

Drama Series

Antigone

teacher resource



Second Edition

 The Center for Learning

Antigone

Sophocles

Curriculum Unit

Mary Neelan



Author

A secondary English teacher, Mary Neelan earned her M.A.T.E. at Villanova University and also studied in England under a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. Other Center for Learning publications she has authored include Mythology and Shakespearean curriculum units.

Editorial Director: Dawn P. Dawson
Contributor: Mary Anne Kovacs, M.A.
Editor: Tammy Sanderell, B.A.
Editorial Assistant: Melissa R. R. Gutierrez
Graphic Designer: Joseph Diaz
Cover Design: Mark Gutierrez

© 2016, 1990 by The Center for Learning, a division of Social Studies School Service
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

The Center for Learning
10200 Jefferson Boulevard, P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232-0802
United States of America

(310) 839-2436
(800) 421-4246

www.centerforlearning.org
access@socialstudies.com

This Curriculum unit is a revision of the 1990 edition created by Mary Neelan. This edition is more than 50 percent new material: every lesson has been fully revised, often rewritten; there are new activities; and there are two completely new lessons.

Only those pages intended for student use as handouts may be reproduced by the teacher who has purchased this volume. No other part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording—without prior written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-56077-862-2
e-book ISBN: 978-1-56077-874-5
Product Code: CFL381

Contents

	Page	Handouts
Introduction	v	
Teacher Notes	vii	
Lessons		
1. Introduction to Greek Theater	1	1, 2
2. Preparing to Read the Play	7	3, 4, 5
3. Analysis of Structure	13	6, 7
4. Understanding an Overview of the Play	18	8
5. An Ode in Praise of Humanity	22	9, 10
6. Imagery and Figurative Language	27	11, 12
7. Tragedy and Tragic Protagonists	34	13, 14, 15
8. Characters: Choices and Consequence	40	16, 17
9. Sophocles's Uses of Irony	46	18, 19
10. Themes and Twenty-First-Century Applications	51	20
11. The Role of the Greek Chorus	54	21, 22
12. A Comparative Study: Sophocles and Anouilh	60	23, 24, 25
Supplementary Materials		
Writing Topics	66	
Greek Theater Quiz	68	
Character and Story Quiz	69	
Essay Test on Sophocles's <i>Antigone</i>	70	
Answer Key	72	
Bibliography	74	

Introduction

After two and a half millennia, Sophocles's *Antigone* still speaks to the world. It reminds us that while laws are essential to preserve social order, those laws must be just and reasonable. Sophocles pointed this out in ancient Athenian society. The story line is fairly simple. Oedipus has died and left behind two daughters and two sons. The daughters—Ismene and Antigone—are in the care of King Creon, their uncle. The sons—Eteocles and Polyneices—killed each other in a war over the throne, and Creon had Eteocles buried with full honors. Polyneices, however, by royal edict, is not to be buried at all. Antigone objects to this and rebels.

French playwright Jean Anouilh echoed this message in the context of Nazi-occupied France. His *Antigone* asks each person to consider what principles, if any, he or she is willing to stand up and perhaps die for. Socrates spoke words of truth and died rather than retract that truth. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. practiced nonviolent civil disobedience to achieve reform of unjust laws. The world has had many Antigones, and they have made a difference.

Both versions of *Antigone* also teach that all choices have consequences, that persons need to acknowledge their limitations, that the old can learn from the young, and that the strong have no right to force their will on the weak.

The Greek play's chorus extols humanity and its accomplishments. People have reason to be proud, but it is best not to be too proud; as the chorus acknowledges, humanity is powerless in the face of death. Vulnerable yet great, free yet destined, virtuous yet guilty—a human being is a paradox.

Antigone is a great choice for high school and college classrooms. Students can easily relate to the characters and issues, and the play gives rise to thoughtful discussions about relationships, laws, and individual conscience.

Teacher Notes

This unit focuses on Sophocles's *Antigone*, which is available in numerous translations, both verse and prose. The lessons do not hinge on any one version and therefore avoid direct quotations from the play. When you ask students for textual evidence to support ideas, it will necessarily be in the words in your edition of the play. Because the tragedy is so short, these references are usually not too difficult to locate. The final lesson invites comparison and contrast with Jean Anouilh's adaptation, which is set in Nazi-occupied France.

Antigone can be taught in many contexts: as a Greek play reflective of the style and literary form of the period; as a character study; as part of a theme study focusing on law and conscience; as a tragedy. It is a play with many faces and with the power to appeal to a variety of audiences, including teenagers.

The unit recommends taking time to read the play aloud in class. Lesson 1 and most of Lesson 2 are introductory; Lesson 2 also includes reading and discussion of the prologue, an encounter between the sisters Ismene and Antigone. Lesson 3 includes a discussion of structure and the parodos, after which students read the rest of the play. Subsequent lessons require an understanding of the play as a whole.

The supplementary materials include a quiz on Greek theater, useful after Lesson 1, as well as a quiz on characters and events that can help you to check comprehension after students have finished reading the play. A short-answer essay test is intended for summative evaluation, and a list of selected writing topics is also included.

Lessons address standards involving use of textual support, analysis of structure and themes, characterization, figurative language, and comparative literary studies. Answers to handouts will vary unless otherwise indicated. Students may need additional paper to complete some handouts.

Lesson 1

Introduction to Greek Theater

Objective

- To learn the origin, structure, and conventions of Greek theater

Notes to the Teacher

Depending upon the context in which you are teaching *Antigone*, you may choose to treat this lesson in a cursory manner or in detail. If the play is part of a unit on Greek literature or on the development of theater, emphasis on background may be desirable. If the play is part of a thematic unit on choice and consequence or on women in literature, then a simpler presentation would be in order.

Greek tragedy originated in religious festivals in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility, who was also associated with cycles of death and rebirth. Every spring in Athens a great festival was held in his honor, and a large group of men danced and recited poetry. Around 534 BCE, a performer named Thespis stepped out of the chorus to achieve an individual role. Gradually, the size of the chorus was reduced. The Greek tragedian Aeschylus added a second actor, and Sophocles used a third one.

Thousands of people attended theater performances. Probably at first, audiences simply sat on hillsides surrounding the performance area. Later, seating was added. For these audiences, a day at the theater was not an experience of lighthearted entertainment. It was a serious duty and an honor.

For the first procedure, you will need a picture of the Greek theater at Epidauros, which is available at many websites and also in books about classical theater. Students research and report on background information. They then closely examine the physical structure of a Greek theater. The Teacher Resource Page provides a summary of information. The quiz on Greek theater (see the supplementary materials) can be administered after students have learned the material in this lesson.

Procedure

1. Use the Internet or a print source to show students a picture of the theater at Epidauros. Point out the huge outdoor seating area that rises in tiers above the circular stage area. Explain that during the classical period both comedies and tragedies were performed in theaters similar to this one. Knowledge about the background can help in understanding the conventions of specific plays.

2. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group one of the following topics: classical Greek tragedians; actors in classical Greece; the chorus; conventions of Greek theater. Ask groups to use the Internet and/or print sources to locate information and to prepare presentations for the rest of the class. (See the Teacher Resource Page for an outline.)
3. When students present information, inject points as necessary. (See the Notes to the Teacher and the Teacher Resource pages.) Emphasize the basic unities, with the action centered in a single day and place.
4. Once again, show the picture of the theater at Epidaurus. Distribute **Handout 1**, and ask students to complete the exercise. Point out the huge size of the theatron, and ask students what difficulties members of the audience might have experienced.

The problems would be similar to those of spectators attending a performance or athletic event today—difficulty seeing and hearing everything.

5. Distribute **Handout 2**, and have students complete it. Then explain the following points:
 - Our word *hypocrite* derived from the Greek word for “actor.” The actor played a role or deceived an audience. Originally, the actor and playwright were one. After the second actor was introduced, dramatists continued to take roles in their own plays. Later the chief actors were paid by the state.
 - A play could have many characters, but all the characters with speaking parts had to be divided among these three actors. All roles were played by men.
 - Shifts from one character to another by male performers presented few problems because of costumes and masks. The actor’s trained voice adapted itself to suit the character and situation. Robes with long flowing sleeves, boots often with raised soles, and larger-than-life masks combined with sweeping gestures and declamatory delivery to create a dramatic, believable impact. The masks identified the speakers as male or female, young or old, grief-stricken or hopeful. The open mouth of the mask is said to have increased the resonance of the actor’s voice, similar to the effect of a megaphone.
 - Because of the structure of the theaters, they had surprisingly good acoustics. Today’s visitors in the theatron at Epidaurus are amazed at how well they can hear what is said in the orchestra area.
6. Ask students what similarities they can see between ancient Greek theater and theater performances today.

Musical productions often include a chorus that performs song-and-dance routines. Plays have to be short enough that audiences can watch them in a reasonable amount of time; this makes a lot of subplots impractical. Actors have to make themselves heard and often wear costumes that help to convey personality and motivation.

Classical Greek Drama

Directions: Examine the following outline, which provides a concise summary of information about Greek drama.

I. Origin of Tragedy

- a. Religious festivals in honor of Dionysus
 1. Great Dionysia—religious festival held in spring
 2. Dithyramb—hymn sung in honor of the god
 3. Chorus—group of about fifty men who sang and danced
- b. Thespis—father of drama (sixth century BCE)
 1. Won prize for tragedy in 535 BCE
 2. Said to have introduced the first actor and thus dialogue
- c. Aeschylus (525–426 BCE)
 1. Added a second actor
 2. Wrote trilogies on unified themes
- c. Sophocles (496–406 BCE)
 1. Added a third actor
 2. Fixed the number of the chorus to fifteen
 3. Introduced painted scenery
 4. Made each play of the trilogy an independent dramatic unit with its own separate actions
- e. Euripides (486–406 BCE)
 1. Reduced participation of the chorus in the main action
 2. Relied on heavy prologues and *deus ex machina* endings

II. Structure of Theater

- a. Theatron—literally the “seeing area” for the audience
- b. Orchestra—circular dancing place where actors and chorus performed
- c. Thymele—altar to Dionysus in the center of the orchestra
- d. Skene—building used as a dressing room
- e. Proskenion—facade of the skene building, which served as backdrop
- f. Parodos—entrance aisles in the theater used by the chorus

III. Actors and Acting

- a. Hypocrites—literally “the answerers,” actors playing roles
 1. Actor and dramatist were originally the same—playwright took a leading role

2. Never more than three actors, who played multiple roles
 - a. Protagonist—main character
 - b. Deuteragonist—secondary character
3. All were male performers—played both male and female roles
- d. Costumes and masks
 1. Long, flowing robes—colored symbolically
 2. High boots, often with raised soles
 3. Larger-than-life masks—made of linen, wood, cork
 - a. Identified age, gender, emotion
 - b. Exaggerated features—large eyes, open mouth

IV. Chorus

- a. Music and dance
 1. Musical accompaniment for choral odes—flute, lyre, percussion
 2. Dance defined as expressive rhythmical movement
- c. Function
 1. Sets overall mood and expresses theme
 2. Adds beauty (theatrical effectiveness) through song and dance
 3. Gives background information
 4. Divides action and offers reflections on events
 5. Questions, advises, expresses opinion—sometimes through the chorus leader

