

ANTIGONE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Legend of Thebes....

Chorus

- A masked group of actors who intermittently appear on stage to comment on the plot—usually through song.
- Choragus = chorus leader



Fate

- Meaning 1: Preordained destiny
- Meaning 2: The Fates, or *Moirai*, are the three goddesses of fate (particularly death and pain).



Tragic Hero

- Protagonist, or central character (good guy)
- Usually fails or dies (with dignity) because of character flaw
- High rank or status
- Shows strength while facing fate



This is Zorro. He was an awesome hero from long ago. You've probably never heard of him because you are young compared to me now! ☹

Tragic Hero

- Anakin Skywalker?
- Batman?

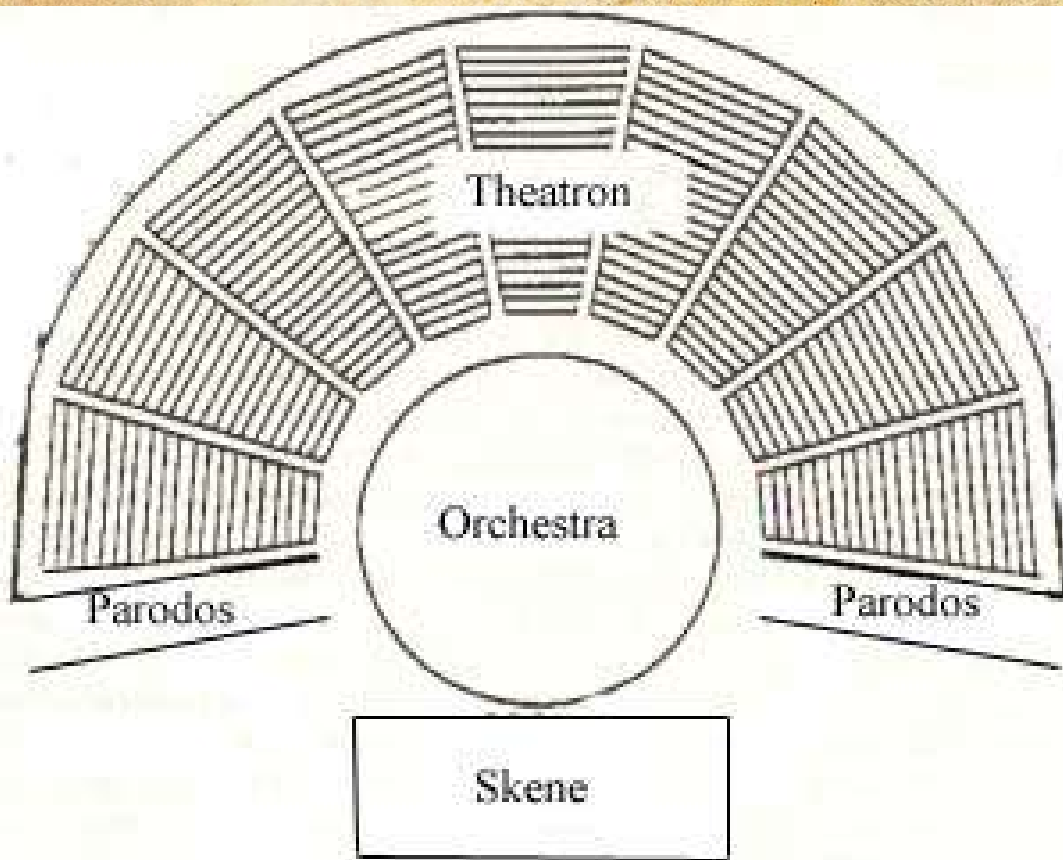


Tragic Hero Qualities

- **Hubris:** arrogance
- **Catharsis:** a move from ignorance to knowledge
- **Hamartia:** weakness that causes downfall
- **Nemesis:** fate that cannot be escaped

The Theatre





Parts of a Greek Theater

- **Orchestra:** “dancing space” used by chorus; often included an altar (*thymele*).
- **Skene:** “tent” or structure behind the stage, with doors and upper levels.
- **Parodos:** “passageways” by which the chorus and actors entered and exited the stage area.
- **Theatron:** “viewing-place” usually part of a hillside overlooking the orchestra.

