

Discussion Questions For Antigone

Antigone

~Sophocles~

STUDY GUIDE with answers

Prologue:

Vocabulary

eddy - current
heed - pay attention to
hence - away
orb - sphere or planet
piety - holiness or devotion
pinion - feather
stay - stop
unsepulchred - not buried
wrought - produced

1. What new suffering must Antigone and Ismene endure?
Creon has ordered that their brother, Polynices, is not to be given a proper burial.
2. Contrast Ismene and Antigone in terms of their character traits.
Antigone is determined, willful, ready to face death. She does what she believes is right to protect her honor. Ismene is passive, obedient, and feels she is powerless against the state.
3. What does Antigone plan to do? Why? What consequences will she face?
She will bury her brother because it is the will of the gods that a family gives its members a proper burial. She will face the punishment of death for disobeying Creon's order.
4. What background information does the chorus provide as they express gratitude for the peace in Thebes?
Polynices formed an army and attacked Thebes. His brother Eteocles stayed loyal to Creon and fought against Polynices. In the battle, the brothers "against each other...laid lances at aim" and both died. (Pg. 7)

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Parados:

Vocabulary

fratricide - the murder of one's brother
hapless - unfortunate or ill-fated

Discussion questions for Antigone are an essential tool for engaging with Sophocles' classic tragedy, which explores themes of morality, law, and the individual's role in society. By examining these questions, readers and audiences can delve deeper into the characters' motivations, the play's ethical dilemmas, and the relevance of its themes in contemporary contexts. This article will present a range of discussion questions categorized by theme, character analysis, and societal implications, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of "Antigone."

Understanding the Themes

The themes of "Antigone" are rich and multifaceted, making them a fruitful

ground for discussion. Here are some key themes along with corresponding questions:

1. Law vs. Morality

One of the central themes of "Antigone" is the conflict between human law and divine moral law.

- How does Antigone's belief in divine law conflict with Creon's belief in state law?
- What does the play suggest about the consequences of prioritizing one over the other?
- In what ways do the characters justify their positions regarding the law?

2. Gender Roles

Gender dynamics play a significant role in the conflict between Antigone and Creon.

- How does Antigone challenge traditional gender roles in her society?
- What commentary does the play offer regarding the expectations of women during Sophocles' time?
- How do Creon's views on masculinity influence his decisions throughout the play?

3. Fate vs. Free Will

The tension between fate and free will is another crucial theme in "Antigone."

- To what extent do the characters believe they control their destinies?
- How does the prophecy surrounding Oedipus and his family influence the actions of Antigone?
- Are the characters' choices truly free, or are they dictated by fate?

4. The Role of the Chorus

The Chorus serves as a commentator on the events of the play, providing context and moral insight.

- What purpose does the Chorus serve in shaping the audience's understanding of the themes?
- How does the Chorus reflect societal values and beliefs during the play?

- In what ways does the Chorus contribute to the emotional impact of the story?

Character Analysis

The characters in "Antigone" embody various moral, ethical, and social dilemmas, making their analysis crucial for discussion.

1. Antigone

Antigone is a symbol of defiance and moral integrity.

- What motivates Antigone to bury her brother, Polynices, despite the consequences?
- How does her character evolve throughout the play, particularly in her interactions with Creon?
- What does Antigone's fate suggest about the nature of sacrifice?

2. Creon

Creon represents the authority of the state and the rule of law.

- What are Creon's motivations for enforcing his decree against the burial of Polynices?
- How does his characterization evolve throughout the play, especially following the death of his son Haemon?
- What can be inferred about Creon's understanding of power and its consequences?

3. Haemon

Haemon, Creon's son and Antigone's fiancé, provides a bridge between the two conflicting forces.

- What role does Haemon play in mediating the conflict between Antigone and Creon?
- How does his character illustrate the theme of loyalty to family versus loyalty to the state?
- What does Haemon's fate reveal about the impact of rigid adherence to authority?

4. Ismene

Ismene, Antigone's sister, represents the voice of caution and conformity.

- How does Ismene's perspective on the law differ from Antigone's?
- What does Ismene's character reveal about the societal pressures faced by women?
- In what ways does Ismene's character evolve by the end of the play?

Societal Implications

The societal implications of "Antigone" resonate with modern audiences, making it a relevant topic for discussion.

1. The Nature of Justice

The concept of justice is central to the conflicts in "Antigone."

- How do the definitions of justice differ between Antigone and Creon?
- What questions does the play raise about the fairness of laws?
- How can we relate these ideas of justice to contemporary legal systems?

2. Civil Disobedience

Antigone's actions can be seen as an early form of civil disobedience.

- What are the ethical implications of Antigone's defiance?
- How does the play address the consequences of standing up against unjust laws?
- Can Antigone be viewed as a hero in the context of civil disobedience? Why or why not?

3. The Role of the Individual in Society

The play raises questions about the individual's responsibilities within a community.

- What is the responsibility of individuals when faced with unjust laws?
- How does the conflict between Antigone and Creon reflect broader societal struggles?
- What lessons can modern society learn from Antigone's plight?

Exploring the Relevance of Antigone Today

Despite being written over two millennia ago, "Antigone" remains relevant in contemporary discussions.

1. Modern-day Parallels

- What modern figures or movements can be compared to Antigone's struggle?
- How do contemporary issues of civil rights and justice echo the themes of the play?
- In what ways can the conflict between individual rights and state laws be observed today?

2. Personal Reflection

- How do the themes of "Antigone" resonate with your personal beliefs about justice and morality?
- Have you ever faced a situation where you had to choose between following the law and doing what you believe is right?
- How does your understanding of the play influence your perspective on current events?

Conclusion

Discussion questions for "Antigone" not only enhance comprehension of the text but also encourage critical thinking about timeless issues. By engaging with the themes, character motivations, and societal implications presented in Sophocles' work, readers can uncover deeper meanings and relevance in our modern world. Whether in an academic setting, a book club, or a casual conversation, these questions serve as a gateway to a richer understanding of one of literature's most enduring tragedies.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the central themes of Antigone, and how do they relate to modern societal issues?

The central themes of Antigone include the conflict between individual conscience and state law, the role of women in society, and the consequences of pride and stubbornness. These themes resonate with modern issues such as civil disobedience, gender equality, and the balance between personal beliefs

and civic duties.

How does Antigone's character challenge traditional gender roles in ancient Greek society?

Antigone defies traditional gender roles by taking a bold stand against King Creon to honor her brother's burial rights, showcasing strength and determination. Her actions contrast with the expectations of women in her society, who were often expected to be submissive and obedient.

In what ways does Creon's tragic flaw contribute to the play's overall message?

Creon's tragic flaw is his excessive pride and rigid adherence to law, which leads to his downfall. His inability to listen to others and his insistence on enforcing his will demonstrate the dangers of authoritarianism and the importance of flexibility and compassion in leadership.

How does the role of fate versus free will manifest in Antigone's decisions?

The tension between fate and free will is evident in Antigone's belief that she is destined to honor her family, despite the consequences. Her choices reflect a struggle against predetermined fate, suggesting that individuals can assert their agency even in the face of an unavoidable destiny.

What impact does the chorus have on the narrative and themes of Antigone?

The chorus serves as a moral compass and commentator on the events, reflecting the societal values and dilemmas of the characters. It enhances the themes of justice, loyalty, and the consequences of human actions, providing insight into the collective consciousness of the community.

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