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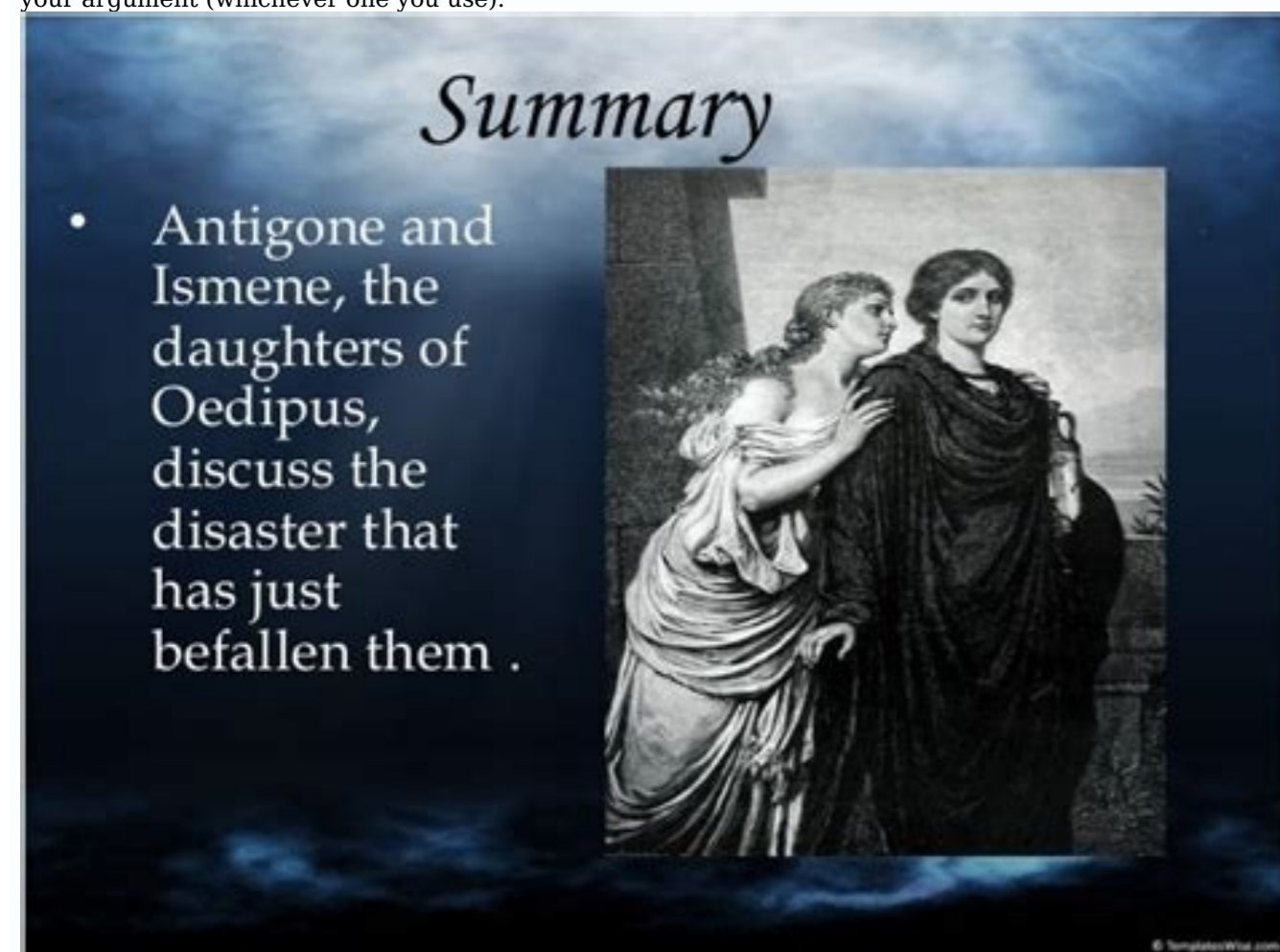
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Antigone scene 1 summary sparknotes

Antigone scene 1 and 2 summary. Antigone play short summary. Scene 2 antigone summary.

