

AS and A LEVEL
Set Text Guide

CLASSICAL GREEK

H044, H444

For first teaching in 2016

Set Text Guide
Sophocles *Antigone*
(Group 3)

Version 1



CONTENTS

General Introduction**3**

Sophocles

3

The Labdacid Saga

3

Tragedy

4

Talking Points

5

Context**6**

Athens in the fifth century BC

6

The Great Dionysia

6

Women in Classical Athens

7

Talking Points

8

The Text**10***Antigone*

10

Antigone 1-99, 497-525, 531-581, 891-928

10

Themes and Motifs

11

Stylistic Features

11

Glossary of Key Terms

12

Talking Points

13

Activities and student tasks**14****Further reading and resources****19**

For teachers

19

For students

19

Publishing information

20

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Sophocles

Sophocles is one of the three Attic tragedians whose works have survived (the other two being Aeschylus and Euripides). He was born around 495 B.C. to a wealthy Attic family. He was well educated, and as well as being the most successful tragedian of his time, was prominent in the affairs of the city. An inscription records that Sophocles was state treasurer in 443/2 B.C., and from other written sources we know he was one of the ten generals in the Samian war of 441/0 (alongside the great Pericles), and one of the commissioners (*probouloi*) who handed over the government of Athens to the oligarchy of the Four Hundred. His involvement in the life of the city extended to religion; it is said that when the cult of Asclepius was introduced to Athens, Sophocles provided the first altar and a home for the god in his own house.

His literary career was even more distinguished than his political one: from his first dramatic production in 468, until at least 409, he wrote over 120 plays, of which only seven survive intact. There are three stories handed down of his death (all of which are very probably untrue): firstly, that he choked on an unripe grape at the Choes – a drinking festival of Dionysus - thus connecting his death to a tradition of his great sociability; secondly, that he died losing his breath while reading out *Antigone*; and thirdly that he died of joy when *Antigone* was awarded first prize. Although the ancient *hypothesis* (summary) of the *Antigone* suggests that it was performed much earlier than his death, the inclusion of these stories show us that the *Antigone* was seen as fitting end to his career – as his greatest work, perhaps.

The Labdacid Saga

Antigone was probably performed in 442 or 441. The plot is taken from the saga of the Labdacids – the family of Laius (son of Labdacus), and Jocasta, the ill-fated parents of Oedipus. The myths were well-known to a Greek audience, and are one of the most popular themes for literature and art. Like the story-cycle of the Homeric epics, the tradition combined a well-known set of relationships and characters, with countless variations of narrative; in many ways similar to the modern fan-fiction which has sprung up around the world of Harry Potter or Twilight, where authors are free to take well-known characters and re-imagine parts of the narrative.

The general outline of the overarching narrative is as follows: Oedipus, separated from his parents at birth, unknowingly kills his own father Laius, and marries his mother, Jocasta. When the truth is discovered, Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself. Oedipus' sons, Eteocles and Polynices, argue over the succession, and eventually Polynices leads an Argive army against his brother in Thebes. Polynices and his six Argive champions (the Seven against Thebes) are defeated, but the two brothers kill each other. Creon, Jocasta's brother, takes over as ruler of Thebes (his name meaning in Greek 'ruler'), and this is where the plot of the *Antigone* begins.

The *Antigone* is the struggle between Creon and Antigone, the sister of Eteocles and Polynices, over the burial of the body of Polynices. Much of it is probably Sophoclean innovation: in other versions of the story, his burial is secured through the mediation of the Athenian hero Theseus, backed by an Athenian army.



Sophocles
Universal History Archive \ UIG

Tragedy

All the Greek tragedies we have were written for the Great Dionysia, an Athenian religious festival. They were written in trilogies (although only one complete trilogy survives, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*), with a fourth play, a kind of burlesque called a Satyr play, attached. The trilogies did not necessarily tell three connected stories, though they were probably at least thematically linked. Sophocles wrote his plays within an understood set of literary conventions and constraints, but also changed some of the distinctive features of tragedy: he increased the number of actors from two to three, and (possibly) enlarged the chorus from twelve to fifteen.

The plays generally took traditional Greek myth as their theme (although one play based on recent history survives, Aeschylus' *Persae*, and there were undoubtedly more), and all used a similar format. The whole play was in verse, in a combination of different metres depending on the scene, and the general structure alternates between scenes with actors speaking, and choral odes sung by the all-male chorus, often commenting on the action obliquely by bringing in other myths and narratives.

There was a maximum of three actors (again, all male), although each actor would have played more than one part: for instance, in the *Antigone*, the same actor probably played Antigone, Haemon, Tiresias, and Eurydice (in this case, meaning that all four opponents of Creon would have been heard speaking with the one voice). All the actors and chorus wore masks. Dialogue among the actors was a mixture of *rhesis*, extended monologues, or an *agon* (contest or argument) between two speakers, and *stichomythia*, line-by-line conversation, as well as irregular, less stylized dialogue between two or three speakers.



