

Scenes 3-5

Review and Anticipate In Scenes 1 and 2, Antigone defies the order of her uncle, King Creon of Thebes, and symbolically buries her brother Polyneices. When Creon discovers her guilt, he sentences Antigone to death, refusing to pardon her just because she is his niece. As Scene 2 ends, the chorus sings, "Fate works most for woe / With Folly's fairest show." The remaining scenes show the truth of these words.

Scene 3

CHORAGOS. But here is Haimon, King, the last of all your sons.
Is it grief for Antigone that brings him here,
And bitterness at being robbed of his bride?

[Enter HAIMON.]

CREON. We shall soon see, and no need of diviners.¹
—Son,

You have heard my final judgment on that
girl:

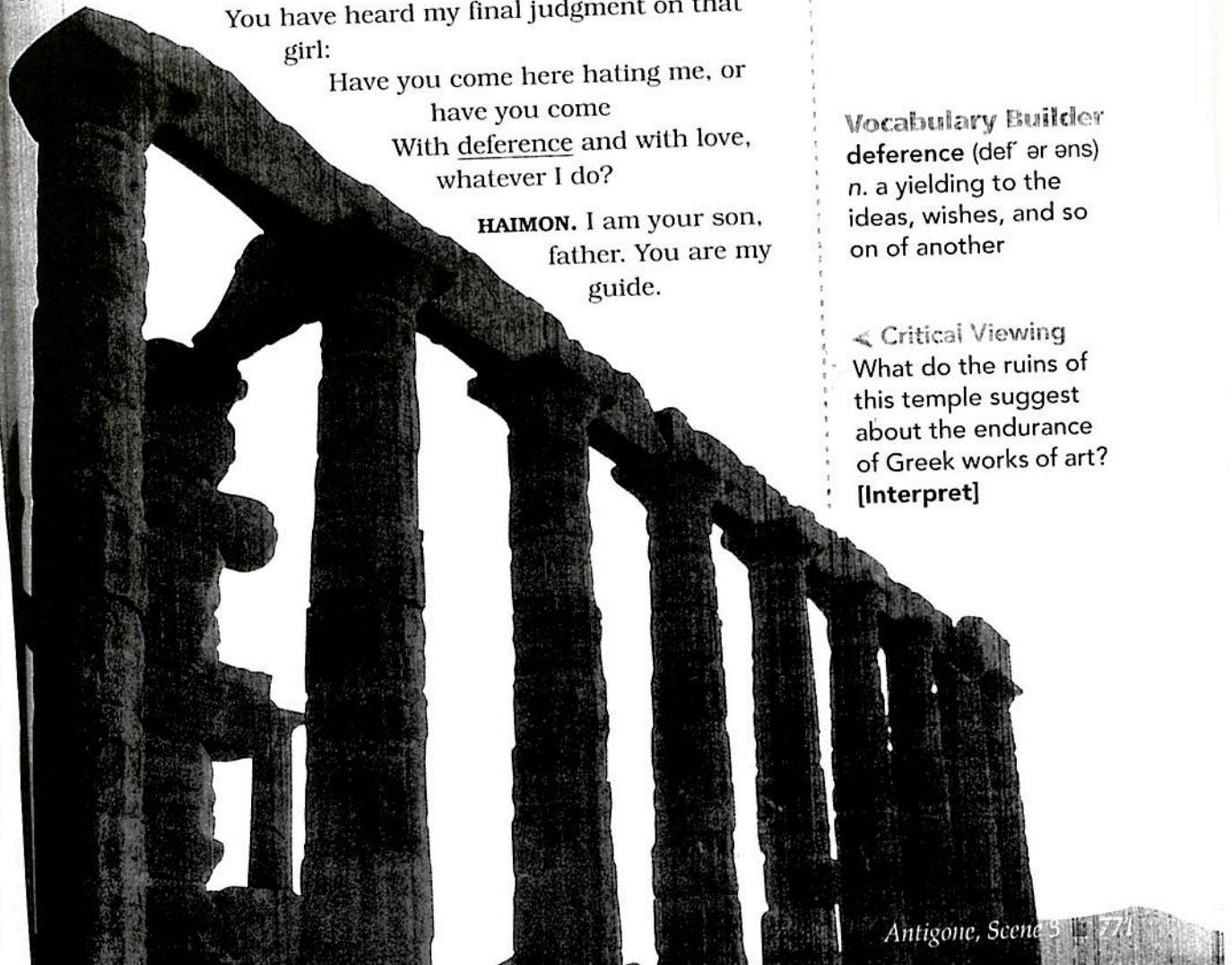
Have you come here hating me, or
have you come
With deference and with love,
whatever I do?

HAIMON. I am your son,
father. You are my
guide.

1. **diviners** (də vin' ərz) *n.*
those who claim to forecast
the future.

Vocabulary Builder
deference (def' ər əns)
n. a yielding to the
ideas, wishes, and so
on of another

◀ **Critical Viewing**
What do the ruins of
this temple suggest
about the endurance
of Greek works of art?
[Interpret]



10 You make things clear for me, and I obey you.
No marriage means more to me than your continuing
wisdom.

CREON. Good. That is the way to behave: subordinate
Everything else, my son, to your father's will.
This is what a man prays for, that he may get
15 Sons attentive and dutiful in his house,
Each one hating his father's enemies,
Honoring his father's friends. But if his sons
Fail him, if they turn out unprofitably,
What has he fathered but trouble for himself
20 And amusement for the malicious?

