

# Kyros' love of power

Scholarly source:

Beushausen, Katrin (2008). Dangerous fracture: Undermining the order of the law in Sophocles Antigone. *Mosaic*, Vol. 41, No. 3.

# Meet Kyros

Kyros was a sixteen-year-old boy living in Ancient Greece in the middle of the fifth century BC. He was a boy with many advantages in life, and some of these advantages went to his head.

But we'll get to that in a minute. First, let's learn a little bit about Kyros' world.



In the ancient world, Greece was divided into city-states. Each city state had its own government. The two city states that will come up in this story are Athens and Thebes. See if you can find them on the map.





Ancient Greece is the place where democracy began—at least as far as the historians know for sure. Most of the city-states in Greece had democratic governments.



The very first city-state to have democracy was Athens. And this is where Kyros and his family lived.





Kyros was very fortunate to live in Athens. He had so many advantages—wealth, a good education, and beautiful surroundings.

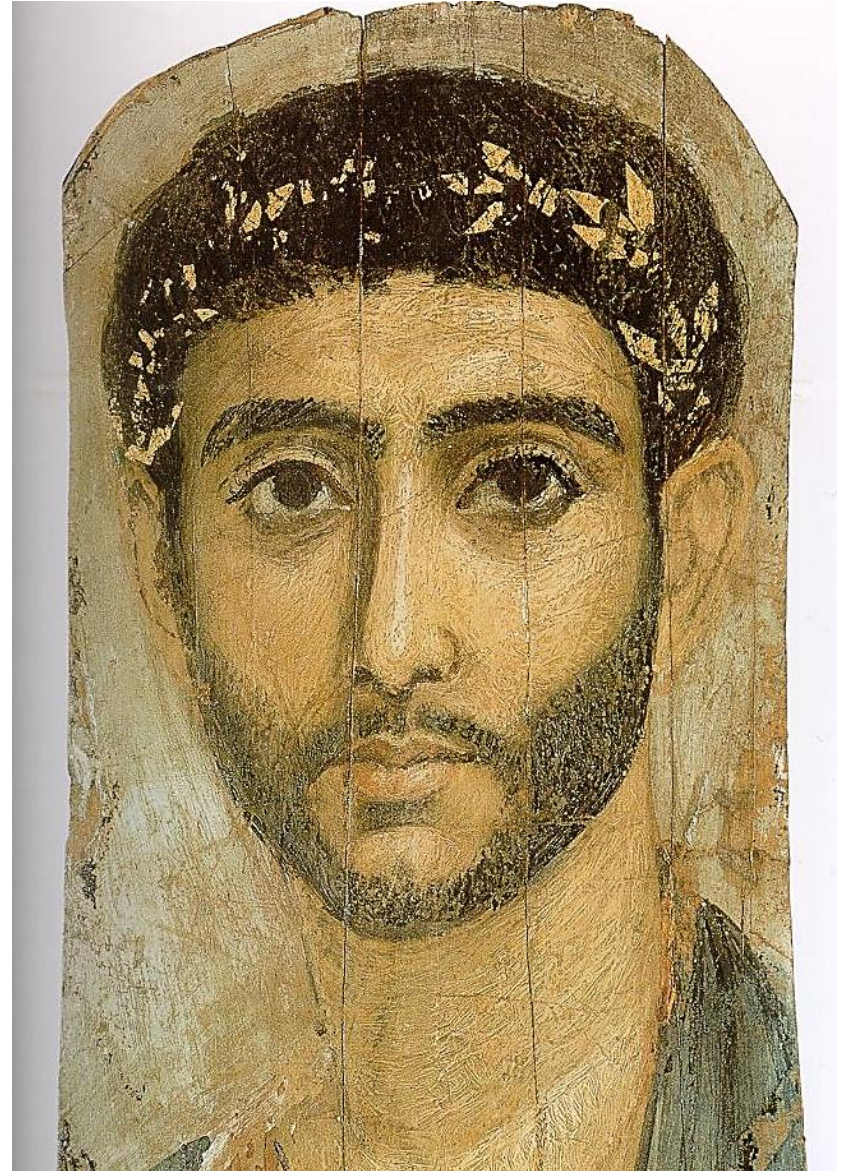


Kyros was also very spoiled. He was the only child in a wealthy family. As he grew up, his mother granted his every wish.





