Bentley Wood
High School for Girls

AS Classical Civilisation

Summer Holiday Bridging Work
2024/25 Year 11 into 12

Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Teacher: _____

Welcome to A Level Classical Civilisation!

You have just made the best choice of your life.

Classical Civilisation is the best subject for those who have an interest in everything.

During the course we will cover:

- History
- Literature
- Drama
- Politics
- Art
- Archaeology
- Anthropology
- Reception Theory
- Theology
- Architecture
- Philosophy
- And much, much more!

What is Classical Civilisation?

Classical Civilisation is the study of the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome. It is a very wide ranging subject involving the study of literature, art and ancient thought and ideas, which are studied in the historical context.

Though all of the literature would have been originally written in Ancient Greek and Latin, everything that we study will be in **translation** (in English).

Why study Classical Civilisation?

The number one reason to study Classical Civilisation is that it is endlessly and enduringly interesting. Why else would scholars have been writing about these civilisations for the last 2,000 years?

Classical Civilisation is the perfect subject for someone who is an all rounder, but also for those who would like to increase their skills in a wide range of areas since it is all-encompassing and through reading a simple extract from a piece of ancient literature, you will have already covered elements of History, Philosophy, Language and many other disciplines. For this reason, Classical Civilisation is widely respected and can be extremely useful for whatever you might want to do in later life.

Transferable Skills:

- Analytical skills (from analysing sources and language)
- Developing argument
- Learning about and from cultures different from your own
- Developing independent, critical and evaluative approaches

Classical Civilisation can take you anywhere. It is the perfect complement to science subjects, as well as to supporting arts subjects. It is listed as an excellent subject to study to support university applications for Arts subjects and it is listed on UCL's list of 'preferred A Level options.'

What does the course look like?

Over the course of 2 years we will complete the course listed below.

We study two texts (The Odyssey and The Aeneid – the foundation texts of Western Literature) and **one** choice from Component Group 2 and **one** from Component Group 3.

We will be studying Greek Theatre and Love and Relationships. Both of these choices provide a wide overview of Greek and Roman life and provide great comparisons with the modern day.

	Content Overview	Assessment Overview	
Y12 Y13	**The World of the Hero** This is a compulsory component consisting of an in-depth study of: • one of Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey* • and Virgil's *Aeneid* This component is solely focused on the study of literature in translation.	**The World of the Hero** H408/11 100 marks 2 hours 20 minutes Written paper	**40%** of total A Level
Y12	**Component Group 2: Culture and the Arts** Learners must study one component in this component group, chosen from: • Greek Theatre (H408/21) • Imperial Image (H408/22) • Invention of the Barbarian (H408/23) • Greek Art (H408/24) Components in this group involve the study of visual and material culture. In all except Greek Art this is combined with the study of literature in translation.	**Culture and the Arts** H408/21, H408/22, H408/23, H408/24 75 marks 1 hour 45 minutes Written paper	**30%** of total A Level
Y13	**Component Group 3: Beliefs and Ideas** Learners must study one component in this component group, chosen from: • Greek Religion (H408/31) • Love and Relationships (H408/32) • Politics of the Late Republic (H408/33) • Democracy and the Athenians (H408/34) Components in this group involve of an area of classical thought, in combination with either the study of literature in translation or visual/material culture.	**Beliefs and Ideas** H408/31, H408/32, H408/33, H408/34 75 marks 1 hour 45 minutes Written paper	**30%** of total A Level

Support

Classical Civilisation will hopefully be an incredibly positive and fulfilling learning environment, but there may be times that you encounter problems with work, family, health, friends etc. that may have an impact on your life in school.

If you are experiencing any difficulties, there are always people you can turn to in school.

You can also come to see Ms Hussain or email her.

Expectations

In order to succeed during Classical Civilisation A Level, there are certain requirements that are expected during your time at school.

You are expected to:

- Have 100% attendance and excellent punctuality. If you are unwell, please contact your teacher prior to the lesson. If you have to miss a lesson for medical or academic appointments, it is **your responsibility** to catch up on the course content.
- Complete two pieces of **written homework every week** and hand it in on time. In addition to this there will always be some peparation homework set too which may take the form of reading scholarship, watching lectures or listening to podcasts.
- Spend 4 hours a week on personal study for Classical Civilisation. During this time you will be required to make detailed notes, read for essays and complete your homework. In order to do this, you must ensure that you are organised.
- Manage your time both in and outside of school effectively. A Levels demand great commitment, thus you will be responsible for organising your time and your resources and keeping them tidy.
- Work well with your peers. Be a respectful listener and a critical friend. Be supportive of everyone in the class to create a safe and inspiring learning environment.

You should expect me to:

- Mark homework and return it within two weeks of the hand-in date.
- Be willing to discuss any questions that you might have and to be supportive of your learning and progression within the subject.

Useful Websites and Knowledge Growing Ideas

- The course website: www.ocr.org.uk If you go onto the website and type in 'Classical Civilisation A Level' you will be taken to the area of the website that includes: the course information and some sample questions.
- https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl: Log on to 'In Our Time' on BBC Radio4. They have some excellent discussions about Ancient Writers such as The Philosophy of Love since Plato and The Odyssey – this will serve as an excellent introduction to the text.
- Follow Mary Beard on Twitter and watch her documentaries on Pompeii and read her books:
    - *Pompeii*
    - *Confronting the Classics*
    - *SPQR*
    - *Women and Power*
- Read modern novels about Ancient Texts like:
    - *The Children of Jocasta* by Natalie Haynes (a story of Oedipus the King from his wife's POV)
    - *The Song of Achilles* by Madeleine Miller
    - *Troy* by Adele Geras
- Read about Tragedy in *Poetics* by Aristotle – this may help you with your holiday question

Watch *Troy* (with Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom in it!) – this tells the story of the Iliad, which comes before The Odyssey. It will provide good background.

Tasks:

1. **Order your copy of the Odyssey: Homer**, 'Odyssey' translated by E.V. Rieu, revised translation by D.C.H. Rieu (Penguin)
2. **Read at least Books 1-12** (you can keep reading, if you wish).
3. From your reading (or research, if necessary), **complete the table on the key characters in the Odyssey and the Homeric terms table.**
4. **Read the introduction to the Odyssey** (Jenkyns- at the end of this booklet). From it and Books 1-12, complete:
    a. **A visual representation of what you think is the most interesting scene in the Odyssey (I leave it to you to choose what media you use)**
    b. **One question that you would like to learn more about the Odyssey over the year.**
    c. **'Odysseus is not a hero, in the modern sense of the word.' Do you agree with this statement? Answers should be two pages, handwritten, ideally with about 4 paragraphs. One of these could be about whether he is an ancient Greek hero, if you would like to research this.**

Homeric terms table

Greek Term	Meaning and Explanation
xenia	
nostos	
kleos	
time	

key characters in the Odyssey

Name	Who is he/she?	What is their involvement in the Odyssey?
Penelope		
Telemachus		
Anticleia		
Laertes		
Circe		
Calypso		
Nausicaa		
Polyphemus		
Eurymachus		
Antinous		

Academic Enrichment Suggestions:

READ!

- *Circe* by Madeleine Miller
- *The Song of Achilles* by Madeleine Miller
- *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker
- *The Women of Troy* by Pat Barker
- *The Children of Jocasta* by Natalie Haynes
- *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes
- *Pandora* by Natalie Haynes
- *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt
- *The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Odyssey* translated by Emily Wilson (first edition to be published in the English language by a woman)
- *Mythos* by Stephen Fry
- *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie
- Ancient Texts:
    - *Metamorphoses* by Ovid
    - *The Iliad* by Homer

LISTEN!

BBC 'In Our Time' podcast:

- The Greek Myths
- Tragedy
- The Odyssey

(Always make detailed notes as you listen!)

WATCH!

U	Ben Hur
U	Hercules (Disney)
U	Jason and the Argonauts
PG	Spartacus
PG	The Odyssey (1997)
PG	Clash of the Titans (1981)
12	Pompeii
12	Agora
12	The Eagle
15	300
15	Alexander
15	Gladiator
15	Troy

The Plots

The Troy Story

All three poems are related to the story of Troy. Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, was invited to judge which was the most beautiful of three goddesses, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (Latin names: Juno, Minerva, Venus). He chose in favour of Aphrodite, goddess of love, in return for which she enabled him to seduce Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, and take her to Troy. To avenge this insult, Troy was besieged by a Greek army led by a federation of chieftains under the overall command of Menelaus' brother, Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. (Troy is also called Ilium – hence *Iliad*.)

The Iliad

The *Iliad* has one of the best plots ever devised. Its outlines are simple, but there is a very large cast of subsidiary characters. The essential plot is given here; added in brackets are some details or episodes which may clarify the discussion in this book.

It is the tenth and last year of the war. The Trojan priest of Apollo offers ransom for the return of his daughter, who is Agamemnon's captive. Agamemnon insults him, and the god Apollo sends a plague on the Achaean (i.e. Greek) army. The Achaean chieftains meet: Agamemnon agrees to return the girl, but angered by the speech of Achilles, son of Peleus, the best of the Achaean warriors, seizes Achilles' own captive woman, Briseis. Achilles withdraws from battle and appeals for help to his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis. (We learn that his life is destined to be short.) She prevails on Zeus, king of the gods, to give the Trojans the upper hand in the battle, so that the Achaeans will have to make terms with Achilles.

Under the leadership of Hector, son of King Priam, the Trojans begin to gain the upper hand. (Hector's wife Andromache, with their baby son, is introduced in a scene in which she talks with him before

he re-enters battle.) Agamemnon is forced to back down, and sends an embassy to Achilles (consisting of two chieftains, Ajax and Odysseus, and Achilles' old tutor, Phoenix) offering the return of Briseis and a vast recompense in addition. (Phoenix tells the story of the anger of another hero, Meleager, trying to persuade Achilles that if he delays too long, he may lose the recompense.) Achilles angrily rejects the offer, declaring that he will not do battle again until the Trojans are setting fire to the Achaean ships.

Distressed by the continued Achaean reverses, Patroclus, Achilles' intimate friend, persuades Achilles to let him enter the fight wearing Achilles' armour. (Patroclus inflicts slaughter on the Trojans and kills Sarpedon, a Lycian who is fighting with the Trojans as an ally.) Hector kills Patroclus.

