punishment—  
          her sister, too, whom I accuse as well.  
          She had an equal part in all their plans                                                    [490]  
          to do this burial. Go summon her here.  
          I saw her just now inside the palace,  
          her mind out of control, some kind of fit.

*[Exit attendants into the palace to fetch Ismene]*

          When people hatch their mischief in the dark                              560  
          their minds often convict them in advance,  
          betraying their treachery. How I despise  
          a person caught committing evil acts  
          who then desires to glorify the crime.

ANTIGONE  
          Take me and kill me—what more do you want?

CREON  
          Me? Nothing. With that I have everything.

ANTIGONE  
          Then why delay? There’s nothing in your words  
          that I enjoy—may that always be the case!                                             [500]  
          And what I say displeases you as much.  
          But where could I gain greater glory                                            570  
          than setting my own brother in his grave?  
          All those here would confirm this pleases them  
          if their lips weren’t sealed by fear—being king,  
          which offers all sorts of various benefits,  
          means you can talk and act just as you wish.

CREON  
          In all of Thebes, you’re the only one  
          who looks at things that way.

ANTIGONE  
                                                            They share my views,  
          but they keep their mouths shut just for you.

CREON  
          These views of yours—so different from the rest—  
          don’t they bring you any sense of shame?                                    580        [510]

ANTIGONE  
          No—there’s nothing shameful in honouring  
          my mother’s children.

CREON  
                                                   You had a brother  
          killed fighting for the other side.

ANTIGONE  
          Yes—from the same mother and father, too.

CREON  
          Why then give tributes which insult his name?

ANTIGONE  
          But his dead corpse won’t back up what you say.

CREON  
          Yes, he will, if you give equal honours  
          to a wicked man.

ANTIGONE  
                                               But the one who died  
          was not some slave—it was his own brother.

CREON  
          Who was destroying this country—the other one                        590  
          went to his death defending it.

ANTIGONE  
                                                          That may be,  
          but Hades still desires equal rites for both.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note5)**

CREON  
          A good man does not wish what we give him                                        [520]  
          to be the same an evil man receives.

ANTIGONE  
          Who knows? In the world below perhaps  
          such actions are no crime.

CREON  
                                                          An enemy  
          can never be a friend, not even in death.

ANTIGONE  
          But my nature is to love. I cannot hate.

CREON  
          Then go down to the dead. If you must love,  
          love them. No woman’s going to govern me—                            600  
          no, no—not while I’m still alive.

*[Enter two attendants from the house bringing Ismene to Creon]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          Ismene’s coming. There—right by the door.  
          She’s crying. How she must love her sister!  
          From her forehead a cloud casts its shadow  
          down across her darkly flushing face—  
          and drops its rain onto her lovely cheeks.                                              [530]

CREON  
          You there—you snake lurking in my house,  
          sucking out my life’s blood so secretly.  
          I’d no idea I was nurturing two pests,  
          who aimed to rise against my throne. Come here.                        610  
          Tell me this—do you admit you played your part  
          in this burial, or will you swear an oath  
          you had no knowledge of it?

ISMENE  
                                                                       I did it—  
          I admit it, and she’ll back me up.  
          So I bear the guilt as well.

ANTIGONE  
                                                             No, no—  
          justice will not allow you to say that.  
          You didn’t want to. I didn’t work with you.

ISMENE  
          But now you’re in trouble, I’m not ashamed                                          [540]  
          of suffering, too, as your companion.

ANTIGONE  
          Hades and the dead can say who did it—                                     620  
          I don’t love a friend whose love is only words.

ISMENE  
          You’re my sister. Don’t dishonour me.  
          Let me respect the dead and die with you.

ANTIGONE  
          Don’t try to share my death or make a claim  
          to actions which you did not do. I’ll die—  
          and that will be enough.

ISMENE  
                                                   But if you’re gone,  
          what is there in life for me to love?

ANTIGONE  
          Ask Creon. He’s the one you care about.

ISMENE  
          Why hurt me like this? It doesn’t help you.                                            [550]

ANTIGONE  
          If I am mocking you, it pains me, too.                                          630

ISMENE  
          Even now is there some way I can help?

ANTIGONE  
          Save yourself. I won’t envy your escape.

ISMENE  
          I feel so wretched leaving you to die.

ANTIGONE  
          But you chose life—it was my choice to die.

ISMENE  
          But not before I’d said those words just now.

ANTIGONE  
          Some people may approve of how you think—  
          others will believe my judgment’s good.

ISMENE  
          But the mistake’s the same for both of us.

ANTIGONE  
          Be brave. You’re alive. But my spirit died  
          some time ago so I might help the dead                                        640      [560]

CREON  
          I’d say one of these girls has just revealed  
          how mad she is—the other’s been that way  
          since she was born.

ISMENE  
                                    My lord, whatever good sense  
          people have by birth no longer stays with them  
          once their lives go wrong—it abandons them.

CREON  
          In your case, that’s true, once you made your choice  
          to act in evil ways with wicked people.

ISMENE  
          How could I live alone, without her here?

CREON  
          Don’t speak of her being here. Her life is over.

ISMENE  
          You’re going to kill your own son’s bride?                                    650

CREON  
          Why not? There are other fields for him to plough.

ISMENE  
          No one will make him a more loving wife  
          than she will.

CREON  
                                         I have no desire my son  
          should have an evil wife.

ANTIGONE  
                                                 Dearest Haemon,  
          how your father wrongs you.

CREON  
                                                             I’ve had enough of this—  
          you and your marriage.

ISMENE  
                               You really want that?  
          You’re going to take her from him?

CREON  
                                                                       No, not me.  
          Hades is the one who’ll stop the marriage.

CHORUS LEADER  
          So she must die—that seems decided on.

CREON  
          Yes—for you and me the matter’s closed.                                    660

*[Creon turns to address his attendants]*

          No more delay. You slaves, take them inside.  
          From this point on they must act like women  
          and have no liberty to wander off.  
          Even bold men run when they see Hades                                               [580]  
          coming close to them to snatch their lives.

*[The attendants take Antigone and Ismene into the palace, leaving Creon and the Chorus on stage]*

CHORUS  
          Those who live without tasting evil  
          have happy lives—for when the gods  
          shake a house to its foundations,  
          then inevitable disasters strike,  
          falling upon whole families,                                                          670  
          just as a surging ocean swell  
          running before cruel Thracian winds  
          across the dark trench of the sea  
          churns up the deep black sand                                                                [590]  
          and crashes headlong on the cliffs,  
          which scream in pain against the wind.

