



Dear 2019 – 2020 Advanced Placement Literature Students:

Welcome to AP Literature and Composition. Following is the list of summer assignments. These assignments are designed to prepare you for the kinds of work we will be doing in AP Literature throughout the school year.

1. READING:

- *Oedipus Rex*, a play by Sophocles (English version by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald)
- *Jane Eyre*, a novel by Charlotte Brontë

Read *Oedipus Rex* and *Jane Eyre*. Under no circumstances should you use SparkNotes or other similar aids in developing your interpretations of the assigned reading I encourage you to discuss these readings with one another and to share ideas throughout the summer.

2. NOTETAKING:

On the following pages, you will find reading guides for each of these works and a handout on Aristotle's definition of tragedy, which you will need to complete the notetaking guide for *Oedipus Rex*. Prepare for class discussions and essays by taking notes in response to the prompts on these reading guides. Your notes on the texts are for your use and will be checked, not graded. However, you WILL be able to use your notes during graded discussions and the first in-class essay of the year, so it is important that you complete the work thoughtfully and thoroughly. You will need to be able to refer to direct passages from the works.

3. VIEWING:

After reading each of these texts, view the following film:

- *Jane Eyre* (directed by Cary Fukunaga, 2011; rated PG-13)
 - Interpret: Note what gets left out of this version of *Jane Eyre*? What one omission do you think has the most significant impact on the meaning of the story?
 - Interpret and Evaluate: Fukunaga explained that there are two competing story elements in *Jane Eyre*, the romantic and the Gothic. Which do you think he values more? How can you tell?

4. MAKING CONNETIONS (in writing):

Think about *Oedipus Rex* and *Jane Eyre* in relation to each other. What points of intersection do you see? Consider connections of various kinds – structural, symbolic, thematic, plot-based, character-based, etc. Write a 1-2 page response that illuminates one interesting and insightful connection that you see. Be sure to include specific references to the texts. Your response is due at the beginning of our first class.

Response Requirements:

- 1-2 pages, double-spaced
- 12-point, Times New Roman font
- Standard (1" margins)
- MLA formatting for page numbering/heading/parenthetical notation

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Please start to gather applications for the colleges that interest you. **I strongly encourage you to write your college essays before the year begins.** You will have a lot of writing to do once the year begins, so *please* work on your college applications over the summer.

Oedipus Rex

Preparation for Class Discussion

Your responses to these prompts will NOT be collected. They will be for your use during both a graded discussion AND an in-class essay.

1. Read the handout titled “Tragedy: Aristotle’s Definition of Tragedy”. Annotate this handout, making sure that you understand can identify the meaning of each of the following terms:
 - a. Tragedy
 - b. Action
 - c. Magnitude
 - d. Ornament
 - e. Purgation
 - f. Catharsis
 - g. Hamartia
 - h. Hubris
 - i. Peripeteia/Peripety
 - j. Anagnorisis

2. What is the function of **irony** in *Oedipus Rex*. How does irony function on a macro level in the play? Be ready to discuss how, according to Aristotle’s definition, irony is an inherent quality of tragedy – and how this is, indeed, the case with *Oedipus Rex*.

As importantly, how does irony functions on a micro level in the play? (Be prepared to refer to specific speeches and actions that are ironic and to explain the significance of each.)

3. In the Prologue of the play, we learn that Oedipus came to be the king of Thebes because he was the only man to solve **the Sphinx’s riddle**. Do some research on the Sphinx in Greek mythology. Consider the significance of this background knowledge in better understanding: (1) Oedipus’s character (and **magnitude**), (2) the riddle-ridden action of the play, and (3) the pattern of Oedipus’s life. Find direct passages from the text to support what you say.
4. As Aristotle tells us, in tragedy, “there is no possibility of escape”. This is certainly the case in *Oedipus Rex*.
 - What does the oracle reveal Oedipus’s **fate** to be?
 - How do Laiös and Iocaste try to thwart the fate of their son? How does their very attempt to avoid fate directly lead to its fruition?
 - How does Oedipus himself try to escape the oracle’s predictions? How does he, paradoxically, run smack into his fate precisely as he tries to avoid it?
5. Even though the characters in Ancient Greek mythology cannot escape their fates, it is also true that, before many of the most famous fateful moments in Ancient Greek literature (Paris’s destruction of his own city, Troy; Achilles’s death in the Trojan War), there is a moment of choice.
 - To what extent is Oedipus (and the choices that he makes) responsible for the outcome of his life? Be specific.
 - Identify that trait which you consider to be Oedipus’s **hamartia**, or **tragic flaw**. Use specific examples to illustrate this.