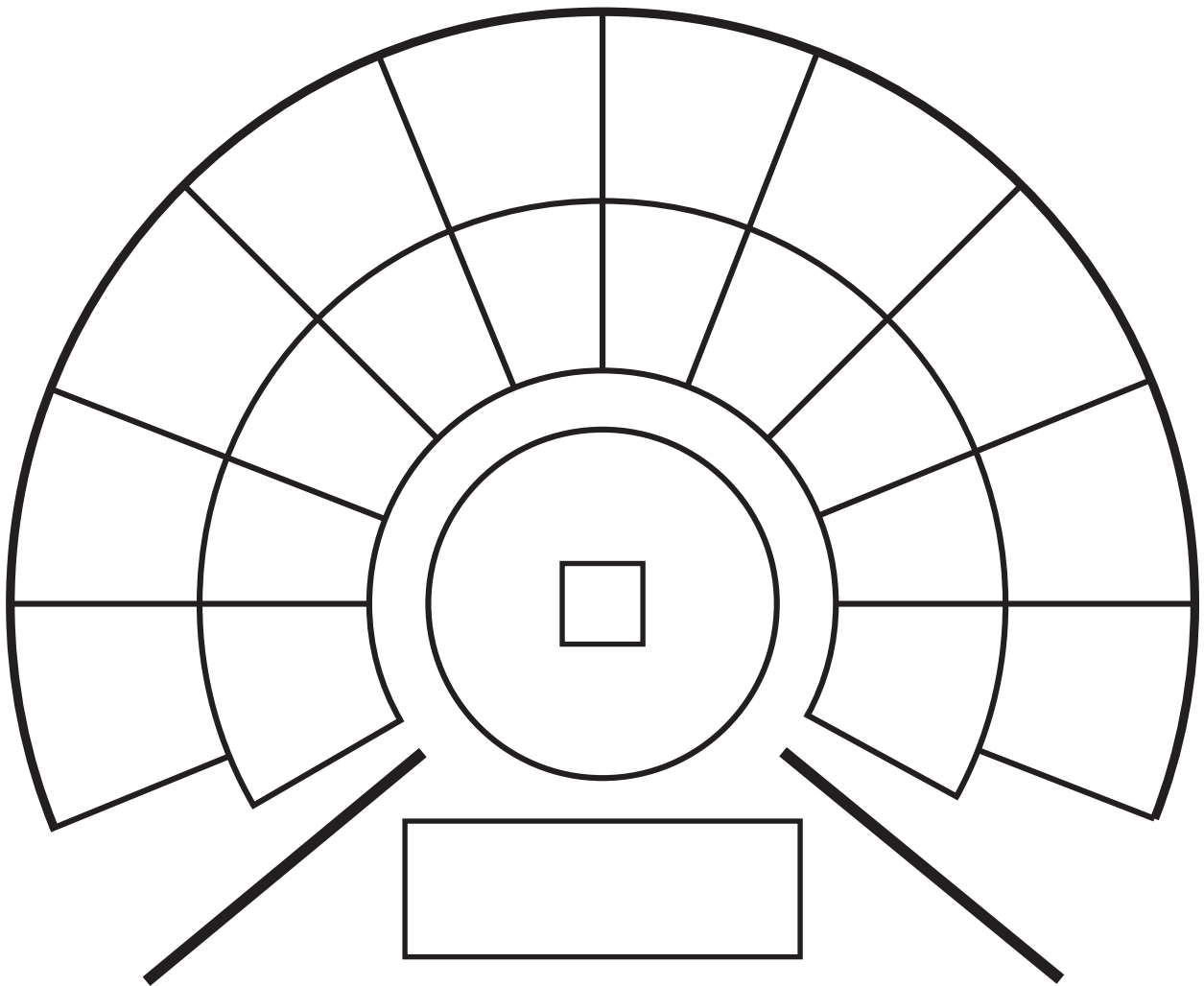
V. Conventions

- a. Unities
 1. Action—simple plot
 2. Time—single day
 3. Place—one scene throughout
- d. Messenger
 1. Delivers news happening away from the scene
 2. Reports acts of violence not appropriate for the stage
- c. Limitations of theater
 1. Continuous presence of chorus
 2. No intermissions; continuous flow of action and choral odes
 3. No lighting; no curtains

Structure of a Typical Greek Theater

Directions: The diagram shows the characteristic layout of classical Greek theaters. Read the following information, and label the parts.

The theatron was the large seating area for the audience, while the orchestra was the circular performance area. The *paradoi* (plural of *parados*) were aisles or passageways into the theater used by the chorus as they danced, sang, and recited poetry. In the center of the orchestra was an altar to Dionysus, which was called the *thymele*. The building behind the orchestra, the *skene*, served as both dressing room and storage area. The front wall of the *skene* was a backdrop for the action.



Greek Theater: An Experience in Song, Dance, and Dramatic Action

Directions: Read the following information, and highlight the main points.

Greek theater began as festivals in honor of the god Dionysus, so it had many liturgical aspects. Like religious services today, the Greek tragedies involved music and rituals.

We know little about the music used two and a half millennia ago except that the instruments included flutes, lyres, and trumpets.

The dance element of the plays was performed by the chorus. For the Greeks, dance included any rhythmic movements. Thus the chorus could move in unison in a stately manner from left to right and back again, using broad sweeping hand motions.

The chorus performed poems between episodes of the play and also interacted with the characters. The poems or odes were integral to the play as a whole. The chorus helped set the mood, provided background information, offered reflections, and asked questions.

Unity was a high value in the Greek theater. The plays are not characterized by subplots. Unity of time restricted action to a twenty-four-hour period, and unity of place decreed one unchanging location. A common device was the use of a messenger to convey information about people and events at other times and in other places.

Once the chorus entered, it remained onstage for the rest of the play, sometimes speaking, sometimes as silent observers.

Lesson 2

Preparing to Read the Play

Objectives

- To understand the story behind the Oedipus cycle
- To explore the Greek concepts of curse and fate
- To understand the prologue

Notes to the Teacher

In this lesson, students first learn the story behind the events in *Antigone*. Greek dramas did not appear singly but came as packages of three tragedies along with a Satyr play. Although *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus* deal with related subject matter, the three tragedies were not part of the same trilogy. The plays that accompanied *Antigone* are not extant. Greek audiences already knew the mythological and historical background of the plays; they were interested in what the playwrights would do to bring the old stories to life. **Handout 3** acquaints students with the story of the house of Oedipus, and they discuss the Greeks' beliefs in oracles and curses.

Handout 4 involves discussion of some of the issues at the heart of the play. What happens when laws come in direct conflict with individual conscience? What should limit an individual's power to govern? Is any ideal worth the sacrifice of a person's life? Is it cowardly to obey the law because of fear of punishment?

Even with very bright students who are perfectly capable of reading *Antigone* on their own, it is usually worthwhile to take the time to read the play orally in class. This helps to make the characters and events immediate and vivid. It is a good idea to assign the parts in advance. Individual voices include Ismene, Antigone, Creon, Eurydice, Haemon, Teiresias, a guard, messengers, and the chorus leader. The rest of the class or a group of volunteers can read the lines of the chorus in unison.

Students close the lesson with reading and discussing the prologue of *Antigone*, which includes only Antigone and Ismene and vividly presents contrasts between the two daughters of Oedipus.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 3**, and ask students to read and annotate the information. Conduct a discussion based on the following questions:
 - Does what happened to Oedipus seem fair?

He wanted to avoid doing the terrible things prophesied by the oracle, which is what led him to leave Corinth. When he married the queen in Thebes, he had no idea he was marrying his biological mother. It does not seem fair that he had to suffer such terrible events.

- What does belief in oracles indicate about the ancient Greeks' ideas about fate?

The oracles were seen as prophets voicing the views of the gods. Yet first Jocasta and Laius and later their son did everything in their power to try to avoid fulfilling the predictions of the oracles.

- In the story of the house of Oedipus, what happens when people try to avoid fulfilling the predictions of oracles?

No matter how hard human beings twist and turn, they cannot avoid the will of the gods. Humans have free will, but their control over outcomes is very limited.

- Who was in the right—Eteocles or Polyneices—in their battle?

The idea of sharing the kingship in alternate years does not seem like a very good one in terms of stability and continuity. Predictably, Eteocles did not want to give up his position. Polyneices was pursuing his rights, but in doing so he waged war on the very city he wanted to rule.

2. Point out that in the Oedipus story Jocasta and Laius fully believed in the oracle but still sought to escape by abandoning the child. Oedipus fully believed but still sought to escape by forsaking Corinth.
3. Explain the Greek concept of fate. If Jocasta and Laius had kept the child, if Oedipus had stayed in Corinth, or if they had never known the oracle, would the outcome have been the same? Discuss the Greek concept of a curse which haunts a family from generation to generation. Antigone makes reference to the sin or crime of Oedipus following her to her doom. Tell students to look for references to fate and family curses as they read the play.
4. Explain that although the play was written very long ago, in the fifth century BCE, it deals with issues that remain relevant today. Distribute **Handout 4**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion.

Having read the play, students will see connections. As in the first hand-out's scenario, Antigone faces a situation in which her conscience and personal beliefs are at odds with a legal edict. The second scenario is relevant to the moral conflict experienced by Ismene: She would like to join Antigone in at least a token burial of Polyneices but feels terrified by the power of authorities to inflict punishment. The third scenario reflects Polyneices's situation and could be compared with analogous situations, such as who gets to play first violin or will run in the 4 x 100 relay.

5. Tell students that *Antigone* opens with a scene, the prologue, involving only two characters, sisters who are the daughters of Oedipus. Make students comfortable with pronunciation of the names. Explain that the final letter in both names is articulated as a long “e” sound rhyming with “bee.” The second syllable of Antigone’s name is stressed: an-ne-tig’-uh-nee. Her sister’s name is pronounced: is-mee’-nee, also with the stress on the second syllable.

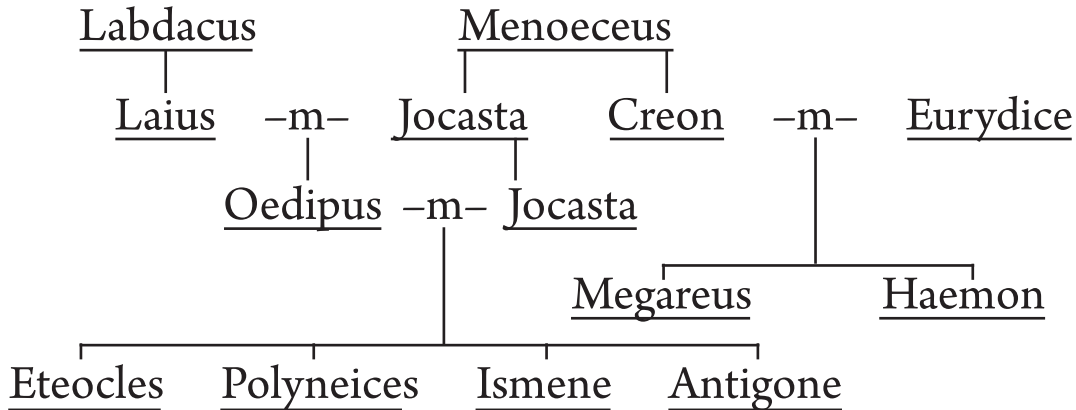
6. Assign the parts of Antigone and Ismene, ask the students who will be reading the parts to sight-read the prologue in the play.
7. Distribute **Handout 5**, and have small groups answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. The sisters are all that is left of the family of Oedipus, and it is evident that they trust each other.
 2. Antigone is bolder and more headstrong; Ismene looks ahead and foresees consequences. Antigone is more prone to rebel, Ismene to comply.
 3. Polyneices and Eteocles have killed each other in battle; Creon has had Eteocles buried with full honors; Polyneices, however, is to be left unburied, to rot and be devoured by carrion eaters. There is an edict against anyone daring to defy Creon.
 4. Antigone wants to know if Ismene will help her to bury Polyneices. Antigone sees this as a family responsibility that transcends politics.
 5. Ismene thinks that there is no way anyone can successfully take on the powers that be and sees Antigone as willful and headstrong. Antigone declares that, in that case, she does not want Ismene's help.
 6. Antigone is absolutely determined to bury Polyneices no matter what the consequences; she is proud of her decision and invites Ismene to tell everyone. Ismene will not help with the burial, but she wants to keep Antigone's action a secret. She clearly does not want Antigone to suffer for her actions.
8. Assign parts for oral reading, and ask students to look ahead in the text so that they can prepare their parts ahead of time. Alternatively, assign the entire play to be read outside the classroom.

Getting the Story Straight

Directions: Greek tragedies retell stories from ancient myths. The audience already knew the outcome of stories they were going to see portrayed on stage, so the ending was no mystery. What was interesting was what playwrights did with the old stories. An audience viewing *Antigone* already knew the woeful legend of her family. Study the family tree, and read the information.



The oracle at Delphi prophesied to Laius and Jocasta, the king and queen of Thebes, that their son Oedipus would one day kill his father and marry his mother. Thinking to escape this fate, the horrified parents had the baby abandoned on a mountainside to die. The child was rescued by a shepherd and given to the king and queen of Corinth, who brought the child up as their own. When Oedipus was a grown man, he, too, went to the oracle at Delphi. Hearing the same prophecy and thinking to escape his fate, he resolved not to return to Corinth. In his travels, he met a stranger at a crossroads, argued with the man, and killed him. He then went into Thebes, met and married the recently widowed queen, and became king himself.

