**Antigone**

Antigone is both the daughter and the sister of Oedipus (since he married his own mother). Now that Oedipus and his brothers are dead, Antigone and Ismene are the last of the Labdacus family. After her father went into exile, Antigone and her sister were raised in the house of Creon. Her brothers Polyneices and Eteocles were casualties in a brutal war for power, each brother dying by the other's hand. Creon has declared that Eteocles will be honored with burial since he was a defender of Thebes, while Polyneices' body is left to the vultures and dogs. It is this edict that drives Antigone to defy the state, since she believes her brother Polyneices deserves the same treatment as Eteocles. Some critics see Antigone as too self-righteous, even alienating, but others claim her as a seminal feminist, determined to do what is right even in defiance of patriarchal law. Indeed, Antigone captured the public imagination immediately after the first performance of the play more than 2,500 years ago, as her deeds expanded the possibilities of human action, reconceived the role of women in society, and delineated a new type of character, one who sets her individual conscience and belief in divine principle above and against the power and authority of the state.

**Ismene**

Antigone's last surviving sibling, Ismene is the foil for her stronger sister. In comparison to Antigone she has almost no agency, primarily because she is utterly terrified of disobeying men in power. She does not believe that women should ever violate the laws of men, since they are stronger and deserve subservience. Ismene does not help to bury Polyneices, but tries to claim responsibility for the burial later so that she can die with Antigone. Antigone refuses her help and Ismene is spared. This reflects both her great love for her family and her place as a symbol of the status quo who is rewarded for remembering her place.

**Chorus of Theban Elders**

The Chorus comments on the action and interacts with Creon, actively interceding with advice at a critical moment late in the play. The Chorus is comprised of the Theban elders, vital for maintaining order in the city, and Creon summons them to win their loyalty. They watch the unfolding events with sympathy and a discerning eye: they pity Creon and Antigone, but also comment critically on their faults.

**Creon**

The ruler of Thebes in the wake of war, Creon cherishes order and loyalty above all else. He cannot bear to be defied any more than he can bear to watch the laws of the state defied. He has Polyneices' body defiled while Eteocles is honored because he feels that he cannot give equal to share to both brothers when one was a traitor and the other was loyal. He does not recognize that other forms of justice exist, and in his pride he condemns Antigone, defies the gods, and brings ruin on himself.

**Sentry/Watchman**

The Sentry brings the news that Polyneices has been buried, and later captures Antigone. His speech is an interesting experiment in the history of Greek drama, as it attempts to approximate the rhythms and diction of natural speech. Similarly, his psychology reflects that of the simplest logic and reason - his only concern is preserving his life, and he asks basic questions, contrasting with Creon, Haemon, Ismene, and Antigone's lofty speeches on principles and ethics.

**Haemon**

Haemon is the son of Creon and Eurydice and is engaged to be married to Antigone. In a dramatic dialogue with his father, Haemon defends the moral basis of Antigone's actions while warning his father that the people of Thebes sympathize with her determination to bury Polyneices. He and his father part in anger, as he simply asks his father to do what's right for Thebes, and his father stubbornly follows the path of least resistance. Haemon's devotion to Antigone is clear; at her death, he is so distraught that he tries to kill his father and then kills himself.

**Teiresias**

Teiresias, or Tiresias, is a blind prophet who warns Creon that the gods do not approve of his treatment of Polyneices' body or the punishment of Antigone. Creon insults Teiresias, believing that he's simply blackmailing him for money, but the prophet responds with a prophecy foretelling the death of one of Creon's children and a warning that all of Greece will despise the king if he does not relent. Creon realizes that Teiresias has never been wrong and that he must do his bidding. The prophet is an important part of Sophocles' vision: through Teiresias, the will of the gods is made known, and his very existence implies that there is a definite will of the gods that is far above the domain of man's law.

**A Messenger**

The Messenger reports the suicides of Antigone and Haemon to the Chorus and Eurydice. He leaves to follow Eurydice when she runs off in grief.

**Eurydice**

Eurydice is Creon's wife and Haemon's mother. Broken by her son's suicide, she kills herself, calling curses down on Creon for having caused the tragedy.

**Second Messenger**

The Second Messenger reports Eurydice's suicide to the Chorus and Creon. Creon, already broken by Haemon's death, is forced to confront the suicide of his wife as well.

Antigone Timeline

* At the beginning of *Antigone*, Antigone and her sister Ismene return to Thebes in an attempt to help their brothers. The sisters learn that both of their brothers are dead.
* Antigone asks Ismene to help her bury her brother Polyneices, whom Creon has refused to allow to be buried. Ismene says the danger is too substantial and that they will not succeed. Antigone disagrees. She feels it’s morally imperative and within their power. She decides to act alone.
* Antigone performs the burial rites, but is caught in the act.
* A sentry brings Antigone to Creon.
* Creon attempts to humiliate Antigone but is unsuccessful. She confesses quickly, and willingly accepts and even welcomes death.
* Antigone refuses to allow Ismene to take any blame for the crime.
* Creon locks Antigone away.
* Antigone hangs herself in prison.