Achilles is stricken with grief and rage. (Thetis persuades the god Hephaestus to make him new armour, including a shield depicting many scenes of human activity.) He now makes up his quarrel with Agamemnon, passionately eager to plunge into battle again. He kills many Trojans, and finally meets and kills Hector. To avenge Patroclus he refuses to return Hector's body for burial and attempts to mutilate it by dragging it behind his chariot (though the gods prevent the mutilation by supernatural means). Patroclus' ghost appears to Achilles, asking for burial. Achilles sacrifices animals and Trojan prisoners by his pyre. He organises funeral games, which show him in a newly humane light.

There is contention among the gods between those who favour the Achaeans and those who favour Troy, but the squabble is soon settled. The gods agree to tell Achilles to hand back Hector's corpse, and arrange for Priam (escorted by the god Hermes, disguised as a young man) to come alone to bring the ransom and collect his son. Achilles shows generosity and pity towards Priam, and a short truce is arranged for the funeral rites.

The Odyssey

Books 1-4. Ten years after the end of the Trojan War, Odysseus, king of the island of Ithaca, has still not returned home, thanks to the enmity of the sea-god Poseidon. His palace is occupied by local nobles, who are wasting his substance; they are suitors for the hand of his faithful wife Penelope, who is finding it hard to resist their demands that she choose one of them. The goddess Athena prevails on Zeus to enable Odysseus to return. She comes to Ithaca, in

disguise, to put heart into Telemachus, Odysseus' son; he holds an assembly, and sets off on a journey to enquire after his father, visiting the court of Nestor at Pylos and (with Nestor's son Peisistratus) the court of Menelaus and Helen at Sparta.

Books 5-8. Meanwhile Zeus sends the messenger god Hermes to the island of Ogygia, where the amorous goddess Calypso has for years kept hold of Odysseus. She is told to let him go; he builds a raft and leaves, and after being shipwrecked in a storm sent by Poseidon is washed ashore at Scheria, land of the Phaeacians. He is rescued by the princess Nausicaa, who tells him to go to her parents, Alcinous, the Phaeacian king, and Arete. He is hospitably received, and at a feast is asked to tell his name and story.

Books 9-12. He tells his adventures, in which all his men perished. Some of them are captured by the one-eyed cannibal giant, Polyphemus the Cyclops, from whom they escape by blinding him. He is Poseidon's son; hence the god's wrath. After the Laestrygonians, another cannibal people, have destroyed eleven of Odysseus' ships and their crews, the surviving ship reaches Aeaea, island of the enchantress Circe. She turns some of Odysseus' men into pigs, but by supernatural assistance he outwits her, and they have an affair. Odysseus leaves her and comes to a place where he calls up the ghosts of the dead: the seer Teiresias foretells his future, and he also meets his mother Anticleia, Achilles, Agamemnon and his old rival Ajax. On another island they find the cattle of the Sun, which they are forbidden to touch, but driven by hunger, they kill and eat some; only Odysseus refrains. In consequence Zeus wrecks the ship, and Odysseus alone survives, cast ashore on Calypso's isle. (Other adventures include the Lotus-Eaters, Aeolus and the bag of winds, the Sirens, and Scylla and Charybdis.)

Books 13-20. The Phaeacians leave Odysseus on Ithaca, asleep. He meets Athena, disguised again, and tries to deceive her with a lying story. She reveals herself, promises help, and disguises him as an aged beggar. He is hospitably received by the loyal swineherd Eumaeus, to whom he tells more false tales about himself. Telemachus returns, accompanied by a seer, Theoclymenus, whom he has met on the journey, and escapes a plot by the suitors to kill him. He comes to Eumaeus' hut, and Odysseus reveals his identity to him. Odysseus,

Eumaeus and Telemachus come to the palace. The aged hound Argus recognises Odysseus, and dies. Odysseus is insulted by the goatherd Melanthius, the beggar Irus, the maidservant Melantho and several suitors. Odysseus and Penelope converse; she tells the housekeeper Eurycleia to wash him, and Eurycleia recognises him by his scar. Theoclymenus foresees the suitors' deaths from a vision of blood dribbling from their mouths as they eat meat.

Books 21-3. Penelope tests the suitors by inviting them to string Odysseus' bow and shoot through a line of axes. They fail to string the bow. Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus and the loyal oxherd Philoetius. He strings the bow and shoots through the axes. Odysseus, Telemachus and the two loyal herdsmen kill the suitors. Those slave-girls who were disloyal are hanged, and Melanthius is hideously mutilated. Penelope refuses to believe in Odysseus' identity. As a trick she orders his bed to be moved; Odysseus, who had built the bed around a living tree, flares up in anger, and Penelope acknowledges that this is truly her husband. They retire into the bed.

Book 24. The souls of the suitors pass to the underworld, where they meet Agamemnon and Achilles. Odysseus visits his father Laertes, who is living in decrepit conditions in the country, and after testing him with another false story, reveals himself. The suitors' kin plan vengeance; there is a skirmish, but Athena intervenes and brings peace.

The Aeneid

Book 1. Aeneas is the leader of a band of Trojans who have survived the sack of Troy. Jupiter, king of the gods, has willed that he shall go to Italy and establish the people that will ultimately found Rome; but his wife, Juno, is resolved to continue her persecution of the Trojans. Juno arranges for a storm to batter Aeneas' ships; the remnants of his fleet make landfall on the African coast, near Carthage. Jupiter reassures Aeneas' mother, the goddess Venus, and reveals the future greatness of Rome, culminating in the rule of Augustus. Aeneas meets Venus, disguised as a young huntress. The Trojans are hospitably received by the queen of Carthage, Dido, a young widow. Juno and Venus, from different motives, conspire to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas.

Chapter 8
The Two Worlds of Odysseus

On the face of it there are two kinds of Odysseus in the poem. There is the folktale figure, the trickster, wily, curious, cheeky, acquisitive, the cousin of Jack the Giantkiller and Sinbad the Sailor; and there is the Odysseus of the *Iliad*, a hero of epic song. The one Odysseus is a wanderer among magic and monsters, the other is a king rooted in his own kingdom, a noble whose prowess is displayed in close combat with other nobles. The co-existence of these two conceptions is due to the tradition. Odysseus the trickster seems to be a very ancient figure; we have stories about his wiles which are quite independent of Homer. At some stage, probably much earlier than the *Iliad*, he becomes attached to the Troy story, but even in the *Iliad* as we have it there are trace-indications of his origins elswhere: he is regarded as belonging to a generation older than that of the other Achaeans, and he belongs to a part of Greece remote from the Mycenaean heartland out of which most of the heroes come.

However, we should not regard the two types of Odysseus as a flaw in the *Odyssey*: on the contrary, the diversity of the tradition is material with which the poet plays, and from which he produces some of his most delicate effects. From one point of view the main narrative itself is a blend of folktale and epic tale: obvious folktale elements are the magic disguise, the wondrous bow that only Odysseus is strong enough to bend, the fantastic way in which one man can kill dozens almost single-handed, the riddle of the bed. But the simple story of Odysseus' homecoming has been expanded to a heroic length comparable to that of the *Iliad*, and that expansion of scale is matched by one of the leading ideas of the poem, the heroisation of the domestic; we shall come back to this in due course.

From another point of view, though, it can be said that the two kinds of Odysseus are kept almost separate. When he tells the story of his wanderings he begins in the real world, with Ismarus in Thrace, Cythera and Cape Malea. From Malea he is carried by a storm for nine days, and that storm blows him right off the map. Thereafter he is in a wholly mythical world, inhabited mainly by gods and monsters,

Fig. 3. Odysseus blinding the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus, was a favourite subject with vase-painters (here on a jar of about 520 BC). The folktale is depicted with appropriately crude gusto. In the poem Odysseus describes how he twisted the stake while his men pushed; adapting the story for visual treatment, the artist has Odysseus at the front thrusting, his foot pressed against Polyphemus' chest.

and otherwise by peoples who are dangerous in magical or exotic ways (the Lotus-Eaters, the cannibal Laestrygonians). The lying stories that Odysseus tells after his return to Ithaca are set in real places, like Crete and Egypt, while the geography of the 'true' adventures that he tells in Phaeacia is entirely fantastic – so far are the two fictional worlds of the *Odyssey* kept apart.

The poet's pleasure in the juxtaposition of these two kinds of fiction comes out above all in the place where they meet, Scheria, land of the Phaeacians, the charm of which resides in the delicate way that it is poised between the familiar and the fantastic. This is a magic place: there are fruit and blossom in Alcinous' garden all the year round (7. 117ff.), there are automata in his palace (7. 91ff., 100ff.); the Phaeacians' ships steer themselves (8. 557ff.); this people, as Alcinous himself says, is especially close to the gods, who come and join their feasts in person (7. 201ff.). But this does not prevent the poet from regarding them with an ironic humour, which like much in the poem is understated: as in the *Iliad*, we are often not told what to think; we make our own deductions. Alcinous, the generous host, proposes that each of the Phaeacian nobles should make Odysseus a present, but spoils the effect by adding that they should recoup the cost from the people later (13. 10ff.). Thus spake Alcinous, 'and the speech pleased them'; the formula acquires an edge in the context.

There are other hints that Alcinous is a bit of a bumbler; for example Nausicaa's advice, unexplained, that when Odysseus enters the palace, he should pass by Alcinous (who 'sits drinking wine like an immortal') and supplicate the queen so that he can get what he wants (6. 308ff.). Later Alcinous presses Odysseus to come and watch the Phaeacians at their sports, so that 'the stranger may tell his friends when he comes home how far we excel others in boxing and wrestling and jumping and running' (8. 101ff.). When Odysseus is goaded into taking part he wins the discus competition easily, and threatens to beat his young rivals at boxing, wrestling and even running as well. Alcinous blandly adjusts his earlier boast; it is another example of how repetition and the formulaic manner can be used, neatly and economically, to humorous effect:

> We are not outstanding boxers and wrestlers, but we run swiftly and are the best of seamen, and always dear to us are feasting, the lyre and dances, changes of clothing, hot baths and bed. But come... make merry, so that the stranger may tell his friends when he comes home how far we excel others in seamanship, fleetness of foot, dancing and song. (246ff.)

Well, we may reflect, it takes no great skill to like hot baths and fresh linen. But the passage is not simply comic: there is something touching and lovely in the idyll of Scheria, a land of dance – as we shall see.