Oedipus and Jocasta had four children—Eteocles, Polyneices, Ismene, and Antigone. Years later, when a plague struck Thebes, an oracle foretold that the plague would continue until the murderer of Laius was found and punished. The prophet Teiresias warned Oedipus not to press for an answer. Continuing his search, Oedipus discovered the truth. Jocasta hanged herself, and Oedipus put out his eyes and exiled himself.

After the death of Oedipus, his sons agreed to share the kingship by ruling in alternate years. Eteocles ruled first but refused to step down for his brother. Polyneices then raised a foreign army and attacked Thebes. In the course of the battle, both brothers were killed.

Antigone begins after the battle. Jocasta's brother Creon has accepted the kingship. He ordered Eteocles buried with honor and Polyneices left for the birds to devour.

Universal Concerns in *Antigone*

Directions: Part of the timeless appeal of this play lies in the issues at its heart, themes that are as relevant today as they were two and a half millennia ago. Read and respond to the following scenarios.

1. A classmate who has been a friend ever since kindergarten calls your cell phone, obviously terribly upset, and asks you to come for a talk at a neighborhood twenty-four-hour café. Your town has an 11:00 p.m. curfew for people under eighteen, and your eighteenth birthday is three months away. It is now midnight. When you ask your friend why, the explanation is that the family just found out that an older brother was killed in an accident at a military training camp. Your friend desperately wants to talk to you and really needs to get out of the house for a while.

2. Two of your siblings are opposed to the planned construction of a new condominium development in what is now a forested area not far from your home. The construction will obliterate the habitat of deer, wild turkey, several kinds of birds, and lots of other wildlife in the area. Your siblings plan to stage a demonstration against the construction company first thing in the morning, and you would like to participate. The problem is that the demonstration involves some unlawful obstructions of the construction activities, and the the mayor has already announced that any further problems at the site will result in a no-questions-asked trip to the jail and a hefty fine.

3. You are one of three outstanding players on the varsity basketball team, and your favorite position is center, a role in which all three of you excel. The coach decided that you will take turns and also play other positions. The third game is tonight, and you can hardly wait to star in your favorite role. Then the coach tells you that the kid who played center in the first game wants the position permanently, and he did such a great job the coach decided to give it to him, not even allowing you a chance to show what you can do on the court.

Focus on the Prologue

Directions: The opening scene in *Antigone* is usually classified as a prologue, since it comes before the entrance of the chorus. Use the following questions to analyze the interaction between Antigone and Ismene.

1. Ismene and Antigone are sisters. Do they like each other?
2. How do they differ in basic personality traits?
3. What is the central issue in their dialogue?
4. What does Antigone want Ismene to do?
5. How does Ismene react? How does Antigone respond to Ismene's reaction?
6. As the prologue ends, what does each sister intend to do?

Lesson 3

Analysis of Structure

Objectives

- To examine the structure of *Antigone*
- To understand the interrelationships of episodes and odes

Notes to the Teacher

Dramatic structure involves a linking of actions into an indivisible chain. The general structural pattern of a Greek tragedy consists of a prologue (opening scene of exposition), a parodos (entrance ode by the chorus), and a series of episodes (dramatic scenes) followed by choral odes (stasima). After the episodes and odes comes the exodos (exit scene), which includes the catastrophe (literally, the “overturning” or “undoing”—the action that resolves the plot) and parting lines. Greek tragedies have no breaks or act divisions. The stasima are not interludes or intermissions, but comments on the action. They are vital to a full understanding of the plays.

If students have looked over the play as a whole to locate their own parts, they will have noticed some of these structural elements. In this lesson, they first learn the typical structure of a Greek tragedy. They then analyze the ode that the chorus presents during the parodos, as the choral members enter the playing arena. This lesson should be followed by a reading of the rest of the play before the class goes on to Lesson 4.

Procedure

1. Ask students what they observed as they read or looked ahead through *Antigone*.

Episodes consisting of dialogue alternate with poems or songs presented by the chorus.

2. Distribute **Handout 6**, and use it to explain the typical structure of a Greek tragedy. Emphasize that the choral odes are not just interludes; they are as important to the plays as the action-oriented episodes.
3. Have students fill in the part of the chart that pertains to the prologue.

The exposition in the prologue introduces the protagonist, Antigone, and shows her in conflict with Creon’s edict. It also provides a contrast of character, with Antigone exhibiting strong commitment and Ismene fearful of breaking the law. Father, mother, and two brothers are now dead; the question is whether the curse on the Oedipus family is to fall on the surviving family members, the two sisters, as well.

4. Explain that classical Greek tragedies are based on stories from mythology and history with which audiences would have been very familiar. Distribute **Handout 7**, and use it for a quick review of the major Greek gods.
5. Remind students that the tragedies were composed in classical Greek, so they are reading one of many translations, some of which are in verse, others in prose. Translations differ in both diction and syntax, depending on translators' interpretations of the authors' intentions and words' nuances.
6. Have students playing the chorus read the parodos aloud. Then lead a discussion based on the following questions.

- What do the chorus members say about the war they just survived?

Thebes was attacked by warriors from Argos who were supporting Polyneices. The attackers were defeated, and both Polyneices and Eteocles were killed.

- What seems to be the attitude of the chorus?

They are grateful for the sunrise on a Thebes no longer at war; they are also proud of their city.

- What seems to be their attitude toward the gods?

They are profoundly respectful of the power of the gods and seem to know that humans are limited.

- What do they say that Zeus cannot abide?

The king of the gods loathes human arrogance in any form.

- Whose arrival terminates the parodos?

The new king, Creon, enters.

7. Have students complete the portion of **Handout 6** that deals with the parodos.

The parodos adds to the exposition given in the prologue. It describes the battle in which Eteocles and Polyneices fought and died. It also provides an ironic contrast, for while Antigone and Ismene grieve over personal loss, the Thebans rejoice over the end of the war and celebrate victory.

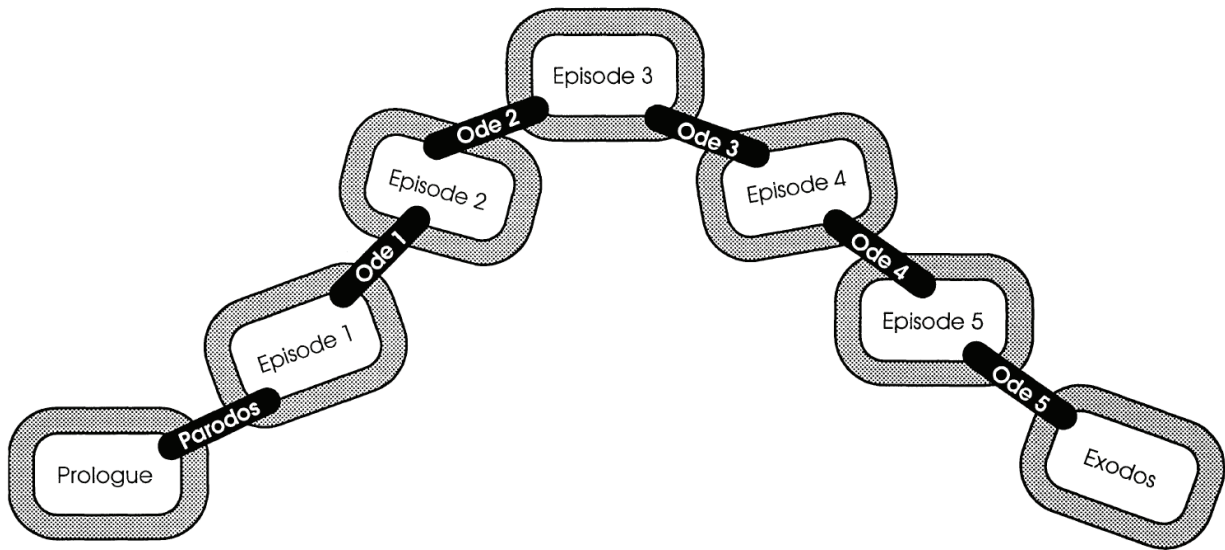
8. Clarify the pronunciation of Teiresias (tie-ree'-see-us), Haemon (hay'-mun), and Eurydice (yu-rid'-uh-see). Then have students begin their in-class oral reading of the play, and pick up with Lesson 4 when they have finished.

If your students do not enjoy reading aloud, you can instead have them listen to a recording. One drawback to this option is that the recording may differ substantially from the translation you are using.

9. Ask students to keep **Handout 6** available for use during the next lesson.

The Structure of Greek Tragedies

Directions: Greek tragedies follow a typical structure shown in the graphic organizer below. After a prologue that introduces the general situation, the chorus enters reciting a poem. Then come episodes, each followed by a choral ode, until the play reaches its conclusion. As you read *Antigone*, record information in the columns.



Episodes List characters and action/conflict.	Odes Briefly describe content.
Prologue	Parodos
Episode 1	Ode 1

Episode 2	Ode 2
Episode 3	Ode 3
Episode 4	Ode 4
Episode 5	Ode 5
Exodos	Exodos (last line)

The Greek Gods

Directions: Read the information about some of the Greek deities.

Religion in classical Greece was polytheistic. According to mythology, the gods were descendants of Titans. They were decidedly anthropomorphic, with the same flaws and foibles as human beings.

Zeus defeated his father, Cronus, and became the head of the gods with the most power, but he was not seen as omnipotent. He was associated with the sky and related to both gods and humans. The ancient Olympic Games were held in honor of this king of the gods.

Poseidon, a brother of Zeus, was the god of the sea. He figures prominently in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Hades, another brother, was the god of the underworld, associated with death.

Hera, the queen of the gods, was both sister and main wife to Zeus. Many myths tell stories about her rage over Zeus's affairs with both goddesses and humans.

Demeter, another sister of Zeus, was the goddess of the harvest, responsible for successful growing seasons.

Hestia, still another sister of Zeus, was the goddess of home and hearth; there do not seem to be as many legends about her, concerned as she was with domesticity.

Aphrodite was the goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality.

Athena, a daughter of Zeus, was the extremely important goddess of wisdom and a favorite with her father. She was a warrior goddess.

Artemis was a virgin goddess associated with the hunt, the moon, and wildlife.

Apollo, a brother to Artemis, was the sun god associated with both prophecy and healing.

Ares, a son of Zeus, was the handsome god of war.

Hephaestus, another son, was the misshapen god of the forge, associated with making things.

Persephone, a daughter of Demeter, was tricked into a marriage with Hades; her absence for a period each year was seen as responsible for the winter end of the growing season.

Hermes was the winged messenger god.

Dionysus, a son of Zeus, was associated with wine and revelry; the theater arose in honor of him.

The Greek gods sometimes toyed with human beings' lives and could not abide people who became arrogant and overconfident.

Lesson 4

Understanding an Overview of the Play

Objectives

- To gain an overview of events in the episodes in *Antigone*
- To understand the development of feelings and ideas in the odes

Notes to the Teacher

In this lesson, students first complete the episodes section of **Handout 6**, which they began in Lesson 3. You may want to provide additional copies for those who have mislaid the handout or used it to record notes while reading the play. The action proceeds quickly from Antigone's decision to defy Creon's order to the tragic conclusion.

Students then complete the section of the handout that deals with the odes. They typically find this part of the exercise more taxing. You will want to emphasize that the chorus consisted of ordinary Thebans, not nobility, and their responses would shift as events unfold.

Students conclude the lesson with a preliminary discussion of themes, a topic to which they will return later. The quiz on characters and story line (see the supplementary materials) can be given after students have learned the material in this lesson.

Procedure

1. Direct students to work in pairs to complete the analysis of each episode section of **Handout 6**. (Note: Some translations do not mark episodes as such or may use the word *scene* in place of *episode*. It is always evident when the major characters are speaking, not the chorus. Follow with group discussion to clarify the development of the play's plot.)

Suggested Responses

- **Episode 1:** Creon, chorus, and a guard
Creon gives a lengthy speech that includes his edict regarding the burial of Polyneices; a guard explains that some unknown person has given Polyneices a symbolic burial; Creon demands the arrest of the offender.
- **Episode 2:** Creon, guard, Antigone, and Ismene
Antigone defies Creon and is condemned to death; Ismene asks to share her fate, but Antigone rejects the offer.
- **Episode 3:** Creon and Haemon
Haemon pleads for reason and justice; Creon rejects advice from an infatuated youth.