Summary Analysis

Antigone, Oidipous Tyrannos (c. 429 b.c.e.;Oedipus Tyrannus, 1715), and Oedipus at Colonusare not a trilogy in the true sense. That is to say, they were not originally written to be performed on a single occasion. Rather, these three plays represent Sophocles’ return to the same body of myths several times during his long career as a dramatist. Nevertheless, the Theban plays, as they are called, together tell the complete story of Oedipus from the height of his power as king of Thebes to the execution of his daughter for the burial of his son, Polyneices.

Antigone, although it concerns the last events in the mythic history of this family, was the first of the three plays to be written. In it, certain elements of plot seem to indicate that Sophocles, in this early period of his career, was still imitating the works of his predecessor Aeschylus. For instance, both Antigone and Creon find themselves caught in a “double bind,” a situation in which they are doomed no matter which course of action they choose. Although Antigone suffers because she violates the law of Creon by burying her brother Polyneices, she would have neglected her religious duty had she left him unburied. Creon suffers because he regards his will as more important than the demands of the gods, although political pressures compelled him to punish the traitor of his city.

Antigone and Creon thus represent the two sides that may be taken toward any issue of great importance. Antigone defends the will of the gods, emphasizing the bond that she has to her family more than that which she has toward the state. Creon defends the need for law and order in a community, viewing civil law as more important than the will of the individual.

While these two points of view come into conflict in the Antigone, Sophocles does not regard them both as equally correct. Every character in the play, including the chorus and even Creon himself in the end, declares that Antigone was right and that Creon was wrong. Yet the justice of Antigone’s cause is not sufficient to save her. Many characters in Sophoclean tragedy suffer, not despite being right, but because they were right.

The Antigone illustrates, therefore, that there is a price to be paid for heroic inflexibility. It is unthinkable that Antigone, as Sophocles has drawn the character, would choose compromise rather than death. Her destruction follows inevitably from her unswerving devotion to the cause in which she believes. Nevertheless, it is one of the ironies of the Antigone that Creon also suffers because of his inflexibility and confidence. The very quality that made Antigone seem admirable makes Creon seem stubborn and petty. In the end, their fates are determined less by the nature of the cause that they defend than by the manner in which they defend it.

King Oedipus has died in exile, leaving the Kingdom of Thebes to his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices. The king had decreed that his two sons are supposed to take turns as rulers; they agree, initially. After Eteocles refuses to step down after one year, the two brothers fight over the prize. Polynices attacks Thebes, leading to civil war, and in the end both brothers are dead, each by the other’s hand. Creon, their uncle, assumes the role of king. He gives a state funeral to Eteocles but orders that the body of Polynices be left to rot in the sun as an example to his supporters.

Antigone, Oedipus’s daughter, meets her sister Ismene at the gates to Creon’s palace in Thebes. Antigone feels duty bound to bury her brother Polynices despite Creon’s edict and asks her sister for help. Ismene refuses, arguing that as women they should not go against the decisions of men, especially those of the king.

The Chorus is summoned to the palace. Creon informs the Chorus that he claims the throne and that Polynices is to be left unburied. However, Antigone has stealthily sprinkled Polynices’ body with a layer of dirt, giving her brother a symbolic burial. A guard runs to Creon and reports the attempted burial. Creon is furious and accuses the guard of being involved. One of the elders says it is the work of a god, but Creon disagrees. He threatens to torture and kill the guard unless he captures the real perpetrator. The Chorus sings about the wonder of humanity, but for the city to be safe, humanity should both honor civil law and revere the gods.

The guards brush the dirt off Polynices’ body and then hide, looking to ambush whoever tries to rebury him. Antigone soon arrives and tries to bury Polynices again, but is caught by the guards. She is brought before Creon, where she readily confesses. They argue over her actions and his decree. Creon tries to reason with Antigone, urging her to renounce her crime and assuring her of total indemnity so that she can go on to marry Haemon as planned and, presumably, to lead a happy life. Antigone, however, will have none of Creon’s proffered happiness, preferring to die rather than to take part in her uncle’s political scheme. Creon decrees that she must die. Ismene is brought in and questioned. She demands that she share the guilt. Antigone argues with her.

Creon’s son Haemon argues with his father, trying to convince him to relent. Creon remains stubborn and Haemon threatens to die with Antigone. Creon decrees Antigone to be entombed alive. Antigone mourns her fate and the curse on her family. The Chorus is divided in loyalty between Antigone and Creon. Antigone defends her actions and asks the gods to punish Creon. The Chorus reminds the audience of others who suffered because they tried to subvert the gods’ will.