          I see this house’s age-old sorrows,  
          the house of Labdakos’ children,[**\***](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#note6)  
          sorrows falling on the sorrows of the dead,  
          one generation bringing no relief                                                  680  
          to generations after it—some god  
          strikes at them—on and on without an end.  
          For now the light which has been shining  
          over the last roots of Oedipus’ house                                                     [600]  
          is being cut down with a bloody knife  
          belonging to the gods below—  
          for foolish talk and frenzy in the soul.

          Oh Zeus, what human trespasses  
          can check your power? Even Sleep,  
          who casts his nets on everything,                                                 690  
          cannot master that—nor can the months,  
          the tireless months the gods control.  
          A sovereign who cannot grow old,  
          you hold Olympus as your own,[**\***](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#note7)  
          in all its glittering magnificence.                                                              [610]  
          From now on into all future time,  
          as in the past, your law holds firm.  
          It never enters lives of human beings  
          in its full force without disaster.

          Hope ranging far and wide brings comfort                                    700  
          to many men—but then hope can deceive,  
          delusions born of volatile desire.  
          It comes upon the man who’s ignorant  
          until his foot is seared in burning fire.  
          Someone’s wisdom has revealed to us                                                    [620]  
          this famous saying—sometimes the gods  
          lure a man’s mind forward to disaster,  
          and he thinks evil’s something good.  
          But then he lives only the briefest time  
          free of catastrophe.

*[The palace doors open]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          Here comes Haemon,                                                                   710  
          your only living son. Is he grieving  
          the fate of Antigone, his bride,  
          bitter that his marriage hopes are gone?                                                  [630]

CREON  
          We’ll soon find out—more accurately  
          than any prophet here could indicate.

*[Enter Haemon from the palace]* My son, have you heard the sentence that’s been passed  
          upon your bride? And have you now come here  
          angry at your father? Or are you loyal to me,  
          on my side no matter what I do?

HAEMON  
          Father, I’m yours. For me your judgments                                    720  
          and the ways you act on them are good—  
          I shall follow them. I’ll not consider  
          any marriage a greater benefit  
          than your fine leadership.

CREON  
                                                                       Indeed, my son,  
          that’s how your heart should always be resolved,  
          to stand behind your father’s judgment                                                  [640]  
          on every issue. That’s what men pray for—  
          obedient children growing up at home  
          who will pay back their father’s enemies,  
          evil to them for evil done to him,                                                 730  
          while honouring his friends as much as he does.  
          A man who fathers useless children—  
          what can one say of him except he’s bred  
          troubles for himself, and much to laugh at  
          for those who fight against him? So, my son,  
          don’t ever throw good sense aside for pleasure,  
          for some woman’s sake. You understand  
          how such embraces can turn freezing cold                                              [650]  
          when an evil woman shares your life at home.  
          What greater wound is there than a false friend?                          740  
          So spit this girl out—she’s your enemy.  
          Let her marry someone else in Hades.  
          Since I caught her clearly disobeying,  
          the only culprit in the entire city,  
          I won’t perjure myself before the state.  
          No—I’ll kill her. And so let her appeal  
          to Zeus, the god of blood relationships.  
          If I foster any lack of full respect  
          in my own family, I surely do the same  
          with those who are not linked to me by blood.                            750       [660]  
          The man who acts well with his household  
          will be found a just man in the city.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note8)**  
          I’d trust such a man to govern wisely  
          or to be content with someone ruling him.  
          And in the thick of battle at his post                                                      [670]  
          he’ll stand firm beside his fellow soldier,  
          a loyal, brave man. But anyone who’s proud  
          and violates our laws or thinks he’ll tell  
          our leaders what to do, a man like that  
          wins no praise from me. No. We must obey                                 760  
          whatever man the city puts in charge,  
          no matter what the issue—great or small,  
          just or unjust. For there’s no greater evil  
          than a lack of leadership. That destroys  
          whole cities, turns households into ruins,  
          and in war makes soldiers break and run away.  
          When men succeed, what keeps their lives secure  
          in almost every case is their obedience.  
          That’s why they must support those in control,  
          and never let some woman beat us down.                                    770  
          If we must fall from power, let that come  
          at some man’s hand—at least, we won’t be called  
          inferior to any woman.                                                                           [680]

CHORUS LEADER  
          Unless we’re being deceived by our old age,  
          what you’ve just said seems reasonable to us.

HAEMON  
          Father, the gods instill good sense in men—  
          the greatest of all the things which we possess.  
          I could not find your words somehow not right—  
          I hope that’s something I never learn to do.  
          But other words might be good, as well.                                      780  
          Because of who you are, you can't perceive  
          all the things men say or do—or their complaints.  
          Your gaze makes citizens afraid—they can’t                                          [690]  
          say anything you would not like to hear.  
          But in the darkness I can hear them talk—  
          the city is upset about the girl.  
          They say of all women here she’s least deserves  
          the worst of deaths for her most glorious act.  
          When in the slaughter her own brother died,  
          she did not just leave him there unburied,                                    790  
          to be ripped apart by carrion dogs or birds.  
          Surely she deserves some golden honour?  
          That’s the dark secret rumour people speak.                                          [700]  
          For me, father, nothing is more valuable  
          than your well being. For any children,  
          what could be a greater honour to them  
          than their father’s thriving reputation?  
          A father feels the same about his sons.  
          So don’t let your mind dwell on just one thought,  
          that what you say is right and nothing else.                                  800  
          A man who thinks that only he is wise,  
          that he can speak and think like no one else,  
          when such men are exposed, then all can see  
          their emptiness inside. For any man,                                                      [710]  
          even if he’s wise, there’s nothing shameful  
          in learning many things, staying flexible.  
          You notice how in winter floods the trees  
          which bend before the storm preserve their twigs.  
          The ones who stand against it are destroyed,  
          root and branch. In the same way, those sailors                           810  
          who keep their sails stretched tight, never easing off,  
          make their ship capsize—and from that point on  
          sail with their rowing benches all submerged.  
          So end your anger. Permit yourself to change.  
          For if I, as a younger man, may state  
          my views, I’d say it would be for the best                                               [720]  
          if men by nature understood all things—  
          if not, and that is usually the case,  
          when men speak well, it good to learn from them.

CHORUS LEADER  
          My lord, if what he’s said is relevant,                                           820  
          it seems appropriate to learn from him,  
          and you too, Haemon, listen to the king.  
          The things which you both said were excellent.

CREON  
          And men my age—are we then going to school  
          to learn what’s wise from men as young as him?