- **Episode 4:** Antigone, chorus, and Creon
Antigone recounts her misfortunes; the chorus pities her but reminds her she brought ruin on herself; Creon orders her immediate entombment.
- **Episode 5:** Teiresias and Creon
Teiresias warns of the gods' anger; Creon resists but finally reverses his decision.
- **Exodos:** Creon, chorus, Eurydice, and messengers
A messenger tells of the deaths of Antigone and Haemon; a second messenger announces the death of Eurydice; Creon is alone and recognizes his folly. The chorus speaks last lines warning about the consequences of human arrogance.

2. Ask students the following questions.

- Why was the guard so reluctant to tell Creon that someone buried Polyneices?

The guard feared that he would be held responsible and punished. He seems to see Creon as a harsh taskmaster.

- What is the relationship between Antigone and Haemon?

They are cousins, and they are engaged to be married.

- What seems to be Creon's main motivation until the final catastrophe?

Creon, newly installed as king, is determined to maintain control and to be obeyed. He is full of the hubris or arrogance that the chorus mentions in their entry poem.

3. Have students complete the odes section of **Handout 6**.

Suggested Responses

- **Ode 1:** Nothing is greater than humanity; its accomplishments are many, but it cannot control death; humanity can work for good or evil; the law must be obeyed. (Note: The next lesson features an in-depth analysis of this ode.)
- **Ode 2:** Fate has cursed the House of Oedipus; pride and foolishness lead to disaster.
- **Ode 3:** The chorus sings of the power of love; father and son have been divided by love.
- **Ode 4:** The chorus sings of those who have been imprisoned; Antigone is raised to the level of heroine.
- **Ode 5:** Chorus praises Dionysus in a joyful paean.
- **Exodos:** The chorus cautions humanity to submit to the gods because pride is always punished.

4. Have small groups discuss how each ode comments upon the action of the episode which precedes it. Follow with whole-class discussion about the interrelationships between episodes and odes.

In the first ode, the chorus comments on the importance of law; two laws are involved here, one an edict by Creon and the other the law of loyalty to family and the gods. In ode 2, after seeing Creon condemn Antigone, the chorus reflects on the cursed house of Oedipus. In ode 3, having seen Creon's response to Haemon, the chorus comments about broken relationships. In ode 4, the chorus reflects on imprisonment. In ode 5, after seeing Creon's refusal to listen to anyone, the chorus prays that everything will turn out for the best. Finally, at the end, the chorus reflects that pride leads inevitably to suffering.

5. Distribute **Handout 8**, and have students complete it individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Authority figures often find it difficult and embarrassing to admit the possibility of a mistake, and this can lead to determination to hold on to an essentially untenable position.
2. Antigone certainly has the courage of her convictions, but she is also stubborn and seems to have no skills in diplomacy.
3. Ismene's fear of consequences of breaking the law is understandable, but at the conclusion of the play one feels that there is only misery ahead for her.
4. Haemon is motivated by love for Antigone, but also by his disillusionment about his father's character.
5. Themes or motifs that unify the structure include the doomed House of Oedipus, laws of the city versus laws of kinship, the fluctuating fortunes of life, and pride and its punishment.

Responding to *Antigone*

Directions: Respond to each of the following questions, and prepare to discuss your ideas.

1. Do you think that Creon's actions and responses are typical of people in positions of power and authority?
2. Do you feel empathy for Antigone, or do you see her as stubborn and foolish?
3. What are your attitudes toward Ismene? What caused those attitudes?
4. Do you find Haemon's actions to be believable?
5. What do you see as some of the themes and motifs of the play?

Lesson 5

An Ode in Praise of Humanity

Objective

- To analyze and paraphrase Sophocles's famous ode in praise of humanity

Notes to the Teacher

Previous lessons stressed the interrelationship of episodes and odes. Students considered how each ode comments upon the episode that precedes it and links each episode to the next. They discovered the unity of structure, which comes from underlying themes and motifs.

In this lesson, students are asked to focus on one ode, to analyze its meaning and structure, and to identify its importance to the overall theme of *Antigone*. Sophocles's ode in praise of humanity comes immediately after the first episode and consists of two strophes and two antistrophes. Choral odes were antiphonal in nature; one side of the chorus recited strophes, and the other side responded in antistrophes.

Few of us attempt to read Sophocles's play in its original form; instead, we depend on translations. Translations range from those that employ elegant diction and attempt to match the cadence of the original meter to those that use modern colloquial expressions; the latter are perhaps better described as adaptations. Some translations are in the form of poetry, while others are in prose. The final part of this lesson involves comparison and contrast of various translations and can be expanded to an in-depth study of effects of diction and syntax choices for more advanced students.

In this lesson, students begin with paraphrase and analysis and then move on to the comparative study. For the final procedure, you will need assorted translations of the ode, either from print editions or online, so that small groups of students can each have a different translation.

Procedure

1. Tell students that, after having examined each episode and ode as part of the play's structure, they will now consider one ode in detail, the one that comes immediately after the first episode.
2. Distribute **Handout 9**, and read the information with the class. Clarify pronunciations: stroh'-fee; an-tis'-troh-fee. Have the students reading the part of the chorus recite the first ode one more time. Then ask small groups to complete the exercise. If necessary, clarify the nature of both paraphrase and summary.

3. Have students share their understanding of the ode.

Suggested Responses

- **Strophe 1:** Human beings are the most wonderful creation. People move across the stormy seas in safety and plow the fields of earth, year after year.
 - **Antistrophe 1:** Humans are clever. Birds, beasts, fish—all are caught in snares and tamed. Wild animals, horses, bulls—all are broken to the yoke.
 - **Strophe 2:** Humans fashion words and thoughts to create laws and government. Skill in building provides protection from all weather. People are secure against everything but death.
 - **Antistrophe 2:** Human intelligence has led people to greatness, but fate can be both good and evil. Those who respect the law will be respected, but those who break the law will be outcast.
4. Ask students to consider the importance of this ode to the overall theme of *Antigone*.

The listing of the skills humanity has achieved includes everything from seafaring abilities to creating government. The mind of the human encompasses all. Perhaps a danger exists in humanity's belief that it can do anything. Arrogance is a major theme of the play. The emphasis on law is clear, but is Antigone the lawbreaker, or is it Creon? A major conflict in the play is the law of humanity or city (government) versus the law of gods or individual conscience.

5. Distribute **Handout 10**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

For example, students might mention jet flights across the Atlantic, satellites, weather forecasts, and advanced medical technologies; hubris can still lead individuals and groups to make serious mistakes; death remains inevitable.

6. Divide the class into small groups, and provide each group with a different translation of Sophocles's ode. Ask the groups to read the translations and discover ways they differ in word choices and sentence structures from the edition the class has been studying. After students have finished, have them share results with the class as a whole.

Results will vary depending on the translations students use. Some translations do not use the designations strophe and antistrophe; some are written in prose; some attempt to modernize the play. Nonetheless, the basic structure and content tend to be quite consistent.

Have students indicate if they found the various translations more or less appealing than the one they are using in class and to give reasons for their responses.

Analyzing Sophocles's Ode in Praise of Humanity

Directions: Read the information, and complete the exercise.

Choral odes are antiphonal in structure. This means that half the chorus spoke one stanza and the other half responded in the next. These sections are called *strophes* and *antistrophes*. The chorus moved or danced as they spoke or sang, and those reciting an antistrophe reversed the direction of the movement that they used for the strophe. One of the most famous passages from *Antigone* is the ode that comes immediately after the first episode. Creon has just spoken, and the sentry has reported that someone gave ritual attention to the corpse of Polyneices. Read the ode carefully, and paraphrase or summarize each section.

Strophe 1

Antistrophe 1

Strophe 2

Antistrophe 2

A Twenty-First-Century Ode to Humanity

Directions: Sophocles wrote his ode two and a half millennia ago. Use the following questions to create the content of a contemporary ode in honor of human capabilities and limitations.

1. The first strophe or stanza says that of everything that exists on earth, human beings are the greatest. The chorus provides two examples: seafaring capability and agriculture. What specific examples would you cite today?

2. The first antistrophe stresses people's ability to subdue and tame elements of nature; people can trap and train birds, fish for food, and tame horses. What human abilities to subjugate nature would you emphasize in today's world?

Lesson 6

Imagery and Figurative Language

Objectives

- To consider the functions of imagery and figurative language
- To analyze the metaphor of a ship of state

Notes to the Teacher

It is difficult to discuss an author's style of writing when the reader is limited to translations of the author's work. As the last lesson noted, translators have their own styles—sentence structures, word choices, and rhythms of language; however, since translation is a means of communicating the playwright's ideas, a study of imagery (even through the words of another) is important to understanding and appreciation.

Imagery creates atmosphere, reinforces certain themes or motifs, characterizes and contrasts personalities, and foreshadows upcoming events. In medieval times, imagery was often used in the design of a tapestry. Similarly, by repeating images and weaving them into the basic pattern of a story, an author creates a picture.

This lesson focuses on one major image from the play—the ship of state—and then asks students to discover other images and consider their functions.

Procedure

1. Initiate the following discussion:

- What is style?

Style involves everything characteristic of the way an author writes, not what he or she says but how it is said.

- What are various aspects of style?

Style analysis involves a study of diction, syntax, structure, images, symbols, and motifs.

- Why is an analysis of style difficult when the class is studying Sophocles?

Sophocles wrote in the Greek of the Golden Age; Greek is a living language, and living languages change; translations vary in their interpretations of various aspects of the text.

2. Explain that although translators have their own styles (as discovered in Lesson 5), they usually retain the images of the original because of their power, usefulness in distinguishing the nature of the characters, role on the progress of the action, and relationship to themes.

3. Present the famous adage from Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*: "A small leak will sink a great ship." Ask students to interpret it literally. (If there is even a small hole in the bottom of a boat, sooner or later it will take on water and be in danger of capsizing.) Ask students to interpret the statement metaphorically. (It can apply to organizations, businesses, and nations, as well as to individuals. A problem may seem inconsequential, but, untended, can lead to disaster.)
4. Distribute **Handout 11**, and have students complete the exercise. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

Part A

1. Unlike trains and road vehicles, ships do not have a set path to follow. They need competent leaders who know both ship and sea well and who can maintain control even when others try to seize it.
2. A captain needs both seafaring competence and a firm hand in maintaining control, even over unruly members of the crew.
3. The consequences include mutiny, unskilled leadership, raiding supplies of food and drink, and, most likely, a disastrous sea trip. Plato wrote metaphorically about the fall of a country or an empire.

Part B

1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote about the United States during the antebellum period (the years leading up to the Civil War of 1861–1865) and saw the country as a great ship that should sail on with confidence. This is a patriotic poem.
2. The poet was well aware of the growing gap between North and South on many issues, especially slavery.

Part C

1. Walt Whitman's ship is a metaphor for the United States as the Civil War was coming, at last, to an end.
2. The captain is President Abraham Lincoln, assassinated before he could see the Union's success and the end of the war.
3. Whitman was writing about a union saved (a ship's safe arrival) and the violent death of the captain (Lincoln).

5. Distribute **Handout 12**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. Creon compares the recent war to surging waves and states that the gods have preserved the ship of state. He wants to be like the captain of a ship, one who rules in the best and safest way. A city protects its people just as a ship protects its passengers; a captain needs a loyal crew, and Creon needs friends of the city to help the ship remain on course.

2. Creon wants to lead the city with a firm and competent hand. He expects unquestioning obedience. He believes that a strong leader will make strong laws to keep the ship of state on a steady course and that weakness in a leader will lead to the destruction of the ship.
 3. Near the end of the speech, Haemon uses the analogy of a ship's captain being able and willing to change the way sails are rigged as weather changes.
 4. Haemon is warning against the dangers of rigidity; he wants his father to compromise in the treatment of Antigone. If a captain tightens the sails in a bad wind, the ship will capsize; with looser sails and heading with the wind, the ship will survive.
 5. Thebes is a ship that has managed to survive treacherous seas and is in need of a wise and skilled captain. Creon does not prove equal to this task; he blindly believes that he knows best.
 6. For a country like Greece, surrounded by water with many islands, the ship analogy is a logical choice probably based in folklore. Sophocles used the metaphor in this play. Plato did not invent the metaphor, but he did extend and clarify it.
6. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Have groups consider other images they noticed in reading the play. Ask each group to skim through the play to find references to any one image and to prepare to report their findings to the rest of the class.

