



BACKGROUND TO ANTIGONE

GREEK DRAMA



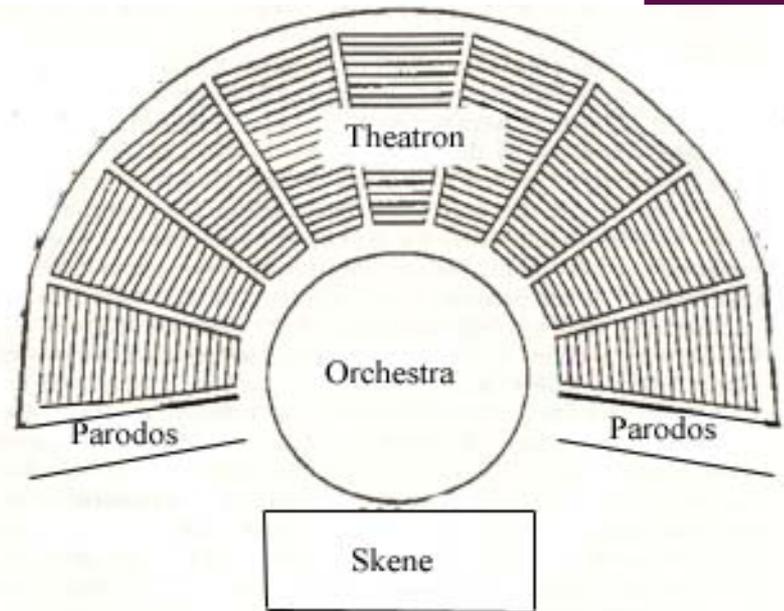
ATTENDING THE THEATRE

- Plays were either comedies or tragedies
- Attending a performance was considered an act of worship
- **Dionysus**, the god of wine & fertility, was worshipped here
- All actors were male and wore masks to portray different characters
- Most tragedies were based on familiar legends or myths



THE GREEK THEATRE

- Always performed in outdoor theatres
- **Orchestra**: Where the chorus would be located
- **Theatron**: Where the audience sat
- **Skene**: A building directly behind the stage; usually decorated as a palace, temple, or other building. Actors could enter and exit the stage through here, if necessary
- **Parodos**: The path by which the chorus and some actors made their entrances and exits



Parts of a Greek Theater



Skene

Theatron

Parodos

Proskenion

Chorus

Altar

Paraskenia

Orchestra

THE ROLE OF THE CHORUS

- ◉ Chanted or sang their commentary during each performance
- ◉ Perceptive, but also over-the-top and funny
- ◉ Comments on the events witnessed on stage
- ◉ Would sometimes advise characters



ANCIENT GREEK MASKS

- ◉ The members of the chorus wore similar masks but completely different from the leading actors
- ◉ Actors had to put on different masks, in order to play more roles.
- ◉ The actors were all men. The mask was therefore necessary to let them play the female roles.



TRAGEDY

- ⦿ A drama or literary work in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances.



CLASSICAL TRAGEDIES

- ◉ **Tragedy:** a drama that recounts the downfall of a dignified, superior character who is involved in historically or socially significant events
- ◉ **Tragic flaw:** a defect that a tragic hero possesses which contributes to his/her downfall; for example: poor judgment
- ◉ **Hubris:** Excessive pride, a very common tragic flaw. Who else has had it???