HAEMON  
          There’s nothing wrong in that. And if I’m young,  
          don’t think about my age—look at what I do.

CREON  
          And what you do—does that include this,                                            [730]  
          honouring those who act against our laws?

HAEMON  
          I would not encourage anyone                                                      830  
          to show respect to evil men.

CREON  
                                                             And her—  
          is she not suffering from the same disease?

HAEMON  
          The people here in Thebes all say the same—  
          they deny she is.

CREON  
                                                             So the city now  
          will instruct me how I am to govern?

HAEMON  
          Now you’re talking like someone far too young.  
         Don’t you see that?

CREON  
                                                   Am I to rule this land  
          at someone else’s whim or by myself?

HAEMON  
          A city which belongs to just one man  
          is no true city.

CREON  
                                         According to our laws,                                  840  
          does not the ruler own the city?

HAEMON  
          By yourself you’d make an excellent king  
          but in a desert.

CREON  
                                         It seems as if this boy                                             [740]  
          is fighting on the woman’s side.

HAEMON  
                                                             That’s true—  
          if you’re the woman. I’m concerned for you.

CREON  
          You’re the worst there is—you set your judgment up  
          against your father.

HAEMON  
                                         No, not when I see  
          you making a mistake and being unjust.

CREON  
          Is it a mistake to honour my own rule?

HAEMON  
          You’re not honouring that by trampling on                                  850  
          the gods’ prerogatives.

CREON  
                                                   You foul creature—  
          you’re worse than any woman.

HAEMON  
                                                   You’ll not catch me  
          giving way to some disgrace.

CREON  
                                                             But your words  
          all speak on her behalf.

HAEMON  
                                                   And yours and mine—  
          and for the gods below.

CREON  
                                                   You woman’s slave—  
          don’t try to win me over.

HAEMON  
                                                             What do you want—  
          to speak and never hear someone reply?**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note9)**

CREON  
          You’ll never marry her while she’s alive.                                               [750]

HAEMON  
          Then she’ll die—and in her death kill someone else.

CREON  
          Are you so insolent you threaten me?                                          860

HAEMON  
          Where’s the threat in challenging a bad decree?

CREON  
          You’ll regret parading what you think like this—  
          you—a person with an empty brain!

HAEMON  
          If you were not my father, I might say  
          you were not thinking straight.

CREON  
                                                             Would you, indeed?  
          Well, then, by Olympus, I’ll have you know  
          you’ll be sorry for demeaning me  
          with all these insults.

*[Creon turns to his attendants]*

                                                  Go bring her out—                                         [760]  
          that hateful creature, so she can die right here,  
          with him present, before her bridegroom’s eyes.                          870

HAEMON  
          No. Don’t ever hope for that. She’ll not die  
          with me just standing there. And as for you—  
          your eyes will never see my face again.  
          So let your rage charge on among your friends  
          who want to stand by you in this.

*[Exit Haemon, running back into the palace]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          My lord, Haemon left in such a hurry.  
          He’s angry—in a young man at his age  
          the mind turns bitter when he’s feeling hurt.

CREON  
          Let him dream up or carry out great deeds  
          beyond the power of man, he’ll not save these girls—                 880  
          their fate is sealed.

CHORUS LEADER  
                                               Are you going to kill them both?                                   [770]

CREON  
          No—not the one whose hands are clean. You’re right.

CHORUS LEADER  
          How do you plan to kill Antigone?

CREON  
          I’ll take her on a path no people use,  
          and hide her in a cavern in the rocks,  
          while still alive. I’ll set out provisions,  
          as much as piety requires, to make sure  
          the city is not totally corrupted.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note10)**  
          Then she can speak her prayers to Hades,  
          the only god she worships, for success                                         890  
          avoiding death—or else, at least, she’ll learn,  
          although too late, how it’s a waste of time  
          to work to honour those whom Hades holds.                                        [780]

CHORUS  
          O Eros, the conqueror in every fight,**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note11)**  
          Eros, who squanders all men’s wealth,  
          who sleeps at night on girls’ soft cheeks,  
          and roams across the ocean seas  
          and through the shepherd’s hut—  
          no immortal god escapes from you,  
          nor any man, who lives but for a day.                                           900  
          And the one whom you possess goes mad.                                             [790]  
          Even in good men you twist their minds,  
          perverting them to their own ruin.  
          You provoke these men to family strife.  
          The bride’s desire seen glittering in her eyes—  
          that conquers everything, its power  
          enthroned beside eternal laws, for there  
          the goddess Aphrodite works her will,                                                    [800]  
          whose ways are irresistible.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note12)**

*[Antigone enters from the palace with attendants who are taking her away to her execution]*

CHORAL LEADER  
          When I look at her I forget my place.                                           910  
          I lose restraint and can’t hold back my tears—  
          Antigone going to her bridal room  
          where all are laid to rest in death.

ANTIGONE  
          Look at me, my native citizens,  
          as I go on my final journey,  
          as I gaze upon the sunlight one last time,  
          which I’ll never see again—for Hades,  
          who brings all people to their final sleep,  
          leads me on, while I’m still living,                                                           [810]  
          down to the shores of Acheron.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note13)**                                                 920  
          I’ve not yet had my bridal chant,  
          nor has any wedding song been sung—  
          for my marriage is to Acheron.

CHORUS  
          Surely you carry fame with you and praise,  
          as you move to the deep home of the dead.  
          You were not stricken by lethal disease  
          or paid your wages with a sword.                                                            [820]  
          No. You were in charge of your own fate.  
          So of all living human beings, you alone  
          make your way down to Hades still alive.                                   930

ANTIGONE  
          I’ve heard about a guest of ours,  
          daughter of Tantalus, from Phrygia—  
          she went to an excruciating death  
          in Sipylus, right on the mountain peak.  
          The stone there, just like clinging ivy,  
          wore her down, and now, so people say,  
          the snow and rain never leave her there,                                                [830]  
          as she laments. Below her weeping eyes  
          her neck is wet with tears. God brings me  
          to a final rest which most resembles hers.                                   940

CHORUS  
          But Niobe was a goddess, born divine—  
          and we are human beings, a race which dies.  
          But still, it’s a fine thing for a woman,  
          once she’s dead, to have it said she shared,  
          in life and death, the fate of demi-gods.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note14)**