Kyros' father Leon had an important job in Athens government. The job meant he spent a lot of time traveling throughout the Greek world. He was not home as often as most fathers and tried to make up for his absence by giving Kyros everything he wanted.





Leon made sure that Kyros got lessons in the major sports in Athens. Kyros had a natural talent for wrestling and his father used his power to ensure that his son became a member of the *Greek Olympic team*.

See, the *Olympic Games* were also invented in ancient Greece.



But as Kyros got into his teens, Leon began to hear bad reports about his son. He heard that he was behaving selfishly like the spoiled brat he'd become. Then in summer he heard about him attending wild parties that weren't meant for a boy his age.

Leon felt bad because he had not spent much time with his son over the years. He began making plans to help his son develop better character.





But because the Olympics were about to begin, Leon's plans would have to wait.

Kyros' wrestling match was one of the last events scheduled during the Olympic Games. For nearly two weeks Leon and his male relatives went to Olympic Stadium.



The young men competing never wore clothes. They were naked.

Leon and his male relatives watched the foot races.





They watched the boxers compete in match after match.



And finally the wrestling events began.

They watched Kyros defeat opponent after opponent. They cheered. They screamed.





In the end, the wrestling championship went to Kyros.



And after the matches ended, the already self-centered Kyros became the talk of all Athens. Men and women stood in line just to shake his hand.

He was a bigger hero in Greece than Aaron Rodgers is today in Wisconsin.

But he was still a very immature sixteen.





"Do you know what I think?" Kyros asked his father.

"What?"

"I think that I could do anything I want in this city. If I asked someone to give me their horse, they would do it. If I asked them to give me their chariot, they would do it."

"And you think this is a good thing?" asked Leon.

"Well, of course I do," responded the spoiled son.



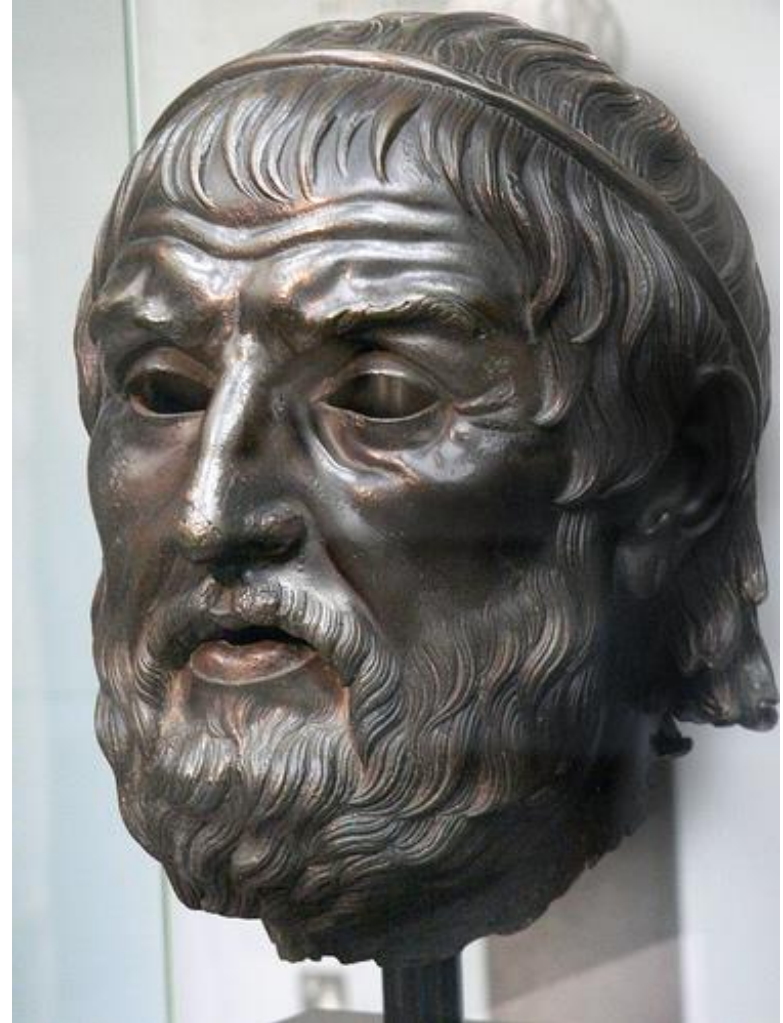
## Leon's plans

And so Leon began carrying out his plans for Kyros.