TRAGIC HERO

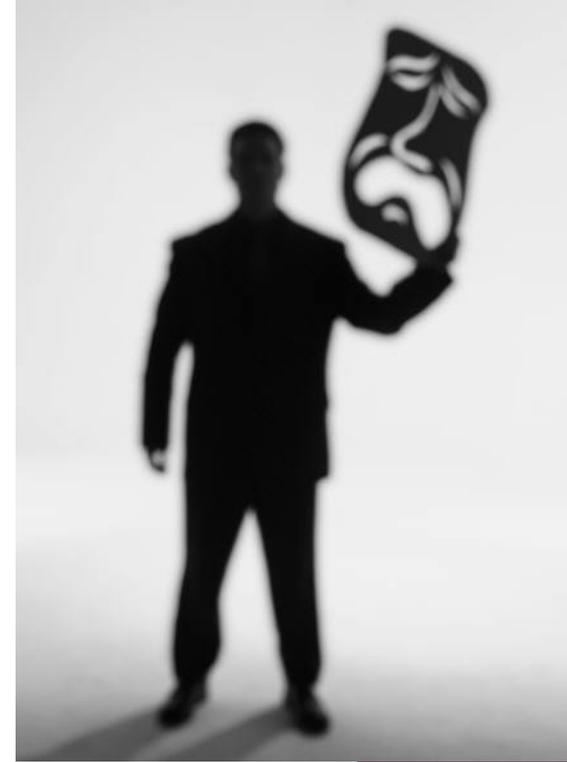
- ◉ Noble birth
- ◉ Responsible for his/her own fate
- ◉ Has a tragic flaw
- ◉ Doomed to make an error in judgment
- ◉ Realizes irreversible mistake
- ◉ Falls from great heights/esteem
- ◉ Meets a tragic death



CLASSICAL TRAGEDIES, OTHER INFO:

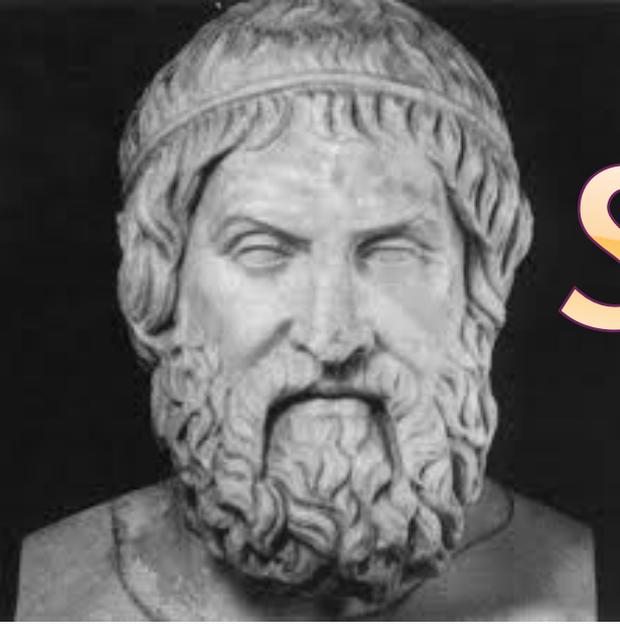
Common Themes:

- **Free Will vs. Fate**
- **Predictions and Prophecies**
- **Truth vs. Ignorance**
- **Intuition vs. Policy**
- **Mortal weakness when compared to the strength of the gods**
- **Power's fleetingness**
- **Pride and Envy**



OTHER TERMS TO KNOW

- ◉ **Irony:** Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs - oftentimes humorous
- ◉ **Dramatic Irony:** (pertains to theatre) When the audience knows something important that the character(s) do not know.
- ◉ **Catharsis:** A general reaction from the audience to tragedies. Supposed to be a feeling of cleansing and relief.



SOPHOCLES

- ◉ Famous author of Greek Drama
- ◉ born 495 BCE
- ◉ Is thought to have written over 100 plays, but only 7 have survived.
- ◉ The Oedipus trilogy are among the surviving plays. These are his most famous plays

...ALSO FAMOUS FOR:

- Introduced third actor to the stage
- Limited the use of chorus
- Emphasized dialogue

“Quick decisions are unsafe decisions”

“Nobody had a more sacred obligation to obey the law than those who make the law”

“One word frees us all the weight and pain of life: that word is love”

THE OEDIPUS TRILOGY: IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Tiresias: The Blind Prophet

- ◉ Very much respected, but finds his forecasts often ignored
- ◉ The irony of Tiresias is that he gives people “sight” into the future, but they often choose to ignore his vision
- ◉ Predicts that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother



THE OEDIPUS TRILOGY: IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Oedipus

- ◉ Father is Laius and mother is Jocasta
- ◉ To avoid the fate Tiresias predicts, his parents sent him away to die
- ◉ The servant in charge of this left him with another family to raise him
- ◉ One day he kills a man... not knowing that he had killed his father
- ◉ He eventually becomes a hero of Thebes



