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Reflections:

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *Antigone*

*by Sophocles*

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*Antigone*

## **T o T h e T e a c h e r**

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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## *Response Journal*

### **To The Student**

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.



\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

## **Antigone**

1. Actors in Ancient Greece typically wore masks to depict the character they were playing. The masks were personalized specifically for each character. Imagine you are a character in a Greek play. In a detailed paragraph, describe your mask. Include information on how it depicts your personality and whether your character would be in a tragedy or a comedy?
2. As you begin reading *Antigone*, the conflict of the play is immediately apparent. Creon has decreed to put to death anyone who tries to bury or mourn Polynices; however, Antigone states she will disobey the decree out of love for her brother, facing death if necessary.

Write a letter to a person who you would risk your life for. Give some specific reasons for making this choice.

3. Throughout the first part of the play, you meet most of the characters and learn about their relationships with Antigone, as well as their feelings about her actions. Keep a running list of all the characters you meet throughout the play; then next to each character's name, write that person's relationship to Antigone and that person's response toward her actions.
4. A play such as *Antigone* would most likely have been performed in a Greek amphitheater. Research to find out more about amphitheaters in ancient Greece. Imagine you are a tour guide in Athens in 450 B.C. Write a brochure full of the information you will share with visitors as you take them through a Greek amphitheater.

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## Response Journal

5. The themes of the play are evident quickly as the conflict unfolds. Rank the following principles that are portrayed in *Antigone* in order of importance to you, and explain the reasons for your first and your last ranking.
- Loyalty/obligation to family
  - Obedience to civil law
  - Observance of religious law
  - Protection of personal dignity
  - Freedom
  - Protection of community or nation

6. As Ismene and Antigone discuss Antigone's decision to bury Polynices, Ismene reminds Antigone:

"We must remember we are women born,/Unapt to cope with men; and,  
being ruled/By mightier than ourselves, we have to hear/These things—and  
worse."

As a woman in ancient Greece, Antigone does not have rights that women in many parts of the world hold today.

Research some information on the role of women in ancient Greece. Imagine you are a woman living at the time of Sophocles. Write a magazine article about your role in society. Be sure to create a heading that will grab your reader's attention.

7. Ismene is reminded that Antigone desires to win the approval of the gods, rather than men, through Polynices' burial: "I know that those approve/Whom I most need to please."

The Greeks relied heavily on their gods for wisdom in all circumstances. Choose one of the Greek gods that is mentioned in the play. Assume the persona of that god and write an autobiography about yourself. The choices of gods and goddesses are: Zeus, Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, Perseus, Dionysus, Demeter, Hecate, or Até.



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## *Antigone*

8. Ismene refuses to help her sister bury Polynices out of fear of death, but she is terrified that Antigone will be discovered. Imagine you are Ismene's best friend. You know that Ismene is upset because of Antigone's actions. Ismene approaches you about this situation. In dialogue form, give Ismene advice or words of wisdom on this difficult situation. You may want to begin like this:

**You:** I know this dilemma has you terrified for Antigone's death, but you must remember...

9. Ismene clearly fears for her sister's life and wishes Antigone would change her mind. Write a letter from Ismene to Antigone begging her not to disobey Creon's orders.
10. In the ancient world, proper burials displayed respect to the deceased, just as funerals do today. Find some information on proper burials in ancient Greece and write one paragraph comparing them with modern funerals. Make a list of the similarities as well as the differences.
11. One reason Antigone is adamant about giving Polynices a proper burial is because of her respect for the traditions her family upholds. In a journal, write about a tradition in your family that you enjoy and will possibly continue in your future family, or you can create a tradition that you would like for a family that you would have in the future.
12. Antigone and Ismene, though sisters, have very different views on loyalty to family versus obedience to the law. As a result, the two have a heated argument about the burial of Polynices. In the form of a screenplay, recreate a forceful argument you have had with a sibling or family member. What was the argument about? Immediately following the screenplay, write a brief paragraph stating whether you can see the point your sibling or family member was trying to make now that the argument is in the past.