A week after the Olympics had ended, Leon announced that the great Greek playwright Sophocles had a new play opening the next night. "For your great feat in wrestling, my son, I am going to take you to the theater," he declared.

Kyros was excited, as he'd never been to the theater.

"The name of the new play is Antigone." stated Leon. (Leon actually knew a lot about this play as one of the actors was a friend of his.)





The following day Kyros and his father arrived at the theater very early. The actors were just putting on their costumes.

"I think it is important, my son, that you pay close attention to the central themes of this play. It is about the power you so cherish."



Soon the seats at the theater began filling up and the play called *Antigone* was about to start.

The first actor announced that the play took place in the city-state of Thebes—just northwest of Athens.





# The play, Antigone

In the first scene, a young Greek woman named Antigone was crying over the death of her two brothers—both who died fighting on opposite sides of a civil war in Thebes. Creon, the new ruler of Thebes, declared that the brother who died on his side of the battle would be honored, but the brother who died on the other side would not have an honorable burial per Greek religion. He would be left out to rot on the battlefield.

Antigone rebelled against the king's power and said she would honor her religious beliefs and her brother, and she'd make sure he has a proper burial.



In the next scene the king Creon (see right) entered, along with a chorus of elders. Creon asked their support regarding Antigone's brother's body. The chorus of elders pledged their support.

Soon a sentry rushed to the scene with Antigone in chains and reported that she had gone ahead and buried her brother, defying the king's ruling. Creon sent Antigone off to prison.

The king's son, who was engaged to Antigone, arrived on the scene. He gently tried to persuade his father to release Antigone, claiming that the people of the city were secretly on her side, because of their beliefs in proper burials.





Creon got angry at him and told him to leave and never return.

Creon now issued the order that Antigone should be buried alive in a tomb.



Tiresias, a blind prophet, entered the scene. He said that the Greek gods were angry with the king because of what he'd done and were refusing to come to the city of Thebes' assistance. Tiresias told Creon that his power had corrupted him and he would lose a son for trying to bury Antigone alive and refusing to bury her brother honorably.

The chorus of elders now saw that their support for Creon had been wrong. Creon also began to realize that he was sick with power.





Creon started to cry. He told his guards that they should release Antigone and give her brother a proper burial. He admitted he'd been corrupted by his power.

But in a moment a sentry rushed in to tell him the very worst news imaginable.



"Antigone has hung herself in the tomb!"  
he cried out. "Her father has come for  
her body."

Creon gasped.

"And there is worse news. Your son has  
stabbed himself to death."

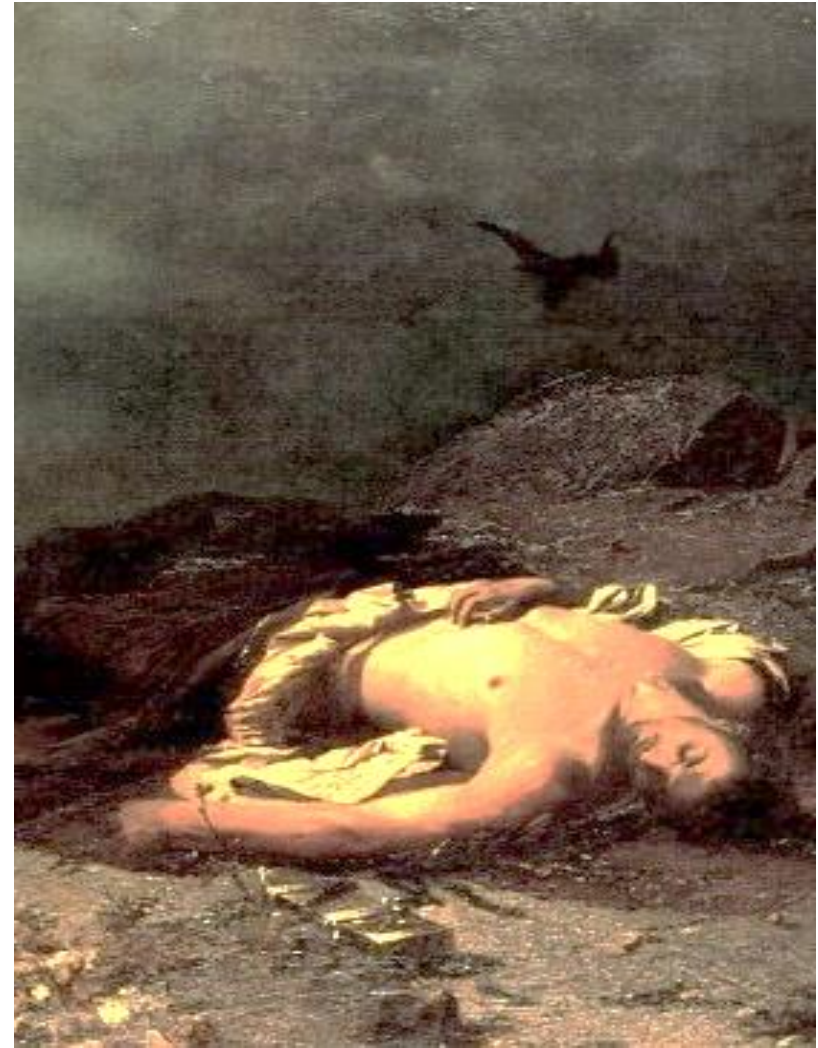
The chorus of elders gasped.