Ancient theater mask representing a youth.

Marie-Lan Nguyen

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>What are the major differences between modern and ancient drama?</i></p>	<p>Getting students to appreciate both the importance of performance for our understanding of the text, as well as the specific constraints of the Athenian theatre, are important for a full contextual understanding of the tragedy. Responses might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of actors • gender of actors • level of realism • audience familiarity with plot <p>Students might also be able to come up with some interesting parallels – recent superhero films, for instance, use characters and plots that are familiar in outline, but approached very differently by different writers and directors.</p>
<p><i>Most modern, popular drama is set in the contemporary world of its audience: why do you think Greek tragedy chose the mythic past of a foreign city as the settings for its stories?</i></p>	<p>This question forms an appropriate introduction to the material covered in the next section on the society and politics of fifth century Athens. It is worth exploring the question more generally before pinning it to historical facts, however: a general understanding of why and how fiction interacts with the real world is something that sixth-form students should start to develop.</p> <p>Responses might include suggestions like simple escapism or exoticism; fear of political backlash; making political or social truths more palatable or more visible by framing them at a distance. A good prompt for discussion is to draw a comparison with a modern genre like science fiction, which is often used as a vehicle for social or political critique.</p>

CONTEXT

Athens in the fifth century BC

Athens of the fifth century has traditionally been viewed as the high point of ancient Greek civilisation. The city gained moral and political, and later, financial pre-eminence within Greece after effectively leading the Greek city states to victory over the Persians. By the 440s, when the *Antigone* was written, the city had become the hub for intellectual, artistic and literary life in the Greek-speaking world and even beyond.

The democratic system, first introduced in 508, was an influential part of this dynamism: authority was held by the popular assembly and law courts, and positions of power were held only for a year, on the basis of election or lot, rather than by hereditary privilege. Although a traditional aristocracy still managed to wield great influence, even they had to present themselves as citizens loyal to the city, rather than noblemen loyal to their families. The tension between democratic virtues and aristocratic values is certainly reflected in tragedy, as were the rising importance of rhetoric, and the dangers of the art of persuasion when wielded unjustly.



MARKET IN ATHENS - as it appeared in classical antiquity: wood engraving, 19th century.
The Granger Collection / Universal Images Group

Athens developed not only its own distinctive forms of writing and performance (such as a tragedy and comedy), but also influenced and inspired Herodotus' development of historiography and ethnography. The city played host not just to writers, but also a new breed of teacher and thinker: the sophists, whose stock-in-trade was teaching rhetoric, important when the power to persuade a large audience was the key to political success. It was this intellectual climate which led to the philosophical enquiries of Socrates, and the writings of his students Plato and Xenophon.

The Great Dionysia

All Sophocles' tragedies were written for and first performed at the Great Dionysia, a series of celebrations lasting several days in honour of Dionysus, god of wine, theatre, and transgression. Each year, three playwrights were chosen to write three plays (plus a Satyr play) for the competitive spectacle. The cost for each set of plays was born by a wealthy citizen (the *choregos*), who was obliged by the city to undertake such *liturgies* as a kind of taxation on the wealthy. In turn, the *choregos* and the playwright stood to gain a great deal of prestige from a successful production. A panel of judges was chosen by lot to adjudicate the competition, and Sophocles' popularity is demonstrated by the claim of ancient authorities that he won first prize twenty-four times, and his plays were never given third place.

The Great Dionysia's civic processions, priestly actions, and political ceremonials provide an inescapable backdrop to the plays themselves. At the beginning of the competition, the ten *strategoi* poured libations to the gods, opening the ceremony in front of the assembled citizen body in the theatre. The tribute paid to Athens by its allies was laid out in the theatre, the sons of those who had lost their lives fighting for Athens were paraded, and those who had done conspicuous service to Athens were named and honoured. It was a celebration of the power and civic identity of democratic Athens, in front of both its citizens assembled as the *polis* as well as visitors from across the Greek world.

