



Antigone  
Introduction

# Myths



- A. Earliest form of literature & they originated with religious rituals
  - B. Their purpose was to “explain” mysterious ways of gods, humans, and nature
- Ex. Persephone’s death and revival explains the seasonal cycles

# Myths (continued)

- C. Myths enlighten us by telling us about our fears, desires, and what we are capable of as human beings
- D. Our main source of Greek myths came from the poet Homer and the Roman myths mainly came from the poet Ovid



# Fundamental Themes of Old Myths

- A. The idea that a true hero must be willing to sacrifice personal desires and even his family's well-being in order to save his country
- B. The idea that the causes of war may not justify the enormous suffering that it produces
- C. The idea that individual conscience and divine law are superior to the dictates of civil law

# Fundamental Themes of Old Myths

- D. The idea that anger, stubbornness, and pride can lead to tragedy.
- E. The idea that youth is rash and deaf to all warnings to be moderate.
- F. The idea that in attempting to be “more” than human, human beings can bring disaster upon themselves.

# Sophocles

(496?-406 B.C.)



A. Greatest of Ancient Greek Playwrights

B. Known for his dramatic, poetic, & musical talents

C. Was a general, political leader, & priest

G. Wrote 120 tragedies-only 7 survive today

H. Plays always contain a moral lesson

I. Was a technical innovator: added a third character, introduced painted sets, expanded the size of the chorus to 15, and made each play a trilogy separate in nature (each play could stand alone)

- *Oedipus Rex*
- *Oedipus on Colonus*
- *Antigone*



# Admired for his Oedipus Trilogy



- A. Written over a 40 year period
- B. Began with the last & third part of the trilogy, *Antigone*
- C. Twelve years later he wrote the first part of series, *Oedipus the King*
- D. During the last year of his life, he wrote the middle segment, *Oedipus at Colonus*



# *The Oedipus Trilogy*

## *(Synopsis of plays 1 & 2)*

- King Laios & Queen Jocasta of Thebes learn from an oracle that their newborn son would kill his father and marry his mother
- They gave their son to a shepherd who was to pin the child's ankles together and leave him for dead on top of a mountain
- The shepherd however gave the boy to another shepherd who then gave the child to the King & Queen of Corinth who could not have children of their own





Fig. 56 (left). Statue holding mask (Roman copy)

Fig. 58 (above). Bronze mask from Peiraeus



Fig. 57. Terracotta mask from Athenian Agora.





Upper right: relief showing six tragic masks

Illustration of Athens, NM 382



# Greek Theatre



# V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*



- They adopted the child and named him Oedipus which means “swollen foot” or “clubbed foot”
- When Oedipus was older he learned of the oracle’s prediction...Believing that the king & queen of Cornith were his real parents he ran away from his terrible fate
- During his journey to Thebes, an arrogant man ran Oedipus off the road in his chariot. Because his honor was a stake, Oedipus fought the man and killed him.