- Ultimately, who is to blame for the **catastrophe** that ends this play? Find direct passages from the text to illuminate your points. You will most certainly need to deal with Oedipus's actions at the place "where three highways meet" and the symbolic significance of this setting (38).
6. What does the name "Oedipus" mean? To what does it refer? What is the thematic significance of this name?
 7. Explore the significance of **sight & blindness** and **light & darkness** in *Oedipus Rex*. As you read, trace these motifs, recording or marking passages that contain references to them. Look back over these moments, determine how these opposing forces relate to the characters (especially to Oedipus and Teiresias) and to the themes of the play
 8. Consider the role of the gods in this play. What is Apollo's significance? (If you do not know who Apollo is, do a bit of research.) Why is he the primary Greek god of this play? Be prepared to refer to direct passages to illustrate your points.

Jane's Eyre: Notetaking Guide

Instructions:

As you read *Jane Eyre*, note that Jane's journey is predominantly linear. As she develops, she moves to five different places, each of which relates to her development. Brontë uses motifs to make her novel cohesive and to emphasize Jane's progress. Trace Jane's journey, using the following notetaking guide. Integrate direct passages from the text into your notes. You may use bulleted points for most responses.

Gateshead

Significance of the name of the place:

Description of the place

Jane's Position

Patriarch

Maternal Figure

Other Important Minor Characters (and their significance)

Important symbols and motifs

- The Moon

- The Color Red

- The Mirror

- Fire

- Ice

- Birds

Jane's Anger/Rebellion

Jane's relationship to reading/education:

Jane as an artist:

Lowood

Significance of the name of the place:

Description of the place

Jane's Position

Patriarch

Maternal Figure

Other Important Minor Characters (and their significance)

Important symbols and motifs

- The Moon

- The Color Red

- The Mirror

- Fire

- Ice

- Birds

Jane's Anger/Rebellion

Jane's relationship to reading/education:

Jane as an artist:

Thornfield Hall

Significance of the name of the place:

Description of the place

Jane's Position

Patriarch

Maternal Figure

Other Important Minor Characters (and their significance)

Important symbols and motifs

- The Moon
- The Color Red
- The Mirror
- Fire

- Ice

- Birds

Jane's Anger/Rebellion

Jane's relationship to reading/education:

Jane as an artist:

Marsh End

Significance of the name of the place:

Description of the place

Jane's Position

Patriarch

Maternal Figure

Other Important Minor Characters (and their significance)

Important symbols and motifs

- The Moon
- The Color Red
- The Mirror
- Fire

- Ice

- Birds

Jane's Anger/Rebellion

Jane's relationship to reading/education:

Jane as an artist:

Ferndean

Significance of the name of the place:

Description of the place:

Jane's position and state of mind:

Important symbols and motifs:

Comments on the novel's ending:

Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy

All discussion of serious drama begins with an examination of Aristotle's *Poetics*. **Tragedy** is "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artful ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, in the form of action, not of narration; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these and similar emotions." To fully understand Aristotle's definition, you must comprehend the meaning of his terms:

Imitation means getting at the heart of the situation; finding the universal in the particular.

Action means more than just the moving about of characters; it refers to the great decisions that the central character makes, and the ramifications that these decisions cause.

Magnitude means that the action and characters must rise above the ordinary. Arthur Miller challenged this assumption in *Death of a Salesman* with the creation of Willy Loman, the "low man" common to all of us. For Aristotle, the plays had to revolve around kings, gods, or great military leaders.

Ornament includes *diction* and *song*. The diction must be elevated; people must talk in a refined manner. The songs, choral odes, are sung in ritualistic and often complicated manners. Different ornaments are suited for different parts of the play. Arthur Miller challenged this notion too, with the diction he used in *Salesman*, the everyday talk of a common man.

Purgation, or in Aristotelian terms, **catharsis**, refers to the cleansing that the audience experiences at the end of the play. We feel fear for the fate of the main character, and we pity this character, basically noble and good, who has been put through such travail.