This activity is heavily dependent upon the translation in use. Bird imagery is present with the eagle in the parodos, the mother bird in episode 2, and birds of augury/birds of pollution in episode 5. The images provide foreshadowing and create an atmosphere of doom. Bridal imagery is present in episodes 2 and 3 and in the exodos, accenting the foreshadowing and adding to the atmosphere of lamentation. Students might also note recurring references to money and profit, disease, and the military.

The Concept of a Ship of State

Part A

Directions: The metaphor of a ship of state is often attributed to the Greek philosopher Plato (429–347 BCE). The following excerpt comes from book 6 of *The Republic*. Read it, and answer the questions.

Imagine then a fleet or a ship in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering—everyone is of opinion that he has a right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation and cannot tell who taught him or when he learned, and will further assert that it cannot be taught, and they are ready to cut in pieces anyone who says the contrary. They throng about the captain, begging and praying him to commit the helm to them; and if at any time they do not prevail, but others are preferred to them, they kill the others or throw them overboard, and having first chained up the noble captain's senses with drink or some narcotic drug, they mutiny and take possession of the ship and make free with the stores; thus, eating and drinking, they proceed on their voyage in such manner as might be expected of them. Him who is their partisan and cleverly aids them in their plot for getting the ship out of the captain's hands into their own whether by force or persuasion, they compliment with the name of sailor, pilot, able seaman, and abuse the other sort of man, whom they call a good-for-nothing; but that the true pilot must pay attention to the year and seasons and sky and stars and winds, and whatever else belongs to his art, if he intends to be really qualified for the command of a ship, and that he must and will be the steerer, whether other people like or not—the possibility of this union of authority with the steerer's art has never seriously entered into their thoughts or been made part of their calling. Now in vessels which are in a state of mutiny and by sailors who are mutineers, how will the true pilot be regarded? Will he not be called by them a prater, a star-gazer, a good-for-nothing?

1. In what sense is a country similar to a ship?

2. What sort of captain does an efficient ship need?

3. What are the consequences of ineffective leadership?

Part C

Directions: In 1865, American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892) wrote the following poem, “O Captain! My Captain!” Read it, and answer the questions.

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!

The arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring, O bells!

But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

—Walt Whitman

1. What is the ship referred to in the poem?
2. Who is the captain? What has happened?
3. About what event was Whitman writing?

Lesson 7

Tragedy and Tragic Protagonists

Objectives

- To define *tragedy* and its components
- To consider the characters of Antigone and Creon as tragic heroes

Notes to the Teacher

Tragedy is a difficult term to define. Critics, from Aristotle to the present day, have advanced a dozen different theories regarding the nature of tragedy and characteristics of tragic heroes.

Aristotle's *Poetics*, written in the fourth century BCE, sets forth many ideas that later critics have used to evaluate not only Greek tragedy but also Shakespearean tragedy and even modern tragedy. Aristotle—a philosopher not a playwright—did not intend his description to set rules of what a tragedy should be. Writing after the time of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, he described what the Greek playwrights did, not what they should have done.

Aristotle's theory regarding a tragic hero whose downfall is caused by a character flaw (*hamartia*), usually arrogance or pride (*hubris* or *hybris*), has sometimes been misused by critics who try to bend plays and other literary works to fit the theory.

This lesson provides students with traditional Aristotelian vocabulary related to the study of tragedy. Students then study the characters of Creon and Antigone, each of whom has been suggested as the tragic protagonist of *Antigone*.

Procedure

1. Write the following headline on the board: “Thirteen Die in Tragic Fire at Day Care Center.” Ask students to describe their feelings when they read headlines such as this. (Students may mention sorrow, sadness, pity, or even anger.) Ask what words they would use to describe the situation. (Students may suggest *loss*, *disaster*, *catastrophe*, or *tragedy*.)
2. Explain that the word *tragedy* as it is used in the nonliterary sense often means any misfortune or calamity, but the literary meaning is more specific.
3. Identify Aristotle as a Greek philosopher of the fourth century BCE who wrote a treatise on the nature and form of poetry, *Poetics*, devoted almost entirely to tragic drama. He wrote after the time of the great tragedians and described general characteristics of tragic drama of the Golden Age. Aristotle did not create rules for tragedians; he simply analyzed patterns. The word *tragoidia* means “goat song,” and tragedy was born as worship of Dionysus.

4. Distribute **Handout 13**, and ask students to read Aristotle's definition of key terms in Greek tragedy. Then ask the following questions.
 - How does the play demonstrate Aristotle's definition of tragedy by arousing pity and fear in the audience?
As the action moves toward disaster, the audience members pity Antigone as well as other characters and think of their own fate and the fates of all human beings.
 - Why must the tragic hero be neither totally good nor totally evil?
If the hero is all good, then destruction of the hero would seem evil on the part of fate/gods; if the hero is all evil, the viewer would have no pity but would be pleased at the character's well-deserved fate.
5. Explain that since Aristotle's time, many philosophers and critics have discussed the nature of tragedy, and their interpretations reflect shifts in perspectives on life, happiness, unhappiness, and death. All agree that a tragic figure must end in misery.
6. Distribute **Handout 14**, and ask small groups to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Despite great potential and phenomenal success, humanity remains vulnerable to suffering, loss, and death.
 2. Humans have free will and intellect to choose paths in life, yet because of physical, mental, and societal limitations they are not free.
 3. Humans have the capacity for great good and most often desire that good, yet all good intentions can lead into error and, thus, guilt. Creon seems to be an able ruler, yet he is prey to his passions. Antigone seems to be a woman of determination and principle, yet she deliberately insults Creon and later laments her fate, as the ideal of dying for a cause becomes the reality of entombment.
 4. Antigone, Creon, Haemon, Ismene, the guard, Eurydice, and the chorus all experience internal conflicts. External conflicts include the following: Antigone versus Ismene; Antigone versus Creon; Creon versus the guard; Creon versus Haemon; Creon versus Teiresias; Antigone versus society; Creon versus society.
 5. Antigone and Creon are both stubborn and unwilling to compromise, and they are unable fully to understand their the consequences of their choices.
 6. To the ancient Greeks, fate was inevitable. In later tragedies, the hero's defeat is caused not by divine mandate but by a sense of the inevitability of destruction.
7. Distribute **Handout 15**, and ask students to complete it individually. Then ask students to write responses to the following question: Who is the tragic hero of Sophocles's *Antigone*? Collect writings as tickets out of class.

Aristotle and Tragedy: Getting the Terms Straight

Directions: In *Poetics*, Aristotle described characteristics of the tragedies of classical Greece. Read the following definitions.

Tragedy—an imitation or presentation of a serious action that arouses pity and fear in the viewer

Tragic hero—a character, usually of high birth, neither totally good nor totally evil, whose downfall is brought about by some weakness or error in judgment

Hamartia—a tragic flaw, weakness of character, or error in judgment that causes the downfall of the hero; often a form of hubris or unreasonable pride

Hubris—arrogance or overweening pride that causes the hero's transgression against the gods; usually, the tragic flaw

Anagnorisis—recognition or discovery on the part of the hero; when ignorance changes to knowledge or insight

Peripeteia—reversal of fortune, as the hero goes from happiness to misery

Nemesis—fate that cannot be escaped

Catharsis—response of pity and fear that leaves the audience both relieved and elated

Tragedy and *Antigone*

Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. Some critics argue that tragedy demonstrates that human beings are simultaneously vulnerable and great. How can this paradox be true?
2. Another paradox lies in tragedy's view of people as both free and destined. How is this evident in *Antigone*?
3. Tragic figures are often both virtuous and guilty. Is this true in *Antigone*?
4. *Antigone* includes many conflicts, both external and internal. Identify them.
5. Does Antigone have a tragic flaw? Does Creon?
6. What role does fate seem to play in *Antigone*?

Who Is the Tragic Figure?

Part A

Directions: In *Antigone*, it is not easy to decide which character is the tragic figure. The play is named *Antigone*, but Antigone disappears from the action before the end of the story. The final words of the chorus are addressed to Creon. Does this designate him the tragic hero? Perhaps the tragedy in this play is equally divided between Antigone and Creon. Consider the following questions and draw your own conclusions. Then, in each blank space, write either *A* for Antigone or *C* for Creon.

- _____ 1. Which character appears to be more committed to a principle?
- _____ 2. Which character has more freedom of choice?
- _____ 3. Which character's fall is brought about by frailty?
- _____ 4. Which character's fall is brought about by errors in judgment?
- _____ 5. Which character suffers more?
- _____ 6. Which character arouses the greater pity or fear?
- _____ 7. Which character has a moment of recognition or discovery?
- _____ 8. Which character seems to be the center of the conflicts?
- _____ 9. Which character stands more alone?

Lesson 8

Characters: Choices and Consequences

Objectives

- To consider the choices of Antigone and Creon and the consequences for themselves and others
- To focus attention on the roles of minor characters as foils, parallels, and catalysts

Notes to the Teacher

Antigone is a play about choices and their consequences. As seen in the last lesson, all the characters struggle with conflicts, both external and internal; however, Antigone and Creon, as main characters, make decisions that have the most severe consequences. The minor characters operate in several capacities, serving as foils, parallels, and catalysts.

This lesson shows the impact of the decisions of Antigone and Creon on many characters. It also places the minor characters in categories based on their actions and the results of those actions.

Procedure

1. Point out that students can understand characters in a play by observing behaviors and examining motives. Initiate a discussion of motivation by asking students why they study for a particular class or why they play a particular sport. Ask students to brainstorm as many human motivations as they can. Lead students to see that most actions are motivated by combinations of reasons.

For example, playing on a basketball team can be motivated by love for the sport, a desire to stay fit, respect for the coach, affection for teammates, and hope for an athletic scholarship in college.

2. Explain that characters, as complicated human beings, are not usually impelled by any one motive but by a combination. Review one or two conflicts from previous discussions, and discuss how multiple motivations are at work.

For example, Ismene is torn between love for her family—both living and dead—and fear of punishment. The second motivation is stronger.

3. Distribute **Handout 16**. Read the directions with the students, and note that each choice may have more than one motive and more than one consequence. Direct small groups to complete the chart for both Antigone and Creon.

Suggested Responses

Antigone

1. **Motives:** love of family; devotion to the laws of the gods; fear of failing the dead; self-will
Consequences: sentence of death for herself; forcing Creon to make his stand; alienating Ismene, who was against the act; leaving Haemon brideless
2. **Motives:** pride; self-will; anger at injustice
Consequences: reveals herself as less than heroic; angers Creon to such an extent that he decrees death for Antigone and Ismene
3. **Motives:** selfishness (personal glory); justice (Ismene deserves no credit); loyalty to family (desire to save her sister's life)
Consequences: shows herself as either courageous in isolation or unforgiving of Ismene's weakness; saves Ismene's life

Creon

1. **Motives:** love of country; pride in position of kingship; desire to appear to be a strong ruler
Consequences: establishes himself as a strong king; leads to the death of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice
 2. **Motives:** fear of failure; pride in his own opinion; distrust of others
Consequences: shows himself as obstinate, not strong; causes Teiresias to issue his warning/curse
 3. **Motives:** fear of gods
Consequences: reveals himself as unwilling to defy the gods; appears to help Antigone but too late
4. Explain the following devices: foil, parallel character, and catalyst.
A foil character is in many ways similar to the main character; the differences set off or help to define the main character. A parallel character faces a similar situation or has similar feelings and attitudes, thus reinforcing themes. A catalyst is a character whose actions serve to complicate the story, change the course of a character's actions, or make possible the tragic or happy ending.

5. Distribute **Handout 17**, and ask students to complete it.

Suggested Responses

Foils

- Ismene contrasts with Antigone: weakness versus strength.
- Haemon contrasts with Antigone: rational argument versus emotional argument.
- Haemon contrasts with Teiresias: voice of a logical human versus voice of the gods.
- The guard contrasts with Creon: subject versus king.
- The guard contrasts with Antigone: cowardly versus courageous.

Parallel Characters

- Ismene and Haemon both lose Antigone.
- Haemon and Eurydice kill themselves for another; both are instruments of revenge.
- Teiresias and the guard are both accused of taking bribes.
- Teiresias and Creon are both blind, one physically and one mentally and emotionally as a result of pride.
- Haemon, Teiresias, and the chorus all warn Creon.

Catalysts

- The guard complicates the plot when he announces the burial.
- Teiresias's warning causes Creon's change at last.
- The chorus at the end gives Creon advice to release Antigone.
- The messenger delivers news of Haemon's death, which causes Eurydice's suicide.

