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*The Prompt*

Make an analysis of the different personality types or social roles represented by the characters of Creon, Antigone, Ismene, and Haemon. What connections can you make between *Antigone* and real life?

*The Journal Entry*

Any play that has survived for thousands of years and that has competed with countless millions of other literary works for readership is likely to have substantial meaning and several intriguing aspects; *Antigone*, so far, has fit this generalization. The play not only provokes difficult questions about the rightness of breaking the law, but it also indicates that many facets of society and human interaction have changed little over more than two millennia.

The behavior and attitudes of the characters is one example of this. The ruler Creon has an obstinately self-righteous ego that is not at all uncommon today. Creon is so focused on one goal—proving the firmness of his leadership to the Theban people by refusing to back down on his decree forbidding the burial of Polynices—and is so convinced in his rightness that he refuses to listen to anyone else—Antigone, Ismene, or even his own son, Haemon. Creon makes countless references to his rectitude in upholding the law against temptations to relax it, simultaneously ignoring his brutality not only to Antigone but even to the Sentry who reported the news.

Haemon is another character with many parallels to the modern world. He obsequiously impresses Creon by declaring the infinite wisdom of his father, and he accepts Creon's praise of his Haemon's fidelity. However, Haemon is not

simply a sycophant; he sympathizes with Antigone and the Theban masses and hopes to use his position to make his father see the truth. His lack of fear in challenging his father's authority even begins to convince the Chorus to see the potential legitimacy of Antigone's sentiment.

Antigone represents a fearless crusader for what she believes must be done. She began as a lone voice protesting Creon's decree; even Ismene refused to assist her in the beginning. But as events progressed, she attracted more and more support—from Ismene, from Haemon, and even from the people of Thebes. At the same time, her recklessness in violating the law and her indifference to the declaration of her own execution evince deep emotional distress, possibly resulting from the death of her brothers and what she considers the unjust decree. She demonstrates a refusal to listen to others that might be considered comparable to that of Creon: not only does she dismiss Creon's position, but she refuses to accept the pleas of Ismene (both before she committed the crime and afterwards when Ismene demanded to be killed).

Ismene is an example of a reluctant friend, one who is initially terrified of defying authority but who later understands its importance. Like perhaps many of the citizens of Thebes, it took the initiative of Antigone for her to build up the courage to repudiate the law. Like Antigone, she holds emotional instability, as is seen in her hysteria when she asks to be killed along with her sister.

It is interesting to realize that *Antigone* seems to revolve around the conflict between two characters with equal stubbornness, namely, Antigone and Creon. Both seem incorrigibly fixed in their adherence to what they consider the right course of action, and both even exhibit indifference to the expostulations and

protests of others. Twice the idea that obstinacy leads only to ruin is mentioned in the play, once when Creon compares Antigone to a piece of hard metal that breaks easily under intense heat and again when Haemon warns his father of being a stiff tree in a strong current that will easily snap. This theme is relevant to any group of people in any time period; regardless of the society in which they live, it will always be essential for people to find a balance between the firm maintenance of a belief and the open-minded recognition of the possible legitimacy of contrasting views.