# V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*

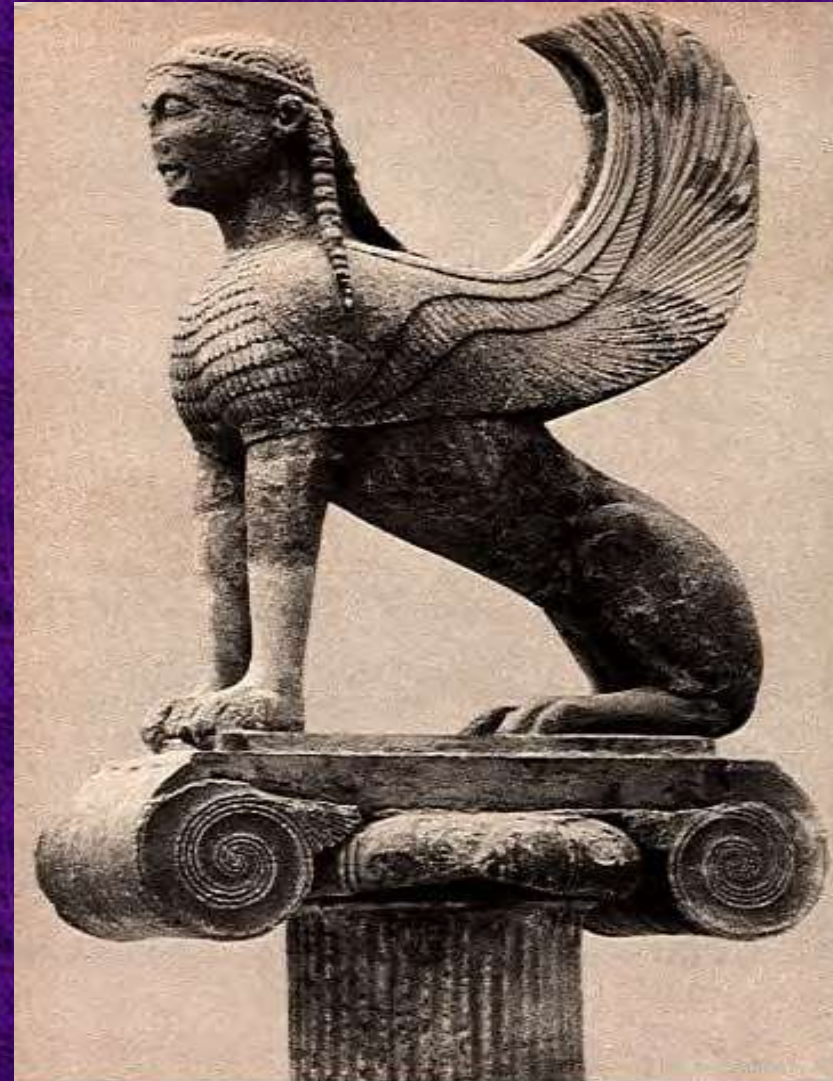


At Thebes, he conquered the Sphinx who was terrorizing the city. The sphinx was a terrible monster with wings of an eagle, body of a lion, and head of a woman. **By answering the Sphinx's riddle correctly, he defeated the monster and gained the throne of Thebes. Now he was the new king and the old king's widow became Oedipus' queen.**

Oedipus and Jocasta had four children together...two sons, Polyneices and Eteocles; and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene.



# *The Oedipus Trilogy*



Die Sphinx der Naxier, Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.

# V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*

- A plague struck Thebes and the oracle said that it would not end until Laios' murderer was killed
- The blind prophet Teiresais told Oedipus that the man he killed while traveling to Thebes was King Laios, Oedipus' real father.



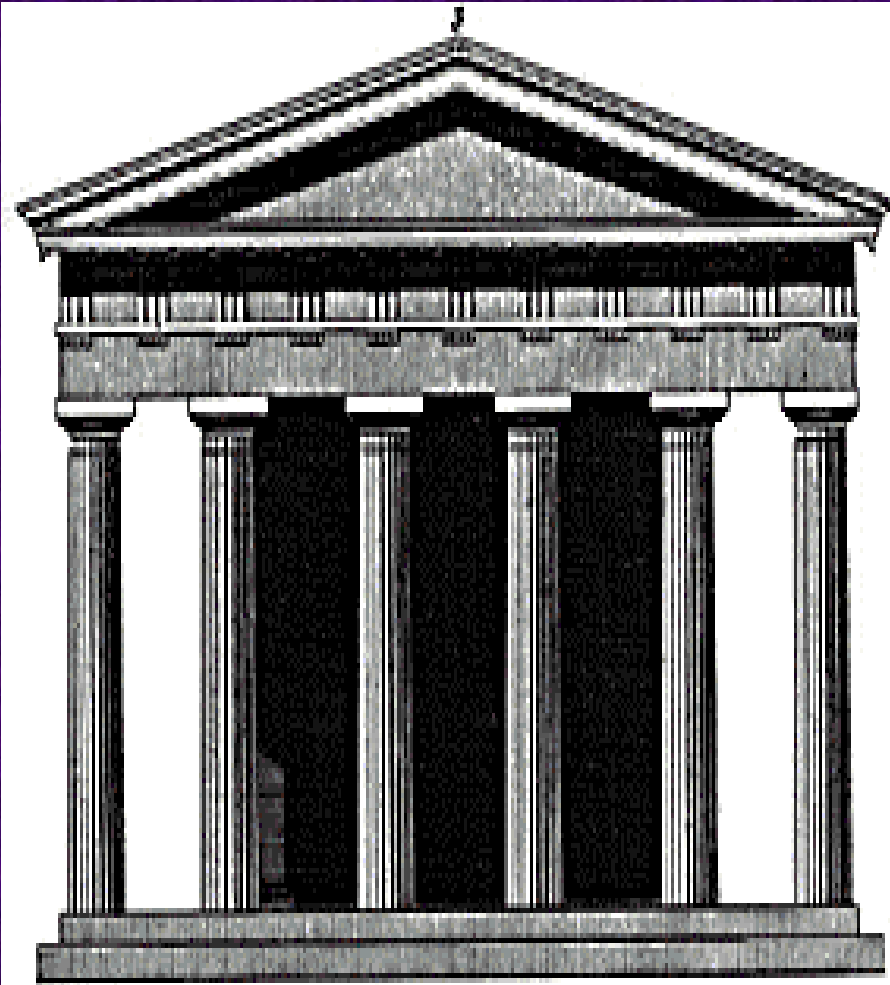
## V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*

