
Characters

A group of Dancers

Antigone, daughter of Oedipus and princess of Thebes

Ismene, sister to Antigone

A Chorus of seven members

Creon, King of Thebes and Uncle of Antigone

Guard

Haemon, son of Creon and Eurydice

Teiresias, the blind seer of Thebes

Messenger

Eurydice, wife of Creon and mother of Haemon

*Before the play starts, dancers playing **Polyneices** and **Eteocles** stage a fight.*

Their bodies are on display when the actors enter.

Enter Antigone and Ismene from opposite sides, embracing



Antigone

Helping Ismene stand up



O darling sister **Ismene**, what will **Zeus** do to us now?

How do you think he'll punish us?

We survived the catastrophe of **Oedipus** – all for this?



I have seen it all in the course of our troubles,
yours and mine,
no end to pain, destiny, disgrace or shame.

And now what is this proclamation
that the general has just made?

They are talking about it, all the people,

Do you know?

Have you heard?

How our loved ones are mistreated?

Or has it passed you by?



Ismene No news has come to me, Antigone.
Nothing good or bad, not since we lost our two brothers,
both dead in one day, in one stroke.

Only last night, the **Argive** army left us,
I have no more news, either good or bad.

Antigone I heard it too and that's why I sent for you.
We can talk alone out here,
away from the palace gates.

Ismene What's going on?
I see the darkness lowering in your words.

Antigone **Creon** has granted full burial rites
to one of our brothers,
but refused it to the other.
That's what they say.

He's buried Eteocles in the ground
in a proper way, honoured with the dead below.

As for the other one, Polyneices,
who died so base, they say a proclamation is made.

So the citizens cannot bury him in a tomb,
nor even mourn.

He's to be unlamented, unburied,
a sweet feast for the ranging vultures.

So they say.

The **noble** Creon has proclaimed these things
against you and me...

Me, I say?

And he is coming here now,
so all the people who still don't know
shall have no excuse...

It's a serious matter:
anyone disobeying any of these things
will face death by public stoning in the city.

This is how things are.
So now, show your mettle,
Are you really so upright,
or just a sorry, sad daughter of noble parents?



Ismene How, my poor sister?
If things are like this,
what could I do to the outcome?
Ignore things, or act?

Antigone
Shaking Ismene

Think! Will you join me in the struggle?
Will you help?

Ismene What now? What do you mean?

Antigone Will you help me to lift up the body?

Ismene You are even thinking of burying him?
It is forbidden.

Antigone He is my brother.
And yours too, even if you pretend he's not.
Nobody will see me betray him.

Ismene You can't be so bold! Creon has forbidden it.

Antigone He has no right to keep me from my own.

Ismene No, sister.
You think!
Our father was destroyed,
hated and loathed for his self-inflicted crimes,
blinding both his eyes with his own hands.
Then his mother, his wife – both in one –
destroyed her life on the plaited noose.
And now the third outrage.
Both brothers killed in one day,
both by each other,
both so wretched,
laying their own hands on each other,
sharing a bitter fate.

Now think of us – the two who are left.
The worst thing would be to die,
breaking the law, the tyrant’s mighty decree.

Remember.
We were born women.

Speaking slowly





We can't fight against men.
They are in control.

We just endure –
this – or worse.

I beg those below the ground to forgive.
I have no choice.
I will do what the tyrant says.
There is no sense in escalation.

Antigone

Angry now



I won't ask again.
And I won't agree if you change your mind.
Do what you will, I **will** bury him.

My death counts as nought.
I will lie in death with the one I loved,
with honour in my crime.

There will be more time there with the dead
than here with the living.