Sophocles: One of the World’s First Literary Feminists

- Antigone honored the way of the Gods over the King, making her the protagonist.
  - By making the issue politics against religion, Sophocles could portray misogyny in a negative light in patriarchal ancient Greece.
- Antigone buried her brother because of her beliefs, not from a duty to her brother, making her one of few self serving heroines.
- Ismene, originally afraid to disobey the law, sides with Antigone in a reversal that forces the audience to question Ismene’s earlier beliefs of female frailty
  - Neither woman tries to escape death, despite Creon’s remark that “they are but women, and even brave men run when they see Death coming”
- Haemon exists as a submissive love interest, whereas Antigone and Ismene exist in war and politics, reversing the stereotypical gender roles seen in film even today.
- With Antigone’s wit, strength and determination, she is a strong feminist character that both ancient Greeks and modern women alike can stand behind

A Study of Feminism in

What Makes Antigone a Story of Gender?

- Antigone is compared to a man several times for standing up for her beliefs.
- Creon orders Antigone’s death in order to re-establish his masculinity
  - “Who is the man here, She or I if this crime goes unpunished?”
  - “If we must lose, let us lose to a man at least!”
- Had Antigone apologized, Creon would have pardoned her. However, by standing up for her beliefs especially in a time when women were expected to be submissive, she was put to death.

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Antigone’s Influence today:

- “I argue that it is to Antigone’s “unwomanly” acts that contemporary feminist thinkers might turn in their own attempts to articulate a specifically feminist political vision.” –Catherine Holland
- “Antigone’s five words are worth all the sermons of all the archbishops” – Virginia Woolf
- Woolf’s Three Guineas is centred on Antigone’s philosophy “Tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving”