



**Lesson Plan in Conjunction  
with the John Holleman production  
of  
*Oedipus the King* by Sophocles  
At the Parthenon  
November 13-15 and 19<sup>th</sup>-21, 2009**

**Goal:**

The learner will improve comprehension and critical thinking skills and gain knowledge of themselves as world citizens through response to ancient literary texts.

**Curriculum Standards:**

This program matches the Essential Reading List for Grade 12 (*Oedipus the King*). Activities below include Essential Reading Lists for Grade 10 (*Antigone*), and Grade 11 (*Death of a Salesman*).

Curriculum Standards include: Grade 12  $\sqrt{3005.8.2}$ ;  $\sqrt{3005.8.3}$ ;  $\sqrt{3005.8.5}$ ; and Grade 10 CLE.3002.8.1; CLE.3002.8.4;  $\sqrt{3002.8.5}$ ; and  $\sqrt{3002.8.6}$ .

**Objectives:**

As a result of this lesson, the learner will:

- Recognize the influence of an author's background, gender, environment, audience, and experience on a literary work.
- Analyze the text and dramatic production as they reflect their own historical period as well as the broader human experience.
- Interpret ideas, recognize logical relationships, and form personal, reasonable interpretations.
- Use cognitive strategies to evaluate text critically.
- Respond to literature by making personal, historical, and visual connections.

**Activities:**

1). After reading or seeing the production of the play, explore the life and teachings of Sophocles and point out obvious influences within the play that reflect the author's background, gender, environment, audience and experience. Are there portions of the play seeming to be at odds with Sophocles' own views and teachings or is the play a clear reflection of his teachings?

2) The following exercise allows students an opportunity to formulate and build an argument supporting their interpretation of this tragedy. Students select from one of the following theories:

A) The "*Oedipus Complex*" theory. This play is a morality tale judging incestuous relationships.

B) The “*Fatal Flaw*” theory. The tragedy is the result of a fatal flaw in the protagonist.

C) The “*Chaos*” theory. This tragedy is the interplay of a number of factors –fate, actions based on little or no evidence, a combination of characteristics inherent in the protagonist, complex and conflicting interpretations of words, the intervention of the gods, etc.

Support your selection with examples from the play.

3). Select and evaluate one of the following elements from the play: prophecy and fate, oracles, curses and riddles, messengers, and the intervention of the gods. Explore the importance of this element to the success of the play, as a crucial ingredient to the tragic outcome, and as a dramatic effect (making visual connections) in the play.

4). *Finding the truth whatever the cost and accepting responsibility* are considered character strengths in our society. Using this tragedy and pulling in other examples, explore the wisdom of this statement as a universal code of ethics.

5). Compare and contrast the downfalls of Oedipus and Willie Loman (*Death of a Salesman*). In what ways are their fates a reflection of their own flaws and personal pursuits and in what ways are their fates tied to others or to the eras in which they lived?

6). After reading/viewing Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, and reflecting back on your 10<sup>th</sup> grade reading of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *There was no curse of the house of Oedipus.*

### Advanced Activities

- 1) **Read Aristotle’s *Theory of Tragedy* in Poetics and explain how Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* meets Aristotle’s criteria as the perfect tragedy.**
- 2) **Read *Crito* in the Dialogues of Plato and compare Socrates’ pursuit of justice with Oedipus’ pursuit of truth.**
- 3) **Compare/contrast the tragedies of Oedipus and Macbeth.**

### Language Arts Sources:

#### Books:

1. Driver, Tom F. *The Sense of History in Greek & Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).
2. Etienne, Roland & Francoise. *The Search for Ancient Greece* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992).
3. Fagles, Robert. *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).
4. Grene, David and Lattimore, Richmond, eds. *Sophocles I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).
5. Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1969 ed.).
6. Rose, H.J. *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc.)
7. Souli, Sofia. *Greek Mythology* (Ilioupoli, Greece: M. Toubis, 1995).
8. Theatre Parthenon. *Oedipus the King* (Nashville: Greek Theatre Project, Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation Dept., 1983).

9. Plato, *The Republic* (Penguin Classics). The Early Period includes the *Crito* dialogue which is short, but powerful.

10. Aristotle, *Poetics* (includes The Theory of Tragedy).

**Web Sites:**

1. [www.angelfire.com/art/architecture/articles/159.htm](http://www.angelfire.com/art/architecture/articles/159.htm)
2. [www.wsu.edu/~dee/GREECE/PERICLES.HTM](http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GREECE/PERICLES.HTM)
3. [www.classics.uc.edu/johnson/tragedy/summaries/antigone.html](http://www.classics.uc.edu/johnson/tragedy/summaries/antigone.html)
4. [www.class.uidaho.edu/luschnig/GTC/7.htm](http://www.class.uidaho.edu/luschnig/GTC/7.htm)
5. [www.temple.edu/classes/antigone.html](http://www.temple.edu/classes/antigone.html)
6. [www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/2/84.02.03.x.html](http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/2/84.02.03.x.html)
7. [www.biola.edu/academies/torrey/handbook/.cfm](http://www.biola.edu/academies/torrey/handbook/.cfm)
8. [www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/myth.htm](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/myth.htm)
9. [www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/2/84.02.03.x.html](http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/2/84.02.03.x.html)..
10. [www.loggia.com/books/musing01.html](http://www.loggia.com/books/musing01.html).