The blind prophet Tiresias tells Creon that he has angered the gods and that Creon is to blame for the people’s prayers going unanswered. A sickness plagues Thebes, and neighboring cities bear Thebes ill will. Creon accuses the prophet of being paid to upset him. Tiresias calls Creon a tyrant and warns him that he will lose his son. This troubles Creon, and he asks the Chorus for council. They advise him to yield and release Antigone. Creon agrees and leaves. The Chorus then asks Dionysus to help Thebes.

A messenger arrives and relates to the Chorus what happened at the tomb. The messenger says that Creon and his men went to bury Polynices and to release Antigone, only to discover that she had killed herself. Haemon, weeping over her body, then kills himself before their eyes. Eurydice overhears the messenger. Creon arrives and openly accepts responsibility for the deaths of Antigone and Haemon. A second messenger arrives and tells him that his wife, too, has committed suicide. Creon prays for death. The Chorus delivers one of the moral lessons of the tragedy: Obedience to the laws of the gods comes first.

**Antigone Themes**

* Fate and Free Will. A central theme of Antigone is the tension between individual action and fate. ...
* Rules and Order. Antigone contrasts two types of law and justice: divine or religious law on one hand, and the law of men and states on the other. ...
* Determination. ...
* Power. ...
* Women and Femininity. ...
* Mortality.

Literary Elements

https://prezi.com/r3qwqos6tu4b/antigone-literary-elements/

TRAGIC HERO CLASSICAL DEFINITION

 A tragic hero is a person of noble birth with heroic or potentially heroic qualities.

This person is fated by the Gods or by some supernatural force to doom and destruction or at least to great suffering.

But the hero struggles mightly against this fate and this cosmic conflict wins our admiration.

Because the tragic hero simply cannot accept a diminished view of the self and because of some personality flaw, the hero fails in this epic struggle against fate.

This tragic drama involves choices (free will) and results in a paradox --- Is it Fate or Free Will which is primarily responsible for the suffering in the hero's life (and in our lives in light of our own personal tragedies)? Though fated the hero makes choices which bring about his destruction.

In addition, tragic drama usually reveals the hero's true identity. Oedipus --- instead of being the proud savior of Thebes --- discovers that he is the cause of the city's plague, the killer of his father and the husband of his mother.

The hero's suffering, however, is not gratuitous because through great suffering the hero is enlightened. Such heroes learn about themselves and their place in the universe. Pride is chastened. Though destroyed the hero is at peace intellectually.

Tragic doom is both public (the State) and private (a family tragedy as well) and usually sexual transgressions are involved in some way.

We are energized by witnessing this eternal drama for it encompasses the fate and "stuff" of all humans from kings and queens to paupers. As for paupers, in his famous editorial for the *NY Times*, *Tragedy and the Common Man*, Arthur Miller argues that the common person is also capable of tragic stature in so far as each one of us seeks a true identity and a personal dignity.

**Symbols**

**The Gray World**

Upon sneaking in from her brother's burial, Antigone tells the Nurse that she has come from a "gray world." Like many of Anouilh's heroines, Antigone wanders in this gray "nowhere," a world beyond the "post card" 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, the world of the living does not lie in wait for Antigone: she is meant to pass onto another.

**Creon's attack**

Anouilh symbolizes Antigone's transcendence of state power with Creon's assault on her person during their confrontation. Enraged by her proud defiance and his inability to sway her, Creon seizes Antigone and twists her to his side. The immediate pain passes, however: Creon squeezes to tightly, and Antigone feels nothing. Thus Antigone passes beyond the reach of state power and the realm of men.

**Eurydice's Knitting**

As the Chorus remarks, Queen Eurydice's function in the tragedy is to knit in her room until she dies. She is Creon's final lesson, her death leaving him utterly alone. In the report of her suicide, Eurydice will stop her knitting and the stab herself with her needle. The end of her knitting is the end of her life, evoking the familiar Greek myth of the life-thread spun, measured, and cut by the Fates.

**Quotes**

*I didn't say yes. I can say no to anything I say vile, and I don't have to count the cost. But because you said yes, all that you can do, for all your crown and your trappings, and your guards—all that your can do is to have me killed.*

The political heroism in Antigone's resistance is her refusal of state power. Antigone says no to all she finds vile, and in this sense she is more powerful than the ruler beholden to his throne. Despite all his trappings of power, Creon finds himself helpless, unable to act on his own. He wants not to execute Antigone but cannot help ordering her death. Having said yes to state power, he is circumscribed by his own kingship, by very the throne that makes him the master of the land. He has surrendered himself entirely to the state and knows his circumscription all too well. Unlike Antigone, he has completely ceded his desires to take upon the mantle of governance. Creon is rendered loathsome, terrified of what his office requires of him and yet unable to act otherwise.