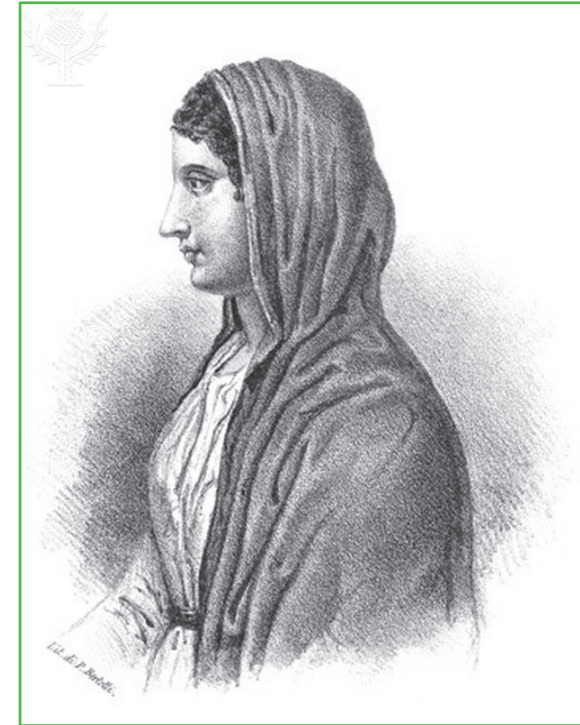
Women in Classical Athens

The status of women is often summed up in words from Pericles' famous funeral oration (Thucydides 2.46): 'Perhaps I should say a word or two on the duties of women to those among you who are now widowed... Your great glory is not to be inferior to what god made you, and the greatest glory of a woman is to be least talked about by men, whether they are praising you or criticising you.'

Understanding the role of women in classical Athens is more challenging than such a sound-bite would suggest, however. On the one hand, they figure prominently in literature as strong-willed protagonists and powerful social and political forces. Some of the most memorable figures of the Greek stage are female: such as Lysistrata, Medea, Clytemnestra, Electra and, of course, Antigone. On the other hand, we know that they were excluded from official political roles, were legally completely under the control of their fathers or husbands, and were absent from the main social life of Athenian men. Add to this the extra complication that even depictions of women as influential, are created by men for predominantly male audiences.

Women's lives differed greatly, too. The main role of well-born Athenian women was to produce new Athenian citizens, and to this end, their lives were tightly controlled: married in their teens, generally to older men, and possibly even restricted to the women's quarters of their own home. For hetairai (courtesans) there were more freedoms, though less protection: someone like Aspasia, Pericles' mistress, could engage in debate with men, and was well-versed in poetry and music.

At the very least, the prominence of women in tragedy shows that ancient Athenians saw gender, the balance between domestic and civic obligations, and the relations between the sexes as topics of debate, conflict, and great importance.



ASPASIA (c470-410 B.C.). - Known as Aspasia of Miletus. Greek adventuress and consort of Pericles. Lithograph, Italian, 19th century, after an ancient bust. The Granger Collection / Universal Images Group

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p>How might our knowledge of the political and religious context of the Great Dionysia influence our reading of Greek tragedy?</p>	<p>There is a wealth of material to be discussed here: particularly useful background reading is Winkler and Zeitlin's <i>Nothing to do with Dionysus</i>, including Simon Goldhill's, 'The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology' (see detail later in this guide). Students' interpretation of the meaning of the play should be guided not only by the text itself and the way it was performed, but also the context in which the performance takes place. <i>Antigone's</i> discussions of political authority, obedience, and conscience are influenced by its staging in front of the polis, surrounded by reminders of the political process of Athens.</p> <p>An extra dimension could be added to the discussion by introducing students to Jean Anouilh's version of <i>Antigone</i>, staged in France during Nazi occupation in 1944: clearly, the discussion of obedience and resistance would have been given quite different overtones in such a context.</p> <p>For more advanced students, this could lead to some discussion of literary theory: to what extent is the meaning of the text bound either by what the original author 'intended' or what the original audience may have taken it to mean? Introducing the more advanced to Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author' will be a challenging stretching exercise.</p>
<p>There is a great deal of debate among scholars as to whether women were present in the audience at the Great Dionysia. How would it make a difference to how we interpret Greek drama?</p>	<p>Modern understanding of the role of women in the Greek, and particularly Athenian, world, has fluctuated wildly, from fairly positive assessments of women's autonomy and power (using evidence drawn largely from tragedy) to ones which see their lives as immensely constricted.</p> <p>Ismene's claim that women by nature should not fight against men (61-2) might form a good starting point for class discussion; if we imagine this heard by men sitting together as the (male) <i>polis</i>, do we hear it differently than if we thought those fifth century Athenians were sitting next to their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, with whom they had argued that morning about the household budget, doing the washing up, etc.? Are the strong female characters something an audience identifies with, or are they merely (like the place and time) a way of distancing uncomfortable viewpoints?</p> <p>One of the most influential articles on the issue has been Froma Zeitlin's 'Playing the other', which could either be read by the teacher to inform discussion, or given to students to consider.</p>

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<i>The power of language and persuasive speech is an important issue for Athenians of the fifth century (and for the Antigone). What modern examples of literature or drama reflect modern concerns about our political system?</i>	<p>Students here are encouraged to think about how the political dimensions of drama function: the range of answers of students will vary drastically with their tastes, from the obviously political <i>House of Cards</i> or Armando Iannucci's satires <i>The Thick of It</i> and <i>In the Loop</i> (and for those with more retro tastes, possibly <i>The West Wing</i> or even <i>Yes, Minister</i>), to interesting discussions of how the superhero genre depicts and interprets politics, or whether <i>Game of Thrones</i> can be viewed as political commentary.</p> <p>The discussion can also be turned back to ancient Athens: what particular debates might the text be reflecting? The role of democracy versus the importance of charismatic statesmen (such as Pericles or Alcibiades), the Peloponnesian War, and even the aftermath, with the rise of the Tyranny of the Thirty, all reflect the importance of the debates over language and power in <i>Antigone</i>.</p>