So you are right

Not to lose your head over this woman.
Your pleasure with her would soon grow cold, Haimon,
And then you'd have a hellcat in bed and elsewhere.
25 Let her find her husband in Hell!
Of all the people in this city, only she
Has had contempt for my law and broken it.

Do you want me to show myself weak before the people?
Or to break my sworn word? No, and I will not.
30 The woman dies.

I suppose she'll plead "family ties." Well, let her.
If I permit my own family to rebel,
How shall I earn the world's obedience?
Show me the man who keeps his house in hand,
35 He's fit for public authority.

I'll have no dealings

With law-breakers, critics of the government:
Whoever is chosen to govern should be obeyed—
Must be obeyed, in all things, great and small,
40 Just and unjust! O Haimon,
The man who knows how to obey, and that man only,
Knows how to give commands when the time comes.
You can depend on him, no matter how fast
The spears come: he's a good soldier, he'll stick it out.

45 Anarchy, anarchy! Show me a greater evil!
This is why cities tumble and the great houses rain down,
This is what scatters armies!

No, no: good lives are made so by discipline.
We keep the laws then, and the lawmakers,
50 And no woman shall seduce us. If we must lose,
Let's lose to a man, at least! Is a woman stronger than we?

Reading Skill

Summarizing As you read Creon's speech in lines 12–51, take brief notes. Then, summarize the speech.

Vocabulary Builder

contempt (kan tempt')
n. scorn; the attitude of someone who looks down on something or someone else

Literary Analysis

Greek Tragedies
What flaw in Creon's character do lines 28–29 reveal?

CHORAGOS. Unless time has rusted my wits,
What you say, King, is said with point and dignity.

HAIMON. [*Boyishly earnest*] Father:

55 Reason is God's crowning gift to man, and you are right
To warn me against losing mine. I cannot say—
I hope that I shall never want to say!—that you
Have reasoned badly. Yet there are other men
Who can reason, too; and their opinions might be helpful.
60 You are not in a position to know everything
That people say or do, or what they feel:
Your temper terrifies them—everyone
Will tell you only what you like to hear.
But I, at any rate, can listen; and I have heard them
65 Muttering and whispering in the dark about this girl.
They say no woman has ever, so unreasonably,
Died so shameful a death for a generous act:
"She covered her brother's body. Is this indecent?
She kept him from dogs and vultures. Is this a crime?
70 Death?—She should have all the honor that we can give her!"
This is the way they talk out there in the city.
You must believe me:
Nothing is closer to me than your happiness.
What could be closer? Must not any son
75 Value his father's fortune as his father does his?
I beg you, do not be unchangeable:
Do not believe that you alone can be right.
The man who thinks that,
The man who maintains that only he has the power
80 To reason correctly, the gift to speak, the soul—
A man like that, when you know him, turns out empty.
It is not reason never to yield to reason!
In flood time you can see how some trees bend,
And because they bend, even their twigs are safe,
85 While stubborn trees are torn up, roots and all.
And the same thing happens in sailing:
Make your sheet fast, never slacken,—and over you go,
Head over heels and under: and there's your voyage.
Forget you are angry! Let yourself be moved!
90 I know I am young; but please let me say this:
The ideal condition
Would be, I admit, that men should be right by instinct;
But since we are all too likely to go astray,

Literary Analysis

Greek Tragedies

What basic limitation
of human beings does
Haimon describe?

Reading Check

What does Haimon
beg Creon to do?

The reasonable thing is to learn from those who can teach.

95 **CHORAGOS.** You will do well to listen to him, King,
If what he says is sensible. And you, Haimon,
Must listen to your father.—Both speak well.

CREON. You consider it right for a man of my years and
experience
To go to school to a boy?

100 **HAIMON.** It is not right
If I am wrong. But if I am young, and right,
What does my age matter?

CREON. You think it right to stand up for an
anarchist?

HAIMON. Not at all. I pay no respect to criminals.

105 **CREON.** Then she is not a criminal?

HAIMON. The City would deny it, to a man.

CREON. And the City proposes to teach me
how to rule?

HAIMON. Ah. Who is it that's talking like a
boy now?

CREON. My voice is the one voice giving orders
in this City!

110 **HAIMON.** It is no City if it takes orders from one
voice.

CREON. The State is the King!

HAIMON. Yes, if the State is
a desert.

[Pause]

CREON. This boy, it seems, has sold out to
a woman.