Choices and Consequences

Directions: Analyze each of the following decisions made by Antigone and Creon. Consider the motivating force or forces behind each choice and the consequences that result from each choice.

Antigone

Choice	Motive(s)	Consequence(s)
1. To bury Polyneices despite the edict		for self: for others:
2. To insult Creon when he confronts her		for self: for others:
3. To refuse to allow Ismene to share guilt		for self: for others:
Other Choices		

Creon

Choice	Motive(s)	Consequence(s)
1. To issue the edict against burial		for self: for others:
2. To accuse Teiresias of accepting bribes		for self: for others:
3. To give in to the counsel of Teiresias		for self: for others:
Other Choices		

Roles of Minor Characters

Directions: Antigone and Creon are not the only characters to make choices, advance the plot, and struggle with conflicts. Consider the minor characters and their actions. Then place the name of each character in the appropriate columns with the reason for that designation. A character may appear in more than one column.

Characters

Ismene
Haemon
Guard
Teiresias

Chorus
Eurydice
Messenger

Foil	Parallel Character	Catalyst

Lesson 9

Sophocles's Uses of Irony

Objective

- To analyze two types of irony: situational and dramatic

Notes to the Teacher

Irony is a discrepancy or incongruity between literal and intended meanings, or between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. The juxtaposition or contrast between the two constitutes the irony. There are three main types of irony: verbal, situational, and dramatic.

Verbal irony is simply the contrast between what someone says and what that person really means. The most common example is sarcasm, such as the sarcasm you use when something goes horribly wrong and you exclaim, “Oh great—that’s just terrific!” *Situational irony* occurs when what happens is the exact opposite of what is expected. Daily, we see discrepancies between people’s hopes and the actual outcome of those hopes. Finally, *dramatic irony* occurs when the audience (viewer or reader) has certain knowledge about which a character is in ignorance; therefore, the character does not fully understand the significance of what he or she says and does. Because of its power in his plays, dramatic irony is also referred to as Sophoclean irony.

Procedure

1. Explain the nature of situational irony, and elicit examples of this type of irony from everyday life.

Someone studies for hours for a math test, only to fail; another student barely glances at the math book and aces the test. Someone finds a dirty, nicked penny on the street, drops it into the Salvation Army kettle, and reads in the newspaper the next day that a dirty, nicked penny worth \$1,000 was found in the Salvation Army kettle.

2. Explain the nature of dramatic irony, and provide examples.

The audience can see someone looking through the window; the characters on stage think that they are completely alone and unobserved, saying or doing things they would not want that person to hear or see.

3. Distribute **Handout 18**, and use it to reinforce students' understanding of irony.

Suggested Responses

1. This is an example of dramatic irony. The audience knows that Romeo is there, and this awareness generates the scene's humor.
 2. This is situational irony; expectation and outcome are total opposites.
 3. This is verbal irony; Taylor missed the shot entirely, and Gina means that his attempt was very poor indeed.
4. Point out the ironic contrasts between the prologue and the parodos.
Antigone and Ismene are grief-stricken after the battle in which their brothers died, while the Theban chorus is jubilant over victory. When Creon proclaims his edict, assured that he will be obeyed, the audience knows what he does not—Antigone plans the burial.
5. Distribute **Handout 19**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. In episode 1, when Creon proclaims that government shows the man, his comment is ironic because he believes he has been shown to be strong, self-reliant, and destined to be the perfect king. How an individual rules does reveal character, but Creon is revealed as a tyrant. When Antigone is arrested, Creon comments on stubbornness as the cause of a great fall; in the course of the play, his own obstinacy causes his ruin. When Creon tells Haemon that the only place he can marry Antigone is in death, he has no idea that that is exactly what will happen.
2. If Antigone has fulfilled the burial rites as the guard proclaims, she does not need to return a second time. If she had not returned, she would not have been captured because the guard declares that he has no idea of the identity of the criminal. Does Antigone unconsciously wish to be captured? Is she disappointed that she escaped detection the first time? In her later lament in episode 4, does she wish for another outcome?
3. Creon seems to have no respect for family. He criticizes Antigone's love for a traitor brother, tells Ismene she has no sister, and encourages Haemon to scorn Antigone. Yet, when Haemon arrives to plead Antigone's case, Creon lectures him on being an obedient son, guided by his father in all things. In the end, the man who rejected family love has no family left.
4. Creon has two actions to perform. The chorus counsels him to release Antigone and to bury Polyneices properly. He reverses the order of doing things and seems to have a skewed sense of proportion, putting care for the dead ahead of care for the living. Because of his attempt, he is too late to save Antigone.

5. Rescue (by both Haemon and Creon) is on the way, but Antigone does not know this, and it comes too late. If Antigone had waited (ten more minutes, one more hour), she might have been saved—and a live Antigone would mean a live Haemon and thus a live Eurydice. Does Antigone kill herself in fear of a lingering death or in a desire to be in control of her own death rather than submitting to Creon's rule?
6. Conclude the discussion of irony by pointing out the complexities of human life that are revealed in the play. It is an oversimplification to see the play in terms of right and wrong. Sophocles's use of irony perhaps cautions the audience to avoid falling into the error of the characters whose own sense of what is right precludes another's view.

How Does Irony Work?

Directions: Read the information and the examples, and answer the questions.

There are three basic kinds of irony. With verbal irony, a person says one thing but really means the opposite. Sarcasm is one form of verbal irony. Situational irony involves a discrepancy between what is expected and what actually is. With dramatic irony, a character on stage is oblivious to something the audience can clearly see.

1. In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the young couple have just met at a party. Afterward, standing on the balcony outside her bedroom, Juliet talks out loud about her love for Romeo. She thinks she is all alone, but the audience knows that Romeo is actually in the garden beneath her balcony and hears everything she says. What kind of irony is involved here? How would it affect the audience?

2. You wake up in the morning in an unusually good mood. It is a beautiful spring Saturday, and you don't have to work this weekend, since you did a double shift last weekend. You decide to make the most of the two days ahead. As you head downstairs to the kitchen, you do not notice a skate on the steps. The consequence is a wild fall, two broken legs, and cracked ribs. What kind of irony is involved here?

3. Taylor is taking a tee shot at the ninth hole. After lining up carefully, he swings confidently, and the golf club whips about two inches above the ball, swinging Taylor around in a complete circle. Watching from the sidelines, Gina snickers and whispers, "Nice shot!" In what way is this scenario an example of irony?

Lesson 10

Themes and Twenty-First-Century Applications

Objectives

- To recognize and articulate dominant themes in *Antigone*
- To appreciate the play's relevance to life today

Notes to the Teacher

As the preceding lesson concludes, *Antigone* is not a play about right and wrong. Howard N. Porter writes, “To settle the question of right and wrong is not . . . to go very deeply into the meaning of the play. Sophocles is neither a moralist nor a theologian. His tragedies are existential probings into the human situation, descriptions not prescriptions. . . . By clinically exposing our limitations, intellectual and spiritual, he has, in a way that defies logic, enhanced enormously the value of life.”¹

In this lesson, students first focus on Sophocles's themes, which are born out of the play's central conflicts. Antigone lives in a place where a law has been declared that she finds abhorrent; personal conscience conflicts with royal fiat, and she concludes that it is incumbent on her to break the law. Creon's rigidity and pride compel him to a path from which he turns back too late, resulting in the painful knowledge that he is fallible and it is important to listen to what others have to say. Antigone confronts punishment, while Ismene quails at the thought of it; people need to pick their battles and know what things are worth the sacrifice of life. Students then make connections with life today.

Procedure

1. Read aloud the final speech of the chorus. Ask students to apply these words to Antigone and Creon.

Both Creon and Antigone are right in their expressed loyalty to the state and to individual conscience. Civil laws are necessary to prevent anarchy; moral laws are necessary to form an ethically correct conscience. Both Creon and Antigone stubbornly insist that there is only one right view. Stiff-necked pride disallows any bending—thus the tragedy. The words of the chorus could be addressed to both characters.

¹ Howard N. Porter, “The Theatre Recording Society Production Folio on Sophocles' *Antigone*” (New York: Caedmon Records, 1967), 7, 9.

2. Distribute **Handout 20**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise. Follow with discussion. (Note: The wording of quotations will vary according to the translation in use.)

Suggested Responses

Conflicts

- a. Creon believes in the complete authority of the king. Antigone asserts that there are higher authorities and more binding obligations.
- b. Creon believes that he has nothing to learn from someone as young as Haemon; Haemon retorts that age is not the key matter, but rather the issue of what constitutes the right action.
- c. Creon cannot bear the thought of being thwarted by a woman; Antigone is a model of courage.
- d. Creon rebukes Antigone for breaking the law; she asserts that the law he is talking about was not made by the gods, and responsibility to family is an enduring value.
- e. Creon proclaims that Polyneices is an enemy in death as he was in life; Antigone counters that she has chosen love, not hatred.

Lessons

- a. The chorus suggests that Creon might learn something from listening to Haemon. At the end of the play, the chorus talks about the importance of acquiring wisdom.
 - b. The chorus tells Antigone that she is acting recklessly. Haemon speaks of the importance of flexibility and compromise.
 - c. The chorus warns Antigone about the ruinous consequences of pride.
 - d. Creon, Antigone, Ismene, Eurydice, and Haemon all end in isolation.
 - e. The chorus announces the impossibility of escaping suffering; Creon realizes that his bad judgments have led to the loss of his family.
3. Clarify that a theme is more than a topic; it is an insight about the topic. For example, “life” is a topic, while “the fragility of life” is a theme. Then have students share the themes they have formulated, including them in the chart in **Handout 20**. Emphasize that *Antigone* is not about right and wrong so much as it is about choices and their consequences. People are faced with choices every day. Some decisions are clear-cut, but others call for a value judgment because the issues seem to present a moral conflict. As students share themes, watch for commonalities regarding personal conscience versus civil law, flexibility, and family relationships.
 4. Ask small groups to devise scenarios in which people would benefit from learning the lessons evident in *Antigone*. Tell them the locale can be as immediate as their own school building or as removed as the Oval Office or a meeting of the United Nations.

For example, a police chief in a major city might realize the value of holding regular meetings to listen to and think about the opinions and experiences of youth in the region.

No Right or Wrong—Just Life

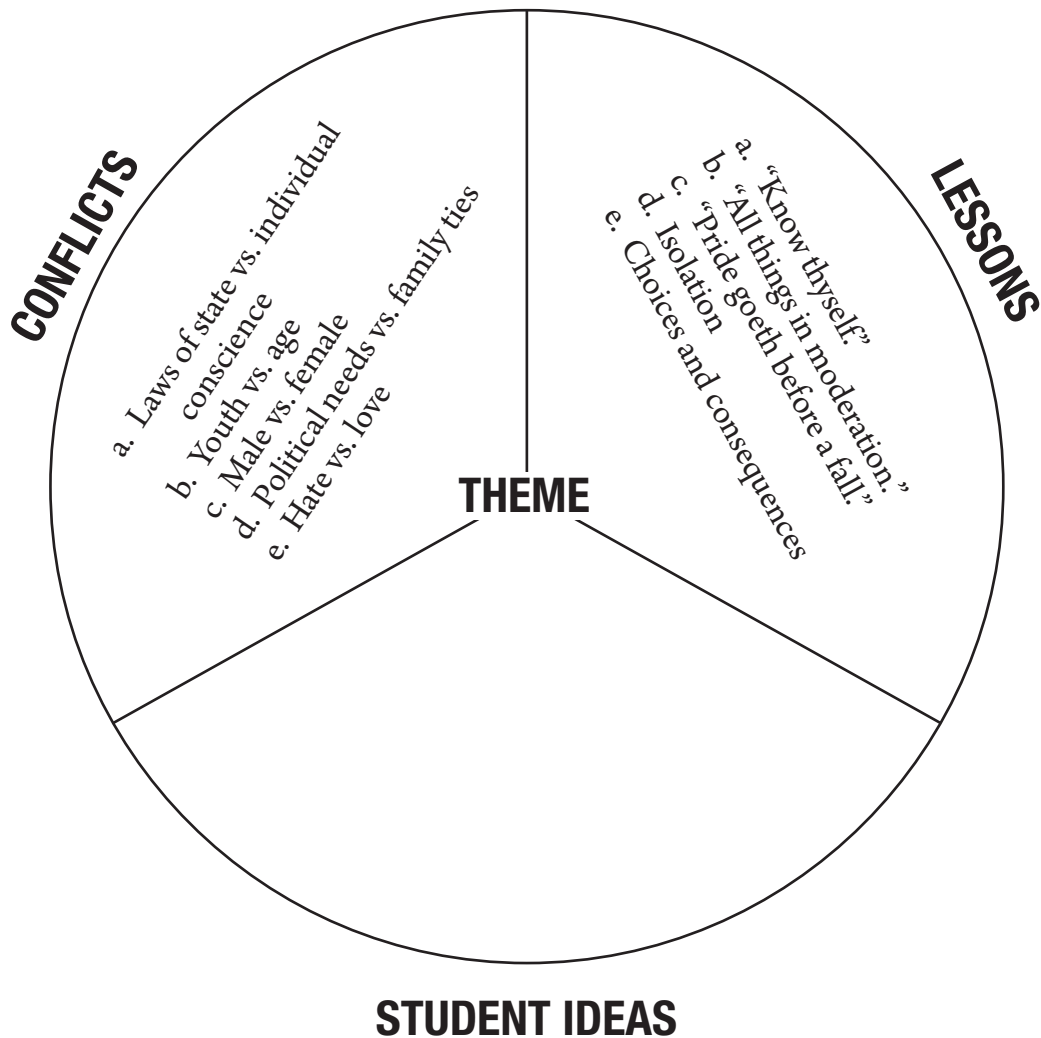
Directions: Find quotations to illustrate both sides of the suggested conflicts and the lessons to be learned. Use the pie chart to identify conflicts and lessons to be learned, using quotations or aphorisms where appropriate. Then in “Student Ideas” formulate themes of Antigone.

