

# Enter the King

**LEARNING STRATEGIES:**  
Marking the Text, Visualizing,  
Graphic Organizer,  
Summarizing

## Literary Terms

A **dynamic character** in literature is one who changes in response to the events of a narrative. A **static character** remains the same throughout the narrative.

## My Notes

## Learning Targets

- Analyze a literary text to examine changes in a dynamic character.
- Write a compare/contrast response to a literary text.

## Dynamic and Static Characters

Remember that one of the elements of Greek drama is the use of masks to portray a character's attitude or emotions. Characters who change and show different emotions throughout a narrative are **dynamic characters**. In contrast, **static characters** do not show significant changes in a narrative.

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

- As you continue reading *Antigone*, mark the text by highlighting evidence of Creon's attitude or emotions, especially as they change throughout the scene.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meanings of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

*[The palace doors are thrown open and guards appear at the doors]*

180 CHORUS LEADER But here comes Creon, new king of our land,  
son of Menoikeos. Thanks to the gods,  
who've brought about our new good fortune.  
What plan of action does he have in mind?  
What's made him hold this special meeting,  
with elders summoned by a general call?

*[Enter Creon from the palace]*

190 CREON Men, after much tossing of our ship of state,  
the gods have safely set things right again.  
Of all the citizens I've summoned you,  
because I know how well you showed respect  
for the eternal power of the throne,  
first with Laius and again with Oedipus,  
once he restored our city. When he died,  
you stood by his children, firm in loyalty.  
Now his sons have perished in a single day,  
killing each other with their own two hands,  
a double slaughter, stained with brother's blood.  
And so I have the throne, all royal power,  
for I'm the one most closely linked by blood  
to those who have been killed. It's impossible  
to really know a man, to know his soul,  
his mind and will, before one witnesses  
his skill in governing and making laws.  
For me, a man who rules the entire state  
and does not take the best advice there is,  
but through fear keeps his mouth forever shut,  
such a man is the very worst of men—  
and always will be. And a man who thinks  
more highly of a friend than of his country,  
well, he means nothing to me. Let Zeus know,  
the god who always watches everything,

200

Introducing Creon!

- 210 I would not stay silent if I saw disaster  
moving here against the citizens,  
a threat to their security. For anyone  
who acts against the state, its enemy,  
I'd never make my friend. For I know well  
our country is a ship which keeps us safe,  
and only when it sails its proper course  
do we make friends. These are the principles  
I'll use in order to protect our state.  
That's why I've announced to all citizens
- 220 my orders for the sons of Oedipus—  
Eteocles, who perished in the fight  
to save our city, the best and bravest  
of our spearmen, will have his burial,  
with all those purifying rituals  
which accompany the noblest corpses,  
as they move below. As for his brother—  
that Polyneices, who returned from exile,  
eager to wipe out in all-consuming fire  
his ancestral city and its native gods,
- 230 keen to seize upon his family's blood  
and lead men into slavery—for him,  
the proclamation in the state declares  
he'll have no burial mound, no funeral rites,  
and no lament. He'll be left unburied,  
his body there for birds and dogs to eat,  
a clear reminder of his shameful fate.  
That's my decision. For I'll never act  
to respect an evil man with honours  
in preference to a man who's acted well.  
Anyone who's well **disposed** towards our state,  
alive or dead, that man I will respect.
- 240 CHORUS LEADER Son of Menoikeos, if that's your will  
for this city's friends and enemies,  
it seems to me you now control all laws  
concerning those who've died and us as well—  
the ones who are still living.
- CREON See to it then, and act as guardians of what's been  
proclaimed.
- CHORUS Give that task to younger men to deal with.
- CREON There are men assigned to oversee the corpse.
- 250 CHORUS LEADER Then what remains that you would have us do?
- CREON Don't yield to those who **contravene** my orders.
- CHORUS LEADER No one is such a fool that he loves death.
- CREON Yes, that will be his full reward, indeed.  
And yet men have often been destroyed  
because they hoped to profit in some way.

### My Notes

**disposed:** inclined

**contravene:** oppose, or act  
contrary to

# Enter the King

## My Notes

**hedge:** avoid giving a clear response

**avert:** prevent

*[Enter a guard, coming toward the palace]*

|     |                             |  |
|-----|-----------------------------|--|
|     | GUARD                       | My lord, I can't say I've come out of breath by running here, making my feet move fast. Many times I stopped to think things over—and then I'd turn around, retrace my steps. My mind was saying many things to me, "You fool, why go to where you know for sure your punishment awaits?"—"And now, poor man, why are you hesitating yet again? If Creon finds this out from someone else, how will you escape being hurt?" Such matters kept my mind preoccupied. And so I went, slowly and reluctantly, and thus made a short road turn into a lengthy one. But then the view that I should come to you won out. If what I have to say is nothing, I'll say it nonetheless. For I've come here clinging to the hope that I'll not suffer anything that's not part of my destiny. |
| 260 |                             |  |
|     | CREON                       | What's happening that's made you so upset?   |
|     | GUARD                       | I want to tell you first about myself. I did not do it. And I didn't see the one who did. So it would be unjust if I should come to grief.   |
|     | CREON                       | You <b>hedge</b> so much. Clearly you have news of something ominous.  |
| 280 | GUARD                       | Yes. Strange things that make me pause a lot.  |
|     | CREON                       | Why not say it and then go—just leave.   |
|     | GUARD                       | All right, I'll tell you. It's about the corpse. Someone has buried it and disappeared, after spreading thirsty dust onto the flesh and undertaking all appropriate rites.   |
|     | CREON                       | What are you saying? What man would dare this?   |
|     | GUARD                       | I don't know. There was no sign of digging, no marks of any pick axe or a mattock. The ground was dry and hard and very smooth, without a wheel track. Whoever did it left no trace. When the first man on day watch revealed it to us, we were all amazed. The corpse was hidden, but not in a tomb. It was lightly covered up with dirt, as if someone wanted to <b>avert</b> a curse. There was no trace of a wild animal or dogs who'd come to rip the corpse apart. Then the words flew round among us all, with every guard accusing someone else. We were about to fight, to come to blows—no one was there to put a stop to it. Every one of us was responsible,   |
| 290 | <b>The Guard's Bad News</b> |  |
|     |                             |  |
| 300 |                             |  |