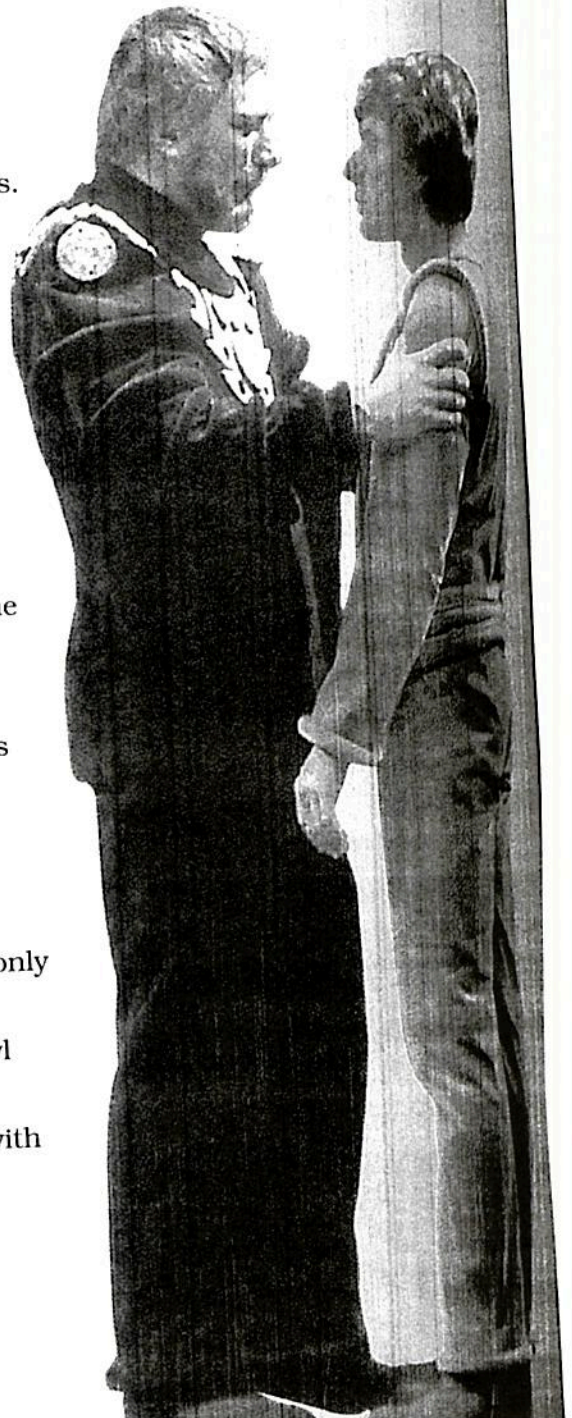
HAIMON. If you are a woman: my concern is only
for you.

115 **CREON.** So? Your "concern"! In a public brawl
with your father!

HAIMON. How about you, in a public brawl with
justice?

CREON. With justice, when all that I do is
within my rights?

✓ Critical Viewing
Which details of this
image from a
production of
Antigone show that
Creon and Haimon are
father and son?
[Analyze]



HAIMON. You have no right to trample on God's right.

CREON. [*Completely out of control*] Fool, adolescent fool! Taken in by a woman!

120 HAIMON. You'll never see me taken in by anything vile.

CREON. Every word you say is for her!

HAIMON. [*Quietly, darkly*] And for you.

And for me. And for the gods under the earth.

CREON. You'll never marry her while she lives.

125 HAIMON. Then she must die.—But her death will cause another.

CREON. Another?

Have you lost your senses? Is this an open threat?

HAIMON. There is no threat in speaking to emptiness.

CREON. I swear you'll regret this superior tone of yours!

130 You are the empty one!

HAIMON. If you were not my father,
I'd say you were perverse.

CREON. You girlstruck fool, don't play at words with me!

HAIMON. I am sorry. You prefer silence.

135 CREON. Now, by God—!

I swear, by all the gods in heaven above us,

You'll watch it, I swear you shall!

[*To the SERVANTS*] Bring her out!

Bring the woman out! Let her die before his eyes!

140 Here, this instant, with her bridegroom beside her!

HAIMON. Not here, no; she will not die here, King.

And you will never see my face again.

Go on raving as long as you've a friend to endure you.

[*Exit HAIMON.*]

CHORAGOS. Gone, gone.

145 Creon, a young man in a rage is dangerous!

CREON. Let him do, or dream to do, more than a man can.

He shall not save these girls from death.

CHORAGOS. These girls?

You have sentenced them both?

150 CREON. No, you are right.

I will not kill the one whose hands are clean.

Vocabulary Builder

vile (vil) *adj.* evil; low; extremely disgusting

Literary Analysis

Greek Tragedies

How do Haimon's words in line 125 warn of the fateful consequences of Creon's decision?

Reading Check

How does Creon respond to Haimon's arguments?

CHORUS. Yet not unpraised, not without a kind of honor,
You walk at last into the underworld;
Untouched by sickness, broken by no sword.
What woman has ever found your way to death?

ANTIGONE.

[ANTISTROPHE 1]

15 How often I have heard the story of Niobe,⁴
Tantalos⁵ wretched daughter, how the stone
Clung fast about her, ivy-close: and they say
The rain falls endlessly
And sifting soft snow; her tears are never done.
20 I feel the loneliness of her death in mine.

CHORUS. But she was born of heaven, and you
Are woman, woman-born. If her death is yours,
A mortal woman's, is this not for you
Glory in our world and in the world beyond?

ANTIGONE.

[STROPHE 2]

25 You laugh at me. Ah, friends, friends,
Can you not wait until I am dead? O Thebes,
O men many-~~q~~charioted, in love with Fortune,
Dear springs of Dirce, sacred Theban grove,
Be witnesses for me, denied all pity,
30 Unjustly judged! and think a word of love
For her whose path turns
Under dark earth, where there are no more tears.

