

World Literature: Universal Themes & Moral Conscience



Name: _____ Date: _____

Read the dramatic confrontation below adapted from Sophocles' ancient tragedy *Antigone*. Analyze how the clash between King Creon and Antigone develops universal themes of justice.

The Unwritten Laws of Conscience

Practice adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Its English wording is adapted for this worksheet, rather than authenticated to a single translation; compare the reference translation.

Source: *Antigone*, reference translation by Francis Storr — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31>

CREON: And yet you dared to overstep these laws?

ANTIGONE: Yes, for it was not Zeus who proclaimed that edict to me, nor did Justice who dwells with the gods below decree such laws for mortals. Nor did I think that your human proclamations possessed such sovereign power as to supersede the unwritten, immutable laws of heaven.

They live not today or yesterday, but forever, and no mortal knows whence they first appeared. I would not, out of fear of any man's arrogant pride, incur the wrath of the gods. Die I must, even without your decree; and if I die before my time, I count that a gain. For whoever lives in sorrow as deep as mine, how does she not reap profit in death?

1. Which UNIVERSAL THEME is most profoundly developed through Antigone's defiant declaration to King Creon?

- A. Material wealth and monetary greed inevitably corrupt royal monarchs.
- B. The supremacy of higher moral and spiritual laws over unjust statutory edicts enacted by earthly rulers.
- C. Youth must always surrender unconditionally to elder tradition.
- D. Military conquest is the only legitimate pathway to societal honor.

2. When Antigone refers to 'unwritten, immutable laws of heaven' that 'live not today or yesterday, but forever,' what ethical philosophy is she articulating?

- A. Utilitarianism where only the happiness of the majority matters
- B. Natural law: transcendent, universal ethical principles inherent in humanity that no temporal ruler has the right to erase
- C. Legal positivism where whatever the king writes down must be obeyed
- D. Complete nihilism asserting that justice does not exist

3. How does Antigone's view of mortality ('and if I die before my time, I count that a gain') heighten the dramatic tension of the scene?

- A. It demonstrates that Creon's primary threat of execution has lost all psychological coercive power over her.
- B. It proves she is secretly planning an armed military coup.
- C. It shows that she regrets her actions and is begging for forgiveness.
- D. It indicates that she does not understand the consequences of her choices.