THE TEXT

Antigone

The original audience would have come to Sophocles' *Antigone* already knowing the basic narrative; Sophocles, however, significantly altered the story and introduced new emphases. An original dispute between Athens (or Argos) and Thebes over the corpses of the Seven is turned into an internal family dispute between Creon and Antigone. The characters of Haemon and Ismene are both introduced in a new and significant way, as foils to Creon and Antigone respectively. The role of the gods and the introduction of divine disapproval of Creon for failing in his familial duties seems also to be a Sophoclean innovation.

The action of the play starts the day after Eteocles and Polynices have died battling for Thebes. Eteocles is buried with full honours, but Polynices is denied burial rites, branded a traitor by Creon (now Thebes' ruler), and Creon publishes an edict proclaiming the death penalty for anyone who dares to bury his body. Antigone refuses to comply, and asserts that her religious duty to her brother, traitor or not, is more important than obedience to the laws of the city. Antigone is captured and sentenced to be walled into a tomb, alive.

Meanwhile, the impiety of leaving Polynices' body unburied causes disturbances in the natural world all around. Creon, warned by the prophet Tiresias, at last repents, but it is too late: Antigone has killed herself in the tomb, and Creon arrives at the tomb just in time to see his son, Haemon, who had been betrothed to Antigone, commit suicide over her body. As Creon leaves the scene, he is told by a messenger that his wife, Eurydice, has also killed herself in grief at the loss of her son.



Aenne Schwarz, *Antigone*, Burgtheater Wien, 2015
Christian Michelides / Burgtheater / CC BY-SA 4.0

Antigone 1-99, 497-525, 531-581, 891-928

a) 1-99: Prologos

Antigone meets Ismene before dawn, and tells her sister of Creon's pronouncement that anyone who dares bury Polynices will be put to death. Antigone is determined to bury him regardless, and tries (unsuccessfully) to convince Ismene to assist her.

b) 497-525, 531-581: From the third scene/ second epeisodion

Soldiers placed to guard the body of Polynices have caught Antigone in the act of covering the body with earth, and have brought her before Creon. This is one of three climactic confrontations around which the play is structured (the other two being Creon and Haemon at 631-765, and Creon and Tiresias at 988-1090). Antigone is unrepentant and aggressive in her opening speech, and the *stichomythia* at 508-25 is a furious exchange, in which resolve on both sides is hardened.

We miss a short choral interlude during which the leader of the chorus announces the arrival of Ismene from the palace to answer Creon's accusation that she helped bury Polynices. The scene is a three-way dialogue, but pointedly, Antigone and Creon avoid directly interacting. Instead, Creon and Ismene first converse, and Ismene admits to the charge. Antigone, however, angrily rejects this and tells Ismene to save herself. Creon reasserts himself in the dialogue, and despite Ismene's protestations that Antigone is his son's fiancée, confirms his command that both sisters shall die.

c) 891-928: From the fifth scene/ fourth epeisodion

Antigone begins her climactic final *rhesis* by addressing first the tomb in which she is to be walled up, but then turns her address directly to her dead family. Her speech weighs up the fierce contradictions of the play: whether piety towards family members outweighs loyalty to the city, and ends indignantly questioning the justice of the gods.

Structure of a tragedy

Prologos - A monologue or dialogue setting out the topic of the tragedy.

Eisodos - The entrance song of the chorus, often in anapaests. We know little about how the chorus sang and danced, but they very likely did both. Choral odes were usually structured as follows: first, the *strophê* ('turn'), in which the chorus moves in one direction; then the *antistrophê* ('counter-turn'), in which it moves in the opposite direction (in the same metre as the *strophê*); and finally, the *epode* ('after-song', sometimes omitted) in a slightly different metre, delivered standing still.

Epeisodon - There are several of these (3-5), on which the modern acts of a play or opera are based, each punctuated by choral singing.

Stasimon - The choral ode reacting to the episode, chanted standing.

Exodos - The departure song of the chorus, after the last episode, usually reflecting or moralising on the aftermath of the tragedy.