CHORUS. You have passed beyond human daring and come
at last
Into a place of stone where Justice sits.
35 I cannot tell
What shape of your father's guilt appears in this.

ANTIGONE.

[ANTISTROPHE 2]

You have touched it at last: that bridal bed
Unspeakable, horror of son and mother mingling:
Their crime, infection of all our family!
40 O Oedipus, father and brother!
Your marriage strikes from the grave to murder mine.
I have been a stranger here in my own land:
All my life
The blasphemy of my birth has followed me.

45 **CHORUS.** Reverence is a virtue, but strength
Lives in established law: that must prevail.
You have made your choice,
Your death is the doing of your conscious hand.

4. Niobe (nī' ō bē') a queen of Thebes who was turned to stone while weeping for her slain children. Her seven sons and seven daughters were killed by Artemis and Apollo, the divine twins of Leto, after Leto complained that Niobe insulted her by bragging of maternal superiority. It was Zeus who turned the bereaved Niobe to stone, but her lament continued and her tears created a stream.

Reading Skill

Summarizing

Summarize the conversation between Antigone and the chorus in lines 1–20.

5. Tantalos' (tan' te les) Niobe's father, who was condemned to eternal frustration in the underworld because he revealed the secrets of the gods.

Literary Analysis

Greek Tragedies In

lines 45–48, which does the chorus say is responsible for Antigone's doom—fate or her own choices?

Reading Check

What punishment for Antigone does Creon announce?

ANTIGONE.

50 Then let me go, since all your words are bitter,
 And the very light of the sun is cold to me.
 Lead me to my vigil, where I must have
 Neither love nor lamentation; no song, but silence.

[CREON interrupts impatiently.]

CREON. If dirges and planned lamentations could put off death,
 Men would be singing forever.

55 [To the SERVANTS] Take her, go!
 You know your orders: take her to the vault
 And leave her alone there. And if she lives or dies,
 That's her affair, not ours: our hands are clean.

ANTIGONE. O tomb, vaulted bride-bed in eternal rock,
 60 Soon I shall be with my own again
 Where Persephone⁶ welcomes the thin ghosts underground:
 And I shall see my father again, and you, mother,
 And dearest Polyneices—

65 To me, since it was my hand
 That washed him clean and poured the ritual wine:
 And my reward is death before my time!

70 And yet, as men's hearts know, I have done no wrong,
 I have not sinned before God. Or if I have,
 I shall know the truth in death. But if the guilt
 Lies upon Creon who judged me, then, I pray,
 May his punishment equal my own.

CHORAGOS.

O passionate heart,

75 Unyielding, tormented still by the same winds!
CREON. Her guards shall have good
 cause to regret their delaying.

ANTIGONE. Ah! That voice is like
 the voice of death!

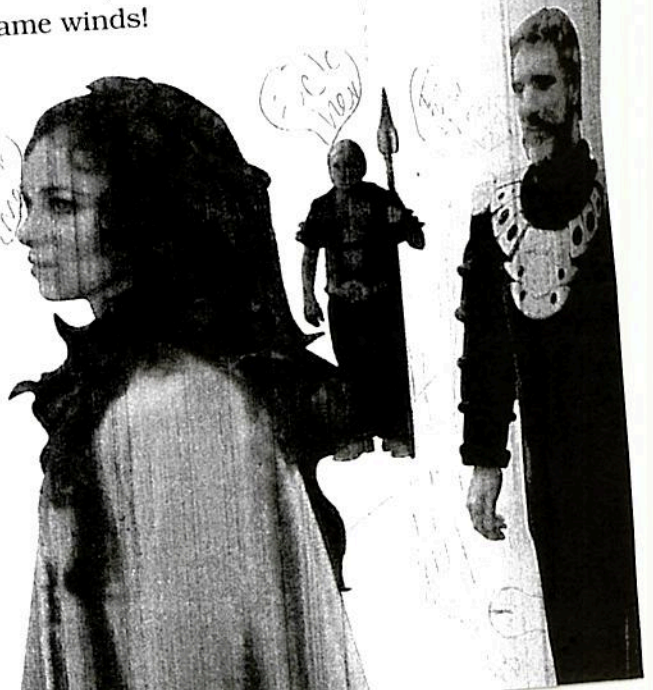
CREON. I can give you no reason to
 think you are mistaken.

ANTIGONE. Thebes, and you my
 fathers' gods,
 And rulers of Thebes, you see
 80 me now, the last
 Unhappy daughter of a line of
 kings,

Vocabulary Builder
lamentation (lam' en-
 tā' shən) n. expression
 of grief; weeping

6. Persephone (per'sē-
 ſhən) n. queen of the underworld.

✓ Critical Viewing
 What does the
 actress's pose in the
 image suggest about
 Antigone's attitude
 toward Creon?
 Explain. [Interpret]



Your kings, led away to death. You will remember
What things I suffer, and at what men's hands,
Because I would not transgress the laws of heaven.

[To the GUARDS, simply]

Come: let us wait no longer.

[Exit ANTIGONE, left, guarded.]

Ode IV

CHORUS.