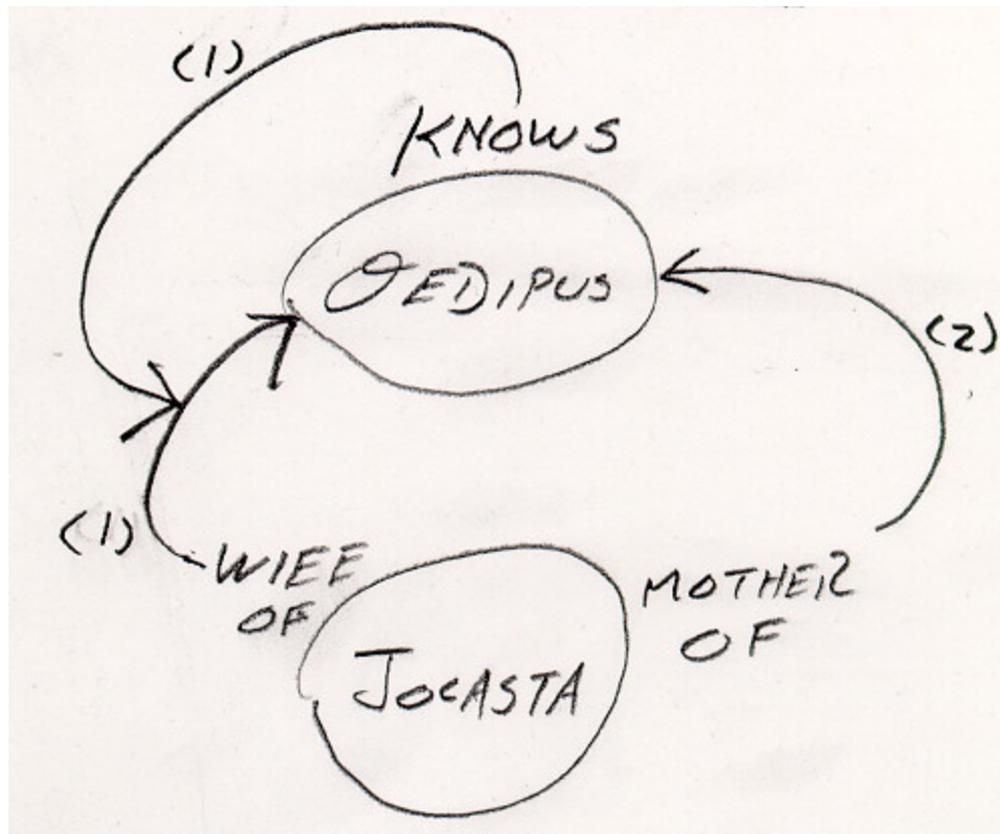
THE OEDIPUS TRILOGY: IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Jocasta

- ◉ Widowed queen of Thebes
- ◉ Agrees to marry the new local hero... Oedipus
- ◉ They have four children together (Antigone is one of them)



OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA DISCOVER THE TRUTH



DRAMA ENSUES



THE OEDIPUS TRILOGY ENDS...

- ◉ Antigone must lead her blind father into exile
- ◉ Creon, Jocasta's brother, takes control of Thebes
- ◉ Thebes has been thrown into chaos and conflict
- ◉ The stage has been set for *Antigone* to begin!



◎ The current ruler, Creon, has made a decree: Since Polynices fought against Thebes, he shall not be buried. Meanwhile, Eteocles is to be buried with full military honors.

- ◎ Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus and the sister of the dead brothers, believes this proclamation to be against the gods' orders.
- ◎ She confides her plan to bury Polynices herself to her sister Ismene. The more timid of the two, Ismene refuses to take part out of fear, but agrees with her motive.



WHY STUDY ANTIGONE?

- ⦿ Ancient Greek Drama is the basis for all modern drama and film
- ⦿ The story gives many important clues to the Ancient Greek culture and character
- ⦿ Tragedies still contain the basic elements from which they originated.

