

Antigone Assignment #2

Due: 12/5

Background for Scene 3 (lines 641-795) and Stasimon 3 (lines 796-814):

Although in Scene 1 Creon claims to represent the State, in Scene 3 he refuses to accept the idea that his subjects support Antigone. "And the City proposes to teach me how to rule?" he demands. Finally, he gives up all pretense of representation and declares, "The State is the king!"

Literary critic Bernard Knox writes, "This autocratic phrase puts the finishing touch to the picture Sophocles is drawing for his audience: Creon has now displayed . . . the characteristics of the tyrant, a despotic ruler who seizes power and retains it by intimidation and force." It is important to realize that Athenian audiences despised tyrants because tyrants ruled Athens for about a hundred years before a democratic government was established in 508 BC.

Discussion Questions for Scene 3 and Stasimon 3:

1. In this scene, Creon withstands a powerful assault on his thinking. Who makes the attack, and what effect does it have on Creon?
2. Creon says that Antigone will probably plead "family ties" to avoid being punished for breaking the law. How has Creon completely misjudged Antigone's character?
3. What metaphors does Haimon use to argue that Creon should be more flexible?
4. Why do you think Creon changes his mind about how to punish Antigone? How can he believe that he can absolve himself, or the state, of her death?
5. At this point in the play, what do you think of Haimon's threat near the end of Scene 3? Do you think he is serious, or do you think he is trying to pressure his father into changing his mind?
6. Stasimon 3 is a rather bitter commentary on love. Discuss the view of love given in Stasimon 3. Why does the Chorus give only one view of love?

Background for Scene 4 (lines 815-948) and Stasimon 4 (lines 949-990):

Antigone holds to a classical Greek view of the afterlife: Although it is a place where there are "no more tears" and where there may be some reunion with those who have gone before, it also is a place without warmth and music, a place of darkness, and a place of "thin ghosts." Indeed, part of Antigone's heroism lies in her willingness to consign herself to a place of such mixed happiness and gloom.

Discussion Questions for Scene 4 and Stasimon 4:

1. How is Antigone's tone in this scene different from her tone in earlier scenes?
2. Antigone accuses the Chorus of mocking her. Why does she think this, and how does the Chorus respond to her?
3. In lines 936-937, Antigone asks that Creon's punishment equal her own. What do you predict will happen to Creon in the final scene?
4. In Stasimon 4, the Chorus alludes to several Greek myths. What does Antigone have in common with Danae and Lycurgos (you'll need to do some research)? Do you think Sophocles is using this stasimon to condemn Antigone for her pride or to praise her courage in accepting her fate? Explain your opinion?