

Might Versus Right: An Ancient Greek Guide to Moral Dilemmas

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Academic Setting

Albuquerque, New Mexico is a very culturally and ethnically diverse city. Highland High School, located in the southeastern part of Albuquerque, matches this diversity. The Hispanic population is about 40% while the Anglo population is around 30%. Native-American students make up approximately 8%; African-American students make up approximately 5%; Asian-American students make up approximately 4%, and other ethnic students make up approximately 4%. The student population varies between 1800 and 2000 students per year in grades nine through twelve.

Ability levels also vary. The population of special education students has increased in the recent years including students who are gifted, learning disabled, emotionally disabled, physically disabled, and severely disabled. Our school also has an increasing number of students whose first language is not English. Teachers are now expected to service these students who have varying skills. It is a difficult challenge to provide stimulating and challenging curriculum to such a wide variety of abilities. As a result, Limited English Proficiency (L.E.P.) training is required at all Albuquerque Public Schools to help teachers learn new teaching strategies.

Another strong program at Highland High School is the inclusion of learning disabled students in the general education setting. It is the law to offer the "least-restrictive environment" for special education students. This can mean a self-contained classroom for severely disabled students, but it can also mean a general education setting with modifications. Teachers are legally bound to service students who are placed into these general education classes as decided in a student's Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.). The special education department is very strong. It offers help in the form of team teaching and also provides general education teachers with the opportunity to get support and help from a resource teacher. Some team-taught inclusion classes include English 9 through 12, Algebra, and Biology.

Highland also has an economically diverse population. Students come from "wealthier" sections of town such as Four Hills, middle-class areas, "the warzone" area, and Kirtland Air Force Base. Many current students have parents who graduated from Highland. We have some

communities that are very stable and other areas where families are transient. To our dismay, the freshmen classes usually begin with approximately 600 students; however, the senior classes only graduate around 300 students.

Highland is also unique in Albuquerque because it is on a 4 X 4 block schedule. Students take four classes between August and December and another four classes between January and May. This means a student can earn eight credits a year as opposed to a traditional schedule which offers six credits. This also means classes are approximately 87 minutes each day, which provides extended time to participate in multi-modal activities.

Goal

The goal of this unit is to engage students in meaningful thought and action through reading, writing, speaking, discussing, and action. It is geared toward a literature or English class in high school, but it can be adopted to any class.

Objectives

Number One: Students will read Sophocles' *Antigone*. Through teacher guidance and explanations, the first moral dilemma will be presented to the class. Students will write their thoughts and move into group discussions. Students will write a final essay on their stance and present it to either small groups or to the class.

Number Two: Students will read Euripides' *Medea*. A second moral dilemma will be presented followed by discussion, writing, and presentation.

Number Three: Students will write their own personal stance on morality after experiencing the previous objectives.

Narrative

Introduction/Purpose

Students face difficult choices everyday which may have long-term repercussions. They might decide to do what is legally correct, but sometimes this conflicts with their moral integrity. How do students decide what to do in the event of an important question? What do the ancient Greeks show us about decisions involving moral dilemmas? Revering personal morality, tolerating differences, and supplicating to existing laws are all factors involved in moral dilemmas. Students can choose divergent paths to follow; however, this may not be what is best for them or for the betterment of society. They may think they are

making the correct decision or perhaps that they have no other viable options. Sometimes teenagers feel as if taking "desperate measures" is the only answer. We can only hope that there are no dire consequences. Perhaps the ancient Greeks can provide lessons which are applicable to modern society.

This unit will explore the process students follow in making moral decisions with some guidance from ancient Greek literature. Studying tragic Greek characters can show us some moral decisions and their consequences. Each tragic character must decide whether to revere their personal integrity or to give into what existing laws dictate as "right." Students will explore the decisions each character makes in the face of controversy. What are the long-term effects? Did they make the right decision? This unit will also help answer or at least offer distinct perspectives on these questions, and probably explore other questions and answers.

Greek tragedies often explore the human condition and how people are treated differently by the Olympian Gods, supernatural characters, and other mortals. Tolerance or intolerance to differences is a major issue in our schools today. Violence on school campuses is frequently reported throughout the United States, and it is often attributed to students who feel isolated, harassed, and victimized. It is so important to create discussion about this precarious problem. The study of Greek tragedy is a great place to start this necessary dialogue concerning tolerance and moral dilemmas wherein characters are wonderful examples of giving into intolerance, acting out intolerant behaviors, or facing an intolerant power. How do they face their society which is intolerant of differences? What actions and consequences follow? How can individuals alleviate violence due to intolerant attitudes and actions? Students are provided opportunities to delve into these issues; hopefully, they will feel safe enough to engage in discussion of often-controversial topics.

Giving into social expectations and giving into peer pressures are other concerns in our schools. Going along with the "in-crowd" just to feel accepted is the easy answer; unfortunately, it probably isn't the best answer. All humans have the innate drive to be accepted by other humans. History continues to repeat itself. Atrocities are committed everyday against groups of people who do not fit into the mainstream. History is full of examples of man's intolerance of others based on perceived differences. Ancient Greece offers many literary examples through their myths and tragedies. Humans just can't seem to learn these lessons. It is necessary to keep discussing why humans continue to obliterate their own kind based almost solely on just one difference. Sophocles' *Antigone* is scorned by society because of her parents

incestuous relationship over which she had no control; just because Euripides' *Medea* is a foreigner to her city, she is treated as an evil outcast. Students are faced with this moral dilemma of tolerance versus intolerance and should be given the opportunity to explore this problem.