ANTIGONE  
          Oh, you are mocking me! Why me—  
          by our fathers’ gods—why do you all,  
          my own city and the richest men of Thebes,  
          insult me now right to my face,  
          without waiting for my death?                                                     950  
          Well at least I have Dirce’s springs,  
          the holy grounds of Thebes,  
          a city full of splendid chariots,  
          to witness how no friends lament for me  
          as I move on—you see the laws  
          which lead me to my rock-bound prison,  
          a tomb made just for me. Alas!  
          In my wretchedness I have no home,                                                     [850]  
          not with human beings or corpses,  
          not with the living or the dead.                                                    960

CHORUS  
          You pushed your daring to the limit, my child,  
          and tripped against Justice’s high altar—  
          perhaps your agonies are paying back  
          some compensation for your father.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note15)**

ANTIGONE  
          Now there you touch on my most painful thought—  
          my father’s destiny—always on my mind,  
          along with that whole fate which sticks to us,                                        [860]  
          the splendid house of Labdakos—the curse  
          arising from a mother’s marriage bed,  
          when she had sex with her own son, my father.                           970  
          From what kind of parents was I born,  
          their wretched daughter? I go to them,  
          unmarried and accursed, an outcast.  
          Alas, too, for my brother Polyneices,  
          who made a fatal marriage and then died—                                           [870]  
          and with that death killed me while still alive.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note16)**

CHORUS  
          To be piously devout shows reverence,  
          but powerful men, who in their persons  
          incorporate authority, cannot bear  
          anyone to break their rules. Hence, you die                                 980  
          because of your own selfish will.

ANTIGONE  
          Without lament, without a friend,  
          and with no marriage song, I’m being led  
          in this miserable state, along my final road.  
          So wretched that I no longer have the right                                            [880]  
          to look upon the sun, that sacred eye.  
          But my fate prompts no tears, and no friend mourns.

CREON  
          Don’t you know that no one faced with death  
          would ever stop the singing and the groans,  
          if that would help? Take her and shut her up,                              990  
          as I have ordered, in her tomb’s embrace.  
          And get it done as quickly as you can.  
          Then leave her there alone, all by herself—  
          she can sort out whether she wants suicide  
          or remains alive, buried in a place like that.  
          As far as she’s concerned, we bear no guilt.  
          But she’s lost her place living here with us.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note17)**                                           [890]

ANTIGONE  
          Oh my tomb and bridal chamber—  
          my eternal hollow dwelling place,  
          where I go to join my people. Most of them                                1000  
          have perished—Persephone has welcomed them  
          among the dead.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note18)** I’m the last one, dying here  
          the most evil death by far, as I move down  
          before the time allotted for my life is done.  
          But I go nourishing the vital hope  
          my father will be pleased to see me come,  
          and you, too, my mother, will welcome me,  
          as well as you, my own dear brother.  
          When you died, with my own hands I washed you.                                 [900]  
          I arranged your corpse and at the grave mound                            1010  
          poured out libations. But now, Polyneices,  
          this is my reward for covering your corpse.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "n19)**  
          However, for wise people I was right  
          to honour you. I’d never have done it  
          for children of my own, not as their mother,  
          nor for a dead husband lying in decay—  
          no, not in defiance of the citizens.  
          What law do I appeal to, claiming this?  
          If my husband died, there’d be another one,  
          and if I were to lose a child of mine                                             1020  
          I’d have another with some other man.                                                  [910]  
          But since my father and my mother, too,  
          are hidden away in Hades’ house,  
          I’ll never have another living brother.  
          That was the law I used to honour you.  
          But Creon thought that I was in the wrong  
          and acting recklessly for you, my brother.  
          Now he seizes me by force and leads me here—  
          no wedding and no bridal song, no share  
          in married life or raising children.                                                1030  
          Instead I go in sorrow to my grave,  
          without my friends, to die while still alive.                                             [920]  
          What holy justice have I violated?  
          In my wretchedness, why should I still look  
          up to the gods? Which one can I invoke  
          to bring me help, when for my reverence  
          they charge me with impiety? Well, then,  
          if this is something fine among the gods,  
          I’ll come to recognize that I’ve done wrong.  
          But if these people here are being unjust                                     1040  
          may they endure no greater punishment  
          than the injustices they’re doing to me.

CHORUS LEADER  
          The same storm blasts continue to attack  
          the mind in this young girl.                                                                     [930]

CREON  
                                          Then those escorting her  
          will be sorry they’re so slow.

ANTIGONE  
                                                                  Alas, then,  
          those words mean death is very near at hand.

CREON  
          I won’t encourage you or cheer you up,  
          by saying the sentence won’t be carried out.

ANTIGONE  
          O city of my fathers  
          in this land of Thebes—                                                              1050  
          and my ancestral gods,  
          I am being led away.  
          No more delaying for me.  
          Look on me, you lords of Thebes,                                                          [940]  
          the last survivor of your royal house,  
          see what I have to undergo,  
          the kind of men who do this to me,  
          for paying reverence to true piety.

*[Antigone is led away under escort]*

CHORUS  
          In her brass-bound room fair Danae as well  
          endured her separation from the heaven’s light,                          1060  
          a prisoner hidden in a chamber like a tomb,  
          although she, too, came from a noble line.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note20)**  
          And she, my child, had in her care  
          the liquid streaming golden seed of Zeus.                                               [950]  
          But the power of fate is full of mystery.  
          There’s no evading it, no, not with wealth,  
          or war, or walls, or black sea-beaten ships.

          And the hot-tempered child of Dryas,  
          king of the Edonians, was put in prison,  
          closed up in the rocks by Dionysus,                                            1070  
          for his angry mocking of the god.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note21)**  
          There the dreadful flower of his rage                                                      [960]  
          slowly withered, and he came to know  
          the god who in his frenzy he had mocked  
          with his own tongue. For he had tried  
          to hold in check women in that frenzy  
          inspired by the god, the Bacchanalian fire.  
          More than that—he’d made the Muses angry,  
          challenging the gods who love the flute.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note22)**

          Beside the black rocks where the twin seas meet,                       1080  
          by Thracian Salmydessos at the Bosphorus,**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note23)**  
          close to the place where Ares dwells,                                                      [970]  
          the war god witnessed the unholy wounds  
          which blinded the two sons of Phineus,  
          inflicted by his savage wife—the sightless holes  
          cried out for someone to avenge those blows  
          made with her sharpened comb in blood-stained hands.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note24)**

          In their misery they wept, lamenting  
          their wretched suffering, sons of a mother  
          whose marriage had gone wrong. And yet,                                  1090        [980]  
          she was an offspring of an ancient family,  
          the race of Erechtheus, raised far away,  
          in caves surrounded by her father’s winds,  
          Boreas’ child, a girl who raced with horses  
          across steep hills—child of the gods.  
          But she, too, my child, suffered much  
          from the immortal Fates.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note25)**

*[Enter Teiresias, led by a young boy]*

TEIRESIAS  
          Lords of Thebes, we two have walked a common path,  
          one person’s vision serving both of us.  
          The blind require a guide to find their way.                                 1100        [990]

CREON  
          What news do you have, old Teiresias?