Conflicts

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Lessons

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____



Lesson 11

The Role of the Greek Chorus

Objectives

- To understand the composition of a Greek chorus
- To identify the functions of the chorus in *Antigone*

Notes to the Teacher

During the Golden Age of Greece, actors in plays were professionals, and they were paid for their work. There were only three major actors in each play, and they often played several roles, changing masks and perhaps costumes along the way. The chorus, on the other hand, consisted of ordinary people playing the roles of ordinary people. Being involved in a play in one of the great outdoor Greek theaters was both a duty and a privilege.

Except for the prologue, the chorus was onstage for the entire play, witnessing the main characters' actions, sometimes interacting with those characters, and reflecting on observations. The hubris that is often part of the makeup of protagonists is not characteristic of the members of the chorus, who are usually profoundly aware of human fallibility and the power of the gods.

In this lesson, students concretize their understanding of the functions of a Greek chorus.

Procedure

1. Explain that the chorus in *Antigone* is just as important as the main characters. Ask students to describe the members of the chorus.

They are older men who are citizens of Thebes, neither members of the royal household nor peasants from outlying farms.

2. Distribute **Handout 21**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. At first, it seems that the chorus has come to the front of the palace simply in celebration of victory in the war; then it becomes clear that Creon has summoned them.
2. The chorus says that the gods hate human arrogance.
3. Creon seems to expect some resistance to his decree, but the chorus seems to have no trouble complying, although they have no desire to help to guard the body to prevent burial.
4. It is important to the chorus to choose good over evil, since evil choices result in misery.

5. The chorus decries this harsh decision and feels sympathy for the young women.
 6. The chorus advises Creon not to ignore Haemon's ideas and cautions that Creon may be forcing Haemon toward desperation.
 7. Now the chorus has reason to be deeply concerned, as Teiresias is never wrong, and Creon is disregarding the advice of the prophet.
 8. With Creon bent on having his own way and unwilling to listen to others' advice, the chorus has no hope but divine help.
 9. The message is that the proper attitude for humans is humble respect for the gods. Human arrogance leads only to suffering and death.
3. Remind students that the chorus did not just recite lines. Members of the chorus also sang and danced, adding spectacle to the drama. The choreography must have been an important part of the show.
 4. Remind students that the choral odes come in between the episodes. Ask students what practical function this would have had.

The odes allowed time for the actors to leave the stage and prepare for subsequent episodes; sometimes this involved a change in costumes or masks.
 5. Distribute **Handout 22**, and divide the class into four groups (one to research each of the plays listed on the handout). Assign the groups to gather information and to prepare to report to the class as a whole.

Suggested Responses

1. In *Agamemnon*, the chorus consists of elderly men in the city of Argos. Everyone is awaiting the arrival of King Agamemnon back from the Trojan War, but his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus have planned to murder Agamemnon, which they do. The chorus is appalled by this act and turns against the city's new rulers—who, at the end of the play, are filled with hubris and disdain for the members of the chorus. This is the first play of the only Greek trilogy that still exists, *Oresteia*, so the story is still unfolding as the play ends.
2. Like the chorus of *Antigone*, the chorus of *Oedipus Rex* consists of citizens of Thebes who are hopeful that their king, Oedipus, will be able to rid the city of a dreadful plague. In the course of a day, they witness the king's discovery that he himself is responsible for the plague because he unknowingly killed his biological father and married his mother. The chorus is appalled by the events that unfold and at the end is silent.
3. The setting of *The Trojan Women* is Troy after the victory of the Greeks; the chorus consists of women of Troy, and their message is one of constant woe and sorrow over what they have experienced. The role of the chorus in the play as a whole is somewhat diminished.
4. Medea is furious at her husband, Jason, who has taken a new wife, and she exacts revenge by making him suffer the death of their children. The chorus consists of women of Corinth who understand her love and rage; they counsel less passion and more control, but to no avail. At the end, the chorus seems to accept the idea that humans have little control over events and suffering is inevitable.

6. Remind students that the celebrations in honor of Dionysus originally consisted only of a chorus, and Thespis is believed to have been the first to step out with an individual role. Ask students how the function of the chorus seems to have changed over time.

The chorus became much smaller, and actors took on increasingly dominant roles, but the chorus never disappeared from classical Greek tragedies.

7. Ask students if there is anything like the Greek chorus in modern theater.

In musical dramas, there is often a fairly large chorus that performs song-and-dance routines, as the Greek chorus did. In some plays, a single character plays a choral role, observing and commenting on the characters and events.

Focus on the Chorus

Directions: Use the following questions to consider the role the chorus plays in *Antigone*.

1. In the parodos, why are the members of the chorus coming to stand before the palace gates?
2. In antistrophe 1, what does the chorus say about human arrogance? How important is that theme to the play as a whole?
3. In episode 1, does the chorus seem inclined to resist Creon's edict?
4. The first choral ode is a hymn of praise of the powers of humanity. What cautions are expressed in its closing section?
5. The members of the chorus witness Creon's conversation with Antigone and know that he has condemned both Antigone and Ismene to death. How does the chorus react?

More Views of the Greek Chorus

Directions: Although many tragedies were staged during the Golden Age of Greece, only a few have survived over the centuries to the present day. Fill in the chart with a description of the members of the chorus and with quotations that reflect the beliefs and attitudes the chorus expresses.

Play and Playwright	Chorus Members	Quote
1. <i>Agamemnon</i> by Aeschylus		
2. <i>Oedipus Rex</i> by Sophocles		
3. <i>The Trojan Women</i> by Euripides		
4. <i>Medea</i> by Euripides		

Lesson 12

A Comparative Study: Sophocles and Anouilh

Objective

- To compare and contrast the treatments of the story of Antigone by the Greek playwright Sophocles and by the modern French writer Jean Anouilh

Notes to the Teacher

Jean Anouilh (1910–1987) was for years one of the most popular French playwrights in Europe. He wrote his adaptation of *Antigone* in the 1940s, when France was occupied by Nazi troops, and he set the play in the context of that occupation and the French resistance. His version, like the one by Sophocles, deals with the confrontation of pragmatic compromise with idealism. The play enjoyed considerable popularity in the 1970s as an emblem of civil disobedience and resistance to the war in Vietnam. Today *Antigone* is Anouilh's most frequently revived play.

A comparative study of literary works offers students the opportunity for critical reading and for observing the universality of situations and themes. Noting additions to or omissions of plot line or cast of characters, analyzing characters, investigating authors' purposes, and comparing authors' styles will help students understand new interpretations of old themes.

If you decide to include the comparative study, students should be assigned the reading of Anouilh's play as class discussion of Sophocles's version is nearing completion. The play is short and can easily be read for homework. **Handout 23** looks at the cast of characters and asks students to consider Anouilh's additions and omissions and the reasons for them. **Handout 24** follows up with a focus on changes in plot line, emphases of certain scenes, and neutrality of setting.

Handout 25 contrasts Sophocles and Anouilh and asks students to suggest what messages each author had for his time and what universal message both plays might have.

Procedure

1. Point out that in writing his *Antigone*, Anouilh made unabashed use of the earlier work by Sophocles but also made changes for his own purposes.
2. Distribute **Handout 23**, and have students mark the top part as indicated; then conduct a discussion based on the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. The only character Anouilh removes is Teiresias. The play omits all references to gods and/or fate; therefore, it follows that Teiresias, the spokesperson for the gods, would be omitted as well. Creon mentions religion in a very derogatory sense. Antigone seems to agree that the religious rites under discussion are meaningless.
 2. The nurse may have been added to provide the background for a fuller understanding of Antigone through insight into her childhood. Both the nurse and Ismene point out Antigone's impulsive nature.
 3. Ismene's character is still weak. She is described more fully; her beauty contrasts with Antigone's plainness. Haemon likes to have fun. His love for Antigone is more visible, his feelings for his father more of disillusion or disappointment. Eurydice knits throughout the play, has no lines, and utters no curse against Creon. She seems to die placidly. The messenger remains the same, unknown, a technique rather than a character.
 4. The chorus, a group of citizens in the earlier play, becomes one person who narrates in Anouilh's version. The chorus introduces each character before the play opens and concludes the play with a description of the guards playing cards.
3. Distribute **Handout 24**, and have students discuss the questions in small groups.

Suggested Responses

1. Perhaps Anouilh desired to stress the human conflict and did not want the concepts of a family curse and fate to detract from the main action.
2. The Greek chorus accomplished a variety of purposes: establishment of mood and theme; pageantry of song and dance; provision of background information; spacing episodes and reflecting on events; providing advice and opinions. Anouilh's play offers no singing, no dancing, and no division of action by the chorus. The other functions remain. The chorus introduces the characters, tells the background of the Oedipus story, and foretells the end result—death. The chorus advises Creon and comments on the nature of tragedy, which provides no escape hatches.
3. Creon reveals that both Polyneices and Eteocles tried to assassinate their father and that neither body was recognizable after death. He tries to convince Antigone that neither brother is worth dying for. She is almost convinced until Creon brings up happiness.
4. The setting for the play is not specific in time and place. Thebes is mentioned, but inclusion of cars, evening clothes, and cigarettes indicates universality.
5. The addition of the scene between Haemon and Antigone reveals the love they share and makes the separation more poignant. The scene also adds complexity to the characters. Why did Haemon choose Antigone over Ismene? Is Antigone jealous of her sister's beauty? The length of the scene between Antigone and Creon indicates the importance of this single conflict. Anouilh's Creon emerges as more humane

than the one in Sophocles. He is willing to bend, even to hide the deed, to save Antigone. Antigone appears more stubborn and resistant to compromise. The scene between Haemon and Creon is shortened, again to place emphasis on the major conflict.

6. Opinions will vary, but most readers will see Antigone as even more strong-willed, unwilling to bend in the slightest. The only time she appears to say “yes” is after the revelation about her brothers. Creon’s mention of happiness recalls her to her purpose. Antigone believes in doing what is right, not in doing what makes one happy. If she cannot have it all, she will accept nothing. Creon seems reasonable, understanding, aware of his niece’s view, but unable to accept it. Sophocles’s Creon would never compromise; Anouilh’s Creon is a man of compromise.
4. Conclude the discussion of the comparison with **Handout 25**. Read aloud the sections on time, situation, and style. Elaborate as necessary. Then ask students to consider what messages the two authors wanted to give to their own times and to all times. Have each student write answers in the spaces provided. Then ask several students to read their answers aloud. Neither playwright solves the problem; both merely show the tragic result.

Suggested Responses

- *To people of Athens*—Laws are essential, but is a law unsanctioned by the people really a law? Is an unjust law really a law? Who gives the power to create law?
- *To people of France*—Individual freedom is essential. Is compromise necessary in life, or is purity of intention superior? Should one live to be happy or to do what is right? Can one do both?
- *To all peoples*—Each person must decide what he or she is willing to stand up for. Is any principle important enough to defy the legally constituted authority? Humankind is a marvel, and so are the creations and talents of humankind. Does humankind have a limit? Is there a boundary over which we must not step?