The term tragedy does not refer to a sad play with an unhappy ending. The root of the word has nothing to do with sadness and death. Rather, it comes from the Greek *tragos*, or goat, plus *aedein*, to sing, which means the "singing of the goat." The goat was a sacred animal to Dionysus, god of wine and fertility, in whose honor the early festivals of song and dance were held out of which drama evolved. The entire notion of tragedy as we now accept it is a product of Greek civilization, founded on the special view Greeks held with regard to man and his relationship to the gods. The Greeks created their gods in their own image, endowing them with beauty, power, and immortality, yet subjecting them to the same passions endured by mortal men and women. Thus, Zeus, the king of the gods, could fall in love with an earthly being, and his queen, Hera, could be jealous. The gods did not always possess common sense, no more than did their human models. When they did act, it was following human lines which could be understood by mortals if not always entirely appreciated. The Greek gods were not independent, for they were under the rule of the Fates, the three sisters who control the thread of life. From this we can see how tragedy developed. As an assertion of the basic greatness of man, it demonstrates the individual's ability to ascend to the heights of human possibility in the face of an antagonistic force he knows will eventually destroy him. The protagonist of a tragedy, do what he will, may suffer from the curses of the gods for generations, for the gods, like their mortal counterparts, are capable of carrying grudges and taking

offense. The point of all tragedy is that the protagonist, even when faced with the knowledge that the forces laid out against him are to cause his literal or symbolic death, can rise and assert his splendor, defy the forces, and even bring the forces down with him on occasion. There is no possibility of escape, and we watch as the hero proceeds in full recognition of his fate. Since the forces move with an absolute finality, it is what the protagonist does in the struggle that counts. The hero rises in the ultimate human courage and defiance to display the godlike qualities that lie within each of us.

Thus, tragedy is not a sad or depressing genre. It is positive and optimistic in its view of the possibilities of human beings. The tragic protagonist is not a martyr, for the martyr suffers for a certain cause and his death implies that something will follow, making the suffering and sacrifice worth the effort. The martyr, having a cause, may actually seek his own end. The tragic protagonist, in sharp contrast, has every reason to survive, and makes a heroic struggle to that end. At the moment of his death, he has shown the very best qualities of mankind, and his death is a very real loss. In displaying his greatness, the protagonist actually becomes godlike, and the giving of his life is a kind of reverse at, a sacrifice for mankind, not for the gods.

At the end of a tragedy there is usually a deep emotional involvement on the part of the audience. Aristotle discussed this when he spoke of catharsis, the arousal in the audience of pity, terror, and fear. When we view a tragedy, we are moved by a compassionate pity for the protagonist. In the same manner, we feel terror when we realize the size and power of the forces that have caused the protagonist's downfall. At the tragedy's end, a calmness descends, and the audience undergoes a spiritual cleansing when it realizes how great the human being can be when called to the proper occasion.

Aristotle described the "ideal" tragic hero as human, not a god, and of noble stature. By this he intended royalty, for those were the deaths that could make empires crumble. Today we have redefined the term to mean that the individual must contain within himself a greatness and a stature beyond the ordinary. Thus, in modern tragedies, the protagonist may be a "little man," but not in any sense a "little person." The tragic hero cannot be predominantly evil, for then the audience would welcome his demise. Neither can he be all good, for then his death would be truly shocking and displeasing to the audience.

Aristotle attributes *hamartia* to the tragic hero, which we translate as a "tragic flaw" or "shortcoming." In many plays, it is a character flaw or a vice, such as *hubris*, a Greek word meaning overwhelming arrogance or pride that leads to his demise. But in other plays, a hero's flaw may be merely a poor choice, or a choice that turns out badly. There have been instances in which the tragic hero is undone because of his virtue, as he may be courageous when others are not. Therefore, the tragic hero need not always have a flaw. For instance, in the case of Romeo and Juliet, neither rashness nor lust fits their case, and they are undone more by circumstance than by anything they themselves lack or have caused. Regardless of the reason, the hero suffers and then comes to some sort of an awareness, either of his vice – if he has one – or his virtue – which he now sees cannot exist in the world of ordinary people.

In the end, the hero must be fully aware of what has happened to him and must face the realization. He proclaims his defiance, as Macbeth did in the end of the play, and welcomes his adversary.

Tragedy is ***ironic***, as the audience, aware of what is going to happen waits for the protagonist to reach awareness. Tragedy may involve the twists of fate: the harder the protagonist may seek to avoid his fate, the faster it approaches. This is true in *Hamlet*, for example.

There are two more terms to consider when discussing Aristotle's definition of tragedy.

Peripeteia (also spelled ***peripety***) occurs when an action produces the opposite of what was intended or expected. It is a reversal. Thus, Macbeth kills his king, Duncan, to gain happiness through power, but reaps misery instead.

Anagnorisis means disclosure, discovery, or recognition. For Aristotle, the disclosure was usually a simple recognition of who was who through a clear external sign such as a birthmark or even clothing, but the term has been extended to include the tragic hero's recognition of himself or his place in the universe. So we see that Othello, who killed his faithful wife, learned that he was tricked into thinking her dishonest, and finally sees himself as "one not easily jealous, but being wrought/Perplexed in the extreme" and enacts justice by killing himself.

(All of this information comes from a book which I have lost. I do not remember its title.)