

## LITERATURE

**In 'Antigone', Sophocles exposes the ultimate insufficiency of political structures, amidst the chaos of an insistently elemental world.**

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In passage 1, Creon's defiant language presents the callousness and rigidity of a patriarchal government, but one anchored in a deep sense of the helplessness of man. Creon opens with an apparent confidence in his short, crisp sentences such as "You are wrong" and his use of absolutes, "None of my subjects" and "You are alone". Yet beneath his defiant surface lies a palpable insecurity, that can be felt in the terse rhythms of his speech. His tone becomes almost condescending in "Was not his enemy your brother?" yet his constant repetition of 'honour' again exposes the tension within him. In contrast, Antigone's language is balanced through continual pauses such as "He will,..." and "Even so, ..". Her language portrays her as truly comfortable in defending her idea of 'law' whereas Creon's expresses restlessness within his own power. His language of strict dichotomies, 'good and bad', 'enemy' and 'friend' is ingrained a deep sense of repression. Although his language is rigid, his aforementioned insecurity undercuts this authority and subtly suggest that Creon's strictly two-tonal world view is a product of the helplessness he feels. Ultimately, Sophocles exposes the inadequacy of the polis in mediating inherent human weaknesses. Instead, these political structures are shown to exacerbate these tensions.

In passage 2, The chorus evocation of the strength of the elemental world grounds man within a higher, natural order. Immediately, the erratic rhythm enacts the "surges" of nature and puts the audience at unease. The unsettling interplay of darkness, such as "the taste of evil", "dark storm" and "black sand", and the strong resonance of "drives", "deeps", "doom down" and "echoing" places man in a position of helplessness' the sheer volatility of this language shows man to be governed by a force beyond his control. The cyclic movement of 'generation to generation' again educes a feeling of helplessness and shows that this natural world cannot be defied by "pride of heart" not "presumptuous tongue". The long vowel sounds of "O Zeus", "sleep", "time", "age" and "come" permeates this chorus speech in reverence. Ultimately it is the 'law' of 'Olympus' that the Theban elders exalt, despite their allegiance to the king, proving that man is governed not by politics, but by nature. Yet this chorus speech also serves to warn of the dangers of undermining these holy powers of heaven/. The hissing quality of "lures", "desires" and "trips" subtly warns of the inevitable "suffering" that "roving ambition" brings. But again, the sheer power of nature is embodied in "the fire that consumes", illustrating that above all, the elemental laws will ultimately prevail. The chorus ends on the echoing resonance of "doomed" in order which leaves a lasting warning of the inescapability of the natural order. Ultimately, Sophocles shows that it is not the 'laws' of the polis which dictates humanity but the divinity of the natural world which guides our lives.

In passage 3, Creon's "bitter affliction" demonstrates the ultimately fallibility of patriarchal authority. Although the chorus announces Creon's arrival with respect in "The King comes here", this authority is soon undercut in the thud of "guilt" and the echoes of "no other man but his alone". In the face of "sin of his erring soul" and "death", Creon admits his lack of power in the slamming force of "drives hard". His political will is shown to have perverted the natural blood ties through the poignant interfusion of "the slayer, the slain, the father, the son". Ultimately, Creon's kingly authority holds no worth in the face of "God" and his "heavy punishment".

The physical violence of "struck me down" and "trod my gladness under foot" demonstrates the weakness of "mortal man", as his physicality places him at the mercy of "Insatiable Death" and the elemental world. In face of this impending doom, Creon is reduced to incoherence, as shown in the staggered rhythm and incomprehension of "Blood upon Blood? More death? My wife?". Thus Sophocles exposes the ultimately insufficiency of politics within the natural world, as man's intrinsic physicality is shown to place him in the hands of "God".

In these three passages, the pervasiveness of the natural world and its elemental power accentuates the inherent conflict and fallibility of rigid political structures. Ultimately, Sophocles necessities that man apprehend his place in an essentially mortal realm, amidst a higher order which requires his submission to authority.