TEIRESIAS  
          I’ll tell you—and you obey the prophet.

CREON  
          I’ve not rejected your advice before.

TEIRESIAS  
          That’s the reason why you’ve steered the city  
          on its proper course.

CREON  
                                                             From my experience  
          I can confirm the help you give.

TEIRESIAS  
                                                   Then know this—  
          your luck is once more on fate’s razor edge.

CREON  
          What? What you’ve just said makes me nervous.

TEIRESIAS  
          You’ll know—once you hear the tokens of my art.  
          As I was sitting in my ancient place                                             1110  
          receiving omens from the flights of birds  
          who all come there where I can hear them,                                             [1000]  
          I note among those birds an unknown cry—  
          evil, unintelligible, angry screaming.  
          I knew that they were tearing at each other  
          with murderous claws. The noisy wings  
          revealed that all too well. I was afraid.  
          So right away up on the blazing altar  
          I set up burnt offerings. But Hephaestus  
          failed to shine out from the sacrifice—                                        1120  
          dark slime poured out onto the embers,  
          oozing from the thighs, which smoked and spat,  
          bile was sprayed high up into the air,                                                      [1010]  
          and the melting thighs lost all the fat  
          which they’d been wrapped in. The rites had failed—  
          there was no prophecy revealed in them.  
          I learned that from this boy, who is my guide,  
          as I guide other men.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note26)** Our state is sick—  
          your policies have done this. In the city  
          our altars and our hearths have been defiled,                              1130  
          all of them, with rotting flesh brought there  
          by birds and dogs from Oedipus’ son,  
          who lies there miserably dead. The gods  
          no longer will accept our sacrifice,  
          our prayers, our thigh bones burned in fire.                                            [1020]  
          No bird will shriek out a clear sign to us,  
          for they have gorged themselves on fat and blood  
          from a man who’s dead. Consider this, my son.  
          All men make mistakes—that’s not uncommon.  
          But when they do, they’re no longer foolish                                1140  
          or subject to bad luck if they try to fix  
          the evil into which they’ve fallen,  
          once they give up their intransigence.  
          Men who put their stubbornness on show  
          invite accusations of stupidity.  
          Make concessions to the dead—don’t ever stab  
          a man who’s just been killed. What’s the glory  
          in killing a dead person one more time?                                                  [1030]  
          I’ve been concerned for you. It’s good advice.  
          Learning can be pleasant when a man speaks well,                      1150  
          especially when he seeks your benefit.

CREON  
          Old man, you’re all like archers shooting at me—  
          For you all I’ve now become your target—  
          even prophets have been aiming at me.  
          I’ve long been bought and sold as merchandise  
          among that tribe. Well, go make your profits.  
          If it’s what you want, then trade with Sardis  
          for their golden-silver alloy—or for gold  
          from India, but you’ll never hide that corpse  
          in any grave. Even if Zeus’ eagles                                               1160       [1040]  
          should choose to seize his festering body  
          and take it up, right to the throne of Zeus,  
          not even then would I, in trembling fear  
          of some defilement, permit that corpse  
          a burial. For I know well that no man  
          has the power to pollute the gods.  
          But, old Teiresias, among human beings  
          the wisest suffer a disgraceful fall  
          when, to promote themselves, they use fine words  
          to spread around abusive insults.                                                 1170

TEIRESIAS  
          Alas, does any man know or think about . . .

CREON *[interrupting]*   
          Think what? What sort of pithy common thought  
          are you about to utter?

TEIRESIAS *[ignoring the interruption]*             
                                                            . . . how good advice  
          is valuable—worth more than all possessions.                                       [1050]

CREON  
          I think that’s true, as much as foolishness  
          is what harms us most.

TEIRESIAS  
                                         Yet that’s the sickness  
          now infecting you.

CREON  
                                          I have no desire  
          to denigrate a prophet when I speak.

TEIRESIAS  
          But that’s what you are doing, when you claim  
          my oracles are false.

CREON  
                                         The tribe of prophets—                                1180  
          all of them—are fond of money

TEIRESIAS  
                                                   And kings?  
          Their tribe loves to benefit dishonestly.

CREON  
          You know you’re speaking of the man who rules you.

TEIRESIAS  
          I know—thanks to me you saved the city  
          and now are in control.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note27)**

CREON  
                                                   You’re a wise prophet,  
          but you love doing wrong.

TEIRESIAS  
                                                             You’ll force me  
          to speak of secrets locked inside my heart.                                             [1060]

CREON  
          Do it—just don’t speak to benefit yourself.

TEIRESIAS  
          I don’t think that I’ll be doing that—  
          not as far as you’re concerned.

CREON  
                                                                       You can be sure              1190  
          you won’t change my mind to make yourself more rich.

TEIRESIAS  
          Then understand this well—you will not see  
          the sun race through its cycle many times  
          before you lose a child of your own loins,  
          a corpse in payment for these corpses.  
          You’ve thrown down to those below someone  
          from up above—in your arrogance  
          you’ve moved a living soul into a grave,  
          leaving here a body owned by gods below—                                          [1070]  
          unburied, dispossessed, unsanctified.                                          1200  
          That’s no concern of yours or gods above.  
          In this you violate the ones below.  
          And so destroying avengers wait for you,  
          Furies of Hades and the gods, who’ll see  
          you caught up in this very wickedness.  
          Now see if I speak as someone who’s been bribed.  
          It won’t be long before in your own house  
          the men and women all cry out in sorrow,  
          and cities rise in hate against you—all those                                          [1080]  
          whose mangled soldiers have had burial rites                              1210  
          from dogs, wild animals, or flying birds  
          who carry the unholy stench back home,  
          to every city hearth.[**\***](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#note28) Like an archer,  
          I shoot these arrows now into your heart  
          because you have provoked me. I’m angry—  
          so my aim is good. You’ll not escape their pain.  
          Boy, lead us home so he can vent his rage  
          on younger men and keep a quieter tongue  
          and a more temperate mind than he has now.                                         [1090]

*[Exit Teiresias, led by the young boy]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          My lord, my lord, such dreadful prophecies—                            1220  
          and now he’s gone. Since my hair changed colour  
          from black to white, I know here in the city  
          he’s never uttered a false prophecy.

