

A Comprehensive Study Guide for Sophocles' "Antigone"



Study Guide for Sophocles's Antigone (Course Hero Study Guides) by Jon Scieszka

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Sophocles' "Antigone" is a classic Greek tragedy that has been studied and performed for centuries. It tells the story of a young woman who defies her uncle's order to bury her brother, who has been killed as a traitor. The play explores themes of family, loyalty, and the limits of human law.

Plot Summary

The play begins with Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, mourning the death of her two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices. Eteocles has died defending Thebes from Polynices, who has attacked the city with an army of Argives. Creon, Antigone's uncle and the new king of Thebes, has ordered that Eteocles be buried with full honors, but that Polynices be left unburied as a traitor. Antigone refuses to obey Creon's order, and buries Polynices herself. When Creon discovers what Antigone has done, he orders her to be buried alive. Antigone's fiancé, Haemon, and her sister,

Ismene, try to convince Creon to spare Antigone, but he refuses. Antigone is led away to her death, and Haemon kills himself in grief.

Character Analysis

Antigone

Antigone is a complex and tragic figure. She is a strong and independent woman who is willing to stand up for her beliefs, even when it means defying her uncle's authority. She is also a loving and compassionate daughter and sister. Antigone's tragic flaw is her inability to compromise. She is so determined to do what she believes is right that she is willing to sacrifice everything, even her own life.

Creon

Creon is a powerful and authoritarian ruler. He is a patriotic leader who is determined to defend Thebes from its enemies. However, Creon is also a stubborn and ruthless man. He is unable to see the error of his ways, and he is willing to sacrifice the lives of others to maintain his power.

Haemon

Haemon is the son of Creon and the fiancé of Antigone. He is a young man who is deeply in love with Antigone. Haemon is a good and honorable man, but he is unable to stand up to his father. When Creon orders Antigone to be executed, Haemon kills himself in grief.

Ismene

Ismene is the sister of Antigone. She is a timid and cautious woman who is afraid to defy Creon's authority. Ismene loves her sister, but she is unwilling

to risk her own life to save her. Ismene's character foil is Antigone, who is willing to sacrifice everything for her beliefs.

Themes

Family and Loyalty

The play explores the themes of family and loyalty. Antigone is torn between her loyalty to her brother and her loyalty to her uncle. Creon is torn between his loyalty to Thebes and his loyalty to his family. The play suggests that these loyalties can sometimes be in conflict with each other.

The Limits of Human Law

The play also explores the limits of human law. Antigone believes that the laws of the gods are more important than the laws of man. Creon believes that the laws of the state are supreme. The play suggests that there are some limits to the authority of human law.

Fate and Free Will

The play also explores the themes of fate and free will. Antigone believes that she is fated to die for her actions. Creon believes that he is free to make his own choices. The play suggests that there is a balance between fate and free will.

Literary Devices

Imagery

Sophocles uses imagery to create a vivid and memorable world for the reader. For example, he describes Antigone as a "young bird, beating its wings against the storm." This image suggests Antigone's youthful innocence and her defiance of Creon's authority.

Irony

Sophocles also uses irony to create a sense of tragedy. For example, Creon's decision to execute Antigone ultimately leads to the deaths of both Antigone and Haemon. This irony highlights the futility of Creon's actions.

Symbolism

Sophocles also uses symbolism to reinforce the play's themes. For example, the burial of Polynices symbolizes the importance of family and loyalty. The death of Antigone symbolizes the limits of human law. The play's chorus of Theban elders symbolizes the wisdom of the people.

"Antigone" is a powerful and moving tragedy that has stood the test of time. It is a play that explores timeless themes of family, loyalty, and the limits of human law. The play's characters are complex and relatable, and its language is beautiful and poetic. "Antigone" is a must-read for anyone interested in classic Greek literature or in the human condition.



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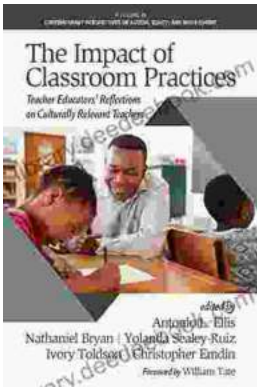
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