

# Fairfield Warde High School

May 23, 2025

## Dear 2025 – 2026 Advanced Placement Literature Students:

Welcome to AP Literature. The following is the list of required summer reading, viewing, and annotating assignments. These assignments are designed to prepare students for the kind of work we will do in AP Literature. They each offer overarching ideas for the course themes. We will also apply various critical theories to these works, exploring the ways such lenses affect our interpretation and understanding of texts.

**Part A: Reading and Annotation. Choose the annotation system (e.g., physical notes, post-its, Google Doc notes) that works best for you.**

**Students will read/interpret a novel, a play, and one film.** The rationale for each is articulated below the title. The theme of Advanced Placement Literature is “The Quest for Meaning” and the following works should offer much to ponder, as well as provide a touchstone to draw from throughout the year.

- ***One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez - (fiction)**

This is, still, an amazingly groundbreaking novel. It captures the history of its author, the country in which he lived (Colombia), as well as the metaphoric history of humanity. Its writing style is the genre of magical realism. Find credible research about this literary style. At its core, AP Literature is the study of how literature is the repository of human thinking, philosophy, and experience. Essentially, the arts reflect what we have thought and believed about the world and ourselves. Also, we will use this novel as a starting point for understanding the various literary theories we will work with during the year.

As you read this novel, consider the following and find related textual evidence:

- the notion of an Edenic state
- archetypal imagery and concepts
- destruction, creation, and duality
- the power of naming
- the weaving of the magical with history, mythology, and politics
- the relationship among the past, present, and future
- linear time versus non-linear time

- ***Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles - (fiction)**

As you read the play, read and review the *Oedipus Rex Terms & Noting Taking Guide* provided. You will receive a physical copy of the play, but *you'll also find a digital copy of the play* in your AP Google Classroom. You may use the digital copy to aid you in reading closely and critically, highlighting key passages and using the comment feature to chronicle insights:

- important quotations
- insightful questions (yours)
- meaningful connections
- thoughtful comments

According to music historian Dr. Lily King, “*Oedipus Rex* is about the inevitability of fate; the characters hope to escape their tragic ends, but their very actions bring those ends closer. *Oedipus Rex* does not build its sense of drama through surprise, but rather through the tragedy of watching the characters careen toward their foregone conclusions.”

### **Part B: Viewing.**

- *The Matrix* (1999) – film, R. This can be found on SWANK Movies through ClassLinks; it may also be found on Google Classroom under the topic “Films/Documentaries” and on Netflix, Amazon, and at your local library

If you have any reservations about the R rating, please email your teacher; email addresses are at the end of the letter.

### **Part C: Writing. Your comprehension of the summer reading will be assessed through in-class writing assignments. You will not have the aid of your notes while writing. Your annotations will serve to cement your recall of story details and your evolving thinking.**

- 3 Annotation Systems for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Oedipus*, and *The Matrix*
- In-class Literary Analysis Essay for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
- 3 In-class Viewing Responses for *The Matrix*

Remember, the theme of the course is “The Quest for Meaning” - the quest to understand must be your own – through analysis, reflection, and dialogue. In-class writing should be DISCO:

***DEVELOPED INSIGHTFUL SPECIFIC CLEAR ORGANIZED***

Adhere to the following when preparing your writing assignments. The tone of these responses may be fairly informal and personal (avoid superfluous use of the first person). We will be looking at the following in your writing:

- clarity
- effective use of personal voice/tone
- thoughtfulness, level of insight
- quality of connections
- effective integration of direct passages/specific examples from texts

- cohesiveness
- grammar, mechanics, and usage

***When we write in class, we will follow these requirements:***

- ***SINGLE spacing***
- ***12 point, Times New Roman font (or something similar in size and readability) NOT Ariel 12pt.***
- ***Standard margins – one inch on ALL four sides***
- ***MLA citation format***

**Plagiarism:** AI has made it significantly more difficult for teachers to vet the authenticity of students' writing. **You will always handwrite on paper provided in class or type in class using a Lockdown Browser in the Google Document provided in the posted assignment in Google Classroom. You must write in the template.** The purpose of writing responses in the linked document is that it allows teachers to see through “Draftback” and other advanced and evolving tools that allow us to check timestamps, keystrokes, or if anything was cut and pasted or plagiarized. These templates will be in Google Classroom as an "assignment." Not following this clear directive will place the validity of student work in question. Use *your* mind. Work that is not your own will result in a zero.

Be sure to enroll in your respective sections before the end of the 2024/25 school year:

**Dr. Faber:                    Class Code: st5cquh7**

**Ms. Landowne:            Class Code: me5jnuey**

**These readings and the in-class writing assignments are a course prerequisite. The work is worth 10% of the Marking Period 1 grade. Additionally, discussions of the film and texts over the summer are encouraged, but not required.**

***Enjoy the summer. We look forward to working with you this coming year. Feel free to contact us at our [fairfield.org](mailto:fairfield.org) emails with any questions.***

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## *Oedipus Rex*: Terms and Note-Taking Guide

### 1. NOTE TAKING:

On the following pages, you will find a reading guide for *Oedipus Rex*, including Aristotle's definition of tragedy, which you will need to understand the play more deeply. (For some of you, this will be a review of Aristotle's definition of tragedy; for some of you, this will be new information.)

Prepare for class discussions and essays by considering these questions and terms as you take notes on your online copy of the play.

## *Oedipus Rex* Preparation for Class Discussion

Your responses to these prompts will NOT be collected. Instead, you will submit your annotations (highlights and comments) on your online copy of *Oedipus Rex*. Any additional notes you choose to make on this document will be for your use during both a graded discussion AND an in-class essay.

1. Read "Tragedy: Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy" (below). Annotate this handout, making sure that you understand and 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

Consider the following questions as you highlight your online copy of the play.

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 function 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 "Argument" 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 Laius and Jocasta 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.

## 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.