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## Response Journal

13. Imagine you are either Antigone or Ismene; write a diary entry that shows the internal conflict arising from the argument the two have about Polynices' burial.
14. Ismene says to Antigone, "But things impossible/'Tis wrong to attempt at all." Think of one important invention (refrigeration, computers), movement (women's rights), law (speed limits), or idea (equality) and write a newspaper article about how different the world would be had that "thing" not been attempted. Include a catchy headline and keep your article brief and to the point.
15. The chorus plays a major part in *Antigone* and most other Greek plays. You have been selected to be a member of the chorus in your school's performance of *Antigone*. Write an article for the playbill describing the role of the chorus in this play and in other Greek plays.
16. Antigone's decision to choose her brother's burial over Creon's threat is similar to ones that many individuals, groups, and countries often face. Write an essay about a time in the last one hundred years when an individual, group, or country has been forced to choose between the law and human rights. What was the outcome of that choice, and how did it affect history?
17. Antigone chooses to disobey Creon's decree because of her own convictions. Write a journal entry about an instance when you had to choose between obedience to authority, or remaining true to what you believed to be right.
18. Does Antigone's choice to disobey Creon's order exhibit hubris (excessive pride) or does it demonstrate heroic loyalty? Choose one answer, then compose a speech that will be read in front of the community debating your opinion.

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## *Antigone*

19. In Creon's first speech, he compares his government to a mighty ship. Rewrite this first speech in today's language, making sure you do not lose any of the meaning or the metaphors Creon conveys.
20. Creon's language in his first speech is filled with words that we often hear from politicians today. For each of the following words, write down your personal definition and then write down the dictionary definition. Then, write a paragraph stating the reasons you think rulers often include these words in their public speeches.
  - Law
  - Policy
  - Welfare
  - Commonwealth
21. A sentinel brings news that someone has buried Polynices against Creon's decree, but no one knows who the lawbreaker was. The sentinel describes the discovery of the body and the search for the person who buried it; however, the audience does not see this action. Write the scene for this part of the play based on the words of the sentinel.
22. In a fit of rage, Creon tells the sentinel that if he cannot find the person who buried Polynices, the sentinel put to death by hanging. This is an irrational decision born out of anger. Write a journal entry about a time when you were so angry that you made an irrational decision. Describe the situation and discuss how this decision affected you or anyone around you. What were the consequences for this irrational decision?
23. Creon's reaction probably came as a surprise to the innocent sentinel. Imagine you are the sentinel. Write a diary entry of your thoughts regarding Creon's threat toward you.

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## Response Journal

24. After Creon's threat to the sentinel, the chorus delivers lines predicting that tragedy will come as a result of Creon's egotistical actions. The chorus says:

"Wrestling his country's laws to his own will,/Spurning the sanctions of celestial right;/High in the city, he is made city-less,/Whoso is corrupt, for his impiety; ..."

Ultimately, the message here is that society will not tolerate a ruler who dangerously changes the laws to build his power. Using the Internet or your local library, write a few paragraphs discussing a time in history when society refused to yield to a leader whose actions were solely for his or her benefit.

25. The sentinels find Antigone next to Polynices' body after a dust storm. Write the dialogue that occurs between the sentinels and Antigone as they arrest her. (You may include stage directions or character actions.) You may want to begin like this:

**Sentinel:** Young woman, what are you doing seated by the body of Polynices'?

**Antigone:** (*sobbing*) This is my beloved brother...

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## *Antigone*

26. Antigone admits to knowing about the decree against burying Polynices and deliberately disobeying it. However, she tells Creon:

“Because it was not Zeus who neither ordered it,/Nor Justice, dweller with the Nether Gods,/Gave such a law to men; nor did I deem/Your ordinance of so much binding force,/As that a mortal man could overbear/The unchangeable unwritten code of Heaven;...”