- The oracle's original prediction had come true- Oedipus did kill his father and married his mother.
- With the truth learned, Jocasta killed herself and Oedipus gouged out his eyes for he had been blind to the truth all these years.





## V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*



- After these disasters, Creon temporarily took over as acting ruler of Thebes and exiled Oedipus.
- Oedipus accompanied by his daughter, Antigone, wandered the countryside as a beggar until he reached the sanctuary at Colonus, where he died.

## V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*

- Antigone returned to Thebes to find her brothers had agreed to rule Thebes in alternate years. Eteocles' turn was first, however he refused to give up the throne when his rule was over.
- Civil War broke out between the two brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices. The brothers finally killed each other during the battle.



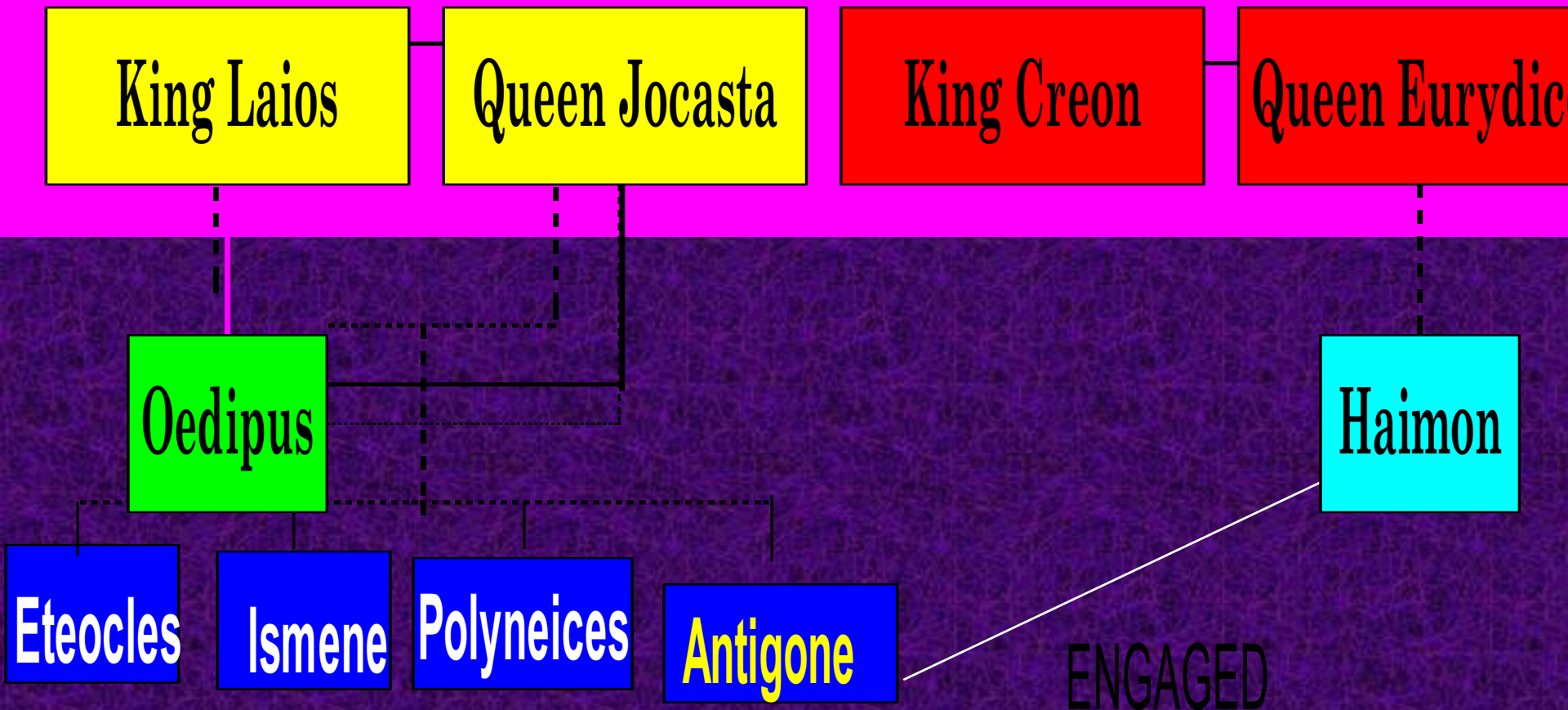
# V. *The Oedipus Trilogy*



- Creon now has become the king of Thebes. He gave Eteocles, his ally, a hero's burial but he refused to bury Polyneices because he considers him a traitor. **By not burying Polyneices, Creon defied the holiest of laws and now Polyneices soul will be condemned to eternal unrest.** This is where the play *Antigone* begins. **The main conflict of the play is between Antigone who believes that God's laws must be obeyed and wants to bury Polyneices and Creon who stands firm that the laws of the state must be top priority.**