Themes and Motifs

Polis and Oikos – The conflict between loyalty to one's family and loyalty to the state forms the heart of Sophocles' drama. The very first words of the play highlight familial relationship, as Antigone addresses Ismene with the pleonastic ὦ κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον. In response to Ismene's statement that she would dare something forbidden to the city (ἀπόρρητον πόλει), Antigone replies with the emphatic recapitulation of their relationship: τὸν γοῦν ἐμὸν καὶ τὸν σὸν ἦν σὺ μὴ θέλης / ἀδελφόν (44-6). Much is made throughout the play of the flexibility of the word *philia*, denoting both friendship and kinship. Antigone in line ten quite clearly marks the boundary between friend and enemy in familial terms: πρὸς τοὺς φίλους στείχοντα τῶν ἐχθρῶν κακὰ. In contrast, Creon asserts at 511-25: οὔτοι ποθ' οὐχθρός, οὐδ' ὅταν θάνῃ, φίλος - *philia* is here dependent on political circumstances.

Male and Female – Gender is, of course, hugely important to the play: issues of limits of male authority, the power of masculine speech, and the possibility of female autonomy simmer throughout the tragedy. Creon's almost pathetic cry, ἡ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀνὴρ, αὕτη δ' ἀνὴρ, / εἰ ταῦτ' ἀνατὶ τῆδε κείσεται κράτη (484-5, just before the set text) highlights these tensions and the contested masculinity of the play. Ismene's warning at the outset: ἀλλ' ἐννοεῖν χρή τοῦτο μὲν γυναῖχ' ὅτι / ἔφυμεν, ὡς πρὸς ἄνδρας οὐ μαχουμένα (61-2) shows how far Antigone goes in controverting commonly held views.

Human and Divine – Antigone frames her struggle as an attempt to fulfil divinely-ordained duties to her family, as opposed to the man-made laws which Creon imposes; see in particular 542: ὦν τοῦργον, Ἄιδης χοί κάτω ξυνίστορες. The chorus' final judgment is that 'we must not be impious to the gods' (1349-50). A superficial reading of the play sees its conclusion as the vindication of religious duty over secular obligations to the city (see 1074-5); but the play resists such simple judgments. Antigone's death seems to show a callous disregard on the part of the divine, and even she seems to waver in her assurance of the gods' favour at 921-8: τί χρή με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι / βλέπειν; (922-3).

Stylistic Features

The following two sections just give a taste of two aspects of Sophocles' style; firstly, his use of language, and secondly, his use of structure. Much more could be said on both counts, but this gives an indication of the kind of analysis that is possible.

Variations in style: Language and Character

Of all the tragedians Sophocles' language is 'the most flexible and richly varied' (Griffith). Contrast, for instance, the elevated style and word-play in lines 1-6: Antigone addressing her sister as ἰσμήνης κάρα, the rhyming neuter adjectives, and the rhetorical force of seven negatives in three lines; to the more colloquial and plainer language at 69-77: short sentences, made to feel more immediate and prosaic by constant enjambement, and a preponderance of shorter words.

These variations are not just for variation's sake: his style shifts to convey character. The reserved and cautious Ismene speaks in measured sentences with embellished language; Antigone, in her passion, speaks more impetuously, with short sentences and bold claims in imperatives or the future tense. Later, Creon's imperious nature is shown with how he addresses the sisters in the third person even when they are present (561-2), or aggressively with the pronoun σὺ, as at 531.

Stichomythia: the heart of tragic conflict

The use of this formal device of tragedy can be powerful; the tension and conflict the quick line-by-line dialogue creates is one of the reasons Greek tragedy remains so engaging to a modern audience. Stichomythia generally sees the lines closely connected in syntax as well as rhetoric, but contrasts the two speakers in mood or attitude. So, for instance, in ll. 37-48, between Antigone and Ismene, the latter's lines express her doubt and fear, while Antigone is assertive and sure. Ismene's rhetorical question of l. 40 is answered by Antigone continuing her sentence with a conditional in l. 41, parallel to the participles of 39-40. Almost every line given by Ismene is a question, contrasted with Antigone's firmness. Antigone and Creon are even more aggressively contrasted at 508-525; the contrast between ὀρθῶς/ ὀρθῶσι (508-9) sets out (literally) their difference of view; heated question and answer constitute a large part of the clash.

Glossary of Key Terms

Agon - Literally 'struggle' or 'competition', this refers to pivotal scenes of competitive dialogue in tragedy, such as between Antigone and Creon.

Chorus - A formal part of the tragic apparatus, usually taking the dramatic form of impartial observers; Antigone's chorus is made up of Theban elders.

Enjambement - The carrying over of a unit of sense onto a second line of verse.

Hypothesis - The summary attached to play; most of these are thought to have been composed by Alexandrian scholars in the Hellenistic period.

Oikos - 'home' or 'extended family'.

Philia - 'love'; 'friendship': a contested term in the play, depending on the familial

Polis (plural poleis) - The city, the formative political and social unit of the ancient Greek world.

Rhesis (plural rheseis) - a longer speech of varying length, though usually no longer than about a hundred lines, in which a character offers an exposition of their situation, or a description of events.

Pleonasm - Using more words than necessary to express meaning, often for emphatic effect.