Homer's blend of the elevated and the everyday is at its most delicate in the handling of Nausicaa. She belongs with Circe and Calypso in the sequence of women whom Odysseus encounters in his wanderings, but she differs from the others in that they are goddesses, while she is an ordinary mortal, and that they have sexual relations with him, while she may not. She is unlike Circe and Calypso, and yet – here is the delicacy – not wholly unlike. Nausicaa too is physically drawn to Odysseus, and we may start to wonder if her story also will be one of passion and desolation. And though she is not a goddess, at moments she resembles one. As she plays with her maidens she is likened to Artemis, accompanied by her nymphs (6. 102ff.). When Odysseus comes forward to her in supplication, he asks her if she is god or mortal, and makes the comparison with Artemis again (149ff.). This is flattery, to be sure, but flattery with a sort of truth in it. Later, he will promise that when he reaches home, he will always pray to her as to a god, in gratitude for what she has done for him (8. 467f.). The charming naturalism with which Nausicaa's girlhood is portrayed gains a radiance from these hints of divinity that hover about it. One can easily be pompous or sentimental about Nausicaa, which Homer is not; but it is fair to say that Homer shows us that, in a sense, girlishness can be divine.

The preparations for Nausicaa's excursion are a social comedy of hidden motives and tacit understandings. First Athena comes to her, disguised as one of her friends, and urges her to go and wash her clothes in preparation for her marriage, which cannot be far off; the goddess conceals her true purpose, which is to bring Nausicaa face to face with Odysseus (and indeed, since he will be naked, rather more than face to face). Nausicaa, for her part, is embarrassed to talk about marriage to her father, and pretends that she wants to wash his own and her brothers' clothes. In turn, Alcinous recognises her real motive, but goes along with the pretence, as though he had not seen through it. These social levities are also part of a moral vision. Manners makyth man; and a part of good manners, in Homer's idea, is a respect for reticences. A bad host, like the Cyclops, demands Odysseus' name at once (9. 252); the good host Alcinous waits until

Odysseus has been bathed and fed before enquiring about him (8. 550ff.). In the reticences of Athena, Nausicaa and Alcinous there is a mixture of cunning and good feeling; it is part of the ethos of the *Odyssey*, serious but mischief-loving, good-humoured and yet wry, that these two things should come so close together.

After the washing is done, Nausicaa and her maidens play ball. This is not a competition but a dance, accompanied by singing. Nausicaa had told her father that she wanted to do her brothers' laundry because 'they always wish to have newly washed clothes to go to the dance' (6. 64ff.). In the Phaeacians' happy world, order and harmony, which are leading themes of the poem, are lifted out of the solemn business of common life into the playfulness of dancing and music.

The scene of Nausicaa and her maidens is the first picture in European literature of simple happiness. But curiously enough, the washing of clothes had already been associated with the idea of happiness in the *Iliad*. As Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy, they pass the washing troughs

> where the Trojans' wives and lovely daughters used to wash their bright clothes, in earlier times, in peace, before the sons of the Achaeans came.
>
> (22. 154ff.)

There, in the midst of horror, is a brief glimpse of the good time that will never return. And surely it is no accident that laundry and pleasure should be twice associated together. Ordinarily, the women's sphere is indoors, the men's outdoors; Nausicaa finds her mother spinning by the hearth, with her handmaids, while her father is outside, on his way to take counsel with the chieftains (6. 51ff.). But when women go to wash clothes, they leave the house, they leave the city ('The washing-troughs are far from the city,' as Athena observes, 6. 40); they are women together, freed from the constraints of the home, without men to see them or command them – the presence of Odysseus is indeed an alarming intrusion.

Having created this feminine idyll, what will Homer do with it? Nausicaa hints to Odysseus that he might become her husband. There is more mild deceit and unspoken meaning. She suggests that as they approach the city, Odysseus should leave her and enter separately for fear of gossip; otherwise, someone may say, 'Who is this tall, handsome stranger with Nausicaa? Where did she find him? He will be her husband' (276ff.). And thus Nausicaa, too modest to announce

her name directly, has managed to reveal it by indirection. We seem to be at the beginning of a folktale: the story of the stranger who comes to a far land, performs deeds of prowess and marries the king's daughter. Yet Nausicaa and Odysseus separate before they reach the city, and apart from one very brief scene, apparently of farewell, he seems not to see her again. It is as though the romance has been lost or forgotten before it ever got started.

Odysseus cannot of course marry Nausicaa. The Phaeacians, who have no existence in myth independent of Homer, have plainly been invented to fit into the *Odyssey*, or into a poem close to the one we know. It is therefore hard to believe that there was ever a love story which got lost as the poem developed. Rather, the poem chooses to toy with the folktale motif, to tease our expectations. The beauty lies in understatement. We have almost forgotten Nausicaa when she comes into the hall where Odysseus is feasting with the Phaeacian nobles. She does not even come close to him, but stands by a pillar, at a distance, as befits a woman. And she speaks two lines only: 'Farewell, stranger,' – for she has not learnt so much as his name – 'so that when you are in your homeland you may still remember me, since you owe thanks to me for first saving you' (8. 461ff.). Odysseus briefly thanks her and promises to remember her with honour. That is all; we do not even have her departure from the hall described.

Notice that the restraint is not only in the telling but in the event itself. Many poets would have milked the story of all the pathos that it could yield. All but a very few, even if they did not dwell upon the girl's heartbreak, would at least have implied it. Homer will not even do this. The pathos is there ('She looked admiringly at Odysseus before her eyes'), but it is kept very light. Nausicaa has been happy and Homer will not let that happiness be destroyed. When Virgil alludes to Nausicaa as he introduces Dido, he prepares to transform the idyll into tragedy; but though Dido's story is a masterpiece, we may feel that with the vanishing of Homer's understatement something has been lost. There is a type of literary critic who cannot be content with the depiction of happiness unless the poet is in some way undercutting it or adding troubling overtones. Homer was wiser.

The Phaeacians themselves fade from the picture in a curious way. Odysseus has no parting from them: he wakes up in Ithaca and finds them gone. We ourselves never learn whether their prayers will dissuade Poseidon from raising a mountain above their city, and they actually disappear from our sight in mid-sentence:

> Thus the chiefs and leaders of the people of the Phaeacians prayed to the lord Poseidon, standing around the altar, while Odysseus awoke...
>
> (13. 185ff.)

We shall know them no more; nor will anyone else, for Alcinous has resolved that whereas hitherto they have given everyone passage in their ships, they will never do so to mortal men again. Homer's technique of narrative, in refusing to complete the story, is a strange one, teasing in its elusiveness; but it is curiously apt that the Phaeacians, who have combined the charms of domesticity with the enchantments of distance, should pass from the poem by a mysterious evanescence.

Classical Civilisation

Summer 2024 Bridging Work

All reading you have to do is attached at the end of the booklet

Name:

The 9 Muses:

Clio (History), Euterpe (Music), Thalia (Comedy), Melpomeni (Tragedy), Terpsichore (Dance), Erato (Love Poetry), Polymnia (Hymns & Mimic Art), Ourania (Astronomy), Calliope (Epic Poetry)

1. General Classics Knowledge

Mythology

- ❖ Greek Tragedy was based on well-known myths and religion was an intrinsic part of Greek society. Therefore, you need to make sure you know all major mythological stories and have a strong understanding of all their deities.
- ❖ **TASK 1: You need to research the main Olympian Gods and the most well-known myths associated with them and summarise this on the following table on p3-4.**
- ❖ Dig as deep as you can and read as many stories as you can in order to gain a good overview.

NB: the myths will change, sometimes drastically from source to source so do not worry if you get very different ideas to everyone else.

Good websites to research the gods and goddesses are the two links below:

- https://www.greekmythology.com/
- https://www.theoi.com/

Recommended books to expand your knowledge:

- *Orchard Book of Greek Myths* by Robert Graves (it looks childish, but the myths are told well and accurately)
- *Mythos* by Stephen Fry – a very current book. There is a lot of artistic licence in this one, but it is a very entertaining read.
- *Pandora's Jar* by Natalie Haynes – very current and interesting look at women in Greek myth
- *Classical Myths* by Jenny March

God/Goddess Add Roman name below the Greek names	God/Goddess of?	Symbols	Major mythological stories associated with them
Zeus			
Hera			
Athene			
Poseidon			
Hermes			
Apollo			

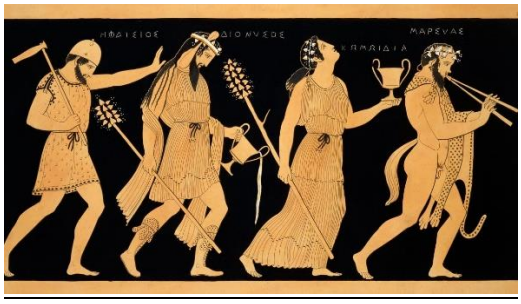
Dionysus			
Artemis			
Hestia			
Demeter			
Hades			
Aphrodite			

TASK 2: Major Mythological tales you need to research and create storyboards for:

- The Oresteia
- The Trojan war -from the judgement of Paris to the fleeing of Aeneas to found Rome

Your storyboard should be filled with creative and colourful images which clearly represent parts of the story. It can be realistically drawn or you can use symbols.

