

English 9

Agamemnon Review

I. Character identification. In a character ID, be able to tell the character's main role in the story, what the character adds to the play (the knowable purpose of the character's existence in the play), the character's main relationships to others.

II. Short answer. Be able to answer, specifically and insightfully, questions about the play. To prep:

- Understand how Aeschylus is different from the playwrights who follow him.
- Know the basics of *Agamemnon*'s family tree and the horrible story that accompanies it;

• Know the basics of Aristotle's description of *Poetics*. Be able to talk intelligently about terms like *peripeteia*, *hamartia*, *anagnorisis*. Remember what tragedy does (elicits *catharsis*) as a religious rite and what constitutes a tragic hero. Remember Aristotle's definition of tragedy and how it relates to *Agamemnon*:

"A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language;...in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a *catharsis* of these emotions."

Aristotle's *Poetics* gives you a template to use for understanding the text; your mastery of the text will serve you well in placing it on the template.

III. Passage identification and discussion.

- Be able to identify major aspects of style when you see them (motifs and how they work): the net/web, the role of light and darkness, the imagery associated with the tapestries
- While all speech is stylized in *Agamemnon*, you can use your knowledge of character to tell who is speaking;
- Use your knowledge of the sequence of events to identify context;
- Use your understanding of the main themes of the play to discuss the relationship of a passage to those themes.

Themes

Revenge/The futility of blood justice/Old and new gods

Consequences of war

Gender roles and norms

Fate and the role of the gods

Moral ambiguity