Anouilh's Modifications of the Play

Directions: Discuss each of the following changes in Jean Anouilh's play, and suggest why Anouilh might have made these changes.

1. Anouilh omitted all references to the curse on the House of Oedipus. Instead, Creon comments on the pride of both father and daughter but not on the curse. Why?
2. Anouilh included a chorus, but it is one person, not a group. There are no odes in his play either, but there is commentary on characters, on tragedy, and on life itself. Compare the functions of the Greek chorus with the functions of Anouilh's chorus.
3. What is added to the plot line through Creon's revelations about Antigone's two brothers?
4. What is the setting for Anouilh's play? Why did Anouilh employ anachronisms and a neutral setting?
5. Why did Anouilh add a scene between Antigone and Haemon? Why did he lengthen the scene between Antigone and Creon and shorten the scene between Creon and Haemon?
6. Does the reader respond differently to the characters of Creon and Antigone in Anouilh's play?

A Look at the Two Authors and Their Messages

Directions: Complete the graphic organizer with your insights into themes.

Sophocles

Time period: lived fifth century BCE

Situation: Periclean Athens, Greece; religious context of theater

To the people of the Golden Age of Greece in the fifth century BCE in Athens, Creon's pronouncements would have seemed like the arbitrary decisions of a dictator.

Style: Greek theater tradition, lyric odes, poetic language, studied in translation

Anouilh

Time period: lived 1910 to 1987

Situation: France during World War II; Nazi occupation; censorship of theater productions

Anouilh's audience was well aware of the political situation and the play's focus on a fight for freedom and the possibility of triumph even in the face of defeat.

Style: modern theater, interest in classical myth, similar to play within a play, less elevated language, studied in translation

Message to the People of Athens	Message to the People of France
Message to People of All Times	

Writing Topics

Directions: Choose one of the following as a prompt for an essay.

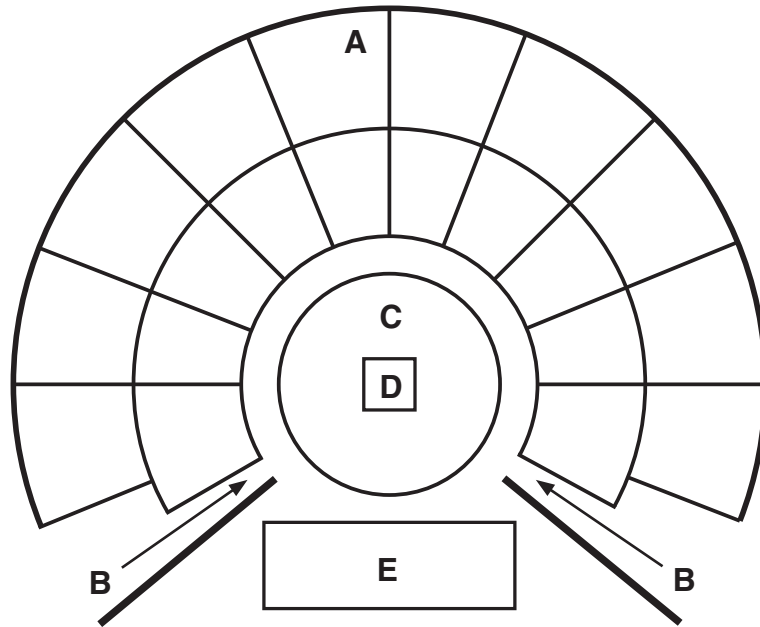
1. Write an analysis of any character in *Antigone* based on quotations by and about that character.
2. Could any character be omitted from the play? Choose one, and explain how his or her elimination would affect the play as a whole.
3. Of the House of Oedipus, only Ismene survives. What do you think happens to her? Write a description of her future as you imagine it, and include references to the play to support your ideas.
4. Write an adaptation of the story in which you place Antigone in a different place and time.
5. Write an essay in which you establish whether *Antigone* condones or condemns flexibility and compromise.
6. Read Jean Anouilh's play *The Lark*, and compare and contrast the protagonist with Anouilh's interpretation of Antigone.

Greek Theater Quiz

Part A

Directions: Choose the correct answer to match the diagram with the terms.

- ___ 1. Letter A on the diagram is the
 - a. strophe.
 - b. hamartia.
 - c. theatron.
 - d. proskenion.
 - e. skene building.
- ___ 2. Letter B on the diagram is the
 - a. orchestra.
 - b. epode.
 - c. thymele.
 - d. parodos.
 - e. catharsis.
- ___ 3. Letter C on the diagram is the
 - a. orchestra.
 - b. hubris.
 - c. dithyramb.
 - d. thymele.
 - e. skene building.
- ___ 4. Letter D on the diagram is the
 - a. catharsis.
 - b. thymele.
 - c. hypocrites.
 - d. orchestra.
 - e. proskenion.



- ___ 5. Letter E in the diagram is the
 - a. orchestra.
 - b. theatron.
 - c. chorus.
 - d. protagonist.
 - e. skene.

Part B

Directions: Mark the statement as true or false.

- _____ 1. The Father of Drama is Sophocles.
- _____ 2. In Greek plays, violent scenes occur offstage.
- _____ 3. Tragedy originated in religious festivals in honor of Zeus.
- _____ 4. Greek tragedies included instrumental accompaniment.
- _____ 5. Sophocles fixed the number of the chorus to fifteen.
- _____ 6. The actors of the Greek theater were all male.
- _____ 7. The three unities are time, place, and action.
- _____ 8. Greek theater had no lighting effects and no curtain.
- _____ 9. Masks helped to identify the characters as to age, gender, and emotion.
- _____ 10. A play could have many characters, but all roles had to be divided among five actors.

Character and Story Quiz

Part A

Directions: Match the character with his or her description.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| ___ 1. She refuses to help Antigone bury her brother's body. | a. Creon |
| ___ 2. He loves Antigone and wants to marry her. | b. Eurydice |
| ___ 3. She is ready to die for a cause. | c. Laius |
| ___ 4. He orders the edict against burial. | d. Oedipus |
| ___ 5. He was the father of Oedipus. | e. Jocasta |
| ___ 6. He is the blind prophet who knows the truth. | f. Polyneices |
| ___ 7. He killed his father and married his mother. | g. Teiresias |
| ___ 8. She is Creon's wife, and she kills herself in grief. | h. Ismene |
| | i. Haemon |
| | j. Eteocles |
| | k. Antigone |

Part B

Directions: Mark the statement as true or false.

- _____ 1. *Antigone* takes place in Thebes.
- _____ 2. Creon accuses both Teiresias and the guard of accepting bribes.
- _____ 3. The deaths of Haemon and Eurydice are announced by Creon.
- _____ 4. Eteocles is left unburied because he led a foreign army against his people.
- _____ 5. Haemon tries to advise his father not to carry out the order to kill Antigone.
- _____ 6. Haemon is killed by the guards as he tries to save Antigone.
- _____ 7. At the play's end, Creon blames Antigone for all his suffering.

Essay Test on Sophocles's *Antigone*

Directions: Provide a concise response to each prompt.

1. Describe the structure of a classical Greek theater and the structure of Sophocles's *Antigone*.
2. Why can Ismene be considered a foil for Antigone?
3. Explain the irony in Creon's comment about Antigone's stubbornness.
4. How do the attitudes of the chorus change from the play's beginning to the conclusion?
5. How is Antigone sentenced to die? Why does Creon choose this method of execution?

Supplementary Materials

Answer Key

Greek Theater Quiz

Part A

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. c

Part B

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. False

Character and Story Quiz

Part A

1. h
2. i
3. k
4. a
5. c

Part B

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. False

Short Answers to Essay Test

1. Classical Greek theaters were outdoor facilities with huge seating sections, circular stages, and aisles for the entry of the chorus. Behind the stage or orchestra was a building called the skene, which served for storage and as a background for the action. *Antigone* used the structure of the theater successfully, with the prologue and episodes on stage, separated by odes and dancing by the chorus. At the end, the exodos presents the catastrophe and the chorus's insight.
2. Antigone and Ismene are both young Theban women, royalty, and the only surviving members of the House of Oedipus. In the crisis over the burial of Polyneices, Ismene's weakness and trepidation highlight Antigone's strength and courage.
3. Creon disparages Antigone's obstinacy without realizing that his own stubbornness is in the process of engendering terrible results. This is situational irony. He can see that Antigone is bringing disaster on herself, but he is oblivious to the fact that he is doing the same thing to himself.
4. At the beginning, the members of the chorus are jubilant over victory and the end of the war, and they have no trouble accepting Creon's edict. When they observe his response to Haemon and, even more disturbing, his treatment of Teiresias, the chorus can see trouble coming. By the end, a subdued chorus can only acknowledge human frailty.

5. Originally, the sentence is stoning, but Creon apparently reconsiders and instead sentences Antigone to entombment in a cave. To his mind, this would leave his hands free of bloodshed.
6. As Antigone is led to the cave and later when her death is announced, the audience feels pity for this young person who died because of her determination to fulfill a family duty. Fear comes with the realization that anyone can experience a conflict between conscience and law and might have to face the same sort of consequence. Creon evokes the same pity and fear.
7. The ship represents Thebes, and the captain is the ruler of the city, currently Creon. The metaphor demonstrates the captain's need for wisdom, strength, and the ability to adapt to conditions as they arise. Creon is so inflexible that he proves to be an inadequate captain.
8. Antigone laments her lost marriage. Instead of marrying Haemon, she will wed Death. She realizes that she will never have children or a life of her own.
9. Teiresias is physically blind, while Creon is spiritually blind. Teiresias knows the answers, but Creon will not listen to any opinion but his own. Creon is blinded by pride—something the gods despise in humans.
10. Messengers report the deaths of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice, and we only hear about the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices. The Greeks saw portrayal of violence on stage as unseemly and tasteless. Instead, we are left to imagine what happened.

Bibliography

- Adams, Sinclair MacLardy. *Sophocles, the Playwright*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962.
- Ahrens Dorf, Peter. "The Pious Heroism of Antigone." In *Greek Tragedy and Political Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Allen, James Turney. *Stage Antiquities of the Greeks and Romans and Their Influence*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963.
- Beer, Josh. "Chapter 5 Antigone." In *Sophocles and the Tragedy of Athenian Democracy*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.
- Belli, Angela. *Ancient Greek Myths and Modern Drama: A Study in Continuity*. New York: New York University Press, 1969.
- Bieber, Margarete. *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Critical Views on Antigone*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003.
- Bowra, C. M. *Classical Greece*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1965. (Picture Essay: Enduring Theater—pp. 145–155.)
- . *Sophoclean Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Calderwood, James L., and Harold E. Toliver, eds. *Forms of Tragedy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- Easterling, P. E., and B. M. W. Knox, eds. *Greek Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Gardiner, Cynthia P. *The Sophoclean Chorus: A Study of Character and Function*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987.
- Garland, Robert. *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Harwood, Ronald. *All the World's a Stage*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.
- Hogan, James C. *A Commentary on the Plays of Sophocles*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.
- Johnston, Sarah Iles. "Antigone's Other Choice." *Helios* 33 (2006): 179-186.
- Kernodle, George R. *The Theatre in History*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1989.
- Lenson, David. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

- Nardo, Don, ed. *Readings on Antigone*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginning to the Present Day*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966.
- . *World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976.
- Ormand, Kirk W. *A Companion to Sophocles*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.
- Pedrick, Victoria, and Stephen M. Oberhelman. "The Subject of Desire in Sophocles' *Antigone*." In *The Soul of Tragedy: Essays on Athenian Drama*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005.
- Scodel, Ruth. *Sophocles*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.
- Simon, Erika. *The Ancient Theatre*. New York: Methuen, 1982.
- Steiner, George. *Antigone*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Vickers, Brian. *Towards Greek Tragedy: Drama, Myth, Society*. New York: Longman, 1979.
- Vickers, Michael J. *Sophocles and Alcibiades*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Whitman, Cedric H. *The Heroic Paradox: Essays on Homer, Sophocles, and Aristophanes*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Wilmer, S. E., and Audrone Zukauskaitė, eds. *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Winnington-Ingram, R. P. *Sophocles: An Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Woodard, Thomas, ed. *Sophocles: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966.
- Zimmermann, Bernhard. *Greek Tragedy: An Introduction*. Translated by Thomas Marier. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