Stichomythia - The rapid line-by-line exchange between two actors.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>How important is it to read the <i>Antigone</i> in the original language, rather than just in translation?</i></p>	<p>Translation of poetry is a notoriously difficult task; students might be introduced to Jebb's translation (available on Perseus) and asked whether they think it's a good translation or not. Whilst a prose translation might be able to convey the plot of the drama, it will of course fail to grasp any of the stylistic features of the text – from the feel of the metres used, to the subtle changes in diction between characters, to the difficulties of translation of key terms like <i>philia</i>.</p> <p>It might be worth discussing which features of the poetry survive translation and which don't. There are of course some which need more than just linguistic understanding – the conventions of tragedy, the practicalities of its staging, and the context of the Great Dionysia, for example, all contribute to the meaning of the play, without them being present in the Greek text.</p> <p>This discussion serves as good grounding to make sure the students know the kind of feature they are looking for when writing commentary questions, and can be linked to the Poetry Translation exercise featured later in this guide.</p>
<p><i>What is the moral lesson of <i>Antigone</i>?</i></p>	<p>This is a deliberately provocative question, and in way, deliberately misleading, encouraging students to think that there is or should be a single, definite, moral lesson. Historically, one of the most influential readings of <i>Antigone</i> has been the dialectical, Hegelian view: Creon represents the law of the state; <i>Antigone</i>, individualism, and the moral of the play rests in the synthesis of the two views. But Sophocles doesn't make it that easy for us: the drama is open-ended and ambiguous enough to allow interpretations of wildly differing hues.</p> <p>This question might serve as an appropriate introduction to the debate suggested in the resources section of this guide.</p>

ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT TASKS

Activities

Vocabulary List for *Antigone*

The Perseus Project

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/vocablist?works=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0185%3A>

Click on 'vocab tool' in the right-hand column for a vocabulary list which gives the most frequent words used in Od. 6.

The Perseus text can be used on its own by students – especially helpful is the morphological analysis of individual words.

Particularly useful, however, is the option for creating a specific vocabulary list for the *Antigone*. Taking the top 50% of words used in the tragedy will give a list of just over 160 words, many of which (especially at the top, where simple words like 'and' and 'but' feature) won't need to be learnt. This is great as a tool, if learnt off by heart, to get students familiar with the vocabulary of the text so that they can prepare it themselves, and see the process of reading the text as reading – not just as memorizing a translation by rote.

Antigone on the Modern Stage

National Theatre

<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/backstage/greek-theatre>

A series of resources, with a particular focus on the 2012 version of the *Antigone* at the NT.

Students can explore the issues of staging and interpretation of the play as a piece of dramatic performance in the modern world by discussing or critiquing the (short) videos.

Greek theatre at the National Theatre

National Theatre

<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/greek-tragedy-at-the-national-theatre/wRnC0fJ0?position=56%2C40>

An online exhibition of the history of performance of Greek theatre at National theatre, with some interesting interviews with both theatre practitioners and classicists.

A more general examination of the process of translation ancient Greek theatre to the contemporary western world.



Antigone by Sophokles, Burgtheater 2015 (with Mavie Hörbiger in the role of Ismene)
Christian Michelides / Burgtheater / CC BY-SA 4.0

In Our Time: Tragedy

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p005464v#play&in=collection:p01h9vvk>

Melvyn Bragg discusses tragedy with academic experts.

Translating Poetry

Stephen Spender Trust

http://www.stephen-spender.org/spender_prize.html

Choose a short section of the set text to translate into English as English poetry.

The challenge is not merely to translate the Greek words or sentences, but to try to convey the tone, style, feel, and form of Greek poetry as English poetry.

***Antigone* reconfigured**

Re-present the narrative of *Antigone* in another creative format.

Given the majority of class time is spent in detailed reading of the Latin, students often find their sense of the overall narrative lacking; retelling the story in a creative format encourages students to link all the major episodes together as a coherent whole.

Debate

A debate on the topic, using evidence from *Antigone*: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." (E.M. Forster)

Student task sheets

Title of activity: Poetry in Translation	
Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:	Often we view translation as a task of combining the right definitions with the right syntax and grammar to produce 'correct' translations of individual sentences. However, literature (especially poetry) is far more complex in the way it creates meaning: it plays with the audience's expectations of genre, of the combination of form and content; it uses all the effects of sound – rhythm, metre, alliteration, and rhyme, to produce particular effects. Successful translation of poetry requires thought about all of these aspects.
The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),	<p>Your task is to select a passage from the set text and create a poetic translation of it, with an explanation of the choices you have made in your translation. The translation may not be at all close to the original Greek – but as long as you have good reasons for your changes, it may well make it a better poetic translation. A good discussion of the principles underlying literary translation can be found on the website of the Stephen Spender prize (http://www.stephen-spender.org/poetry_translation_notes.html), along with some excellent examples of classical poems (including many from tragedy) turned into English poetry. In order to translate, you will need to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form: how does one effectively translate metre into English? Using an English verse form (Blank verse? Free verse? Or spoken-word style?) • What balance can you strike between poetic form and dramatic realism? • Poetic effects: alliteration, assonance, and other aural effects – how are they rendered? Do you try to keep them, avoid them, or replace them with English equivalents, like rhyme or word-play? • Context: How do you cope with the political and social context of the drama, as well as the knowledge of the plot familiar to a Greek audience but not to a modern one? Do you replace them with modern referents, keep them as mysterious references, or gloss them with an explanation?
Extension activities/questions:	The students can enter their poems into the Stephen Spender prize competition: http://www.stephen-spender.org/spender_prize.html . There are excellent opportunities for cross-curricular work with English or Modern Foreign Languages here – students can compare foreign translations of the <i>Antigone</i> , as well as English ones.

