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# Antigone



## Synopsis

The curse placed on Oedipus lingers and haunts a younger generation in this new and brilliant translation of Sophocles' classic drama. The daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, Antigone is an unconventional heroine who pits her beliefs against the King of Thebes in a bloody test of wills that leaves few unharmed. Emotions fly as she challenges the king for the right to bury her own brother. Determined but doomed, Antigone shows her inner strength throughout the play. Antigone raises issues of law and morality that are just as relevant today as they were more than two thousand years ago. Whether this is your first reading or your twentieth, Antigone will move you as few pieces of literature can. To make this quintessential Greek drama more accessible to the modern reader, the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics edition of Antigone includes a glossary of difficult terms, a list of vocabulary words, and convenient sidebar notes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The third of Sophocles' Theban plays chronologically and the first written, Antigone is his second greatest world literature contribution, second only to Oedipus the King itself. Like that work, its greatness has reigned for nearly 2,500 years, and it is still a model of what tragedy should be; deftly plotted and perfectly executed, it has a sympathetic protagonist, a crushing climax, sublime poetry, and a wealth of meaningful themes. Though less famous than Oedipus the King and not quite as great, it is so tantalizingly close that it remains an immortal masterpiece. It is essential for everyone. As in Oedipus the King, the title character may be the aspect that has always spoken most strongly. Though not a tragic hero in Oedipus' strict sense, Antigone has fundamentally human thoughts and feelings that make her supremely relatable; we feel with and for her because we see

ourselves in her. She may be extremely high strung, and her actions and emotions may be highly wrought, but she is an extreme case of what the dark, often contradictory emotions at humanity's heart can lead to if followed to the logical conclusion. Whatever her faults, she is far more sinned against than sinning, and the depiction of her doomed love and tragic end are profoundly moving; few portrayals are more pathos-drenched. However ostensibly different from us, she has the indisputable human core necessary for a truly moving character. Whether or not we agree with her, we sympathize strongly, and her determination and resilience are truly admirable. We must not overlook the significance of a female protagonist in an ancient Greek work. Greek society was truly a man's world; women were oppressed to an extent that has long been unthinkable in the Western world.

\*Note to readers of this review: when I use the term liberal, I mean it in the "classical" sense. I am not singling out the "Left"; both "Right" and "Left" in contemporary western democracy are "liberal". Sophocles's *Antigone* is the crowning achievement of Greek literature above all because its lesson bears profoundly on political philosophy. To appreciate that lesson, however, one must first understand that a liberal view of the individual does not underlie it, and I devote this review to explaining why liberal individualism is an improper lens through which to interpret the play. The liberal view of the individual is that, qua his status as an individual, he has dignity and is entitled to rights. He is thus not required to live in any particular way or espouse any particular principles to have a claim on dignity and right. Antigone is thought to have performed what a puzzling majority of interpreters refer to as a "personal" act, rooted in her individuality, when she defies the law and buries Polynices. Creon is thought to have failed to respect her dignity and her rights in putting her to death. Hence Antigone exemplifies, in the liberal mold, the oppressed individual, Creon the vicious tyrant. To see why this interpretation of the play is flawed, consider that Antigone's defense of her action is rooted in her belief that it accords with divine law, and not in a belief that her individuality endows it with dignity and legally entitles her to perform it. She therefore cannot exemplify the oppressed individual in the liberal mold, because the basis of the latter's claim on dignity and right is antithetical to the basis of her actions. Moreover, Antigone does not think of herself as an individual, but as a member of a family.

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