Antigone is justified in disobeying Creon's law because she believes she is following higher and more just laws: her sense of duty to family and the gods. A possible thesis to explain why Antigone is justified in disobeying Creon's law could be something like this: Antigone is justified in disobeying Creon's law because she believes she is following higher and more just laws: her sense of duty to family and the gods. In the play, Antigone's brothers fight in a battle but on different sides. One brother fights for Thebes (Creon's side), and the other fights against. Both brothers are killed, but Creon forbids anyone to bury the body of the brother who fought against Thebes. Antigone feels a sense of duty to her brother as family and gives him a proper burial.

She also knows that the gods support her decision and tells Creon this. Antigone is the protagonist of the play (it's named for her, after all), and she garners the sympathy of most readers and audiences. She is outspoken and loyal to her family. She truly believes that if a law is unjust, or contradicts her moral compass or the will of the gods, it should not be obeyed. Another way to support the thesis is to discuss Creon's character and how he is portrayed by Sophocles, the playwright. Creon is depicted as stubborn in upholding his decree, even when he and others question it. He ends up losing his son, who was set to marry Antigone, and his pride and obstinacy end in tragedy for all involved. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team Possible thesis statements for why Antigone is more justified in her reasoning than Creon might sound like the following: Antigone's reasoning is more justified than Creon's because Antigone seeks to obey and honor the laws of the gods, while Creon instead seeks to maintain his public honor and authority over his state. Alternatively, it could sound something like this: Antigone is justified in opposing Creon's decree because her burial of her brother upholds the laws of the Gods and her familial duty. The conflict in Antigone is interesting because both of these characters have valid reasons for their actions, and both of them are ultimately punished. Creon does not want Polynices to be buried because Polynices led a rebellion against his brother and his home country. To Creon, Polynices should not be buried because he is a traitor. Creon threatens that anyone who defies this order will be publicly stoned. Creon is well aware of his position as a leader and does not want anyone to threaten his authority. He chooses a public punishment that would put similar traitors (anyone who dared to defy his decree) on display. Creon is stuck between maintaining his power on Earth and being a strong leader of men and following the customs that honor the gods (burying the dead). Antigone is not a ruler, so she does not have to worry about losing her authority or public image in the same way that Creon does. She follows laws and customs that are central to her faith in the gods and her position as a woman. Although it hurts her that her brothers fought each other, it is still her place as a woman and a sister to bury Polynices. She fulfills her family duty and the honor due to the gods by burying Polynices. While the two struggle, there are several others that question Creon's will, but the chorus also frequently condemns Antigone because, in many ways, she willingly brings her punishment on herself. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team Here's a possible thesis statement you could use: Antigone is justified in defying Creon, because doing the right thing is ultimately more important than obeying unjust laws. Sometimes it's necessary for brave people to stand up and defy unjust laws. That's what Antigone does. Her uncle, King Creon, has violated the law of the gods in leaving the body of Antigone's brother Polynices to rot out in the open. He won't allow Antigone or anyone else to bury him. But Antigone defies Creon's orders. She knows what's morally right and what's pleasing to the gods. When writing your thesis, make sure to cite examples from the text to support your argument (whichever one you use).