Antigone clearly believes that the gods are on her side and will bless her for her obedience to them; however, Creon cannot imagine the gods siding with Antigone. Imagine you are Zeus. In the form of a speech, write your opinion of what has happened and explain on which side of the conflict you lean.

27. Antigone thinks she is right to bury her brother and disobey Creon. Creon believes his decree is necessary to maintain order in his kingdom and to assert his authority. In a three-paragraph essay, argue for the person you think is right. Make sure to explain the reasons for your choice.
28. As Antigone and Creon argue throughout this part of the play, they both display hubris, or excessive pride. Compose a list, and use it to catalogue the aspects of each person's pride that are similar and the aspects that are different.
29. Because of their pride, both Antigone and Creon refuse to acknowledge the other person's point of view. Both of them will be hurt because of this refusal. Was there ever a time when one of your friends refused to see your point of view? Write an E-mail to that friend recalling the experience and explaining how your opinions have changed since then. If they have not changed, try again to convince your friend of your opinion.

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## *Response Journal*

30. In their argument, Antigone and Creon use strong language that displays their excessive pride. Find examples of this strong language and list them. Then write those words in today's language.
31. Conflicts occur every day in our world. Imagine that at your school, there is a conflict between a principal and you; both of you feel you have taken the right action, even though only one of you can be correct concerning the issue. Write a letter to the editor of the school newspaper explaining your point of view.
32. After Creon confronts Antigone, Ismene reappears and offers to share the blame for burying Polynices. Have you ever voluntarily taken the blame for something you had no part in? Do you know anyone who has taken the blame for something even though he or she is innocent? Write the situation down in story form, discussing what happened, as well as the repercussions.
33. Creon makes another irrational decision by ordering Ismene's death, even though she does not help her sister bury Polynices. Creon clearly believes his power allows him to do anything he wants. Imagine you are Creon. In your journal, think about your recent actions. You are a powerful leader, so how does being a leader justify your decisions?
34. Creon's pride is taking over his capability to judge correctly. Write a magazine article, geared toward young adults, about a time when pride led you to make a bad judgment and, therefore, led you to a bad action. What was this action? What were the consequences? What did you learn from this experience? The article should send a clear message to your readers about the dangers of having too much pride.

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## *Antigone*

35. At one point in their conversation, Creon says, “Better be outcast, if we must, of men,/Than have it said a woman worsted us.” Imagine you are Antigone, and you are present at the time Creon says these words. In dialogue form, write down your response. Keep in mind the role of women in ancient Greece as well as Antigone’s pride.

36. According to Haemon, the citizens of Thebes sympathize with Antigone. Imagine you are a citizen. Write a letter to Creon begging him to release Antigone.

37. Haemon tells Creon:

“For all men who believe themselves alone/Wise, or that they possess a soul or speech/Such as none other, turn them inside out,/They are found empty; and though a man be wise,/It is no shame for him to live and learn,/And not to stretch a course too far.”

Write this passage in your own words, and then support or refute Haemon’s beliefs in a brief paragraph.

38. Haemon’s conversation with his father turns violent as Haemon increasingly sides with Antigone. He advises his father to swallow his pride and release Antigone and Ismene. This advice enrages Creon even more, especially since it comes from a young man. Creon says, “Men that we are, must we be sent to school/To learn discretion from a boy like this?”

Write a composition about a time when you learned a valuable lesson from someone younger than you. Was it difficult to accept this lesson, considering that it came from someone younger? If you have never had an experience such as this, imagine what it would be like.

