

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*:

Aristotle defines **tragedy** in [Book VI](#) as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions" (51).

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