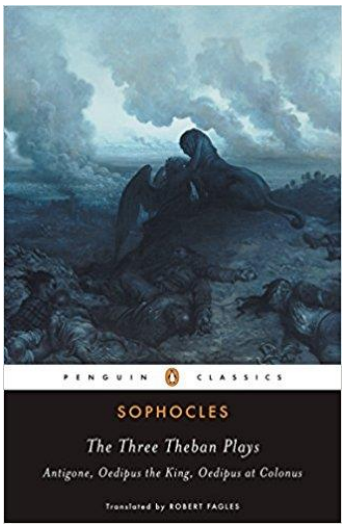
2. Greek Theatre

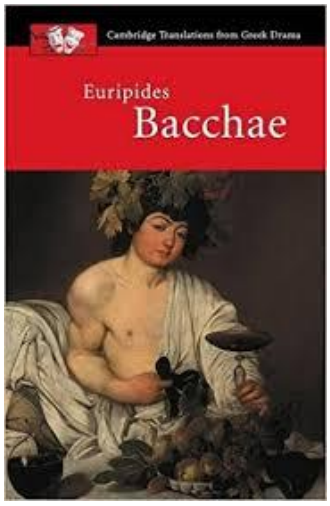


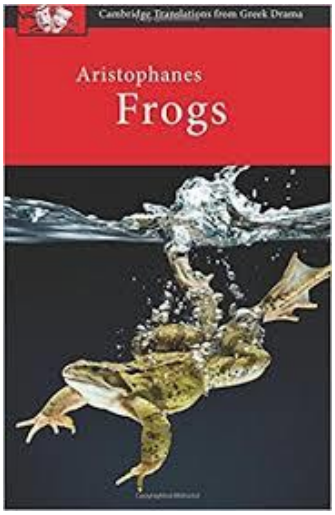
For the Greek Theatre unit, you will have to read three plays:

- *Bacchae* by Euripides
- *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
- *The Frogs* by Aristophanes

Over the summer holidays, you must purchase the following copies of the plays:







TASK 3: Read the article on the origins of Greek theatre (given to you in the taster lesson)

TASK 4: Fill in the table on **p6** which is full of **key terms** you will need to know when studying Greek theatre

TASK 5: you must read **Oedipus the King and use the comprehension booklet to support your understanding.**

TASK 6: You must then write an answer of no less than 500 words to this question: **Why do you think Oedipus the King is an effective tragedy?**

Success Criteria:

- Write in full paragraphs
- Make at least 3 separate points
- Support your answer with examples from the text

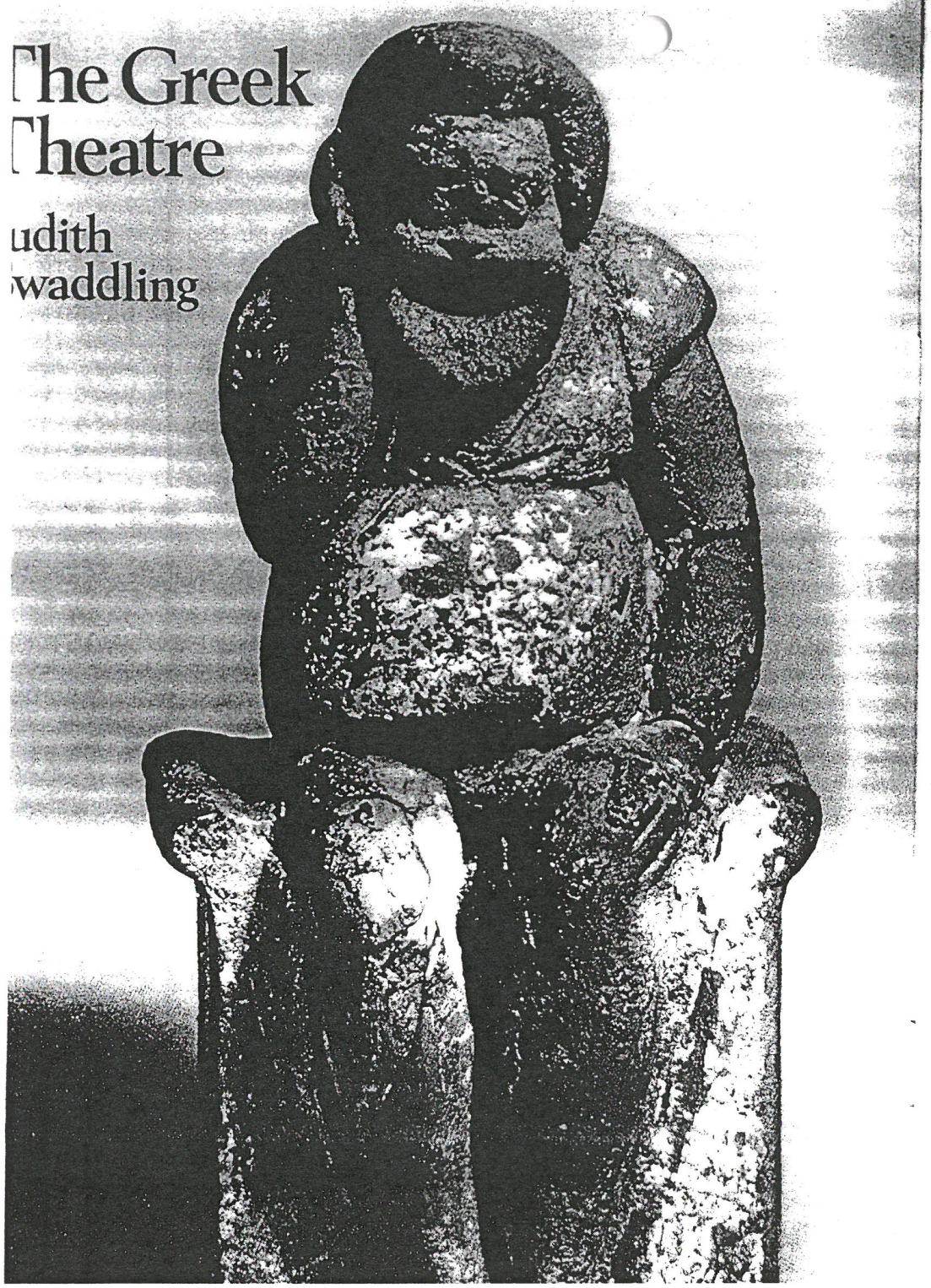
You must bring this with you to your first lesson of Classical Civilisation in September

Key Terms

Term	Definition
catharsis	
chorus	
choral ode	
exodus	
hamartia	
hubris	
kommos	
monody	
parabasis	
parodos	
peripeteia	
prologue	
stasimon	
stichomythia	
tragic/dramatic irony	

The Greek Theatre

udith
waddling



(*Cover*) Wine bowl from Southern Italy: comedy scene with lover climbing ladder to girl at window (cf. Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazousae*) 360–340 BC.

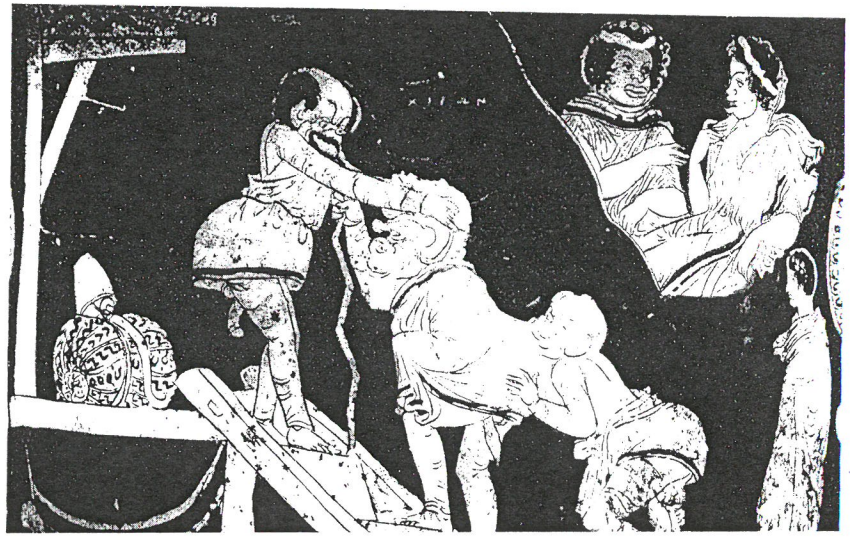
(*Left*) Slave seated on altar where he has taken refuge, mockingly raising hand to ear as though he cannot hear his pursuer shouting at him to leave it. Greek terracotta statuette made in Athens about 350 BC.

Parody of the myth of Cheiron (the centaur, enacted by an old man with a slave pushing from behind). The slave Xanthias helps him from further up the stairs leading into the 'Temple of Apollo' where Cheiron goes to be cured of blindness. *Top right*: two nymphs. *Below*: Achilles. Wine-bowl, made in Southern Italy about 380 BC.

Weird masks, outlandish characters, highly stylized acting and a chorus posing or shifting about the stage in a series of exaggerated, rhythmic movements – these are probably the impressions that come to most people when they hear of 'the Greek theatre'. Today, it may well seem a strange and remote form of entertainment, but one has only to watch a good production of a Greek drama to see the colourful spectacle come alive, to appreciate the impact of the tragedy, and the hilarity of the comedy.

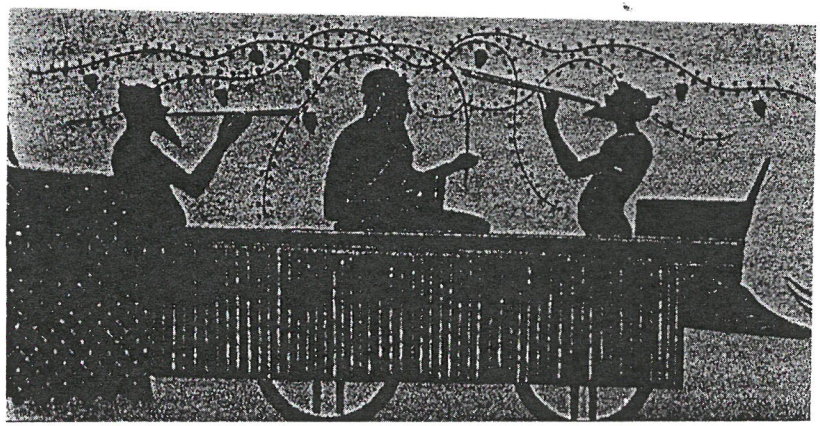
The basic conventions of the Greek theatre, variously refined and modified through the ages, still form the principles of our modern theatre. Even the words that we use – theatre, drama, scene, programme, orchestra – though some are now slightly changed in meaning, have been derived from the Greek. Not only are the ancient plays still performed in their own right, in both local and national theatres, but updated versions have always been popular. The Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, the French dramatists Racine and Molière and our own Shakespeare, to name but a few, have all borrowed material, in the way of plots, themes or characters, from the Greek drama. Even today, farces like *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* owe a great deal to these ancient productions.

Where the ancient theatre differed very much from ours was in the part that it played in people's lives. Fortunately for us, both the Greeks and the Romans so enjoyed the theatre that they even decorated their household wares with representations from it. We find theatrical masks gracing the handles of bronze bowls and on terracotta lamps, scenes from plays pictured on bowls for mixing wine, wall paintings and floor mosaics, and masks made of stone, bronze and clay used as hanging decorations for the home. Tiny masks shaped in gold and others in the form of glass pendants



(*Above*) Greek and Roman objects decorated with theatrical masks: carved finger ring, bone mask from a hairpin, bronze mask from a vase.

(*Left*) Parody of an incident in Homer. Dolon ambushed by Odysseus and Diomedes. Wine bowl made in Southern Italy, about 390–380 BC.