[STROPHE 1]

All Danae's beauty⁷ was locked away
In a brazen cell where the sunlight could not come:
A small room, still as any grave, enclosed her.
Yet she was a princess too,
5 And Zeus in a rain of gold poured love upon her.
O child, child,
No power in wealth or war
Or tough sea-blackened ships
Can prevail against untiring Destiny!

[ANTISTROPHE 1]

10 And Dryas' son⁸ also, that furious king,
Bore the god's prisoning anger for his pride:
Sealed up by Dionysos⁹ in deaf stone,
His madness died among echoes.
So at the last he learned what dreadful power
15 His tongue had mocked:
For he had profaned the revels,
And fired the wrath of the nine
Implacable Sisters¹⁰ that love the sound of the flute.

[STROPHE 2]

20 And old men tell a half-remembered tale
Of horror done where a dark ledge splits the sea
And a double surf beats on the gray shores:
How a king's new woman, sick
With hatred for the queen he had imprisoned,
Ripped out his two sons' eyes with her bloody hands
25 While grinning Ares¹¹ watched the shuttle plunge
Four times: four blind wounds crying for revenge,

[ANTISTROPHE 2]

30 Crying, tears and blood mingled.—Piteously born,
Those sons whose mother was of heavenly birth!
Her father was the god of the North Wind
And she was cradled by gales,
She raced with young colts on the glittering hills
And walked untrammelled in the open light:


7. Danae's (dan' ā ēz') **beauty**
Danae was imprisoned when it was foretold that she would mother a son who would kill her father, King Acrisios. Her beauty attracted Zeus, who visited her in the form of a shower of gold. Perseus was born of the union, and Danae was exiled with the child. Years later, as prophesied, the boy did kill Acrisios, whom he failed to recognize as his grandfather.

8. Dryas' (dri' əs) **son**
Lycorgos (li kur' gəs), whose opposition to the worship of Dionysos was severely punished by the gods. He drove the followers of Dionysos from Thrace and was driven insane. Lycorgos recovered from his madness while imprisoned in a cave, but he was later blinded by Zeus as additional punishment.

9. Dionysos (di' ə ni' səs) god of wine, in whose honor the Greek plays were performed.

10. nine / Implacable Sisters
nine Muses, or goddesses, of science and literature.
Implacable (im plak' ə bəl) means "unforgiving."

11. Ares (er' ēz') god of war.

 Reading Check

Why does Antigone believe that she is not guilty of a crime?

But in her marriage deathless Fate found means
To build a tomb like yours for all her joy.

Scene 5

[Enter blind TEIRESIAS, led by a boy. The opening speeches of TEIRESIAS should be in singsong contrast to the realistic lines of CREON.]

TEIRESIAS. This is the way the blind man comes, Princes, Princes,
Lock-step, two heads lit by the eyes of one.

CREON. What new thing have you to tell us, old Teiresias?

TEIRESIAS. I have much to tell you: listen to the prophet, Creon.

5 CREON. I am not aware that I have ever failed to listen.

TEIRESIAS. Then you have done wisely, King, and ruled well.

CREON. I admit my debt to you.¹² But what have you to say?

TEIRESIAS. This, Creon: you stand once more on the edge of fate.

CREON. What do you mean? Your words are a kind of dread.

10 TEIRESIAS. Listen, Creon:

I was sitting in my chair of augury,¹³ at the place
Where the birds gather about me. They were all a-chatter,
As is their habit, when suddenly I heard

15 A strange note in their jangling, a scream, a
Whirring fury; I knew that they were fighting,
Tearing each other, dying

In a whirlwind of wings clashing. And I was afraid.
I began the rites of burnt-offering at the altar,
But Hephaistos¹⁴ failed me: instead of bright flame,

20 There was only the sputtering slime of the fat thigh-flesh
Melting: the entrails dissolved in gray smoke,
The bare bone burst from the welter. And no blaze!

This was a sign from heaven. My boy described it,
Seeing for me as I see for others.

25 I tell you, Creon, you yourself have brought
This new calamity upon us. Our hearths and altars
Are stained with the corruption of dogs and carrion birds
That glut themselves on the corpse of Oedipus' son.
The gods are deaf when we pray to them, their fire
30 Recoils from our offering, their birds of omen
Have no cry of comfort, for they are gorged
With the thick blood of the dead.

12. my debt to you Creon is admitting that he would not have acquired the throne if Teiresias had not moved the former king, Oedipus, to undertake an investigation that led eventually to his own downfall.

13. chair of augury the seat near the temple from which Teiresias would deliver his predictions about the future. Augury is the practice of forecasting the future from omens such as the flight of birds.

14. Hephaistos (he-fes-tes) god of fire and the forge, who would be invoked, as he is by Teiresias, for aid in the starting of ceremonial fires.

Reading Skill

Summarizing Take brief notes on lines 10–32. Then identify two details that you would not include in a brief summary of the speech.

O my son,
These are no trifles! Think: all men make mistakes,
But a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong,
And repairs the evil. The only crime is pride.

Give in to the dead man, then: do not fight with a corpse—
What glory is it to kill a man who is dead?
Think, I beg you:

It is for your own good that I speak as I do.
You should be able to yield for your own good.

CREON. It seems that prophets have made me their
especial province.