CREON  
          I know that, too—and it disturbs my mind.  
          It’s dreadful to give way, but to resist  
          and let destruction hammer down my spirit—  
          that’s a fearful option, too.

CHORUS LEADER  
                                          Son of Menoikeos,  
          you need to listen to some good advice.

CREON  
          Tell me what to do. Speak up. I’ll do it.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Go and release the girl from her rock tomb.                                1230     [1100]  
          Then prepare a grave for that unburied corpse.

CREON  
          This is your advice? You think I should concede?

CHORUS LEADER  
          Yes, my lord, as fast as possible.  
          Swift footed injuries sent from the gods  
          hack down those who act imprudently.

CREON  
          Alas—it’s difficult. But I’ll give up.  
          I’ll not do what I’d set my heart upon.  
          It’s not right to fight against necessity.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Go now and get this done. Don’t give the work  
          to other men to do.

CREON  
                                                             I’ll go just as I am.                    1240  
          Come, you servants, each and every one of you.  
          Come on. Bring axes with you. Go there quickly—  
          up to the higher ground. I’ve changed my mind.                                     [1110]  
          Since I’m the one who tied her up, I’ll go  
          and set her free myself. Now I’m afraid.  
          Until one dies the best thing well may be  
          to follow our established laws.

*[Creon and his attendants hurry off stage]*

CHORUS  
          Oh you with many names,  
          you glory of that Theban bride,  
          and child of thundering Zeus,                                                     1250  
          you who cherish famous Italy,  
          and rule the welcoming valley lands  
          of Eleusianian Deo—  
          O Bacchus—you who dwell  
          in the bacchants’ mother city Thebes,  
          beside Ismenus’ flowing streams,  
          on land sown with the teeth  
          of that fierce dragon.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note29)**

          Above the double mountain peaks,  
          the torches flashing through the murky smoke                            1260  
          have seen you where Corcyian nymphs  
          move on as they worship you  
          by the Kastalian stream.                                                                         [1130]  
          And from the ivy-covered slopes  
          of Nysa’s hills, from the green shore  
          so rich in vines, you come to us,  
          visiting our Theban ways,  
          while deathless voices all cry out  
          in honour of your name, "Evoe."**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note30)**

          You honour Thebes, our city,                                                      1270  
          above all others, you and your mother  
          blasted by that lightning strike.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note31)**  
          And now when all our people here                                                         [1140]  
          are captive to a foul disease,  
          on your healing feet you come  
          across the moaning strait  
          or over the Parnassian hill.

          You who lead the dance,  
          among the fire-breathing stars,  
          who guard the voices in the night,                                               1280  
          child born of Zeus, oh my lord,                                                              [1150]  
          appear with your attendant Thyiads,  
          who dance in frenzy all night long,  
          for you their patron, Iacchus.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note32)**  
  
*[Enter a Messenger]*

MESSENGER  
          All you here who live beside the home  
          of Amphion and Cadmus—in human life  
          there’s no set place which I would praise or blame.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note33)**  
          The lucky and unlucky rise or fall  
          by chance day after day—and how these things  
          are fixed for men no one can prophesy.                                       1290      [1160]  
          For Creon, in my view, was once a man  
          we all looked up to. For he saved the state,  
          this land of Cadmus, from its enemies.  
          He took control and reigned as its sole king—  
          and prospered with the birth of noble children.  
          Now all is gone. For when a man has lost  
          what gives him pleasure, I don’t include him  
          among the living—he’s a breathing corpse.  
          Pile up a massive fortune in your home,  
          if that’s what you want—live like a king.                                    1300  
          If there’s no pleasure in it, I’d not give  
          to any man a vapour’s shadow for it,                                                      [1170]  
          not compared to human joy.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Have you come with news of some fresh trouble  
          in our house of kings?

MESSENGER  
                                                             They’re dead—  
          and those alive bear the responsibility  
          for those who’ve died.

CHORUS LEADER  
                                         Who did the killing?  
          Who’s lying dead? Tell us.

MESSENGER  
                                         Haemon has been killed.  
          No stranger shed his blood.

CHORUS LEADER  
                                         At his father’s hand?  
          Or did he kill himself?

MESSENGER  
                                         By his own hand—  
          angry at his father for the murder.                                               1310

CHORUS LEADER  
          Teiresias, how your words have proven true!

MESSENGER  
          That’s how things stand. Consider what comes next.

CHORUS LEADER  
          I see Creon’s wife, poor Eurydice—                                                      [1180]  
          she’s coming from the house—either by chance,  
          or else she’s heard there’s news about her son.

*[Enter Eurydice from the palace with some attendants]*

EURYDICE  
          Citizens of Thebes, I heard you talking,  
          as I was walking out, going off to pray,  
          to ask for help from goddess Pallas.  
          While I was unfastening the gate,  
          I heard someone speaking of bad news                                       1320  
          about my family. I was terrified.  
          I collapsed, fainting back into the arms  
          of my attendants. So tell the news again—                                            [1190]  
          I’ll listen. I’m no stranger to misfortune.

MESSENGER  
          Dear lady, I’ll speak of what I saw,  
          omitting not one detail of the truth.  
          Why should I ease your mind with a report  
          which turns out later to be incorrect?  
          The truth is always best. I went to the plain,  
          accompanying your husband as his guide.                                   1330  
          Polyneices’ corpse, still unlamented,  
          was lying there, the greatest distance off,  
          torn apart by dogs. We prayed to Pluto  
          and to Hecate, goddess of the road,  
          for their good will and to restrain their rage.                                           [1200]  
          We gave the corpse a ritual wash, and burned  
          what was left of it on fresh-cut branches.  
          We piled up a high tomb of his native earth.  
          Then we moved to the young girl’s rocky cave,  
          the hollow cavern of that bride of death.                                    1340  
          From far away one man heard a voice  
          coming from the chamber where we’d put her  
          without a funeral—a piercing cry.  
          He went to tell our master Creon,  
          who, as he approached the place, heard the sound,  
          an unintelligible scream of sorrow.  
          He groaned and then spoke out these bitter words,                                [1210]  
          "Has misery made me a prophet now?  
          And am I travelling along a road  
          that takes me to the worst of all disasters?                                  1350  
          I’ve just heard the voice of my own son.  
          You servants, go ahead—get up there fast.  
          Remove the stones piled in the entrance way,  
          then stand beside the tomb and look in there  
          to see if that was Haemon’s voice I heard,  
          or if the gods have been deceiving me."  
          Following what our desperate master asked,  
          we looked. In the furthest corner of the tomb                                        [1220]  
          we saw Antigone hanging by the neck,  
          held up in a noose—fine woven linen.                                        1360  
          Haemon had his arms around her waist—  
          he was embracing her and crying out  
          in sorrow for the loss of his own bride,  
          now among the dead, his father’s work,  
          and for his horrifying marriage bed.  
          Creon saw him, let out a fearful groan,  
          then went inside and called out anxiously,  
          "You unhappy boy, what have you done?  
          What are you thinking? Have you lost your mind?  
          Come out, my child—I’m begging you—please come."              1370      [1230]  
          But the boy just stared at him with savage eyes,  
          spat in his face and, without saying a word,  
          drew his two-edged sword. Creon moved away,  
          so the boy’s blow failed to strike his father.  
          Angry at himself, the ill-fated lad  
          right then and there leaned into his own sword,  
          driving half the blade between his ribs.  
          While still conscious he embraced the girl  
          in his weak arms, and, as he breathed his last,  
          he coughed up streams of blood on her fair cheek.                      1380  
          Now he lies there, corpse on corpse, his marriage                                   [1240]  
          has been fulfilled in chambers of the dead.  
          The unfortunate boy has shown all men  
          how, of all the evils which afflict mankind,  
          the most disastrous one is thoughtlessness.