# *Antigone's Family Tree*



# VI. Conflicts & Themes in Antigone

Although various conflicts arise, the main conflict is btw. the requirements of human/state law (civil law) & divine law (religious law).

Theme#1 – Strong links between wisdom (reason), piety & humility.

“There is no happiness where there is no wisdom;  
No wisdom but in submission to the gods.

Big words are always punished,

And proud men in old age learn to be wise.”

(792, l.139-142.)

# VI. Conflicts & Themes in *Antigone*

## Theme #2- Folly of pride

“ Think all men make mistakes,  
But a good man yields when he  
Knows his course is wrong,  
And repairs the evil.

The only crime is pride.”

(783 l.33-35)



# VI. Conflicts & Themes in *Antigone*

Theme #3 - Supremacy of moral laws

“The laws of gods are mighty, and man  
must serve them,

To the last day of his life!”

(786, l.108-109)

# VI. Conflicts & Themes in **Antigone**

Main Conflict: Divine Law vs Civil Law

Prologue Man vs Man  
Scene 1 Man vs Man  
Scene 2 Man vs Man  
Scene 3 Man vs Man  
Scene 4 Man vs Self  
Scene 5 Man vs Man

# VII. Allusion

Alludes to WWII

Jews and people who supported the Jews  
(Support the Law of God)

VS

Autocrat Ruler/Hitler  
(Support the Law of Man/Ruler)



# IX. Tragic Hero vs. Epic Hero

Noble in stature/royal

Tragic Flaw  
(Hamartia) such as  
Hubris (excessive  
pride)

Downfall due to own  
fault/free choice

Misfortune not  
wholly deserved

Accepts fate and  
gains wisdom

Catharsis is  
experienced

Man of nobility strong  
in mind and body

Mortal/can die and  
has fears

Goes on a quest with  
allies/followers

Faces foes/obstacles  
that are  
extraordinary

Helped by the gods

Remains  
steadfast/never gives  
up