All my life long
I have been a kind of butt for the dull arrows
Of doddering fortunetellers!

No, Teiresias:
If your birds—if the great eagles of God
himself
Should carry him stinking bit by bit to
heaven,
I would not yield. I am not afraid of
pollution:

No man can defile the gods.

Do what you will,
Go into business, make money,
speculate
In India gold or that synthetic gold from
Sardis,¹⁵

Get rich otherwise than by my consent to
bury him.

Teiresias, it is a sorry thing when a wise
man
Sells his wisdom, lets out his words for
hire!

TEIRESIAS. Ah Creon! Is there no man left in the
world—

CREON. To do what?—Come, let's have the aphorism!¹⁶

TEIRESIAS. No man who knows that wisdom outweighs any
wealth?

CREON. As surely as bribes are baser than any baseness.

▶ **Critical Viewing** Judging from this image, what type of relationship do
Creon and Teiresias have? Explain. [**Infer**]

15. Sardis (sār' dis) capital of ancient Lydia, which produced the first coins made from an alloy of gold and silver.

16. aphorism (af' ə riz' əm) *n.* brief saying. Creon is taunting the prophet and suggesting that the old man relies on profound-sounding expressions to make an impression.



✓ **Reading Check**

What does Teiresias come to tell Creon?

TEIRESIAS. You are sick, Creon! You are deathly sick!

CREON. As you say: it is not my place to challenge a prophet.

TEIRESIAS. Yet you have said my prophecy is for sale.

CREON. The generation of prophets has always loved gold.

65 **TEIRESIAS.** The generation of kings has always loved brass.

CREON. You forget yourself! You are speaking to your King.

TEIRESIAS. I know it. You are a king because of me.

CREON. You have a certain skill; but you have sold out.

TEIRESIAS. King, you will drive me to words that—

70 **CREON.** Say them, say them!
Only remember: I will not pay you for them.

TEIRESIAS. No, you will find them too costly.

CREON. No doubt. Speak:
Whatever you say, you will not change my will.

75 **TEIRESIAS.** Then take this, and take it to heart!
The time is not far off when you shall pay back
Corpse for corpse, flesh of your own flesh.
You have thrust the child of this world into living night,
You have kept from the gods below the child that is theirs:

80 The one in a grave before her death, the other,
Dead, denied the grave. This is your crime:
And the Furies¹⁷ and the dark gods of Hell
Are swift with terrible punishment for you.

Do you want to buy me now, Creon?

85 Not many days,
And your house will be full of men and women weeping,
And curses will be hurled at you from far
Cities grieving for sons unburied, left to rot
Before the walls of Thebes.

90 These are my arrows, Creon: they are all for you.
[To BOY] But come, child: lead me home.
Let him waste his fine anger upon younger men.
Maybe he will learn at last
To control a wiser tongue in a better head.

[Exit TEIRESIAS.]

95 **CHORAGOS.** The old man has gone, King, but his words
Remain to plague us. I am old, too,
But I cannot remember that he was ever false.

Literary Analysis
Greek Tragedies
 How does Creon's
 reaction to Teiresias
 advice reflect the
 king's tragic flaw?

17. Furies (fyoor-eez)
 goddesses of vengeance who
 punished those who committed
 crimes against their own families.

CREON. That is true. . . . It troubles me.

Oh it is hard to give in! but it is worse

To risk everything for stubborn pride.

CHORAGOS. Creon: take my advice.

CREON.

What shall I do?

CHORAGOS. Go quickly: free Antigone from her vault

And build a tomb for the body of Polynices.

CREON. You would have me do this?

CHORAGOS. Creon, yes!

And it must be done at once: God moves

• Swiftly to cancel the folly of stubborn men.

CREON. It is hard to deny the heart! But I

Will do it: I will not fight with destiny.

CHORAGOS. You must go yourself, you cannot leave it to others.

CREON. I will go.

—Bring axes, servants:

Come with me to the tomb. I buried her, I

Will set her free.

Oh quickly!

My mind misgives—

The laws of the gods are mighty, and a man must serve them

To the last day of his life!

[Exit CREON.]

Paan

CHORAGOS.

God of many names

[STROPHE 1]

CHORUS.

O Iacchos¹⁸

son

of Kadmeian Semele¹⁹

O born of the Thunder!

Guardian of the West

Regent

of Eleusis' plain²⁰

O Prince of maenad Thebes²¹

and the Dragon Field by rippling Ismenos:²²

CHORAGOS.

[ANTISTROPHE 1]

God of many names

CHORUS.

the flame of torches

18. **Iacchos** (ē' ə kəs) one of several alternate names for Dionysos.

19. **Kadmeian Semele** (sem' ə lē') Semele was a mortal and the mother of Dionysos. She was the daughter of Thebes' founder, Kadmos.

20. **Eleusis'** (e lōō' sis) plain Located north of Athens, this plain was a site of worship for Dionysos and Demeter.

21. **maenad** (mē' nad') **Thebes** The city is here compared to a maenad, one of Dionysos' female worshipers. Such a follower would be thought of as uncontrolled or disturbed.

22. **Dragon Field . . . Ismenos** (is mē' nas) The Dragon Field was located by the banks of Ismenos, a river near Thebes. Kadmos created warriors by sowing in the Dragon Field the teeth of the dragon he killed there.