Dionysos in his ship-cart. Reconstructed drawing from vase made in Athens about 500 BC.

w( )ed as jewellery, and minute ones were used as seal-stones in finger rings. The Greeks also collected sets of terracotta statuettes representing the characters of their favourite plays: in contrast, we can hardly imagine anyone nowadays adorning their shelves with figures from plays.

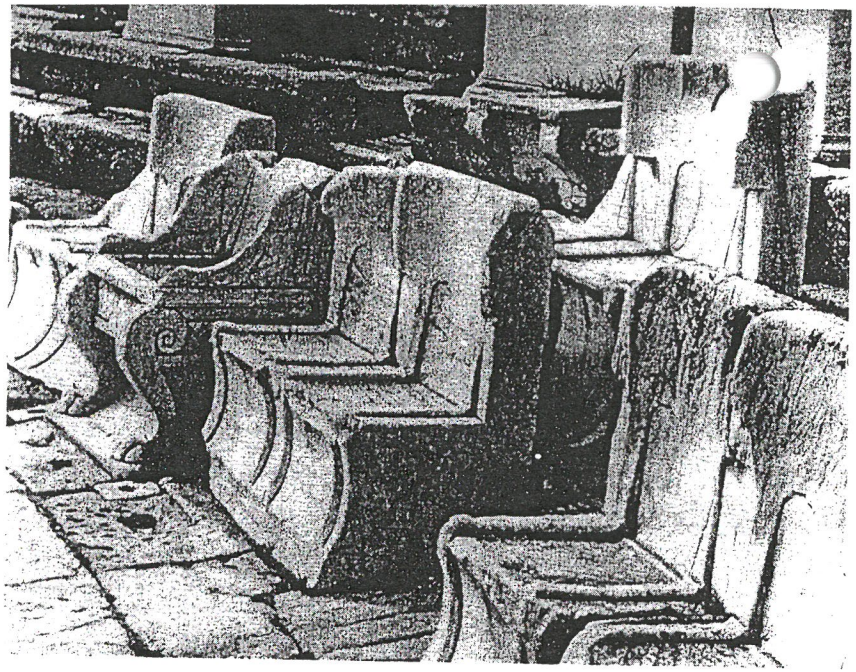
Drama and Religion

To the Greeks, the importance of the theatre lay not in that it was a mere entertainment, but that it was a performance very closely associated with religion. It was not a round-the-year commercial entertainment, but took place only once annually; at Athens, for example, drama was part of the great festival which was held at the end of every March, and called the City Dionysia. The celebration was in honour of Dionysos, the god of wine and laughter, who was believed to bring back spring to the countryside. An image of Dionysos, or perhaps a priest dressed as the god, was carried around the city and its outskirts in a ship-cart, accompanied by a joyous procession of people singing and dancing. Such festivities and religious ceremonies went on for three days; the next four days saw the most exciting event–the play contest. Playwrights and actors competed for prizes just like the athletes and musicians at other Greek national festivals–the games at Olympia, Delphi and Athens.

Everyone in Athens whose work allowed him to do so went along to the theatre of Dionysos to attend the performances on all four days. The state paid for any citizen too poor to afford admission. Separate blocks of seats were allotted to each district or tribe of a city. Athens had ten tribes and some of the theatre tickets that survive, small bronze or lead discs, display amongst other symbols the name of one of the tribes, Erechtheus.

The Production of the Plays

The oranization of the dramatic competitions was serious state business. When the *archon* (the annually elected chief-magistrate) took up office at the beginning of July, he chose three rich men to produce the tragedies, and five more to produce the comedies at the next City Dionysia. These sponsors were called *choregoi* (literally, 'chorus-leaders'). Their task was considered a great privilege. Each choregos might have to provide up to 5000 drachmas (roughly equal to ten years' wages for the average man) to finance items such as the rehearsals of the cast, training, payment of musicians, masks, costumes, and so on. The archon also chose three tragic poets and five comic poets out of those who submitted plays, or at least outlines of plays, for consideration. The comic poets produced only one comedy each, but the tragic poets presented three tragedies linked in theme and called a 'trilogy', and also a type of burlesque called a satyr-play. The archon was perhaps also responsible for allotting a troupe of three actors to each dramatist for the actors were paid by the state, while the main concern of the choregos was the chorus. The tragedies were



Marble thrones for priests and officials in the theatre of Dionysos at Athens. The front row was sheltered by a canopy resting on wooden posts. 4th century BC.

Satyrs revelling, the leader dressed as Hermes, with herald's staff and travelling hat. Wine-cooler made in Athens about 490–480 BC.

At the end of each day the judges, who had special thrones in the front row of the theatre, wrote their decisions on clay tablets; the first play chosen by five judges was the winner. There was another competition for the best actor. The prizes for the poets were first a bull, second a large jar (*amphora*) full of wine, and third a goat. The victorious chorus won a bronze tripod and cauldron with ring-handles, which was duly dedicated to Dionysos and set up in the Street of the Tripods, an impressive thoroughfare lined with these monuments. The choregoi themselves often made dedications for the privilege of holding office, like the monument of the choregos Lysicrates, a tiny circular temple of Dionysos still standing in Athens, or the now headless statue of a Muse in the British Museum. Sometimes they also gave banquets for their chorus, and wine bowls specially made for the occasion have survived which show the actors feasting, with their names inscribed beside them.

The Origins of Greek Drama

Satyr-play. We have already seen that one type of play performed at the City Dionysia was a satyr-play. Satyrs were traditionally the wild followers of Dionysos–mischievous creatures with snub-noses, goats' ears and horses' tails. Their revels and antics formed a delightful and sometimes bawdy entertainment. This section of the drama was in fact the oldest surviving element of the festival. It is interesting that the cult of Dionysos, which arrived in Greece from the East, was banished by most of the other Greek cities, who despised the wild rites performed by the disciples of Dionysos while drunk on wine, the gift of the god. But the Athenians assimilated the performances into their own dramatic contests and made them one of the most outstanding features of Athenian social life.

The satyr revellers can be traced back at least as far as the seventh century BC when we find representations on vases from the Peloponnese of ribald dancers in padded costumes who seem to have performed mockeries of the tales of the heroes and of daily life. These farces were introduced into Attica and combined with the local band of merry-makers (the *komos*) who sang and danced fertility rites at the country festival of Dionysos. At this time there was no theatre, just a circular clearing probably near to a temple of Dionysos, where the religious followers performed. No doubt the ground was originally a threshing floor, a further connection between the harvest and Dionysos as a fertility god. Arion, a poet in the court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth in the late seventh century BC, is credited with being the inventor of the *dithyramb*, the formal version of the Dionysiac song and dance which had long been in existence, and he gave the satyr-costume to the singers of the dithyramb. From this chorus developed the satyr-play, which by the late sixth century was presented at the festival after the three related tragedies.

The daring improvisations of the komos sometimes directed ridicule and obscenity at the spectators, and therefore the performers had resorted to masks and disguises for anonymity. The wild nature of the rites made it natural for some of these costumes to be in the form of animals, and the choruses of wasps, birds, and frogs which we find in the comedies of Aristophanes in the fifth and early fourth centuries BC are remnants of these early entertainers. So too is the ridicule and accusations which are heaped upon the politics, manners and thought of the Athenian people

Certain stock characters from the Peloponnesian parodies were also retained–such as the comic version of Hercules, the roistering man and the impudent slave girl. On occasions episodes in the life of Dionysos, the original theme of the revels, were still performed.

Tragedy. Unlikely though it seems, tragedy was an offshoot of the satyr-plays. 'Tragos' meant 'one who dresses up and performs as a follower of Dionysos'. The goat was the sacred animal of Dionysos, and hence the satyr's goat-like appearance. A goat was also given as a third prize at the dramatic festivals, as we have seen.

According to the Greek writer Aristotle, tragedy developed from the dithyramb. It probably began to take shape when the subjects of the dithyramb became more varied; eventually there emerged one actor from the throng who discarded the satyr mask and assumed the costume of the individual whom he impersonated. Thespis is said to have created the first actor set in opposition to the chorus, about 534 BC, during the reign of the tyrant Peisistratos.

In the early fifth century BC, the tragedian Aeschylus created a second actor to permit freer development of the dialogue, and then Sophocles invented a third. Meanwhile the chorus, usually about fifteen in number, diminished in importance, and drama of a recognizably modern type evolved.

But the chief difference between ancient and modern drama lies in the music. The chorus was always accompanied by a musician on the double-pipes, to which they danced and the lines of the play were intoned. The double-pipes (*aulos*) had been used as far back as the seventh century BC in company sacrifices, processions, and chorus singing and dancing.

Drama had in fact developed from poetry and song. It used the material of the traditional epic poems, particularly Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the music of the lyric (lyric means the song to the accompaniment of the lyre). The marble relief by the sculptor Archelaos of Priene is carved with figures who personify these elements.

Before about 480 BC, only mythological subjects were represented, but then Phrynichus, a pupil of Thespis, produced the first historic dramas. Though the events were no longer remote in time, they were still remote in place. Several of the early historic plays were located in Persia: for example, Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* and Aeschylus' *Persians*. Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women* depicting the defeat of the second Persian invasion of Greece in 480–479 BC was first performed in 476–475 BC with the statesman Themistocles as choregos. It has even been suggested that the first stage background to be used was the tent of Xerxes, captured in the Persian defeat; it could have formed a background for many dramas and in its grandeur probably resembled Persian palace architecture.

According to Aristotle, the tragic play fulfilled a purpose, namely to purge the emotions by means of pity and fear. This revitalizing experience is very much akin to the effect of a religious ceremony. Tragedy was also believed to be a means of instruction, encouraging citizens to excel in virtue both in public and private life. Sophocles is said to have been appointed one of the generals in the expedition to Samos (440 BC) on account of political wisdom shown in certain passages of his *Antigone*.

Terracotta statuettes made in Athens of actors in stock character roles: 'woman' with veil coyly pulled over face, Hercules, flirtatious girl.

Sophocles. Greek bronze head from a statue. Made about 300–200 BC.

Small jug showing flute-player with chorus of men dressed up as cocks; the vine sprays show that they are performing in honour of Dionysos. 500–480 BC.

Comedy. It is easy to understand how comedy was developed from satyr performances. Again, several actors were gradually set up in opposition to the chorus.

