

Learning Targets

- Analyze how a minor character can serve as a foil to a major character.
- Create a working outline for an essay analyzing a character foil.

Preview

In this activity, you will read lines 710–893 of *Antigone* and create an outline for an essay analyzing a character foil.

Foil Characters

1. Consider the three characters who have interacted with Creon so far. How was each one different from Creon?

Guard:

Antigone:

Ismene:

2. Which of these characters do you think has served as the strongest **foil** for Creon? How did this foil help develop and highlight Creon's character?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

- Use two different colors to mark the text as follows:
 - Use one color to highlight evidence of Haemon's character as it is revealed by his words, thoughts, and actions.
 - Use another color to highlight Creon's character traits that are revealed or emphasized through his interactions with Haemon.
- 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 open]

710 CHORUS LEADER

Here comes Haemon,
your only living son. Is he grieving
the fate of Antigone, his bride,
bitter that his marriage hopes are gone?

**Haemon
Approaches**

CREON

We'll soon find out—more accurately
than any prophet here could indicate.

[Enter Haemon from the palace]

My son, have you heard the sentence that's
been passed
upon your bride? And have you now come here
angry at your father? Or are you loyal to me,
on my side no matter what I do?

720 HAEMON

Father, I'm yours. For me your judgments
and the ways you act on them are good—
I shall follow them. I'll not consider

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Outlining, Marking the Text,
Drafting

My Notes

Literary Terms

A **foil** is a minor character whose actions or thoughts are juxtaposed with those of a major character in order to highlight key attributes of the major character.

An Epic Foil

My Notes

culprit: person who has committed a crime
perjure: make a liar of

CREON

730

Creon the Great Father

740

750

760

770

any marriage a greater benefit
than your fine leadership.

Indeed, my son,
that's how your heart should always be resolved,
to stand behind your father's judgment on every
issue. That's what men pray for—
obedient children growing up at home
who will pay back their father's enemies,
evil to them for evil done to him,
while honouring his friends as much as he does.

A man who fathers useless children—
what can one say of him except he's bred
troubles for himself, and much to laugh at
for those who fight against him? So, my son,
don't ever throw good sense aside for pleasure,
for some woman's sake. You understand
how such embraces can turn freezing cold
when an evil woman shares your life at home.
What greater wound is there than a false friend?

So spit this girl out—she's your enemy.

Let her marry someone else in Hades.

Since I caught her clearly disobeying,
the only **culprit** in the entire city,

I won't **perjure** myself before the state.

No—I'll kill her. And so let her appeal
to Zeus, the god of blood relationships.

If I foster any lack of full respect
in my own family, I surely do the same
with those who are not linked to me by blood.

The man who acts well with his household
will be found a just man in the city.

I'd trust such a man to govern wisely
or to be content with someone ruling him.

And in the thick of battle at his post
he'll stand firm beside his fellow soldier,
a loyal, brave man. But anyone who's proud

and violates our laws or thinks he'll tell
our leaders what to do, a man like that

wins no praise from me. No. We must obey
whatever man the city puts in charge,

no matter what the issue—great or small,
just or unjust. For there's no greater evil

than a lack of leadership. That destroys
whole cities, turns households into ruins,

and in war makes soldiers break and run away.
When men succeed, what keeps their lives secure

in almost every case is their obedience.
That's why they must support those in control,

and never let some woman beat us down.
If we must fall from power, let that come

at some man's hand—at least, we won't be called
inferior to any woman.

CHORUS LEADER

Unless we're being deceived by our old age,
what you've just said seems reasonable to us.

HAEMON

Father, the gods instill good sense in men—
the greatest of all the things which we possess.
I could not find your words somehow not right—
I hope that's something I never learn to do.
But other words might be good, as well.

780

Haemon's Argument

Because of who you are, you can't perceive
all the things men say or do—or their complaints.
Your gaze makes citizens afraid—they can't
say anything you would not like to hear
But in the darkness I can hear them talk—
the city is upset about the girl.

790

They say of all women here she least deserves
the worst of deaths for her most glorious act.
When in the slaughter her own brother died,
she did not just leave him there unburied,
to be ripped apart by carrion dogs or birds.
Surely she deserves some golden honour?
That's the dark secret rumour people speak.
For me, father, nothing is more valuable
than your well being. For any children,
what could be a greater honour to them
than their father's thriving reputation?
A father feels the same about his sons.

800

So don't let your mind dwell on just one thought,
that what you say is right and nothing else.
A man who thinks that only he is wise,
that he can speak and think like no one else,
when such men are exposed, then all can see
their emptiness inside. For any man,
even if he's wise, there's nothing shameful
in learning many things, staying flexible.
You notice how in winter floods the trees
which bend before the storm preserve their twigs.