 Reading Check

What does Teiresias say is Creon's two-part crime?

flares on our hills
the nymphs of Iacchos
15 dance at the spring of Castalia:²³
from the vine-close mountain
come ah come in ivy:
*Evohe evohe!*²⁴ sings through the streets of Thebes

CHORAGOS. [STROPHE 2]
God of many names

20 **CHORUS.** Iacchos of Thebes
heavenly Child
of Semele bride of the Thunderer!
The shadow of plague is upon us:

come
25 with clement²⁵ feet
oh come from Parnasos²⁶
down the long slopes
across the lamenting water

CHORAGOS. [ANTISTROPHE 2]

Io²⁷ Fire! Chorister of the throbbing stars!
30 O purest among the voices of the night!
Thou son of God, blaze for us!

CHORUS. Come with choric rapture of circling Maenads
Who cry *Io Iacche!*²⁸
God of many names!

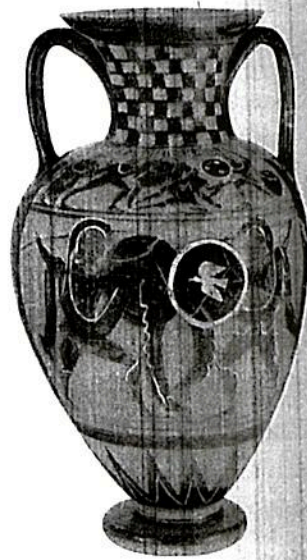
Exodus

[Enter MESSENGER, left.]

MESSENGER. Men of the line of Kadmos,²⁹ you who live
Near Amphion's citadel:³⁰

I cannot say
Of any condition of human life "This is fixed,
5 This is clearly good, or bad." Fate raises up,
And Fate casts down the happy and unhappy alike:
No man can foretell his Fate.

Take the case of Creon:
Creon was happy once, as I count happiness:
10 Victorious in battle, sole governor of the land,
Fortunate father of children nobly born.
And now it has all gone from him! Who can say
That a man is still alive when his life's joy fails?
He is a walking dead man. Grant him rich,



23. **Castalia** (kas ta lee) name of a site sacred to Apollo.

24. **Evohe** (eh voh eh) triumphant shout of affirmation.

25. **clement** kind; favorable.

26. **Parnasos** (par nas os) mountain that was sacred to both Dionysos and Apollo, located in central Greece.

27. **Io** (eh oh) Greek word for "behold" or "hail."

28. **Io Iacche** (eh oh eh eh) cry of celebration used by Dionysian worshippers.

29. **Kadmos** (kad mes) founder of the city of Thebes, whose daughter, Semele, gave birth to Dionysos.

30. **Amphion's citadel** Amphion was a poet. Thebes credited with erecting the walls of the fortress of citadel, by using a magic lyre.

15 Let him live like a king in his great house:
If his pleasure is gone, I would not give
So much as the shadow of smoke for all he owns.

CHORAGOS. Your words hint at sorrow: what is your news for us?

MESSENGER. They are dead. The living are guilty of their death.

20 **CHORAGOS.** Who is guilty? Who is dead? Speak!

MESSENGER. Haimon.

Haimon is dead; and the hand that killed him
Is his own hand.

CHORAGOS. His father's? or his own?

25 **MESSENGER.** His own, driven mad by the murder his father had
done.

CHORAGOS. Teiresias, Teiresias, how clearly you saw it all!

MESSENGER. This is my news: you must draw what conclusions
you can from it.

CHORAGOS. But look: Eurydice, our Queen:
Has she overheard us?

[Enter EURYDICE from the Palace, center.]

30 **EURYDICE.** I have heard something, friends:
As I was unlocking the gate of Pallas³¹ shrine,
For I needed her help today, I heard a voice
Telling of some new sorrow. And I fainted
There at the temple with all my maidens about me.
35 But speak again: whatever it is, I can bear it:
Grief and I are no strangers.

MESSENGER. Dearest Lady,
I will tell you plainly all that I have seen.
I shall not try to comfort you: what is the use,
40 Since comfort could lie only in what is not true?
The truth is always best.

I went with Creon
To the outer plain where Polyneices was lying,
No friend to pity him, his body shredded by dogs.
45 We made our prayers in that place to Hecate³²
And Pluto,³³ that they would be merciful. And we bathed
The corpse with holy water, and we brought
Fresh-broken branches to burn what was left of it,
And upon the urn we heaped up a towering barrow
50 Of the earth of his own land.

When we were done, we ran

◀ **Critical Viewing** In what way do both the play and this vessel show the importance of conflict in Greek art? **[Synthesize]**

31. Pallas' (pal' əs) of Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

Reading Skill

Summarizing Identify three details in lines 37–50 that you would not include in summarizing the speech.

32. Hecate (hek' ə tē) A goddess of the underworld, the resting place of dead souls in Greek mythology.

33. Pluto (plōōt' ō) Chief god of the underworld, who ruled the souls of the dead in Greek mythology.

Reading Check

In the Pæan, from whom does the chorus ask help?