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## *Response Journal*

39. Haemon initially tells Creon that "...no marriage/Shall occupy a larger place with me/Than your direction..."; however, he clearly has strong feelings for Antigone. Imagine you are in a relationship that your parents disapprove of. Write a speech defending your boyfriend/girlfriend to your disapproving parents.
40. Creon is surrounded by men who are afraid to tell him the truth. Haemon knows that Creon's pride has led to an irrational decision regarding Antigone. Similar people exist in businesses, government, and even in relationships. Have you ever been in a situation where you have said what people wanted to hear rather than telling them your true feelings? Write a newspaper article discussing this experience. If this has never happened to you, use your imagination.
41. Haemon unsuccessfully attempts to show Creon his flaw of pride. Write down a list of words you would use when telling your best friend that pride is consuming his life and hurting those around him.
42. Haemon clearly has strong feelings for Antigone based on his argument with his father and his actions later in the play. Write a love letter from Haemon to Antigone to be given to her right before she is buried alive. What do you think Antigone's reaction will be?
43. Creon decides to release Ismene and bury Antigone alive. That way, Creon cannot be blamed for Antigone's death. Imagine you are one of the senators. In your eyes, does Creon's decision excuse him from being responsible for her death? Written in dialogue form, confront Creon with your opinion, even if it would mean certain death. What is his reaction? How does he respond?



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## *Antigone*

44. Creon's punishment to Ismene and Antigone must have caused a stir among the citizens of Thebes. You are Creon's press secretary. Write a press release from Creon, which details his decision to sentence Antigone to death. Because you work for the king, make sure the press release places the king in a good light.
45. As the guards lead Antigone to her tomb, she compares her fate to mythological figures who were buried alive in tombs. Using the Internet or the local library, find one of these figures and write down similarities and differences between the fate of that figure and Antigone.
46. Tiresias, a blind prophet, comes to see Creon. Creon promises to believe any prophecy Tiresias foretells. However, when Tiresias tells Creon that the gods will punish him and the city of Thebes because of his decision to punish Antigone, Creon turns on him. Write to an advice columnist about a time when you asked for the truth from a friend, but when the truth was given, you did not want to hear it and became angry with the friend. Also include the response from the columnist.
47. We learn through a messenger that Antigone has hung herself, and Haemon has killed himself. Imagine you are either Antigone or Haemon. If you are Antigone, write a final letter to Ismene, if you are Haemon, write your final letter to Eurydice or Creon.
48. Upon learning that her son has killed himself, Eurydice also kills herself. We do not see the suicide, and we can only imagine her thoughts as she decides to do it. Write her final speech.

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## *Response Journal*

49. By the end of the play, Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice are dead. Imagine you are a newspaper reporter. Write the obituary of one of the deceased characters. If you need some help, look through the obituary section of your local newspaper for examples.
50. Creon is indirectly responsible for three suicides: Antigone's, Haemon's, and Eurydice's. Imagine that Creon has been charged with three counts of involuntary manslaughter, and you are either a prosecution or defense attorney. Write either an opening or a closing argument for the trial depending on which side you choose to represent.
51. Creon seems to have learned his lesson about how pride can easily overtake a person in power. He indicates that his life has changed because of his actions and their consequences. Write a detailed essay describing Creon's life ten years after the deaths of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice. How does he rule his kingdom now? Have any laws been changed? How have his views towards family changed?
52. Creon realizes he is responsible for the three deaths as he says, "Woe is me! to none else can they lay it,/This guilt, but to me!" Have you ever made a decision you thought was right at the time, but later you found out that it was a bad mistake? Perhaps you have been the recipient of someone else's wrongful decision. Describe this circumstance in a journal entry.

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*Antigone*

## **Wrap Up**

53. Throughout the play, we may tend to feel sorry for Antigone, since she is the one who is punished for her actions. Imagine you are a loyal servant of Creon who has seen the emotions Creon has gone through during these difficult times. Write a diary entry that describes Creon's suffering from a first-hand point of view.
54. Choose three adjectives that describe your impression of Antigone. Then write down your reasons for choosing those adjectives, using examples of her actions and words throughout the play.
55. Imagine you are Antigone. What you would have done differently in this situation. Include your response to your sister as well as to the king who ordered your death. Write your response in the form of a diary entry.
56. Antigone is a complex character whose pride leads to her death. Do you sympathize with her? Do you support her actions, or do you think she acted irrationally? In an essay, write down specific reasons for your response, using examples from the text.