Whereas Athenian tragedy had attained its final form by the end of the fifth century BC, so that the fourth century simply saw the revival of the great tragedies of earlier days, the development of Athenian comedy continued. It is separated into three distinct phases. 'Old Comedy' coincides with the great period of Athenian tragedy, and culminated in the works of Aristophanes. By this time the political life of Athens began to deteriorate; when it was no longer an independent democracy, and free speech was curtailed, lampoons of public life became less appropriate, and the petty vices of private life and individuals were chosen for ridicule. 'Middle Comedy', which belonged to the fourth century BC, retained the old actor types.

Most of the terracotta and bronze statuettes which illustrate these characters belong to the period 400–350 BC, since grotesque forms and exaggerated features were not popular in Athens in the preceding years, when the city was at its height of artistic achievement. While some of these figures were no doubt sold individually others must have been made and sold in a complete set, to represent the cast of a play. Two such sets are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York; they came from a tomb in Athens, where they were probably placed as favourite possessions of the dead man. Two similar examples are illustrated; one is an actor playing the part of a woman, since, just as in the Elizabethan theatre, there were no actresses, and the other is a stock comic character, a slave who has run away and taken sanctuary on an altar. The hand raised mockingly to his ear indicates that he is deaf to appeals to leave the safety of the altar.

In the 'New Comedy' the cumbersome padded costumes were discarded and everyday clothes were adopted. The outstanding writer of the period was Menander, whose numerous plays date from the fourth and early third centuries BC. In thirty-three years, he wrote more than one hundred comedies. Once established, New Comedy became a tradition which lasted several centuries, through the Roman revivals of Plautus and Terence.

Drama in Southern Italy

The Greek colonies of Southern Italy and Sicily took over the form of tragedy already performed in the homeland. Aeschylus visited Sicily, wrote plays there, and eventually died there in exile. There is a vast ancient theatre in Syracuse, largely rebuilt in Roman times; here it was in 413 BC that the old men and women of Syracuse crowded to watch the fight in the harbour below, and saw their own ships win victory over the invading Athenians. The Roman biographer Plutarch tells how the Athenian prisoners were saved because of the esteem felt for Euripides in Sicily; some were given food and drink for repeating his verses, and others were released from slavery for teaching their masters some of his passages. But the Western Greeks had their own type of comedy. This was a mime, in which there were presented burlesques of mythology and daily life. Later the legendary tales of the heroes also became the subject of parody. The master of this form of entertainment was said to be Rhinthon, who perfected it in about 300 BC. The actors are called *phlyakes* or gossips. and they are pictured on numerous South Italian vases. Their padded costumes are similar to those of the Old Comedy, and judging from the scenes represented, the performances were racy and uproarious.

Costume

Masks. Masks were not the original form of facial disguise used for dramatic performances. The creative Thespis (see page 6) is said to have treated his actors' faces with white lead, then covered them with cinnabar (a red oxide of mercury) or rubbed them with wine lees, and then he finally introduced masks of unpainted linen. His successor Choerilus made further experiments with masks, which would have been made of clay, or stiffened linen, cork or wood. Phrynichus is said to have introduced women's masks; this may mean that he was the first to have his chorus appear as women. All ancient actors, leaders and chorus members, were men.

Effects of misfortune sometimes made necessary a change to a fresh mask: Helen, in Euripides' *Helen*, for example, returns to the stage with

hair cut off and pale cheeks; Oedipus, in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, is seen with blood-stained face and blinded eyes.

Masks covering the whole head were of course worn by all the participants in the satyr-plays; the 'Pronomos vase' in Naples, called after the flute-player whose name is inscribed beside him on the vase, shows members of the chorus carrying satyr masks just like those of the satyrs revelling on the other side of the vase.

The use of large masks, with their exaggerated features, enabled the whole audience to see the characters more clearly. It also allowed the actors to change parts more quickly, for while the leading actor had only one part, his assistants might have up to six roles to play; sometimes in the comedies they had less than ten seconds to change parts. There is a statuette in Vienna of an old woman with grinning mouth holding the laughing mask of a young man, who must represent an actor in the midst of changing roles.

The most striking feature of the masks is their huge, trumpet-shaped mouth (see page 2). They are always wide open, allowing the actor's voice to come through clearly, and giving an impression of continual communication; the masks of the mime actors on the other hand always had their lips sealed. It used to be thought that the trumpet-mouths increased the volume of the voice, but recent experiments have proved this to be untrue. The theatres have such marvellous acoustics that a whisper uttered from the orchestra can be heard right up to the highest tier, without any aid at all.

The faces on various types of mask soon became traditional and remained almost unchanged for centuries. Pollux, writing in the second century AD, enumerates twenty-eight types of mask; the principal features of the different masks are mainly distinguished from one another by

(*Above left*) Tragic mask of Hercules

(*Above right*) Mask of the young Dionysos.

(*See also inside back cover.*)

the style of the hair, the colour of the complexion, the height of the style, and the expression of the eyes. The *onkos* style of hair-dressing found in some of the tragic masks (see page 2) preserves a fashion dating from around 500 BC, in which the long tresses of hair were brought forward and piled up in curls over the brow.

Another persistent feature of male masks, particularly in comedy, is the pointed beard cut in the form of a wedge, a fashion originating in the period of the Persian wars. To judge from surviving marble and bronze portraits, Aeschylus seems to have worn this type of beard.

Dress. Like the mask, the rest of the actor's costume was all-important in signifying identity and character to the audience.

The tragic actor's apparel was grand and elaborate. The colour and music of the theatre must have formed a splendid spectacle.

The setting of some of the early tragedies in the land of Persia provided the opportunity for colourfully ornamented and embroidered costume. Along with Dionysos, the goddesses of the Eleusinian Mystery cults, Demeter and Persephone, who also originated in the East, are often

Demeter, wearing elaborately decorated oriental costume similar to that worn by tragic actors. From cup made in Athens about 490–480 BC.

depicted in this type of robe. Dionysos also sometimes appears wearing the tall hunting boot, from which the *cothurni*, boots with high, [illegible] ly painted platform soles, were derived.

Aeschylus is credited with the introduction of most of the outstanding features of the actor's costume. The further enlargement of masks, onkoi and cothurni towards the end of the fourth century BC seems to indicate that tragic actors moved less and less around the stage, and relied increasingly upon expression of voice and elaborate gestures. This was incidentally very wise, since the perilous height of the shoes and weight of the masks must have put actors in grave danger of falling off the stage, if they ventured too close to the edge.

The dress of the tragic actors was similar to that of everyday life – a long tunic over which was worn a thick cloak – but more flowing and dignified. The actors wore padding uniformly over the body, so that the stature of the figure was altogether increased. The broad girdle worn by the tragic actor high up under the breast no doubt helped to keep the padding in place.

The costume of the comic actors, on the other hand, was, and was intended to be, quite ridiculous. The body was grotesquely padded and enclosed in a tight-fitting undergarment, such as we might call a body-stocking. This was usually dyed flesh-colour or red, but was sometimes decorated with stripes. Over the unwieldy body a short tunic was worn, and, until the New Comedy of about 330 BC, it was just too short to be decent. The arms and legs had to be left free for the actors to caper and cavort about the stage, but their clumsiness and any over-balancing would have contributed to the general fun (see illustrations on pages 1, 6, front cover and inside front cover).

Architecture

The plan of the ancient Greek theatre corresponds with the three elements of ancient drama – the circular orchestra for the chorus who provided dancing and music, the stage for the actors who presented the words, and the fan-shaped auditorium for the spectators.

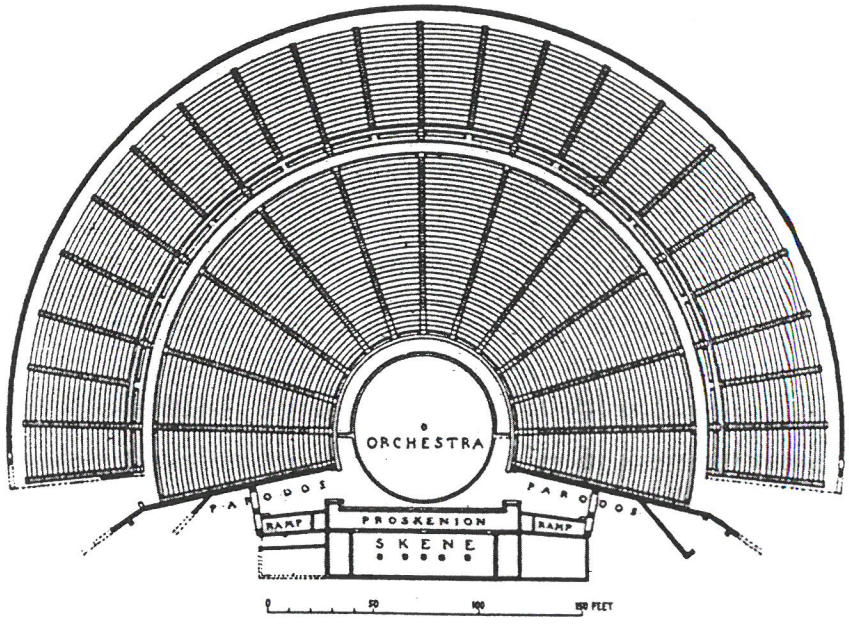
The auditorium was usually cut into the slope of a hill, and the sides of the hollow were faced with stone or marble seating, and divided into sections by gangways. Usually there was seating for as many as 18,000.

It seems that the plays were always performed to a full house; Plato mentions one audience of 30,000, and Aristophanes jokes that once the performance had started, the only way to get out of the theatre was to sprout wings.

All Greek theatres had circular orchestras, or dancing places, as excavations at Epidauros, Eretria, Sicyon, Megalopolis, Amphiraeus and Delphi have shown. In the centre or at the side of the orchestra there stood an altar, or *thymele*, dedicated to Dionysos; at Epidauros a circular plaque marks where this stood. Both the orchestra and altar are relics of the followers of Dionysos who performed dithyrambic dances and songs around the altar of the god. Most of the surviving Greek plays were [illegible] in the 5th century BC. At that time no part of the theatre was made of stone except for the foundations. The seats and stage were made of wood, and the floor was beaten earth or turf (see page 5). The stone theatres that we see today in parts of Greece date from the fourth century BC onwards, but the form was the same, the structure merely being made more permanent by the use of stone or marble. When the chorus lost some of its importance in Roman times, part of the orchestra was forfeited and an oblong stage was added. The whole of the stage building was called the *skene*, from which we derive our word scenery. The simple background of the stage must have made the actors in their colourful costumes stand out rather like the painted sculpture on a temple frieze. The narrow stage probably limited the movement of the actors, but we have already noted that the impact of the drama relied on spectacle, measured gestures and voice production.