*My nails are broken, my fingers are bleeding, my arms are covered with the welts left by the paws of your guards—but I am a queen!*

Antigone makes this delirious proclamation upon reading Creon's weakness. In contrast to conventional readings of the Antigone legend, Anouilh's Antigone does not defend her act of rebellion in the name of filial, religious, or even moral integrity. This insistence becomes especially clear in the course of her confrontation with Creon. In asking why and in whose name Antigone has rebelled, Creon will progressively strip Antigone's act of its external motivations. Antigone will have no "just cause," no human reason for bringing herself to the point of death: her act is senseless and gratuitous. Instead, she acts in terms of her desire, a desire she clings to despite its madness. Ultimately Antigone's insistence on her desire removes her from the human. She becomes a veritably tabooed body and exalts herself in her abjection. As with Oedipus, her expulsion from the human community would make her tragically beautiful.

*if Haemon reaches the point where he stops growing pale with fear when I grow pale, stops thinking that I must have been killed in an accident when I am five minutes late, stops feeling that he is alone on earth when I laugh and he doesn't know why—if he too has to learn to say yes to everything—why, no, then, no! I do not love Haemon!*

Antigone recants her love for Haemon toward the end of her confrontation with Creon. Creon has unmasked her brothers as treacherous gangsters, making her act and death march entirely gratuitous. Its political, moral, filial, and religious motivations appear entirely external. Thus Creon offers the dazed Antigone the promise of human happiness. This vision of human happiness provokes Antigone's final, fatal explosion. She refuses to moderate herself: she will have everything as beautiful as it was when she was a child or die. Anouilh underscores the infantile quality of this desire: Antigone's fiery love recalls the plight of a child who cannot handle the even momentary loss and separation of the beloved. Antigone insists on her desire in its primary form.

*As for those three red-faced card players—they are the guards. One smells of garlic, another of beer; but they're not a bad lot. They have wives they are afraid of, kids who are afraid of them; they're bothered by the little day-to- day worries that beset us all. At the same time—they are policemen: eternally innocent, no matter what crimes are committed; eternally indifferent, for nothing that happens can matter to them. They are quite prepared to arrest anybody at all, including Creon himself, should the order be given by a new leader.*

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. Like its ancient predecessor, the Chorus prepares a ritual. In hits preparation, it 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' very thoughts.

The three Guardsmen are particularly crucial to the political allegory the play offers of the fascist collaboration. The trio, which symbolizes the fascist collaborators or*collabos* of Anouilh's day are made all the more mindless and indistinguishable in being grouped in three. They also emerge from a long tradition of the dull-witted police officer. They are eternally indifferent, innocent, and ready to serve whatever powers that be. This indifference not only inures them to the tragic, also but makes them brutal and dangerous.

*Every kind of stillness. The hush when the executioner's ax goes up at the end of the last act. The unbreathable silence when, at the beginning of the play, the two lovers, their hearts bared, their bodies naked, stand for the first time face to face in the darkened room, afraid to stir. The silence inside you when the roaring crowd acclaims the winner—so that you think of a film without a sound track, mouths agape and no sound coming out of them, a clamor that is not more than picture; and you, the victor, already vanquished, alone in the desert of your silence. That is tragedy.*

Stillness appears as a key metaphor in the Chorus's comments on the nature of tragedy. First the Chorus evokes this stillness in its theatrical mode. This stillness is equated with the spring-like tension and sense of suspense in tragedy that it evokes earlier. Tragedy's stillness appears in the moment before the execution, the moment at the beginning of a play before the consummation of a love affair. This tension only finds release in the terrible, ecstatic shout. Note this conjunction of sex and death. The stillness of sex and death is precisely where the play's two lovers will ultimately end, lain together in the tomb that figures also as their "bridal bed."

Strangely, the Chorus then invokes a filmic metaphor. Tragic stillness is the silence within the spectator when the crowd acclaims the victor. This stillness within perhaps recalls the "hollow space" imagined by Antigone earlier. This inner silence turns the outer world into "no more than a picture," a film without a sound track. This dissociation of sound from the image of the world is a dissociation of the spectator from that world as well. Again, two disjunctions are at work here: that of the sound from the image and the spectator from the world-become image. The Chorus shifts from a theatrical to filmic metaphor here because these experiences of disjunction are inherent to, though covered over in, the cinematic apparatus. The spectator is then identified with the already vanquished victor, who is similarly alone in a desert of silence, similarly disjoined from the world. This disjunction from the world is the plight of the tragic hero and spectator who identifies himself with him.