but none of us was clearly in the wrong.  
In our defence we pleaded ignorance.  
Then we each stated we were quite prepared  
to pick up red-hot iron, walk through flames,  
or swear by all the gods that we'd not done it,  
we'd no idea how the act was planned,  
or how it had been carried out. At last,  
when all our searching had proved useless,  
one man spoke up, and his words forced us all  
to drop our faces to the ground in fear.  
We couldn't see things working out for us,  
whether we agreed or disagreed with him.  
He said we must report this act to you—  
we must not hide it. And his view **prevailed**.  
I was the unlucky man who won the prize,  
the luck of the draw. That's why I'm now here,  
not of my own free will or by your choice.  
I know that—for no one likes a messenger  
who comes bearing unwelcome news with him.

CHORUS LEADER      My lord, I've been wondering for some time now—  
could this act not be something from the gods?

CREON      Stop now—before what you're about to say  
enrages me completely and reveals  
that you're not only old but stupid, too.  
No one can tolerate what you've just said,  
when you claim gods might care about this corpse.  
Would they pay extraordinary honours  
and bury as a man who'd served them well,  
someone who came to burn their offerings,  
their pillared temples, to torch their lands  
and scatter all its laws? Or do you see  
gods paying respect to evil men? No, no.  
For quite a while some people in the town  
have secretly been muttering against me.  
They don't agree with what I have decreed.  
They shake their heads and have not kept their necks  
under my yoke, as they are duty bound to do  
if they were men who are content with me.  
I well know that these guards were led astray—  
such men urged them to carry out this act  
for money. To foster evil actions,  
to make them commonplace among all men,  
nothing is as powerful as money.  
It destroys cities, driving men from home.  
Money trains and twists the minds in worthy men,  
so they then undertake disgraceful acts.  
Money teaches men to live as scoundrels,  
familiar with every **profane** enterprise.  
But those who carry out such acts for cash  
sooner or later see how for their crimes  
they pay the penalty. For if great Zeus

### My Notes

**prevailed:** won out

**profane:** vulgar or improper

# Enter the King

## My Notes

360

GUARD

still has my respect, then understand this—  
I swear to you on oath—unless you find  
the one whose hands really buried him,  
unless you bring him here before my eyes,  
then death for you will never be enough.  
No, not before you're hung up still alive  
and you confess to this gross, violent act.  
That way you'll understand in future days,  
when there's a profit to be gained from theft,  
you'll learn that it's not good to be in love  
with every kind of monetary gain.  
You'll know more men are ruined than are saved  
when they earn profits from dishonest schemes.

Do I have your permission to speak now,  
or do I just turn around and go away?

Creon's Pain

CREON  
do

But I find your voice so irritating—  
n't you realize that?

370

GUARD

Where does it hurt? Is it in your ears or in your mind?

CREON

Why try to question where I feel my pain?

GUARD

The man who did it—he upsets your mind.  
I offend your ears.

CREON

My, my, it's clear to see  
it's natural for you to chatter on.

GUARD

Perhaps. But I never did this.

CREON

This and more—you sold your life for silver.

GUARD

How strange and sad when the one who sorts this  
out gets it all wrong.

380

CREON

Well, enjoy your sophisticated views.  
But if you don't reveal to me who did this,  
you'll just confirm how much your treasonous gains  
have made you suffer.

*[Exit Creon back into the palace. The doors close behind him]*

GUARD

Well, I hope he's found. That would be best. But  
whether caught or not—  
and that's something sheer chance will bring about—  
you won't see me coming here again.  
This time, against all hope and expectation,  
I'm still unhurt. I owe the gods great thanks.

*[Exit the Guard away from the palace]*

SE

COND ODE

CHORUS—Strophe 1

390

There are many strange and wonderful things,  
but nothing more strangely wonderful than man.  
He moves across the white-capped ocean seas  
blasted by winter storms, carving his way  
under the surging waves engulfing him.

## 400

He snares the light-winged flocks of birds,  
herds of wild beasts, creatures from deep seas,  
trapped in the fine mesh of his hunting nets.  
O resourceful man, whose skill can overcome  
ferocious beasts roaming mountain heights.  
He curbs the rough-haired horses with his bit  
and tames the inexhaustible mountain bulls,  
setting their savage necks beneath his yoke.

## 410

420

# Enter the King

## My Notes

3. **Key Ideas and Details:** Review lines 219–239. How does Creon justify treating the brothers so differently after their deaths? Do you think his different treatment of them is justified? Find evidence from the text to support your answer.

4. **Key Ideas and Details:** Reread lines 242–248. Using evidence from the text, discuss how the Chorus’s view of Creon’s control seems to have changed from the beginning of the scene.

5. **Craft and Structure:** Explain the hyperbole in lines 305–306. What emotion does this exaggerated imagery imply?

6. **Key Ideas and Details:** In line 323, why does the Chorus Leader wonder if this act could “not be something from the gods”?

7. **Key Ideas and Details:** Compare and contrast Creon’s attitude toward the Chorus in lines 324–340 to his previous speech at the start of this scene (lines 189–192). How has his tone shifted?