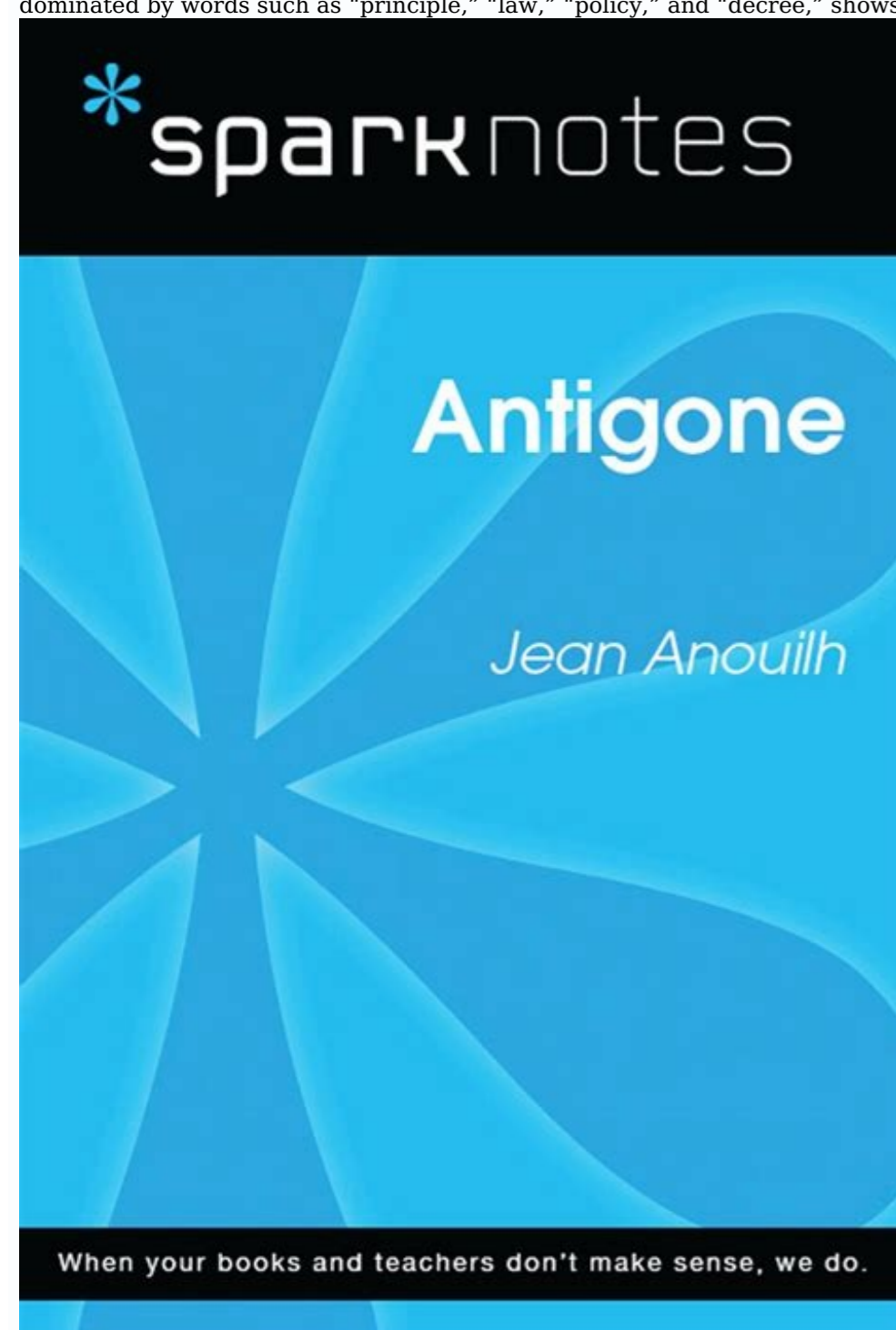


Also, you might like to use a few brief examples from history to show how people in real life have often challenged unjust laws, such as those who fought to abolish slavery or opponents of the Nazis. Start your 48-hour free trial to get access to more than 30,000 additional guides and more than 350,000 Homework Help questions answered by our experts. Get 48 Hours Free Access Already a member? Log in here. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team eNotes.com will help you with any book or any question. Our summaries and analyses are written by experts, and your questions are answered by real teachers. Join eNotes ©2023 eNotes.com, Inc. All Rights Reserved My own flesh and blood—dear sister, dear Ismene, how many griefs our father Oedipus handed down! See Important Quotations Explained Night has fallen in Thebes. The preceding days have borne witness to the armed struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus and brothers to Antigone and Ismene. The brothers, who were fighting for control of Thebes, have now died at each other's hands. Polynices' invading army has retreated, and Creon now rules the city.

Antigone approaches an altar in the palace, bemoaning the death of her brothers. Ismene follows close behind, echoing Antigone's sentiments. Antigone laments Creon's recent decree that whoever tries to bury or mourn Polynices must be put to death. Although Ismene declares that the sisters lack any power in the situation, Antigone insists that she will bury Polynices, and asks for Ismene's help. Ismene contends that though she loves Polynices, she must follow the king's decree—she does not want to risk punishment by death. Antigone rejects Ismene's arguments, saying that she holds honor and love higher than law and death. Antigone exits, still resolved to bury Polynices. Ismene declares that she will always love Antigone, and then withdraws into the palace. The Chorus, composed of the elders of Thebes, comes forward. It sings an ode praising the glory of Thebes and denouncing the proud Polynices, who nearly brought the city to ruin. Creon then enters, assuring the citizens that order and safety have returned to Thebes. He announces that Eteocles, who defended Thebes, will receive a hero's burial, unlike his brother, who shall rot in godless shame for having raised arms against the city. The Chorus says that it will obey Creon's edict. A sentry enters with a message for the king, but he hesitates to speak for fear of the king's reaction. Creon orders him to tell his story, and he finally reports the scandalous news. Someone has given proper burial rites to Polynices' corpse, and no one knows who has done it.

