

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

ENGLISH I HONORS

Antigone

1. Read the drama, *Antigone*, by Sophocles.
2. Review all questions under the heading of Analyzing and Interpreting the Play.
3. Review the information contained under the heading of The Tragic Hero or Heroine.
4. Please bring your copy of the drama to class on the first day that class meets.
5. An essay test will be administered during the first week of class to assess the comprehension of this material.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Play

Prologue

1. The action of the play begins immediately with a conflict between Antigone and Ismene. What is the cause of this conflict?
2. Ismene and Antigone are strongly contrasted in this scene.
 - A. What can you tell of Antigone's character?
 - B. What can you tell of Ismene's character?
3. The speeches of the Chorus and Choragos interrupt the action of the play to describe the battle to the audience. What do these city elders look forward to in the future?

Scene 1

1. What have we learned about Creon before he appears onstage?
2. What is revealed of Creon's character in this scene?
3. What reason does Creon give for his ruling concerning the bodies of Polyneices and Eteocles?
4. How does the Chorus react to this ruling?
5. The Sentry is a very ordinary person, even somewhat humorous. What does he want Creon to think about him?

Scene 2

1. Since Greek dramas usually do not move from one setting to another, many of their important actions take place offstage. What major event has taken place before this scene opens?
2. How does Sophocles help the audience picture what has happened?
3. How does Antigone defend her actions?
4. Look at the comments of the Choragos in this scene. Does he seem to side with Antigone or Creon? Explain.
5. How has Ismene changed since we first saw her in the Prologue?
6. How does Antigone treat Ismene in this scene?

Scene 3

1. Haemon is caught in a conflict of loyalties in this scene. What methods and arguments does he use to persuade Creon to change his mind?
2. How does Creon react to Haemon's arguments?
3. What attitudes does Creon seem to take toward women?
4. What function does the Choragos have in this scene?
5. Whose side, if any, is he on?

Scene 4

1. What comfort does the Chorus offer Antigone?
2. Antigone thinks that the Chorus is making fun of her. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
3. As Antigone faces her death, does she seem in any way changed from the way she has been in previous scenes? Explain.

Scene 5

1. Creon has refused to yield to the arguments of Antigone and Haemon, and at first he refuses to listen to Teiresias. Of what does he accuse Teiresias?
2. Teiresias tells Creon that the only crime is pride. How has Creon shown that he is guilty of pride?
3. Why does Creon finally give in?
4. What part does the Choragos play in Creon's decision?
5. How has the character of the Chorus (or its leader, the Choragos) changed throughout the play?
6. Where in the play do you think the Chorus speaks for Sophocles himself?

Exodus

1. Violence is certainly a part of Greek drama, but it was never portrayed onstage. How does Sophocles tell us what happens to Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice?
2. How is Teiresias' prophecy from Scene 5 fulfilled in this scene?
3. How has Creon changed since the beginning of the play?
4. What does Creon finally come to recognize?

The Tragic Hero or Heroine

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) formulated ideas about tragedy that have influenced writers and critics for centuries. Aristotle based his ideas on the tragedies produced in his own day.

Aristotle defines the tragic hero as a person who is neither completely virtuous nor utterly villainous. The downfall of this tragic figure is brought about "not by vice or depravity but by some error in judgment or frailty." The tragic hero or heroine is "highly renowned or prosperous" so that the fall from good fortune to disaster will arouse strong emotions in the audience.

Aristotle felt that it was good to arouse these strong feelings in the audience. He thought that the release of these upsetting emotions - called catharsis (or "cleansing") - was helpful politically because it cleansed people of their urges to defy authority the way the tragic hero or heroine did.

Who is the tragic figure in *Antigone*? Some critics argue that Creon is the real tragic hero. To support their position, they offer the following evidence: Creon undergoes a dramatic change, whereas Antigone's fate is determined in the first scene and she disappears from stage halfway through the play. The deaths of Haemon and Eurydice are meaningful only to Creon, not to Antigone. And it is the body of Creon's son that is carried onstage, not Antigone's body.