

**How would you direct the actors playing Antigone and Ismene in the prologue?**  
**What themes and relationships would you intend to show?**

I would set my version of Antigone in a Nazi Germany Concentration Camp and Antigone and Ismene would be Guards in the Camp and Kreon would be the Chief Guard. To show the conflict between Eteocles and Polyneices by saying that Eteocles was pro-Hitler and Polyneices was anti-Hitler. Antigone and her sister, Ismene argue because of their different opinions. Ismene feels that although she loved her brother, he is dead, and they should respect the law and not bury him with honour whereas Antigone is the complete opposite, the prologue summarises the moral arguments at the basis of this play, the conflicts of opposing needs and obligations, the individual against the state and divine law opposed to a human law.

The prologue, which the chorus does not overhear, sets up the whole play. The audience finds out about the two brothers, sons of Oedipus, who have just fought against each other over who should rule Thebes. Antigone suggests that Kreon's decree is aimed directly at her (line 38: "yes, me, I tell you"), since it is her duty to bury the dead in her family. Antigone's act of civil disobedience in burying her brother pits divine law against Kreon's civil decree, but it is also an act of direct defiance against her uncle. Ismene objects to help Antigone partly because of the life of shame she and her sister have already endured as the incestuous daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta. Also the Prologue sets up the idea that Antigone is the stronger of the two sisters and that Antigone could care less what others want or think is right. Lastly her loyalty is shown to for the dead, regardless of her brother's attack on Thebes.

The costume for Antigone and Ismene will be Gestapo uniforms with the red Nazi armbands and the chorus who will be prisoners who will wear overalls which will be black and white stripes with numbers across their chests.

The personalities of the two sisters; Antigone and Ismene, are as different from one another as night and day. Antigone acts as a free spirit, a defiant individual, while Ismene is content to recognize her limitations as a woman in a male dominated society.

Antigone's spirit is filled with bravery, passion and fury; which allow her to symbolize the very essence of women. She is strong enough to do what her conscious tells her despite the laws of the land. Many examples in the play prove that Antigone's character is very capable of making her own decisions in the name of justice. First, Antigone opposes Kreon's law and buries her slain brother; because in her mind it was immoral not to. She does this because she is compassionate and loves her brother very much. Kreon, however, believes that his laws must be upheld and would do anything to prevent any type rebelling. Secondly, Antigone shows how determined she is by accepting her consequences with pride. She does not try to hide that she is responsible for breaking Kreon's laws, moreover, she takes all the credit. All the while she maintains her strength because she truly believes in her actions. These sorts of actions ultimately prove that Antigone is courageous and willing to stand up to men, which was completely against the norm at this time. Her spirit refuses to submit to the role of a helpless woman like her sister Ismene's character does.

Ismene is a coward and refuses to help her sister because she feared men. This fear propels her to turn her head to the disrespect that is been shown to her brother, Polyneices. Her character is a close representation of the viewpoints of the male gender regarding women. She is subordinate and weak-willed. She refuses to stand up to Kreon even though in her heart she knows that his laws are moral.

The stage design would be very simplistic so that it doesn't take any emphasis off of the acting that is being performed on-stage.

In this part of the scene we really see how strong Antigone is by witnessing just how feeble Ismene is. Another example of this is when Antigone is talking to Ismene saying she is going

to bury Polyneices no matter what. Ismene replies that you can't. Antigone then says well I will until my strength gives out". Not only is Ismene weak but it she is also a law abiding citizen.

Ismene reveals her passivity and helplessness in the light of Kreon's decree. Thus, from the start, Ismene is characterized as traditionally "feminine", a helpless woman that pays no mind to political affairs. Doubting the wisdom of her sisters plan to break the law and bury Polyneices, Ismene argues:

"We who are women should not contend with men;  
We who are weak are ruled by the stronger, so that  
We must obey..."

Once again Ismene's words clearly state her weak, feminine character and helplessness within her own dimensions. Antigone, not happy with her sisters response chides her sister for not participating in her crime and for her passivity, saying, "Set your own life in order"(346). For Antigone, no law could stand in the way of her strong consideration of her brother's spirit, not even the punishment of an early death. Ismene is more practical; knowing the task is impossible, she feels the situation to be hopeless.