Unsure what to do, the sentries assigned to keep watch over the grave finally resolve to tell the king. The Chorus suggests that the gods themselves may have undertaken Polynices' burial, but Creon denounces this notion as absurd, arguing that the gods would never side with a traitor. He himself theorizes that dissidents in the city have bribed one of the sentries to defy his edict, and he accuses the present sentry of the crime. Refusing to listen to the sentry's desperate denials, Creon threatens the sentry with death if no other suspect is found, and then enters the palace. The sentry declares his intention to leave Thebes forever, and flees. The Chorus sings an ode about how man dominates the earth and how only death can master him. But it warns that man should use his powers only in accordance with the laws of the land and the justice of the gods; society cannot tolerate those who exert their will to reckless ends. Analysis The opening events of the play quickly establish the central conflict. Creon has decreed that the traitor Polynices must not be given proper burial, and Antigone is the only one who will speak against this decree and insist on the sacredness of family.

Whereas Antigone sees no validity in a law that disregards the duty family members owe one another, Creon's point of view is exactly opposite. He has no use for anyone who places private ties above the common good, as he proclaims firmly to the Chorus and the audience as he revels in his victory over Polynices. Creon's first speech, which is dominated by words such as "principle," "law," "policy," and "decree," shows the extent to which Creon fixates on government and law as the supreme authority.



Between Antigone and Creon there can be no compromise—they both find absolute validity in the respective loyalties they uphold. In the struggle between Creon and Antigone, Sophocles' audience would have recognized a genuine conflict of duties and values. In their ethical philosophy, the ancient Athenians clearly recognized that conflicts can arise between two separate but valid principles, and that such situations call for practical judgment and deliberation. From the Greek point of view, both Creon's and Antigone's positions are flawed, because both oversimplify ethical life by recognizing only one kind of "good" or duty. By oversimplifying, each ignores the fact that a conflict exists at all, or that deliberation is necessary.

Antigone and Ismene. The daughters of Oedipus, decide the situation that has just befallen their father. Their brother Polynices and Creon have forbidden any burial in a tomb for anyone who has killed the king. Creon says that the city, and the law, demand that Polynices, who brought a foreign army against Thebes, not be allowed proper burial rites. Creon threatens to kill anyone who tries to bury Polynices and anyone who tries to help. Antigone, in spite of Creon's order, will not let the body of her cousin lie unburied. She decides to give her brother a proper burial. Ismene, a nervous sister, offers to help her in the plan to bury Creon's body, while the women sing, someone gave Polynices burial rites. Creon says that he needs some of the citizens of the city to perform the duty to perform the duty, and he orders to execute the sentry if an object is found to be found.

The sentry was terrified by catching Antigone in the act of attempting to bury her brother. He wanted to bring the king's law, Antigone finally continues her act to Creon and says that he himself defies the will of the gods by refusing Polynices burial. Creon condemns both Antigone and Ismene to death. Haemon, Creon's son and Antigone's betrothed, enters the stage. Creon asks him his opinion on the case. Haemon seems at first to side with his father, but gradually reveals his opposition to Creon's authoritarian and petty megalomania. Creon's own pride and stubbornness to stay Antigone buried in vain even Haemon comes out. Creon finally is pushed back, but vows to kill Antigone by waiting for daylight in a tomb.

