

Instructions: You will read excerpts from the play *Antigone* by Sophocles, who was friends with (and influenced by) the philosopher Archelaus of Miletus. Then, you will answer questions about what you've read.

~ Sophocles' *Antigone* (c. 441 BCE) ~

Antigone was the sister of Polynices, who had been an enemy of King Creon of Thebes. During a civil war in Thebes, Polynices was killed. As payback, Creon forbade anyone from burying Polynices. Yet, that is exactly what Antigone did, and burying her disgraced brother Polynices is what ultimately got her arrested.

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Creon: Eteocles died fighting on behalf of our city, so we shall bury him with the greatest honors. However, his brother Polyneices wanted to burn to the ground the city of his fathers. Therefore, no one is allowed to bury him. Everyone is obligated to leave him unburied in shame. His dead body shall be left on the battlefield for the birds & dogs to eat. This is my will. I'll never allow traitors to be honored.

[A guard enters.]

Guard: My king, I will not say that I arrive breathless because of speed, or from the action of a swift foot. Even if my report brings no good, still will I tell you.

Creon

And what is it that so disheartens you?

Guard

I want to tell you first about myself—I did not do the deed, nor did I see the evildoer, so it would be wrong that I should come to any harm.

Creon

It is clear that you have some unheard-of thing to tell.

Guard

I do.

Creon

Then tell me!

Guard

Well, here it is. The corpse—some one has just buried it.

Creon

What are you saying? What man dared do this?

Guard

I do not know.

[The guard leaves, and then he returns with a prisoner.]

Creon: Your prisoner here—why did you take her?

Guard: She was burying the man. You know all there is to tell.

Creon: Are you clear and sure about what you are saying?

Guard: I am. I saw her burying the corpse that you had forbidden to bury. Is that plain and sufficient?

Creon: You, you with your face bent to the ground, do you admit, or deny that you did this?

Antigone: I admit to everything, and I deny nothing at all.

Creon: Did you know that my law had forbidden this?

Antigone: I knew it. How could I not? It was declared in public.

Creon: And even so, you dared to overstep my law?

Antigone: Yes, since Zeus didn't tell me that law, which isn't the kind of law that godly Justice has made for human beings. Nor did I think that your laws were of such force that a mortal could override the unwritten & unfailing laws given to us by the gods. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but for all time, and no human being knows when their laws were first put forth. Not for fear of Creon's pride (or any other human's pride) was I about to owe a debt to the gods for breaking their laws.

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QUESTIONS ABOUT SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*

1. Antigone believed that it was okay for her to break Creon's law, but did Antigone believe that it was *always* okay for her to break *any* law? Why or why not? (Explain your answer.)

2. In your own words, how did Antigone justify breaking Creon's law?

3. In his *Antigone*, Sophocles added to Archelaus' theory of law by making a distinction between human law and divine law. Accordingly, which of those two kinds of law did Archelaus believe was *natural* law? *Human* law? *Divine* law? *Both* human law *and* divine law? *Neither* human law *nor* divine law? In order to receive credit for this question, support your answer with evidence from "Archelaus and Philosophy of Law" in the reading "The Ionian School: Part 4".