*[Eurydice turns and slowly returns into the palace]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          What do you make of that? The queen’s gone back.  
          She left without a word, good or bad.

MESSENGER  
          I’m surprised myself. It’s about her son—  
          she heard that terrible report. I hope  
          she’s gone because she doesn’t think it right                               1390  
          to mourn for him in public. In the home,  
          surrounded by her servants, she’ll arrange  
          a period of mourning for the house.  
          She’s discreet and has experience—  
          she won’t make mistakes.                                                                       [1250]

CHORUS LEADER  
                                         I’m not sure of that.  
          to me her staying silent was extreme—  
          it seems to point to something ominous,  
          just like a vain excess of grief.

MESSENGER  
                                                                       I’ll go in.  
          We’ll find out if she’s hiding something secret,  
          deep within her passionate heart. You’re right—                        1400  
          excessive silence can be dangerous.

*[The Messenger goes up the stairs into the palace. Enter Creon from the side, with attendants.   
Creon is holding the body of Haemon]*

CHORUS LEADER  
          Here comes the king in person—carrying  
          in his arms, if it’s right to speak of this,  
          a clear reminder that this evil comes  
          not from some stranger, but his own mistakes.                                       [1260]

CREON   
          Aaiii—mistakes made by a foolish mind,  
          cruel mistakes that bring on death.  
          You see us here, all in one family—  
          the killer and the killed.  
          Oh the profanity of what I planned.                                            1410  
          Alas, my son, you died so young—  
          a death before your time.  
          Aaiii . . . aaiii . . . you’re dead . . . gone—  
          not your own foolishness but mine.

CHORUS LEADER  
          Alas, it seems you’ve learned to see what’s right—  
          but far too late.                                                                                      [1270]

CREON  
                                                   Aaiiii . . . I’ve learned it in my pain.  
          Some god clutching a great weight struck my head,  
          then hurled me onto paths in wilderness,  
          throwing down and casting underfoot  
          what brought me joy.                                                                  1420  
          So sad . . . so sad . . .  
          the wretched agony of human life.

*[The Messenger reappears from the palace]*MESSENGER  
          My lord, you come like one who stores up evil,  
          what you hold in your arms and what you’ll see  
          before too long inside the house.                                                           [1280]

CREON  
                                                                       What’s that?  
          Is there something still more evil than all this?

MESSENGER  
          Your wife is dead—blood mother of that corpse—  
          slaughtered with a sword—her wounds are very new,  
          poor lady.

CREON  
                               Aaiiii . . . . a gathering place for death . . .  
          no sacrifice can bring this to an end.                                           1430  
          Why are you destroying me? You there—  
          you bringer of this dreadful news, this agony,  
          what are you saying now? Aaiii . . .  
          You kill a man then kill him once again.  
          What are you saying, boy? What news?  
          A slaughter heaped on slaughter—                                                        [1290]  
          my wife, alas . . . she’s dead?

MESSENGER *[opening the palace doors, revealing the body of Eurydice]*  
          Look here. No longer is she concealed inside.

CREON  
          Alas, how miserable I feel—to look upon  
          this second horror. What remains for me,  
          what’s fate still got in store? I’ve just held                                  1440  
          my own son in my arms, and now I see  
          right here in front of me another corpse.  
          Alas for this suffering mother.                                                               [1300]  
          Alas, my son.

MESSENGER  
          Stabbed with a sharp sword at the altar,  
          she let her darkening eyesight fail,  
          once she had cried out in sorrow  
          for the glorious fate of Megareos,  
          who died some time ago, and then again  
          for Haemon, and then, with her last breath,                               1450  
          she called out evil things against you,  
          the killer of your sons.**[\*](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm" \l "note34)**

CREON  
          Aaaii . . . My fear now makes me tremble.  
          Why won’t someone now strike out at me,  
          pierce my heart with a double bladed sword?  
          How miserable I am . . . aaiii . . .                                                           [1310]  
          how full of misery and pain . . .

MESSENGER  
          By this woman who lies dead you stand charged  
          with the deaths of both your sons.

CREON  
                                                   What about her?  
          How did she die so violently?

MESSENGER  
                                                 She killed herself,                                1460  
          with her own hands she stabbed her belly,  
          once she heard her son’s unhappy fate.

CREON  
          Alas for me . . . the guilt for all of this is mine—  
          it can never be removed from me or passed  
          to any other mortal man. I, and I alone . . .  
          I murdered you . . . I speak the truth.  
          Servants—hurry and lead me off,                                                           [1320]  
          get me away from here, for now  
          what I am in life is nothing.

CHORUS LEADER  
          What you advise is good—if good can come                              1470  
          with all these evils. When we face such things  
          the less we say the better.

CREON  
          Let that day come, oh let it come,  
          the fairest of all destinies for me,  
          the one which brings on my last day.                                                      [1330]  
          Oh, let it come, so that I never see  
          another dawn.

CHORUS LEADER  
          That’s something for the times ahead.  
          Now we need to deal with what confronts us here.  
          What’s yet to come is the concern of those                                 1480  
          whose task it is to deal with it.

CREON  
                                                             In that prayer  
          I included everything I most desire.