- The third speaker, Creon's son, and Creon promises to take Antigone's advice. He gives Creon's advice that Creon allow Polynices to be buried, but Creon refuses. Creon's promise that the gods will bring down justice upon himself. The words of Creon's wife that she will be the focus of Oedipus and the people of Thebes, and Creon's subsequent actions that Antigone's death will be the cause of his own downfall. The first change of heart comes in Act II. A messenger enters and announces the tragic events. Creon and his messenger find Antigone buried in Polynices' tomb. Creon's wife then reveals that she has been waiting for Antigone's death. They seem to see Antigone hanging from a tree, and Haemon taking Creon's sword and thrusting it at his father. Finally, he sees the sword against himself and that murthering Antigone's body. Creon's wife, Eurydice,

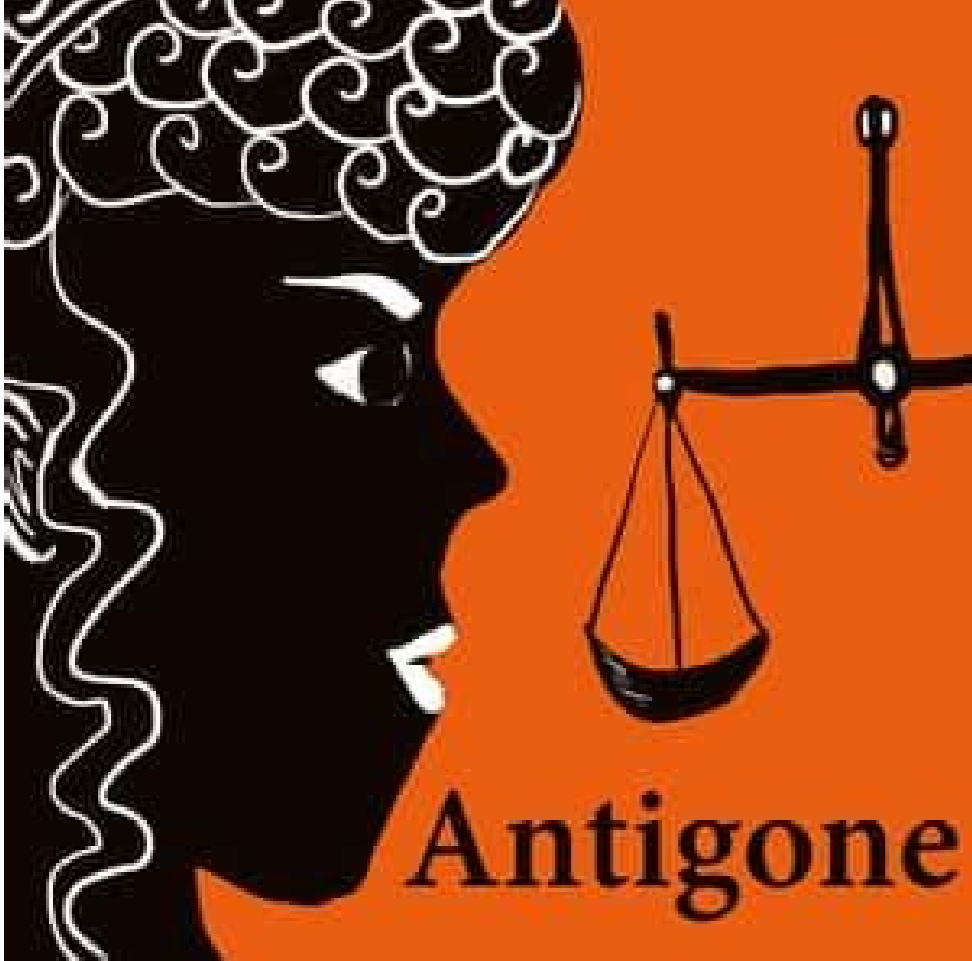
Moreover, both Creon and Antigone display the dangerous flaw of pride in the way they justify and carry out their decisions. Antigone admits right from the beginning that she wants to carry out the burial because the action is "glorious." Creon's pride is that of a tyrant. He is inflexible and unyielding, unwilling throughout the play to listen to advice.