810

The ones who stand against it are destroyed,
root and branch. In the same way, those sailors
who keep their sails stretched tight, never easing off,
make their ship capsize—and from that point on
sail with their rowing benches all submerged.
So end your anger. Permit yourself to change.

820

CHORUS LEADER

For if I, as a younger man, may state
my views, I'd say it would be for the best
if men by nature understood all things—
if not, and that is usually the case,
when men speak well, it good to learn from them.
My lord, if what he's said is relevant,
it seems appropriate to learn from him,
and you too, Haemon, listen to the king.
The things which you both said were excellent.

My Notes

An Epic Foil

My Notes

Youth and Wisdom

CREON
HAEMON

CREON
830 HAEMON

And men my age—are we then going to school to learn what’s wise from men as young as him?

There’s nothing wrong in that. And if I’m young, don’t think about my age—look at what I do.

And what you do—does that include this, honouring those who act against our laws?

I would not encourage anyone to show respect to evil men.

And her—
is she not suffering from the same disease?

The people here in Thebes all say the same—
hey deny she is.

The King vs. The People

HAEMON
t
CREON

HAEMON

CREON

HAEMON
840 CREON

So the city now
will instruct me how I am to govern?

Now you’re talking like someone far too young.
Don’t you see that?

Am I to rule this land
at someone else’s whim or by myself?

A city which belongs to just one man
is no true city.

According to our laws,
does not the ruler own the city?

By yourself you’d make an excellent king
but in a desert.

It seems as if this boy
is fighting on the woman’s side.

Mature Discussion

HAEMON
CREON

HAEMON

CREON
850 HAEMON

That’s true—
if you’re the woman. I’m concerned for you.

You’re the worst there is—you set your judgment up
against your father.

No, not when I see
you making a mistake and being unjust.

Is it a mistake to honour my own rule?

You’re not honouring that by trampling on
the gods’ **prerogatives**.

You foul creature—
you’re worse than any woman.

You’ll not catch me
giving way to some disgrace.

But your words
all speak on her behalf.

prerogatives: exclusive rights or privileges

HAEMON And yours and mine—
and for the gods below.

CREON You woman's slave—
don't try to win me over.

HAEMON What do you want—
to speak and never hear someone reply?

CREON You'll never marry her while she's alive.

HAEMON Then she'll die—and in her death kill someone else.

860 CREON Are you so insolent you threaten me?

HAEMON Where's the threat in challenging a bad decree?

CREON You'll regret parading what you think like this—
you—a person with an empty brain!

HAEMON If you were not my father, I might say
you were not thinking straight.

CREON Would you, indeed?
Well, then, by Olympus, I'll have you know
you'll be sorry for demeaning me
with all these insults.

[Creon turns to his attendants]

870 HAEMON Go bring her out—
that hateful creature, so she can die right here,
with him present, before her bridegroom's eyes.

HAEMON No. Don't ever hope for that. She'll not die
with me just standing there. And as for you—
your eyes will never see my face again.
So let your rage charge on among your friends
who want to stand by you in this.

[Exit Haemon, running back into the palace]

CHORUS LEADER My lord, Haemon left in such a hurry.
He's angry—in a young man at his age
the mind turns bitter when he's feeling hurt.

880 CREON Let him dream up or carry out great deeds
beyond the power of man, he'll not save these girls—
their fate is sealed.

CHORUS LEADER Are you going to kill them both?

CREON No—not the one whose hands are clean. You're right.

CHORUS LEADER How do you plan to kill Antigone?

CREON I'll take her on a path no people use,
and hide her in a cavern in the rocks,
while still alive. I'll set out provisions,
as much as **piety** requires, to make sure
the city is not totally corrupted.

My Notes

piety: devotion to religion;
fulfillment of religious obligations

An Epic Foil

My Notes

890

Then she can speak her prayers to Hades,
the only god she worships, for success
avoiding death—or else, at least, she'll learn,
although too late, how it's a waste of time
to work to honour those whom Hades holds.

Second Read

- Reread the scene to answer these text-dependent questions.
 - Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.
3. **Key Ideas and Details:** Reread lines 727–731. How does this statement help you to understand what Creon expects from his son in this situation?
 4. **Craft and Structure:** Haemon delivers a well-organized and moving argument to Creon in defense of Antigone in lines 776–819. Identify the different rhetorical appeals you can find in it: ethos, logos, and pathos.
 5. **Key Ideas and Details:** In lines 840–850, what are Creon and Haemon arguing about? What prejudices does Creon reveal, and what do they tell you about Creon's character?
 6. **Craft and Structure:** Whose death (besides Antigone's) do you think is foreshadowed in line 859: "Then she'll die—and in her death kill someone else"?
 7. **Key Ideas and Details:** One of the characteristics of a tragic hero is "a good person who is brought down by an 'act of injustice.'" Explain why Creon's choice of death for Antigone is an "act of injustice."