Title of activity: <i>Antigone</i> reconfigured	
Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:	Much of the class time for A Level Greek will be spent on close textual analysis – either for language work, or on close reading of the set text. It is easy to lose sight of the big picture: the way the narrative fits together as a whole, with a carefully structured unity and overarching design holding the play together. Retelling the story in a different medium helps set the individual scenes in their context and is a good revision technique to help prepare for essay questions which ask searching questions about the whole text.
The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),	<p>Re-tell the whole of the <i>Antigone</i> in a different medium. This task can either be set as group-work or an individual assignment. Any format or medium is possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A (short) film. • A comic strip (there are some good sites which can help here: e.g. https://www.bitstrips.com/create/comic/). • A twitter conversation; some sites will allow you to generate it in a form that imitates twitter itself - e.g. http://simitator.com/generator/twitter/tweet, or http://www.lemmetweetthatforyou.com. <p>It may be useful to start the activity by coming up as a class with a timeline of key events in the text which must be included in the retelling.</p> <p>It's worthwhile stressing that the value of this exercise doesn't lie in the quality of the retelling produced: stick figure drawings will be no less useful than carefully produced and edited film versions. What is important is reading over the story, picking out the key components, and using the exercise as a creative tool to really get to know the text intimately.</p>
Extension activities/questions:	The students can enter their poems into the Stephen Spender prize competition: http://www.stephen-spender.org/spender_prize.html . There are excellent opportunities for cross-curricular work with English or Modern Foreign Languages here – students can compare foreign translations of the <i>Antigone</i> , as well as English ones.

Title of activity: Debate: “If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.” (E.M. Forster)	
Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:	Sophocles has often been burdened with a reputation for pessimism; problematic social and political issues are raised, but the outcome of the tragedies forecloses or heads off the possibility for real change. The interpretation of many plays sees the status quo reinforced, as an unalterable and necessary state of affairs. On the other hand (especially from a modern perspective?) the plays seem open enough and ambiguous enough to read quite radical and revolutionary sentiments from them. Is Antigone the tragic hero, whose unnecessary death forces an audience to acknowledge the primacy of conscience over politically expedient conformity? Or are we, with 21st century eyes, missing the real moral of the play – that whilst Antigone’s claims are emotionally moving, they are in fact simply dressing up aristocratic privilege over the shared interests of the ordinary citizen, whose good can only be protected by a recognition of the claims of the city over the claims of the family? Use the text of the <i>Antigone</i> to justify or criticise Forster’s infamous conditional.
The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),	There are several ways of setting up this kind of debate, depending on how many in the class and what the dynamic is usually like. Ideally, with a small class (and this will almost certainly be the case with a sixth-form Greek class), you can divide into two teams of two or three speakers each. Make sure they prepare their case as a team so do not just repeating the same arguments. It would be worthwhile spending a whole lesson on preparation, as long as their focus is finding evidence from the text to support their view. This will function as excellent preparation for longer thematic essay-style questions, and help place the set portions of the drama in the wider context of the tragedy.
Extension activities/questions:	Does a modern viewpoint change the way we view the moral of the play?

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

For teachers

1. Griffith, Mark, *Sophocles Antigone* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990)

The green and yellow commentary gives a solid introduction and hugely useful line-by-line notes.

2. Goldhill, Simon, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986)

Hugely influential work on Greek tragedy, described as an 'advanced critical introduction'. Various selections from it would be useful, but particularly Chapter 4, 'Relations and Relationships', which is focused for a large part on the *Antigone*.

3. Goldhill, Simon, 'The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology', JHS 107 (1987) 58-76, reprinted in revised form in Winkler and Zeitlin, *Nothing to do with Dionysus* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Excellent overview of the context and politics of Greek tragedy within the Great Dionysia and as a political institution.

4. Zeitlin, Froma, 'Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama', *Representations* 11 (1985) 63-94, reprinted in Winkler and Zeitlin, *Nothing to do with Dionysus* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), and revised in Zeitlin, *Playing the Other* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996).