In the fourth century the stage consisted of two floors; the lower, called the *proscenium*, had an entrance on either side, approached by ramps, while the upper floor or *hyposcenium* was decorated with paintings and surrounded by columns. The whole stage structure was roofed and walled and had three gates, like the façade of a palace or temple.

The first production for which these features were necessary was the *Orestaia* of Aeschylus, first performed in the year 458 BC. Most plays were set in a public square in front of a palace or temple, as though an important event in the life of a city were taking place before the spectators. The central doorway was the royal gate through which the leading actor (*protagonist*, literally 'first contestant') entered, while the right-hand gate led to the guest chamber and that on the left to the sanctuary. The two side



Plan of the theatre at Epidauros as it was constructed in the 4th century BC.

entrances also had their own conventional purposes–that on the right led to the countryside and the left to the city.

In Roman times, the authors Vitruvius and Pollux wrote detailed accounts of the ancient stage settings and scenery. Although it is difficult to determine how much of their evidence relates to the Roman and not the Greek theatre, they are both known to have derived information from earlier sources, and much of their writings must hold good. For example, their descriptions sometimes agree with the scanty remains of the classical theatres, or scenes painted on vases, and they describe devices known from extant fifth-century plays.

Before about 340 BC, background scenery consisted merely of a temporary structure leaning against the front wall of the building at the back of the stage which was probably used by the actors for changing, or storing scenery. In the beginning the backdrop was merely a framework of wood covered in skins, which were dried and tinted red. Such screens were first painted with pictures in the time of Aeschylus. It is interesting that this early scenery, painted by the artist Agatharchus, inspired philosophers to do the first research into perspective. It is Sophocles who is credited with the invention of scenery painting (*skenographia*). The backdrops are called by Pollux *katablemata*, or throw-overs, referring to the fact that they could be very quickly changed, or placed one over the other, during the short intermissions between the four plays which took place on each festival day. The katablemata might also be attached to the structures in the wings of the stage, which Pollux and Vitruvius described as prisms, differently decorated on each of the three sides, and capable of being rotated to indicate a different locality. Thus scenery for the four plays of the day could be easily accommodated on the prisms, the fourth backdrop being changed with the first during one of the performances.

Where the scenery failed to convince, there were always the brilliant descriptions of the dramatists to supplement the audience's imagination: a fine example is the opening scene of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* where the herald describes the flaring beacons in the blackness of night (the audience of course was in broad daylight) that announce the victory and homecoming of the king.

Devices

The most important device of the ancient theatre was the movable platform, or *ekkyklema*. Its purpose was to reveal an event inside the building. It consisted of either a rectangular platform which could be wheeled out through the doors of the stage-building or a rotatable circular platform, pivoted in the centre, with a screen across the diameter to fit the corresponding gap in the stage wall. It was a favourite device of Euripides who employed it, for example, in his *Hippolytos* when Phaedra is shown on a couch. It was particularly useful for revealing a murdered corpse, as in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

A more astounding spectacle was created by the 'flying machine' a

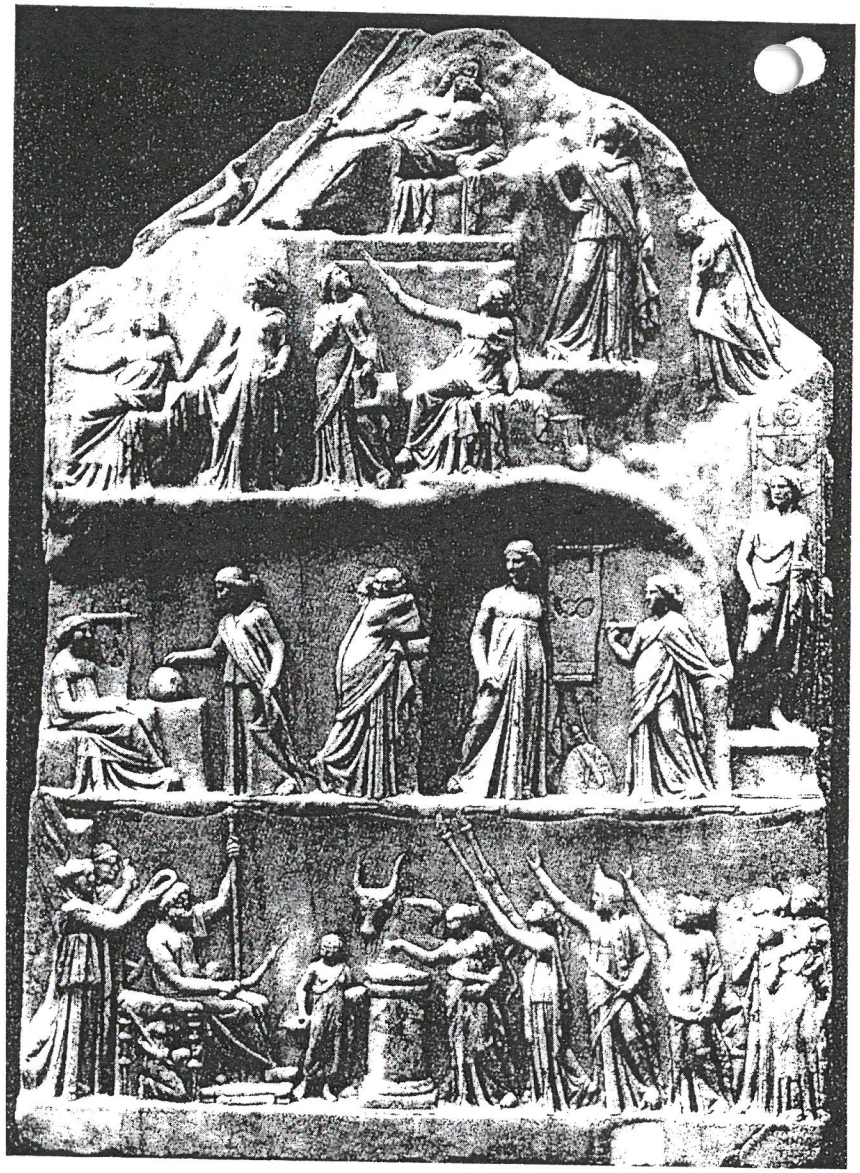
A scene from Euripides' *Oineus*. *From left to right*: Oineus, Periboia, Diomedes before an altar on which is the helpless Agrios, with a Fury rising up beside him (perhaps by means of the trap-door in the stage-floor). Wine-jar made in Southern Italy, about 340–330 BC.

crane behind the scenes which enabled characters to fly through the air. It was another device favoured by Euripides and he made ample use of it for his *deus ex machina*, (god out of a machine), who often appeared over the scene at the end of his plays. Aristophanes delights in parodying this piece of machinery; in his *Peace*, the character Trygaios flies to heaven on a dung-beetle and appeals to the stage-hand not to let him fall.

A useful means of producing a ghostly apparition was an underground passage leading to a trap door, enabling the figure to materialize suddenly before the audience. This would be used, for example, for the ghost of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians*, or that of Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides*. It may be referred to on a vase painting depicting Euripides' *Oineus*, where a black Fury or demon is rising up beside the altar.

There must have been various other props and devices used by the ancient dramatist. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, for example, the orchestra is supposed to be a lake full of frogs (the chorus), through which Dionysos rows a small boat, presumably one on wheels with a hole in the bottom through which he could propel the boat forward with his feet.

Sound-effects. The Greeks, not surprisingly, were also very resourceful when it came to creating sound effects. There were, for example, numerous ways to represent thunder, which would have been amplified by the excellent acoustics: pebbles were poured out of a jar into a large bronze vessel, bags were filled with stones and flung against a metal surface, or lead balls were dropped on a sheet of tightly stretched leather. There was an amusing way of providing lighting: a plank, with a flash of lightning painted on a dark background, was shot out of a box into a receptacle below.



Marble relief showing (*top*) Zeus with Mnemosyne (Memory), and (*below*) their children – the nine Muses. At the bottom is Homer enthroned in his sanctuary like a god, with figures representing the Iliad and Odyssey kneeling beside him. The masked figures on the right are Tragedy and Comedy, amid other personifications. The relief shows that all literary forms were thought to have originated with Homer. Greek, carved about 300–200 BC by Archelaos of Priene.

(*Right*) Tragic mask of hero.

(*Back cover*) The theatre at Dodona, 3rd century BC. Like other Greek theatres, it was in a magnificent natural setting. (Photo: R. G. Broomfield).

Published by British Museum Publications Limited, 6 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3RA

Designed by James Shurmer

ISBN 0 7141 0068 4

Printed in England by Martin Cadbury, Worcester

Further Reading

The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre, M. Bieber (Princeton University Press 1961)

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The Attic Theatre, A. E. Haigh (Oxford 1907)

Oedipus Rex
Sophocles

Year 11 into 12 Bridging work
Support booklet

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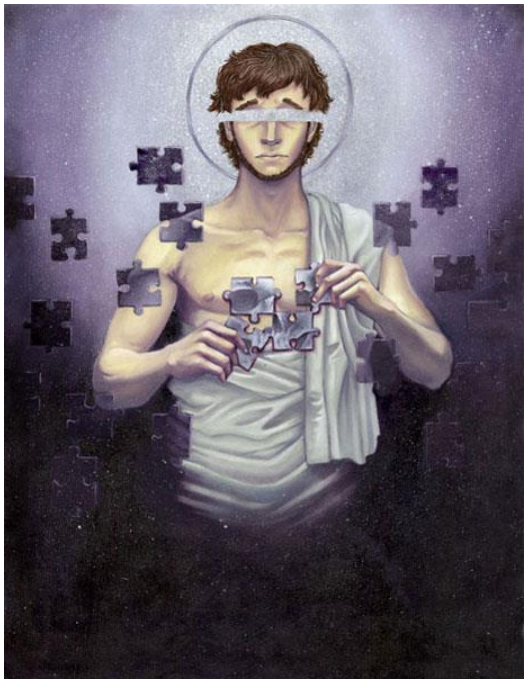


Oedipus the King - some background notes

The following is a summary of the story so far when the Oedipus Tyrannus begins. A good deal of this information, however, comes from within the play, and the order it is revealed there is not the serial temporal order. Some of this information is not in the play at all. In that way this summary is misleading because Sophocles has chosen to reveal this information in a quite different order in the play. The only point of giving this summary is that without it some scenes might seem confusing to a modern audience. The original audience would have known versions of this myth, but could expect significant variants, some of which they might never have come across.

