

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Antigone

by Sophocles

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Antigone

1. Actors in Ancient Greece typically wore masks to depict the character they were playing. The masks were personalized specifically for each character. Imagine you are a character in a Greek play. In a detailed paragraph, describe your mask. Include information on how it depicts your personality and whether your character would be in a tragedy or a comedy?
2. As you begin reading *Antigone*, the conflict of the play is immediately apparent. Creon has decreed to put to death anyone who tries to bury or mourn Polynices; however, Antigone states she will disobey the decree out of love for her brother, facing death if necessary.

Write a letter to a person who you would risk your life for. Give some specific reasons for making this choice.

3. Throughout the first part of the play, you meet most of the characters and learn about their relationships with Antigone, as well as their feelings about her actions. Keep a running list of all the characters you meet throughout the play; then next to each character's name, write that person's relationship to Antigone and that person's response toward her actions.
4. A play such as *Antigone* would most likely have been performed in a Greek amphitheater. Research to find out more about amphitheaters in ancient Greece. Imagine you are a tour guide in Athens in 450 B.C. Write a brochure full of the information you will share with visitors as you take them through a Greek amphitheater.

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5. The themes of the play are evident quickly as the conflict unfolds. Rank the following principles that are portrayed in *Antigone* in order of importance to you, and explain the reasons for your first and your last ranking.
- Loyalty/obligation to family
 - Obedience to civil law
 - Observance of religious law
 - Protection of personal dignity
 - Freedom
 - Protection of community or nation

6. As Ismene and Antigone discuss Antigone's decision to bury Polynices, Ismene reminds Antigone:

“We must remember we are women born,/Unapt to cope with men; and,
being ruled/By mightier than ourselves, we have to hear/These things—and
worse.”

As a woman in ancient Greece, Antigone does not have rights that women in many parts of the world hold today.

Research some information on the role of women in ancient Greece. Imagine you are a woman living at the time of Sophocles. Write a magazine article about your role in society. Be sure to create a heading that will grab your reader's attention.

7. Ismene is reminded that Antigone desires to win the approval of the gods, rather than men, through Polynices' burial: “I know that those approve/
Whom I most need to please.”

The Greeks relied heavily on their gods for wisdom in all circumstances. Choose one of the Greek gods that is mentioned in the play. Assume the persona of that god and write an autobiography about yourself. The choices of gods and goddesses are: Zeus, Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, Perseus, Dionysus, Demeter, Hecate, or Até.

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8. Ismene refuses to help her sister bury Polynices out of fear of death, but she is terrified that Antigone will be discovered. Imagine you are Ismene's best friend. You know that Ismene is upset because of Antigone's actions. Ismene approaches you about this situation. In dialogue form, give Ismene advice or words of wisdom on this difficult situation. You may want to begin like this:

You: I know this dilemma has you terrified for Antigone's death, but you must remember...
9. Ismene clearly fears for her sister's life and wishes Antigone would change her mind. Write a letter from Ismene to Antigone begging her not to disobey Creon's orders.
10. In the ancient world, proper burials displayed respect to the deceased, just as funerals do today. Find some information on proper burials in ancient Greece and write one paragraph comparing them with modern funerals. Make a list of the similarities as well as the differences.
11. One reason Antigone is adamant about giving Polynices a proper burial is because of her respect for the traditions her family upholds. In a journal, write about a tradition in your family that you enjoy and will possibly continue in your future family, or you can create a tradition that you would like for a family that you would have in the future.
12. Antigone and Ismene, though sisters, have very different views on loyalty to family versus obedience to the law. As a result, the two have a heated argument about the burial of Polynices. In the form of a screenplay, recreate a forceful argument you have had with a sibling or family member. What was the argument about? Immediately following the screenplay, write a brief paragraph stating whether you can see the point your sibling or family member was trying to make now that the argument is in the past.

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13. Imagine you are either Antigone or Ismene; write a diary entry that shows the internal conflict arising from the argument the two have about Polynices' burial.
14. Ismene says to Antigone, "But things impossible/'Tis wrong to attempt at all." Think of one important invention (refrigeration, computers), movement (women's rights), law (speed limits), or idea (equality) and write a newspaper article about how different the world would be had that "thing" not been attempted. Include a catchy headline and keep your article brief and to the point.
15. The chorus plays a major part in *Antigone* and most other Greek plays. You have been selected to be a member of the chorus in your school's performance of *Antigone*. Write an article for the playbill describing the role of the chorus in this play and in other Greek plays.
16. Antigone's decision to choose her brother's burial over Creon's threat is similar to ones that many individuals, groups, and countries often face. Write an essay about a time in the last one hundred years when an individual, group, or country has been forced to choose between the law and human rights. What was the outcome of that choice, and how did it affect history?
17. Antigone chooses to disobey Creon's decree because of her own convictions. Write a journal entry about an instance when you had to choose between obedience to authority, or remaining true to what you believed to be right.
18. Does Antigone's choice to disobey Creon's order exhibit hubris (excessive pride) or does it demonstrate heroic loyalty? Choose one answer, then compose a speech that will be read in front of the community debating your opinion.

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19. In Creon's first speech, he compares his government to a mighty ship. Rewrite this first speech in today's language, making sure you do not lose any of the meaning or the metaphors Creon conveys.
20. Creon's language in his first speech is filled with words that we often hear from politicians today. For each of the following words, write down your personal definition and then write down the dictionary definition. Then, write a paragraph stating the reasons you think rulers often include these words in their public speeches.
- Law
 - Policy
 - Welfare
 - Commonwealth
21. A sentinel brings news that someone has buried Polynices against Creon's decree, but no one knows who the lawbreaker was. The sentinel describes the discovery of the body and the search for the person who buried it; however, the audience does not see this action. Write the scene for this part of the play based on the words of the sentinel.
22. In a fit of rage, Creon tells the sentinel that if he cannot find the person who buried Polynices, the sentinel put to death by hanging. This is an irrational decision born out of anger. Write a journal entry about a time when you were so angry that you made an irrational decision. Describe the situation and discuss how this decision affected you or anyone around you. What were the consequences for this irrational decision?
23. Creon's reaction probably came as a surprise to the innocent sentinel. Imagine you are the sentinel. Write a diary entry of your thoughts regarding Creon's threat toward you.