Excellent and highly influential introduction to the issues of the presentation of female characters on the Athenian stage.

5. Gibbons, Reginald, and Segal, Charles, *Antigone* (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

A new translation, with useful introduction and an interesting essay on the difficulties of translating Sophocles.

6. Anouilh, Jean, *Antigone* (London: Methuen, 1951)

The famous French version of the play produced in occupied Paris.

7. Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen* 5-6 (1967)

A seminal work on literary theory and interpretation; a good starting point for these issues for the more advanced students.

For students

1. Perseus

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0185%3Acard%3D1>

The Perseus website is a useful linguistic tool for preparation of the text, providing a lookup tool for linguistic analysis with a link to Liddell & Scott; for the text of the *Antigone* it also Jebb's (rather archaic) and (rather more useful) brief notes.

2. The British Museum on ancient theatre

http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/festivals/explore/exp_set.html

Really a site for much younger children, this short exploration of the Athenian theatre is a fun and useful introduction to the physical spaces which contained Greek drama.

3. Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama

<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/learning/apgrd-introductions-series>

The APGRD, based in Oxford, has a website with some good introductory material on Greek drama, and particularly good extension material on reception of Classical drama.

4. Mnemonics for Greek verse

<http://www.armand-dangour.com/mnemonics-for-greek-metre/>

Dr Armand D'Angour, Classics fellow at Jesus College, Oxford, has a rather jolly collection of mnemonics useful for remembering Greek metres, including those found in tragedy, which is particularly useful in conjunction with Annis' 'Introduction to Greek Meter' (<http://www.aoidoi.org/articles/meter/intro.pdf>)

5. Greek theatre at the National Theatre

<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/greek-tragedy-at-the-national-theatre/wRnC0fJ0?position=56%2C40>

An online exhibition of the history of performance of Greek theatre at National theatre, with some interesting interviews with both theatre practitioners and classicists.



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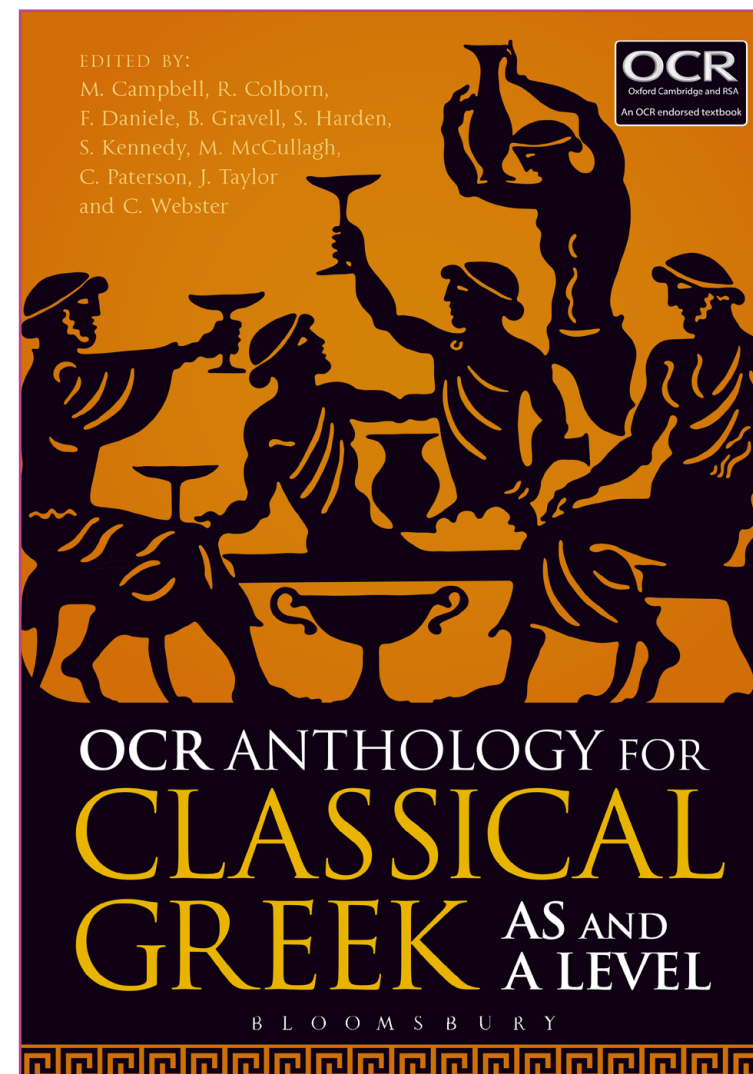
Sophocles, *Antigone*, lines 1–99, 497–525, 531–581, 891–928

Sophocles, *Antigone*, lines 162–222, 248–331, 441–496, 998–1032

with Introduction, Notes and Commentary by Matthew McCullagh

Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 1–203, 366–392

with Introduction, Notes and Commentary by Sarah Harden





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