To the vault where Antigone lay on her couch of stone.
One of the servants had gone ahead,
And while he was yet far off he heard a voice
55 Grieving within the chamber, and he came back
And told Creon. And as the King went closer,
The air was full of wailing, the words lost,
And he begged us to make all haste. "Am I a prophet?"
He said, weeping, "And must I walk this road,
60 The saddest of all that I have gone before?
My son's voice calls me on. Oh quickly, quickly!
Look through the crevice there, and tell me
If it is Haimon, or some deception of the gods!"

We obeyed; and in the cavern's farthest corner
65 We saw her lying:
She had made a noose of her fine linen veil
And hanged herself. Haimon lay beside her,
His arms about her waist, lamenting her,
His love lost underground, crying out
70 That his father had stolen her away from him.

When Creon saw him the tears rushed to his eyes
And he called to him: "What have you done, child? Speak
to me.
What are you thinking that makes your eyes so strange?
O my son, my son, I come to you on my knees!"
75 But Haimon spat in his face. He said not a word,
Staring—
And suddenly drew his sword
And lunged. Creon shrank back, the blade missed; and the
boy,
Desperate against himself, drove it half its length
80 Into his own side, and fell. And as he died
He gathered Antigone close in his arms again,
Choking, his blood bright red on her white cheek.
And now he lies dead with the dead, and she is his
At last, his bride in the houses of the dead.

[Exit EURYDICE into the Palace.]

85 **CHORAGOS.** She has left us without a word. What can this mean?

MESSENGER. It troubles me, too; yet she knows what is best,
Her grief is too great for public lamentation,
And doubtless she has gone to her chamber to weep

➤ Critical Viewing
Do you think the actress portraying Eurydice effectively conveys tragic grief? Explain. [Evaluate]

For her dead son, leading her maidens in his dirge.

90 **CHORAGOS.** It may be so: but I fear this deep silence.

[Pause]

MESSENGER. I will see what she is doing. I will go in.

[Exit MESSENGER into the Palace.]

[Enter CREON with attendants, bearing HAIMON'S body.]

CHORAGOS. But here is the King himself: oh look at him,
Bearing his own damnation in his arms.

95 **CREON.** Nothing you say can touch me any more.
My own blind heart has brought me
From darkness to final darkness. Here you see
The father murdering, the murdered son—
And all my civic wisdom!

100 Haimon my son, so young, so young to die,
I was the fool, not you; and you died for me.

CHORAGOS. That is the truth; but you were late in learning it.

105 **CREON.** This truth is hard to bear. Surely a god
Has crushed me beneath the hugest weight of heaven,
And driven me headlong a barbaric way
To trample out the thing I held most dear.

The pains that men will take to come to pain!

Literary Analysis Greek Tragedies

In what sense might Creon's loss of his son be fitting punishment for his misjudgment?

✓ Reading Check

What has happened to Antigone and Haimon?



[Enter MESSENGER from the Palace.]

MESSENGER. The burden you carry in your hands is heavy,
But it is not all: you will find more in your house.

CREON. What burden worse than this shall I find there?

110 **MESSENGER.** The Queen is dead.

CREON. O port of death, deaf world,
Is there no pity for me? And you, Angel of evil,
I was dead, and your words are death again.
Is it true, boy? Can it be true?

115 Is my wife dead? Has death bred death?

MESSENGER. You can see for yourself.

[The doors are opened, and the body of EURYDICE is disclosed within.]

CREON. Oh pity!
All true, all true, and more than I can bear!
O my wife, my son!

120 **MESSENGER.** She stood before the altar, and her heart
Welcomed the knife her own hand guided,
And a great cry burst from her lips for Megareus³⁴ dead,
And for Haimon dead, her sons; and her last breath
Was a curse for their father, the murderer of her sons.
125 And she fell, and the dark flowed in through her closing eyes.

CREON. O God, I am sick with fear.
Are there no swords here? Has no one a blow for me?

MESSENGER. Her curse is upon you for the deaths of both.

CREON. It is right that it should be. I alone am guilty.

130 I know it, and I say it. Lead me in,
Quickly, friends.
I have neither life nor substance. Lead me in.

CHORAGOS. You are right, if there can be right in so much
wrong.
The briefest way is best in a world of sorrow.

135 **CREON.** Let it come,
Let death come quickly, and be kind to me.
I would not ever see the sun again.

CHORAGOS. All that will come when it will; but we, meanwhile,
Have much to do. Leave the future to itself.

140 **CREON.** All my heart was in that prayer!

CHORAGOS. Then do not pray any more: the sky is deaf.

34. Megareus (me-ga-ree-us) oldest son of Creon and Eurydice, who was killed in the civil war by Argive forces invading Thebes.

CREON. Lead me away. I have been rash and foolish.

I have killed my son and my wife.

I look for comfort; my comfort lies here dead.

145 Whatever my hands have touched has come to nothing.

Fate has brought all my pride to a thought of dust.

[As CREON is being led into the house, the CHORAGOS advances and speaks directly to the audience.]

CHORAGOS. There is no happiness where there is no wisdom;

No wisdom but in submission to the gods.

Big words are always punished.

150 And proud men in old age learn to be wise.

Vocabulary Builder

rash (rash) *adj.* too hasty in speech or action; reckless

Literary Analysis

Greek Tragedies

In what way have events forced Creon to confront his own limitations?