The danger of pride is that it leads both these characters to overlook their own human finitude—the limitations of their own powers. Read important quotes about Creon's excessive pride. Oddly enough, the comical, lower-class messenger is the only character to exhibit the uncertainty and careful weighing of alternatives required by practical judgment. The sentry has no fixed idea of an appropriate course of action. He says that as he was coming to deliver his message, he was lost in thought, turning back and forth, pondering the consequences of what he might say and do. The sentry's comic wavering seems, at this point, like the only sensible way of acting in this society; unlike Creon or Antigone or even Ismene, the sentry considers the possible alternatives to his present situation. As a comic character, the sentry offsets the brutal force of Creon's will. Whereas the conflict between Creon and Antigone is a violent clash of two opposing, forceful wills, Creon's injustice is clearest when he promises to kill the sentry if the person responsible for Polynices' burial is not found. Read more about the sentry's role in Antigone. The two times the Chorus speaks in this section, it seems to side with Creon and the established power of Thebes. The Chorus's first speech (117-179) describes the thwarted pride of the invading enemy: Zeus hates bravado and bragging. Yet this paean to the victory of Thebes through the graces of Zeus has a subtly critical edge. The Chorus's focus on pride and the fall of the prideful comments underhandedly on the willfulness we have just seen in Antigone and will see in Creon. Few speeches in the Oedipus plays are more swollen with self-importance than Creon's first speech, where he assumes the "awesome task of setting the city's course" and reiterates his decree against the traitor Polynices (199). Read an in-depth analysis of the Chorus. The second choral ode begins on an optimistic note but becomes darker toward the end. This ode celebrates the "wonder" of man, but the Greek word for wonderful (deinon) has already been used twice in the play with the connotation of "horrible" or "frightening" (the messenger and Chorus use it to describe the mysterious burial of the body). The Chorus seems to praise man for being able to accomplish whatever goal he sets his sights on—crossing the sea in winter, snaring birds and beasts, taming wild horses. But the point of the ode is that while man may be able to master nature by developing techniques to achieve his goals, man should formulate those goals by taking into consideration the "mood and mind for law," justice, and the common good. Otherwise, man becomes a monster. In his first speech, Creon also uses imagery of mastery to describe the way he governs—he holds the "ship of state" on course (180). The logical problem with Creon's rhetoric is that maintaining the ship cannot be the ultimate good or goal in life, as he seems to think. Ships travel with some further end in mind, not for the sake of traveling. Similarly, the stability of the state may be important, but only because that stability enables the pursuit of other human goals, such as honoring family, gods, and loved ones. The cast sits about palace. The Chorus descends from the top of the staircase and introduces the players to the audience. It begins with Antigone, explaining that she is about to "burst forth as the tense, sallow, willful girl" who will rise up alone against the king and die young. With the rise of the curtain, she began to feel the inhuman forces drawing her from the world of those who watch her now. They watch with little concern, for they are not to die tonight. The Chorus then introduces the chatting pair, Haemon, Antigone's dashing fiancé, and Ismene, her radiantly beautiful sister. They recount that though one would have expected Haemon to go for Ismene, he inexplicably proposed to Antigone on the night of a ball. He does not know his engagement only earns him the right to die sooner.

The Chorus then turns to the powerfully built Creon, king of Thebes. When he was younger, and Oedipus ruled, he was an art patron. The death of Oedipus and his sons bound him to the weary duties of rule. Next to the sisters' Nurse sits the good Queen Eurydice. She knits and will go on knitting until the time comes for her to go to her room and die. The Messenger stands against the wall, brooding over his premonition of Haemon's death. Finally the Chorus presents the three red-faced, card-playing guards. They are common policemen, bothered by the worries of the day-to-day, eternally innocent, indifferent, and prepared to arrest anyone under any leader. The Chorus then recounts the events leading up to Antigone's tragedy. During their recitation, the stage goes dark, a spotlight illuminates the faces of the Chorus, and the characters disappear through the left arch. Oedipus, Antigone and Ismene's father, also had two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. Upon his death, it was agreed that they would each take the throne from one year to the next. After the first year, however, Eteocles, the elder, refused to step down. Polynices and six foreign princes charged the seven gates of Thebes and all were defeated. The brothers killed each other in a duel, leaving Creon king. Creon ordered Eteocles buried in honor and left Polynices to rot. Furthermore, any who attempt to bury him will be put to death.

It is an ashen dawn and the house is still asleep. Antigone sneaks in from the outside. The Nurse appears and asks where she has been; she was not there when she went to check if she had flung her blanket off in the night. "Nowhere," Antigone replies, musing on how beautiful the world is when gray, how lovely the garden is when not thinking of men.