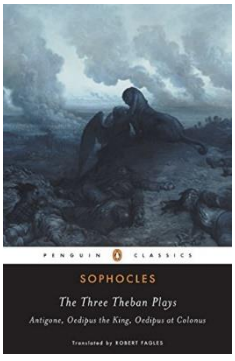
Summary

An oracle came to Laius king of Thebes in Boeotia saying that, if he had a child, the child would kill him. When his wife Jocasta did have a child he had it exposed on Mount Cithaeron, with its ankles pierced together. The child did not die, however, because Laius' man in pity handed the child to a Corinthian shepherd he met on the mountain. So the child went to Corinth where it happened that the king and queen, Polybus and Merope, were childless. They brought up Oedipus (Swollen-foot) as their own. When he was a young man he was taunted at a party by being called a bastard. He took this to Polybus and Merope who denied it, but he was still unsatisfied. So he went to Delphi and asked who his parents were. He received no reply except that he would kill his father and marry his mother. In horror at this he decided not to go back to Corinth but to journey away. At a crossroads he had an altercation with an unknown man and his followers, and killed all but one, including his father Laius. This party had been on it way to Delphi.

Journeying on he came to Thebes which at that time was beset by the Sphinx. The Sphinx had a riddle: Who is it that walks first on four legs, then on two, at last on three. Oedipus gave the correct answer: Man, who first crawls on four legs, walks on two legs as an adult and supports himself with a stick as an old man. He thus banished the Sphinx. The king of Thebes was dead (Laius) and Oedipus was asked to become king. He then married the widow Jocasta and in due time had four children, the boys Eteocles and Polyneices and the girls Antigone and Ismene.

A plague has come upon Thebes. This is a critical challenge to the state. Oedipus must rise to the occasion. He comes forth from the palace to address a group who have come to see him.

Now read the play and work your way through the booklet to help you understand the plot.
This is the book you need to buy →



SOPHOCLES : OEDIPUS THE KING

PRODUCTION :

- Circa 429BC
- 2nd place at the City Dionysia Festival

Read the prologue – Oedipus converses with the priest (p159 – 162)

What is the situation in Thebes at the start of the play?

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What positive and negative impressions do you form of Oedipus from his two speeches?

IMPRESSION	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

"How could I fail to see what longings bring you here?"
Examine the irony in this statement.

What imagery does the priest use to describe the situation in Thebes? How effective do you find it?

Explain the reference to the Sphinx (p161)

What is the tone of warning in the priest's words on p161?

How does the priest view Oedipus during his speech?

What has Oedipus done in response to the situation?

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Do you find this section an effective opening to the play?

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A successful tragedy often involves the fall of a great figure through a *hamartia* (tragic flaw). In what way does this accurately describe Oedipus?
(The following website has useful information:
http://www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes/titles/oedipus/section4.html)

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At this stage of the play, do you admire Oedipus, sympathise with him, dislike him or ...?

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Read the prologue – Oedipus converses with Creon (p163 – 167)

What did the oracle suggest to relieve the plague?

Why does Oedipus insist on being given this news publicly?
Is this a good move?

What information are we given about the murder of Laius?

How is Oedipus shown not to appreciate the clues he is offered?
What does this show about him?

Read the parodos – The entry of the Chorus (p168 – 170)

What is the mood of the Chorus at the start of their ode?

How do the Chorus create sympathy for Thebes?

Read the soliloquy of Oedipus and his conversation with the Chorus (p171 – 175)

What is the proclamation of Oedipus?

How does Sophocles make use of dramatic irony in this section?

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What impressions do you have of Oedipus from this whole section?

IMPRESSION	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the first part of the conversation between Oedipus and Tiresias (p176 – 181)

What is Oedipus' attitude/mood in the first two pages?

ATTITUDE / MOOD	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

How would you describe the behaviour of Tiresias during these two pages?

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How does Oedipus' reaction to the prophet change?
Is this change in attitude justified?

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What accusation does Oedipus make about Tiresias?
Is his paranoia defensible?

What is the counter accusation of Tiresias?

Discuss Sophocles' use of sight and blindness in this section?

What is Oedipus' *hamartia* in this section?

Read the second part of the conversation between Oedipus and Tiresias (p182 – 185)

How does Oedipus taunt Tiresias?

How does Oedipus reveal his arrogance here?

What is the reaction of the chorus to Oedipus?

What use does Sophocles make in this section of blindness/vision and light/darkness imagery?

What glimpses of the future does Tiresias give?

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"Riddles – all you can say are riddles, murk and darkness"
Is this a fair assessment of the way Tiresias converses with Oedipus here and elsewhere?

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What is the reversal of fortune (peripeteia) that Tiresias hints at in this section?

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How does Sophocles present Tiresias' accusation in such a way that the Chorus and Oedipus are reluctant to believe it?

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Read the choral ode (p186 – 187)

How do the Chorus react to the scene between Oedipus and Tiresias?

Why do the Chorus still show their allegiance to Oedipus?

Read the entry of Creon and the agon between Oedipus and him (p188 – 192)

How would you contrast the moods of Creon and Oedipus in their opening speeches?

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How does Oedipus reach the conclusion that Creon and Tiresias have been plotting against him?

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How does Sophocles make this scene dramatic?

DRAMA	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the remainder of the scene between Oedipus and Creon (p193 – 195)

Why does Creon not wish to be king?

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How persuasive do you find his arguments?

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How does Sophocles continue to make this scene dramatic?

DRAMA	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the entry of Jocasta (p196 – 199)

How does Jocasta act towards Creon and Oedipus?

What impression do you have of the nature of Jocasta here?

Why do you think Oedipus backs down?

Read the speech of reassurance of Jocasta and Oedipus' reaction to it (p201 - 204)

How does Jocasta seek to reassure Oedipus in his situation?

Does Jocasta show *hubris* in her comments?

Why does this revelation alarm Oedipus?

How is Oedipus' inquisitive nature revealed in this section?

How does Sophocles show his skill as an author in constructing this passage?

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Read the long speech of Oedipus and his dialogue with Jocasta (p205 - 208)

What are we told of Oedipus' prior life in Corinth?

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What aspects of Oedipus' character that we have seen elsewhere are revealed in his lengthy speech?

CHARACTER TRAIT	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

How does Sophocles make the account of the murder of Laius dramatic?

STYLISTIC FEATURE	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What misunderstanding does Oedipus still have at the end of this speech?

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Do you feel any sympathy for Oedipus at this point in the play?
Consider his actions, his personality and the role of fate?

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What are Jocasta's feelings and concerns at hearing the news?
Do they differ to what she had expressed earlier?

Read the Choral ode (p209 - 210)

How do the Chorus react to Jocasta's rejection of oracles?

How do the words of the Chorus look back upon the events of the play?

Which single idea do you feel is most at the forefront of the choral ode?

Read the conversation between the messenger, Oedipus and Jocasta (p211 - 214)

What has Jocasta been doing?
How does this compare with her earlier sentiments?

How does Oedipus' behaviour now compare with that elsewhere in the play?

What is the messenger's news?

Explain the reactions of Oedipus and Jocasta.
How do we feel at this point?

Read the conversation between the messenger, Oedipus and Jocasta (p215 - 221)

"It's all chance, chance rules our lives. Not a man on earth can see a day ahead, groping through the dark. Better to live at random, best we can."

Explain the irony of these remarks.
Is this a fair assessment of the play?

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What new aspect of the prophecy does Oedipus now reveal?

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How does Sophocles create dramatic tension on pages 217 – 218?

METHOD	EXAMPLE / QUOTATION

What impression do you have of the nature of Oedipus from this section as a whole?

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What is the significance of Oedipus' name (p220)?

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Why is Jocasta silent for much of this section?

Read the dialogue between Oedipus, Jocasta and the Chorus (p222 - 224)

Explain and account for the differences in behaviour of Oedipus and Jocasta.

What is Oedipus' explanation for Jocasta's seemingly odd behaviour?

How would you describe the character of Oedipus in his speech on p224?

CHARACTER TRAIT	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What is the mood of the Chorus in their ode? Why do they behave in this way?

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Read the first part of the recognition scene (p225 - 228)

Discuss and account for the pace and nature of this first part of the scene.

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What are the reactions of Oedipus to the shepherd's refusal to talk?

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Where else in the play have we seen Oedipus behave in a similar fashion?

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Read the first part of the recognition scene (p229 - 232)

How is Oedipus' persistent nature (*prothumia*) shown in this passage?

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How does Sophocles show his skills as a writer in this section?

SKILLS	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What are your feelings towards Oedipus as the scene develops?

Read the choral ode (p233 - 234)

How does Oedipus fit in with the Aristotelian view of the perfect tragic hero?
(Use only the information given in this section)

Discuss the imagery used in this ode.

Read the speeches of the messenger (p235 - 237)

Discuss the behaviour of Jocasta before her death and the description of it by Sophocles?

How does Sophocles create both fear and pity for Oedipus (before he blinds himself) and Jocasta?

How does the vocabulary used by Sophocles add drama to this point in the play?

Why does Oedipus blind himself?
(Look at what he says here and consider what is said elsewhere in the play).

Compare this messenger speech with others that you have read.
Which do you find more effective and why?

Read the arrival of the blind Oedipus (p238 - 242)

What is the reaction of the Chorus as Oedipus is about to enter?

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Compare the differences in the presentation of Oedipus between his first and last appearances in the play.

FIRST APPEARANCE	FINAL APPEARANCE

Comment on the language and imagery used by Oedipus on pages 239 – 240.

Read the laments of Oedipus (p243 - 244)

According to his own words, why did Oedipus blind himself?

What rhetorical techniques does Sophocles use to convey the horror of Oedipus' actions?

RHETORICAL TECHNIQUE	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the arrival of Creon and his conversation with Oedipus (p245 - 247)

What impression do you have of Creon from the first page and a half of this section?

IMPRESSION OF CREON	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What requests does Oedipus make of Creon?

Read the arrival of Oedipus' children, Jocasta and Ismene (p248 - 251)

For whom do you feel most sympathy, Oedipus or his children?
Explain your answer by referring to this section only.

Do you feel, from what has been said earlier in the play, that exile is the right punishment for Oedipus?

How appropriate a summary of the play is the final statement of the Chorus?

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