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## *Response Journal*

57. All characters in this play has admirable qualities, even though their negative qualities seem to be spotlighted throughout the action. Choose one character you admire, and write a paragraph highlighting that character's strengths.
58. The chorus plays a major role in expressing lessons to be learned from actions taken throughout the play. Compose a poem that illustrates the wisdom the chorus offers throughout the play. Your poem does not have to rhyme, but it should be no less than ten lines.
59. In the last two lines of the play, the Chorus states:
- “And great blows great speeches avenging,/Dealt on a boaster,/Teach men wisdom in age, at last.”
- Why do you think Sophocles chose to end the play with these lines, and what do they mean? Write an E-mail to a critic explaining your response as well as how this message can be applied in the modern world.
60. Imagine you have just attended a original production of this play during the time of Sophocles in ancient Greece. Write a detailed review for the play. State specifically what you did or did not like. Would you recommend this play for others to see? Finally, at the close of your review be sure to include how many stars you give the production (one star means a terrible review; four stars is a terrific review).

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*Antigone*

**Test**

1. Etocles and Polynices died
  - A. fighting together for control of Thebes.
  - B. fighting on opposite sides in a war for power in Thebes.
  - C. of a plague that had overtaken Thebes.
  - D. at the hand of Creon for betrayal of their country.
2. Creon refuses to bury Polynices because
  - A. Polynices was Oedipus' son.
  - B. he wanted to win the favor of the Theban people.
  - C. he considered Polynices a traitor.
  - D. Tiresias advised him not to.
3. What is Creon's creed regarding the dead bodies orders?
  - A. All citizens shall attend a proper burial of both bodies.
  - B. Only the family of Polynices shall be allowed to bury him.
  - C. Anyone caught burying Polynices shall be punished by death.
  - D. Anyone caught burying Etocles shall be buried alive.
4. When Antigone asks Ismene for help in giving their brother a burial,
  - A. Ismene refuses and betrays Antigone by informing Creon in order to protect her own position.
  - B. Ismene asks Haemon to stop Antigone.
  - C. Ismene tries to explain to Antigone that they are helpless against the state.
  - D. Ismene refuses to listen to her.
5. Which of the following values is most important to Creon?
  - A. loyalty to state
  - B. compassion
  - C. humility
  - D. loyalty to family

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*Response Journal*

6. Tiresias came before Creon to
  - A. inform Creon that he has had a sign from the gods that Creon should not kill Antigone and that Polynices should be buried.
  - B. express his support and respect for Creon's strength against rebels.
  - C. warn Creon that Antigone is causing as much suffering in Thebes as her father did.
  - D. remind Creon that Ismene is innocent and should not die.
7. The sentinel reports that
  - A. Creon's army has taken over another country.
  - B. someone has buried Polynices.
  - C. the bodies of both brothers have been taken from their tombs.
  - D. an army is attacking the city on the east side.
8. Creon tells the sentinel
  - A. he will be rewarded for his information regarding the city.
  - B. to find the person who buried Polynices or the sentinel will die.
  - C. to find the person who took the bodies or the sentinel will die.
  - D. to go immediately and order Creon's troops to retaliate against the enemy.
9. The sentinel brings Antigone to Creon in order to
  - A. save his own life.
  - B. show that he agreed with Creon.
  - C. express his scorn for Antigone.
  - D. protect Thebes from Antigone's pride.
10. When Creon has Ismene brought to him, she
  - A. tries to take some of the blame for her sister's deed.
  - B. asks him if she can marry Haemon.
  - C. requests to see his wife, so Ismene can plead for mercy from Eurydice.
  - D. tells him the details of Antigone's crime.