The whole world was "breathless, waiting," though not for her. The Nurse asks angrily if she went to meet someone—perhaps a lover. Antigone assents. The Nurse is outraged and says that girls are all the same. Even Antigone, who never used to wear makeup, primp in front of the mirror, and ogle boys like Ismene. She was convinced Antigone would be alone for life. Now she knows she is a hypocrite. Analysis Antigone unfolds almost entirely in the course of one day, in one space (the palace), and in largely uninterrupted dialogue/action. Though dispensing with act divisions, Antigone thus relies on the dramatic unities as appropriated by the French classicists. The Chorus frames the tragedy with a prologue and epilogue. In the prologue, the Chorus directly addresses the audience and appears self-conscious with regards to the spectacle; we are here tonight to take part in the story of Antigone. Unlike conventional melodrama, for example, we are not asked to suspend our disbelief or watch a spectacle that would seamlessly pass itself off as reality.

In some sense, like its ancient predecessor, Anouilh's Chorus prepares a ritual—the absence of such rituals in modern theater perhaps explains why this first scene might seem somewhat "artificial." In preparing its ritual, the Chorus would instruct the audience on proper spectatorship. Note, in particular, the ironic jab that the spectator need not upset himself as the tragedy does not affect him. This jab recalls the trio of crude and indifferent guardsmen, which the Chorus will cast in similar terms. Unlike the guardsmen, we have come to the tragedy to be upset. Read an in-depth analysis of the Chorus. The Chorus, who ultimately enters a spotlight, also recounts the events leading to Antigone's story and introduces all of its players under the sign of fatality. They have come to play their roles and, if such is their fate, die. The Chorus is omniscient, narrating the characters' thoughts: their roles, already predestined, should be self-evident, even if the reason they come to doom is ultimately not. Thus the Chorus traces each character's fate. Antigone is here to rebel and die; Creon is the unwilling king; Eurydice's role is but to die in her room; the guardsmen emblematicize the common rank-and-file. Importantly, it also establishes a key contrast between the two sisters: Ismene the full-figured beauty and Antigone the scrawny, sullen brat. Read more about the Chorus as a motif. The action begins at dawn. Unlike in the Sophocles's Antigone, Antigone has already committed the crime, though the play, perhaps relying on the spectator's memory of the Sophocles's version, keeps this revelation in suspense in the first scenes. Anouilh himself commented on the paradoxical nature of this suspense: "What was beautiful and is still beautiful about the time of the Greeks is knowing the end in advance.

That is real suspense. As the Chorus notes, in tragedy everything has "already happened." Anouilh's spectator has surrendered, masochistically, to a succession of events it can hardly bear to watch. Suspense here is the time before the realization of those events. Read more about the nature of tragedy as a theme. Thus Antigone's death is prefigured in her first words. The first scene involves Antigone and her fussy, aging Nurse. Their touching relationship is one of the more sentimental in the play: note especially Antigone's entrusting her dog, Puff, to the Nurse's care. Like many of Anouilh's heroines, Antigone wanders nowhere in a gray world, a world beyond the postcard universe of the waking. This world is breathless with anticipation: it doubles the stage, set apart from the human world, upon which Antigone's tragedy will ensue. At the same time, this world does not lie in wait for Antigone—she is meant to pass onto another, one beyond the living. Firmly located in her care-taking duties, the Nurse understands none of Antigone's ramblings.

Instead, she bluntly asks if Antigone has taken a lover. Though Antigone is the opposite of the coquettish and hyper-feminine Ismene, to the Nurse she is just the same—another young, foolhardy girl like the rest of them. The Nurse does not appreciate what makes Antigone different from other girls. Read an in-depth analysis of Antigone. Notably, Antigone tells the Nurse what she wants to hear—in some sense confirming that she is like the rest—and feigns that she has a paramour. We should weigh this subterfuge carefully. First, as we will discuss later, Antigone has gone out to attempt to become someone's lover, Haemon, having donned her sister's accoutrements to attempt to participate in pleasures that are not meant for her. Second, it is not for nothing that Antigone feigns to have taken a lover after having an illicit visit to her brother's corpse. This feint evokes a familiar trope in the Antigone tradition, that of Antigone's unnatural love for her brother. This love numbers among the desires Antigone refuses to surrender, desires she will follow to the point of death. Though somewhat suppressed in Anouilh's adaptation, this desire haunts the stage nevertheless. Read more about the author and the background of the play.