It is a wonder, which of the two sisters are really guilty of these chronic charges. Of course, Antigone acted so quickly, and failed to take the advice of the moderate sister, Ismene. Instead, going against Kreon's words, Antigone rashly goes ahead and breaks the law. Antigone is a fool, she must learn that such defiance, even when justified, is not conducive to longevity. Although Antigone is foolish, she is also courageous and motivated by her morals. Proper burial of the dead was, according to the Greeks, prerequisite for the souls entrance into a permanent home. Therefore, perhaps Ismene is also foolish for her quick refusal to help Antigone perform the duty of Polyneices proper burial. Ismene definitely seems hasty in her acceptance of personal weakness. Perhaps in some way, both sisters are guilty of the same tragic sins. Perhaps it is this rashness, more subdued in Ismene's case that leads both sisters to their own destruction.

To my surprise, there is a strange twist in both sisters' character towards the end of the play. Antigone makes a rather contrasting statement, "Not for my children, had I been a mother, Not for a husband, for his rotting body, Would I have set myself against the city As I have done"(368) These words defy rational explanation. To judge from her attitude towards authority and law, Antigone would probably take on any task to preserve family dignity and human justice. In Ismene's final words, she abandons her practical attitudes with a sudden rush of devotion towards the sister she abandoned in time of need.

"Let me stand beside you and do honour the dead"(358).

Ismene heroically takes a stand and shares Antigone's crime.

The two sister's were crushed by the vindictive Kreon, yet they were winners in spirit, in their determination, they died together, as one. Nobility shall live in their hearts forever.

Antigone and Ismene are both loyal in their own ways. Antigone is loyal to her brother and Ismene. Ismene is loyal to Kreon first, but then her brother and Antigone too. Antigone gives her brother a proper burial and is not afraid of the consequences as long as she does the honourable thing. "Sentry: She's the one, she did it single-handed- we caught her burying the body."(78). Antigone is so devoted to her brother that she reburied him after the guards uncovered him the first time. Ismene is loyal because she comes to her sister's side and says she also buried her body, wanting to die honourably along with Antigone. "I did it, yes- if only she consents- I share the guilt, the consequences too."(86) This surprised Antigone and Ismene as well. Both were shocked at how they arrived at the same conclusions from different points of view. This is yet another way of how Antigone and Ismene show the same qualities in their own ways.

The concept of divine law can be described as the law of God. Divine law involves morals and beliefs that are presented by God. Charles Segal describes the idea of divine law as being the "unwritten laws of the Gods". This type of law is most likely in effect when the ideas of morals are apparent, such as when a moral decision must be made. This type of decision

would probably be considered right or wrong. Divine law is not only in decisions, but also in the everyday actions of people. Things that are morally "right" are in accordance with the law of God, while things that are morally "wrong" tend to be actions that go against the law of God. Divine law may not apply to those who do not believe in God. Even those who do believe in God may not follow this type of law because they do not think that this law will have any type of impact upon their lives. Most people are very doubtful about whether or not the laws of god are truly upheld.

Human law is the type of law that is set up to govern the land and the community. Human law can be characterised as "rules of conduct of organised society, enforced by threat of punishment". Human law is usually set up by the head of a community or by the governors of the land. This type of law is normally enforced by people known as officers or guards. They make sure that the law of the land is followed accordingly. There are people in communities that do not follow the laws that are put into effect by humans. This is apparent in the play Antigone, when Antigone herself disobeys a law that was set up by King Kreon, a law that went against the beliefs she held towards the law of the Gods.

The prologue contrasts the differences in character between Antigone and Ismene. Ismene works of what is sensible, while Antigone uses more emotion.

"Antigone: He is my brother. And he is your brother, too."

(Talking about burying Polyneices).

Ismene: "But think of the danger! Think what Kreon will do".

I think that contrast between Antigone and Ismene is shown very well in the prologue very well because it shows that the emotion Antigone shows and timid ness Ismene shows going against Kreon's decree.

My design concept of setting Antigone in a Nazi Germany Concentration Camp will work well because I can show the family feud by Kreon being pro-Hitler and Antigone being anti-Hitler.