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*Antigone*

11. Antigone tells Creon that she disobeyed his order because
  - A. she did not believe he would enforce it.
  - B. she felt her duty to obey the gods and bury her brother was more important than her duty to obey the king.
  - C. she felt her life was meaningless.
  - D. he is not the legitimate king.
12. Haemon is
  - A. a nephew of Creon.
  - B. a son of Creon.
  - C. Ismene's brother.
  - D. the legitimate ruler of Thebes.
13. During the confrontation between Haemon and Creon,
  - A. Haemon tells Creon he does not want to marry Antigone.
  - B. Haemon tells his father he loves Ismene instead of Antigone.
  - C. Haemon first agrees with his father about Antigone's punishment, but then they have a violent argument.
  - D. Haemon tells his father that enemies are waiting to kill Creon.
14. In a rage, Creon orders that
  - A. Haemon be killed for his disrespect to his father.
  - B. his army slaughter the enemy waiting to kill him.
  - C. Ismene will be banished from the city.
  - D. Antigone will die while Haemon watches.
15. After the Chorus objects to Creon's decision to kill Antigone, he decides to
  - A. bury Antigone alive.
  - B. bury Ismene and Haemon alive with Antigone's body.
  - C. banish Antigone and Haemon from the city.
  - D. free Antigone.

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*Response Journal*

16. Tiresias warns that
- A. the gods will curse the city of Thebes for Creon's mistakes.
  - B. Haemon will kill Creon.
  - C. Antigone will kill Creon.
  - D. Antigone's family will seek revenge on Creon.
17. Creon responds to Tiresias by
- A. praising him for his loyalty and wisdom.
  - B. accusing him of being after gold and money.
  - C. throwing a banquet in his honor.
  - D. giving him a seat with Creon's senators.
18. Antigone dies
- A. by throwing herself on a sword.
  - B. by starving to death.
  - C. at the hand of Haemon.
  - D. by hanging herself.
19. When he finds Antigone dead, Haemon
- A. kills himself.
  - B. kills his father.
  - C. flees the city.
  - D. hurries to tell Ismene of Antigone's death.
20. Euridyce, upon hearing the fate of her son
- A. mourns him bitterly.
  - B. blames herself for his death.
  - C. curses her husband and kills herself.
  - D. divorces her husband.



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*Antigone*

Test  
Student Answer Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

20. \_\_\_\_\_

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## *Response Journal*

### **An Annotated Bibliography on Response Journals**

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*Antigone*

Test  
Answer Key

1. \_\_B\_\_

11. \_\_B\_\_

2. \_\_C\_\_

12. \_\_B\_\_

3. \_\_C\_\_

13. \_\_C\_\_

4. \_\_C\_\_

14. \_\_D\_\_

5. \_\_A\_\_

15. \_\_A\_\_

6. \_\_A\_\_

16. \_\_A\_\_

7. \_\_B\_\_

17. \_\_B\_\_

8. \_\_B\_\_

18. \_\_D\_\_

9. \_\_A\_\_

19. \_\_A\_\_

10. \_\_A\_\_

20. \_\_C\_\_

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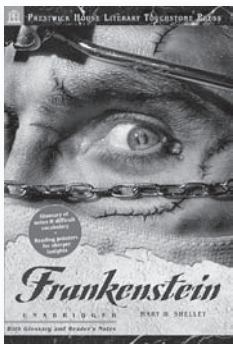
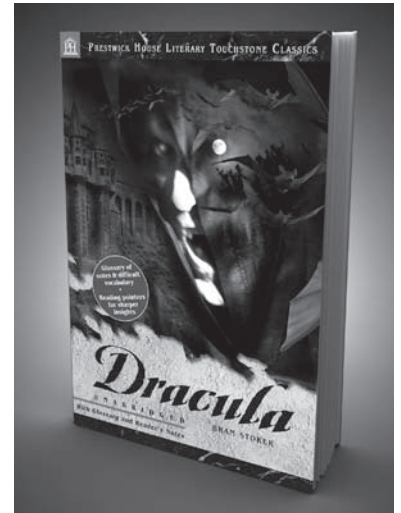
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