In the final scene, Creon entered, crying over his son's body. He admitted all his evil. While he legally remained king, he became a different type of ruler now. He'd seen the effects of his cruel use of power.

At the end of the play the chorus of elders cried out, "Although the gods punish the proud, punishment brings wisdom."



The audience rose to their feet in applause, but the play was not quite over. As soon as the applause died down, an actor in a mask came to the center of the stage. (This actor was actually the friend of Leon's.)

"And what have you learned from this play, young Kyros?" demanded the actor.





The audience sat stunned in their seats.

"Okay, Kyros does not answer. So now I take my questions to the audience. You all now decide." (Yes, this is all of you now.)



Who was the righteous person in this play? Creon or Antigone?

(Shout out your answer)

If Creon had just honored Antigone's religious beliefs, would his son and Antigone have killed themselves?

(Shout out your answer)

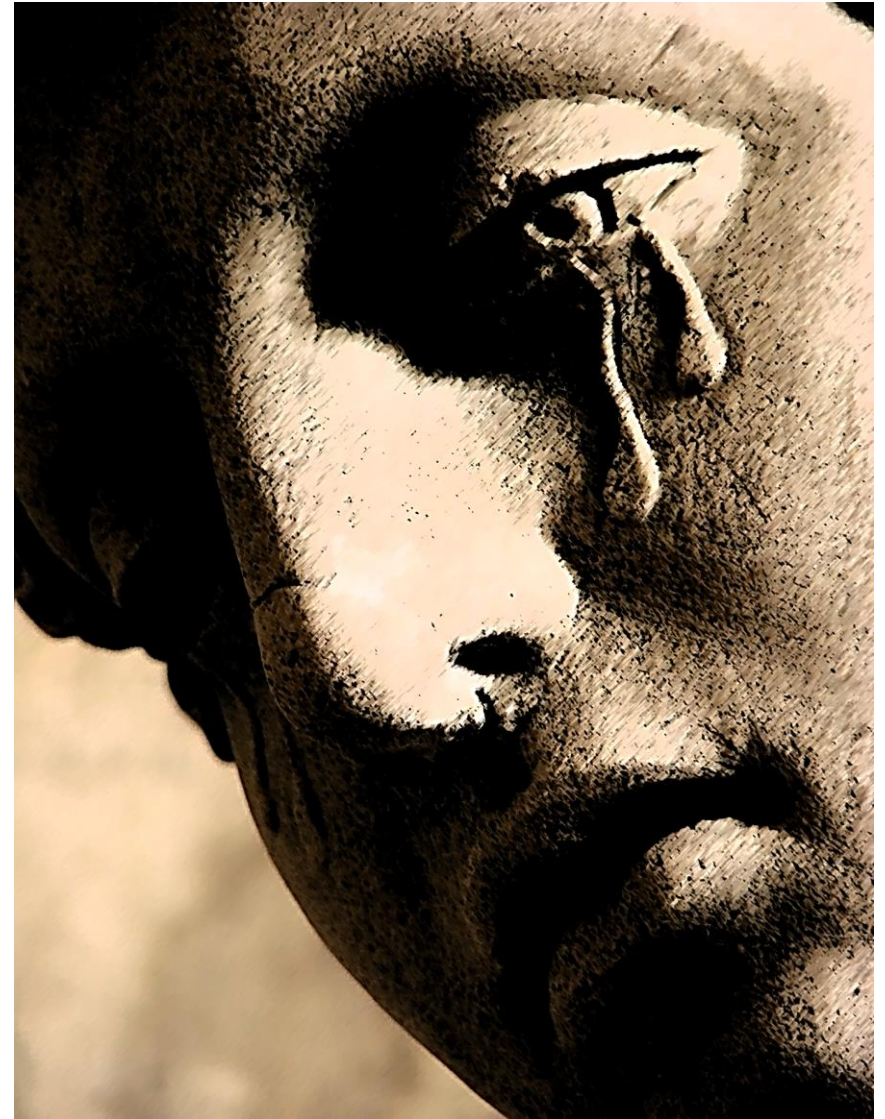


Was Creon's love of power his  
downfall?

(Shout out your answer)

And the last question was directed at Kyros. "And do you now want this kind of power, young man?"

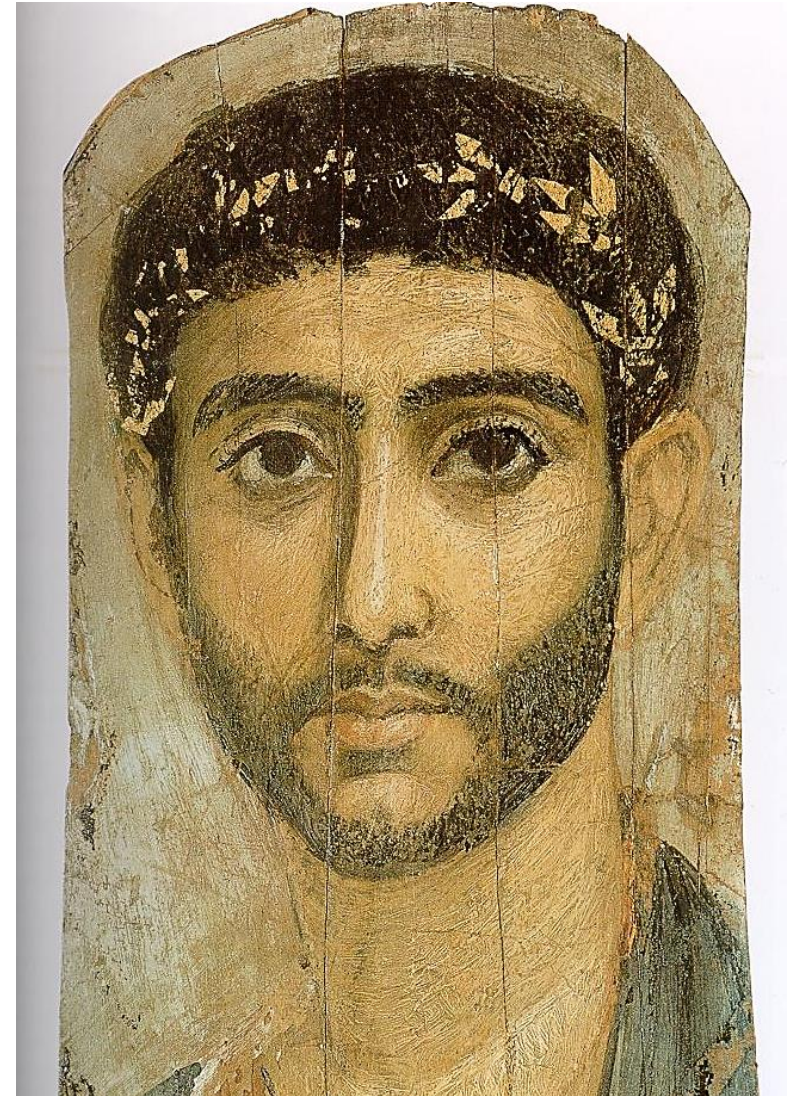
By this time, Kyros was sobbing in his seat. "No, no never," he cried.





And so Kyros learned.

And so did Leon. From that time on he was determined not to leave his family for work so often. He would spend more time with his son, educating him on what it meant to be a good and proper Athens gentleman.



The end

**Let's talk!!!!**