CHORUS  
                                                   Pray for nothing.  
          There’s no release for mortal human beings,  
          not from events which destiny has set.

CREON  
          Then take this foolish man away from here.  
          I killed you, my son, without intending to,                                            [1340]  
          and you, as well, my wife. How useless I am now.  
          I don’t know where to look or find support.  
          Everything I touch goes wrong, and on my head  
          fate climbs up with its overwhelming load.                                 1490

*[The Attendants help Creon move up the stairs into the palace, taking Haemon’s body with them]*

CHORUS  
          The most important part of true success  
          is wisdom—not to act impiously  
          towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men                                        [1350]  
          bring on great blows of punishment—  
          so in old age men can discover wisdom.

**Notes**

\*Dirce: one of the rivers beside Thebes. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text1)]

\*Hephaistos: god of fire. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text2)]

\**Laius*: king of Thebes and father of Oedipus. Oedipus killed him (not knowing who he was) and became the next king of Thebes by saving the city from the devastation of the Sphinx. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text3)]

\*Zeus Herkeios: Zeus of the Courtyard, a patron god of worship within the home. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text4)]

\*Hades: god of the underworld, lord of the dead. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text5)]

\**Labdakos*: father of Laius and hence grandfather of Oedipus and great-grandfather of Antigone and Ismene. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text6)]

\**Olympus*: a mountain in northern Greece where, according to tradition, the major gods live. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text7)]

\*Following common editorial practice, the lines of the Greek have been rearranged here, so that 663-7 come after 671, hence the apparently odd numbering of the lines. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text8)]

\*Following the suggestion of Andrew Brown and others, I have moved lines 756-7 in the Greek text so that they come right after line 750.   [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text9)]

\**corrupted*: the killing of a family member could bring on divine punishment in the form of a pollution involving the entire city (as in the case of Oedipus). Creon is, one assumes, taking refuge in the notion that he will not be executing Antigone directly. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text10)]

\**Eros*: the god of erotic sexual passion. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text11)]

\**Aphrodite*: goddess of sexual desire. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text12)]

\**Acheron*: one of the major rivers of the underworld. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text13)]

\*The last two speeches refer to Niobe, daughter of Tantalus (a son of Zeus). Niobe had seven sons and daughters and boasted that she had more children than the goddess Leto. As punishment Artemis and Apollo, Leto’s two children, destroyed all Niobe’s children. Niobe turned to stone in grief and was reportedly visible on Mount Sipylus (in Asia Minor). The Chorus’ claim that Niobe was a goddess or semi-divine is very odd here, since her story is almost always a tale of human presumption and divine punishment for human arrogance. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text14)]

\**father*: The Chorus here is offering the traditional suggestion that present afflictions can arise from a family curse originating in previous generations. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text15)]

\**still alive*: Polyneices married the daughter of Adrastus, an action which enabled him to acquire the army to attack Thebes. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text16)]

\**here with us*: Creon’s logic seems to suggest that because he is not executing Antigone directly and is leaving her a choice between committing suicide and slowly starving to death in the cave, he has no moral responsibility for what happens. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text17)]

\**Persephone* is the wife of Hades and thus goddess of the underworld. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text18)]

\*In these lines Antigone seems to be talking about both her brothers, first claiming she washed and dressed the body of Eteocles and then covered Polyneices. However, the pronoun references in the Greek are confusing. Lines 904 to 920 in the Greek text have prompted a great deal of critical debate, since they seem incompatible with Antigone’s earlier motivation and do not make much sense in context (in addition most of them appear closely derived from Herodotus 3.119). Hence, some editors insist that the lines (or most of them) be removed. Brown provides a useful short summary of the arguments and some editorial options (199-200). [[**Back to Text**]](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text19)

\**Danae*: daughter of Acrisus, King of Argos. Because of a prophecy that he would be killed by a son born to Danae, Acrisus imprisoned her. But Zeus made love to her in the form of a golden shower, and she gave birth to Perseus, who, once grown, killed Acrisus accidentally. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text20)]

\**mocking of the god*: a reference to Lycurgus son of Dryas, a Thracian king. He attacked the god Dionysus and was punished with blinding or with being torn apart. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text21)]

\**flute*: the anger of the Muses at a Thracian who boasted of his flute playing is not normally a part of the Lycurgus story but refers to another Thracian, Thamyras. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text22)]

\**dark rocks . . . Bosphorus*: the dark rocks were a famous hazard to shipping. They moved together to smash any ship moving between them. The Bosphorus is the strait between the Black Sea and the Propontis (near the Hellespont). [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text23)]

\**blood-stained hands*: this verse and the next refer to the Thracian king Phineas, whose second wife blinded her two step sons (from Phineas’ first wife Cleopatra) by stabbing out their eyes. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text24)]

\**immortal Fates*: Cleopatra was the grand-daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens. Boreas, father of Erechtheus, was god of the North Wind. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text25)]

\**other men*: Teiresias’ offering failed to catch fire. His interpretation is that it has been rejected by the gods, a very unfavourable omen. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text26)]

\**in control*: This is the second reference to the fact that at some point earlier Teiresias has given important political help to Creon. It is not at all clear what this refers to. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text27)]

\*Teiresias here is apparently accusing Creon of refusing burial to the dead allied soldiers Polyneices brought with him from other cities. There is no mention of this anywhere else in the play, although the detail is present in other versions of the story. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text28)]

\**fierce dragon*: In these lines the Chorus celebrates Dionysus, the god born in Thebes to Semele, daughter of King Cadmus. The bacchants are those who worship Dionysus. Eleusis, a region on the coast near Athens, was famous for the its Eleusinian Mysteries, a secret ritual of worship. Deo is a reference to the goddess Demeter, who was worshipped at Eleusis. The Theban race sprang up from dragon’s teeth sown in a field by Cadmus, founder of the city. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text29)]

\**Evoe*: a cry of celebration made by worshippers of Bacchus. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text30)]

\**lightning strike*: Semele, Dionysus human mother, was destroyed by Zeus lightning bolt, because of the jealousy of Hera, Zeus’ wife. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text31)]

\**Iacchus:* Thyiads are worshippers of Dionysus, Iacchus a divinity associated with Dionysus. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text32)]

*\***Amphion:* legendary king of Thebes, husband of Niobe. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text33)]

\**Megareos*: Haemon’s brother, who, we are to understand on the basis of this reference, died nobly some time before the play begins. It is not clear how Creon might have been responsible for his death. In another version of the story, Creon has a son Menoeceos, who kills himself in order to save the city. [[**Back to Text**](https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm#text34)]