Parts of a Greek Tragedy

Simple Structure: Prologue spoken, chorus enters (singing and dancing) with additional scenes that alternate between spoken sections and song

Prologue: Usually gives mythological background

Parodos: Sung by the chorus; it enters dancing

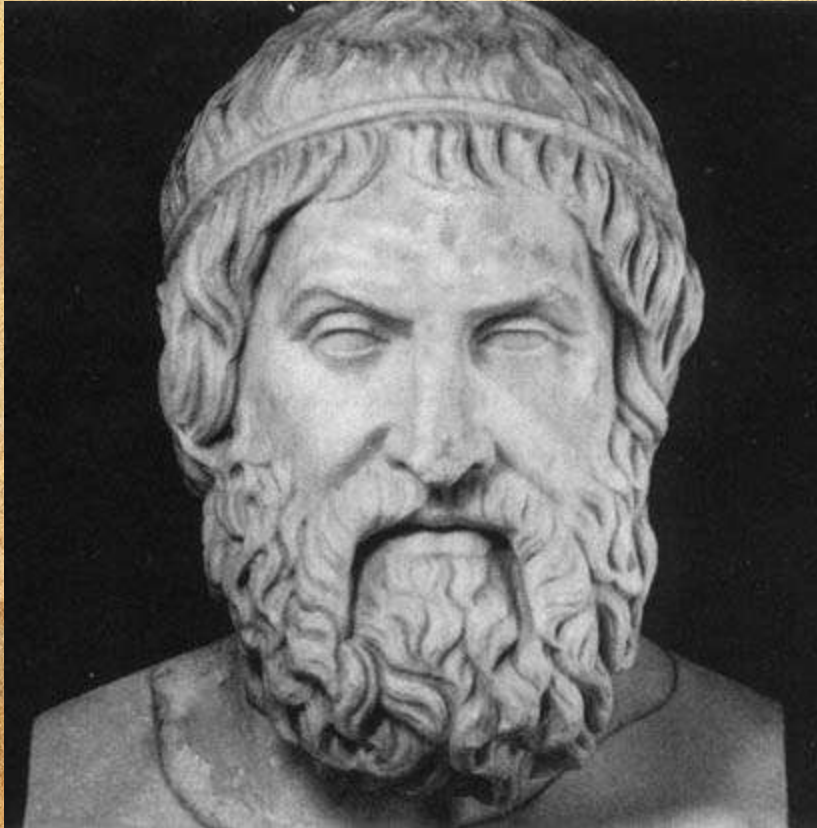
Episodes: This is the first of many "episodes" (literally "between odes"), when the characters and chorus talk and main action occurs.

Ode: At the end of each episode, the actors leave the stage and the chorus dances and sings a choral ode summarizing the episode. The rest of the play is an alternation between episodes and *odes*, until the final scene.

Exodos: Chorus exits singing a processional song which usually offers words of wisdom related to the play.



About Sophocles (480-406 B.C.)



- A prominent citizen of Athens known for his musical, poetic and dramatic talents
- Wrote 127+ tragedies; only seven survive
- His works always contain a moral lesson—usually a caution against pride and religious indifference
- Most admired for his “Theban” plays—three tragedies about King Oedipus of Thebes and his family

Antigone

- Chronologically, it is the third of the three Theban plays but was written first
- First performed in 442 B.C.
- *It is a story that pits the law of the gods- “unwritten law”-against the laws of humankind, family ties against civic duty, and man against woman.*

Oedipus

- ▣ Oedipus was born into a royal family in Thebes (King Laïus and Queen Jocasta).
- ▣ There was a prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother and therefore bring ruin to his city and family.
- ▣ Oedipus' father, King Laïus, wanted to prevent this, so he tied Oedipus' feet together and left him on a mountain to die.



- ▣ The baby was found and raised by King Polybus and Queen Merope
- ▣ An Oracle revealed the prophecy to Oedipus. Oedipus thought that King Polybus was his real father, so he left in order to protect him.



▣ While Oedipus was running away, he encountered a man on a road with a chariot. They argued about who should move out of the way, and Oedipus ended up killing the man. He had no idea that the man was his father, King Lauiis!

- ▣ Oedipus ended up at Thebes and saw that a Sphinx was destroying the city.
- ▣ Oedipus defeated the Sphinx by answering a riddle correctly; as a prize, he was now the king of the city and won the hand of the widowed queen (his mother, Jocasta).

☐ Jocasta and Oedipus had four children.

- Two girls-Antigone and Ismene
- Two boys-Eteocles and Polynices

- So....his children are not only his children...but his brothers and sisters ☹

- ▣ Oedipus went on a search to learn who killed the king (he had no idea that he killed the king on his way there)
- ▣ He found out that he killed the king, the king was his father, and that he married his mother.

- ▣ Then....
 - ▣ Jocasta hung herself
 - ▣ Oedipus gauged his eyes with pins