Discussion of moral dilemmas is a high-interest topic which can engage students into thought and action. This unit will provide extensive opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving, reading, writing, speaking, and discussion. In reference to some powerful, independent, and complex characters, classic literature can provide a stimulus for examination. Students can explore personal integrity, tolerance of differences, and peer pressure. Individuals can fight against discrimination and help society to follow through discussion about feelings, choices, and actions.

We go through our day-to-day routines without much questioning of why people are the way they are to each other. Complacency too often is a formidable opponent of fairness. We as teachers need to address our students egregious behaviors which stem from blissful ignorance. It's not okay to make others suffer because of irrational attitudes flaunted throughout the academic halls of education. Too many adolescents are suffering at the hands of intolerant people, and adults are faced with increasingly complicated situations. We are no longer expected just to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic; we are forced to incorporate integrity, morality, and values. Albuquerque Public Schools adopted a program called "Character Counts" which is basically a set of values including fairness, respect, caring, responsibility, sharing, citizenship, and trustworthiness. This is a scary topic for many educators because some parents feel it is not our place to teach these highly divergent topics. In an ideal world, this is absolutely true; however, it is not always realistic. Many adolescents need to discuss this with other teens and adults. They need the opportunity to connect with other adults, which can be accomplished in an academic setting.

Literature provides an excellent vehicle for inspecting "character" by looking back into our history and studying human behavior. Ancient Greek tragedies provide a plethora of compelling characters. This unit will focus on strong characters who continue to make an impact in literary circles. Antigone, Medea, and Creon are dynamic and complex people; their choices of action may be quite controversial, but they are great impetus for discussion around moral integrity. After reading Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Euripides' *Medea* students will have a chance to inspect motivations for deeds and crimes committed in the name of justice.

The Background and Story of Antigone

Apollo, god of the sun, is the primary Olympian god involved in this play, albeit from a distance. Also known as Phoebus, Apollo is considered to be the consummate Greek god. He is close to perfection among the Greek gods; he is a mixture of power and beauty. His oracle at Delphi, believed to be the center of the universe in ancient Greece, plays a significant role by prophesying events which are fulfilled by the beginning of the play, *Antigone*. Mortals seek information at the shrine, and Pythia, Apollo's priestess, goes into a trance and reveals their future. Apollo's oracle twice reveals a horrific prophecy which precludes any possibility of happiness in the play *Antigone*.

Antigone is the daughter of the infamous Oedipus and Jocasta. Oedipus fulfilled a prophecy in which he was to murder his own father and marry his mother. When Oedipus was born, his parents gave him to a shepherd who was to leave him far away to die in order to curtail the prophecy. The shepherd felt sorry for Oedipus and gave him to a shepherd of Corinth. The baby ended up being raised by the Queen and King of that city. They did not tell Oedipus he was not their son.

Oedipus found out about the prophecy; however, he still was not aware of his adoption. Thinking he was the real son of the Queen and King of Corinth, he left to avoid fulfilling the prophecy. During his escape away from Corinth, Oedipus became involved while on the road to Thebes in a dispute and killed a stranger. Of course as the audience knows, this stranger is actually his real father which begins the tragic demise of Oedipus and his family.

Oedipus continues on his way from Corinth to the city of Thebes. He crosses the pathway of the Sphinx. The Sphinx is a monster with the head of a woman, the wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion. Travelers were to answer a riddle else the Sphinx would devour them. Oedipus is given the following riddle: "What creature goes on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?" Oedipus answers correctly with "man" because he crawls as a baby in the morning of his life, walks upright as an adult in mid-life, and in the evening of his life he uses a cane. After hearing Oedipus' answer, the Sphinx leaps into the sea since a man has beaten her riddle.

Laios, the King of Thebes, had earlier been killed, by Oedipus. Once Oedipus finally arrives in Thebes, the towns people discover his feat and offer him the crown. The crown comes not only with the ruling of Thebes but also with the marriage of the Queen, Jocasta. This is a

clear example of the Greek hero motif wherein the hero is rewarded for his trials. Oedipus then has four children with Jocasta including Polyneices, Eteocles, Antigone, and Ismene. They seem to be the perfect family fulfilling the Greek marriage motif. The audience knows differently. Oedipus had sex with his own mother, and now he is not only the father of his four children, but he is also their older brother.

After many years, the gods send down a plague on Thebes. Oedipus sends his brother-in-law, Creon, to Apollo's oracle at Delphi to find out how to rid the town of the plague. The oracle tells Creon to punish the murderer of King Laios. Ominously, this killer still lives among the other Thebans. Oedipus vows to find this killer and reap retribution for the city. Of course, little does he know that he is actually hunting for himself.

He questions a blind prophet named Teiresias. This prophet does know the truth and definitely does not want to reveal this to the King. Oedipus insists on hearing the truth even after being warned about the impending doom. Yes, Oedipus learns that the stranger he killed years ago on the road to Thebes was actually King Laios. He also learns King Laios was his true father. The prophecy has been fulfilled. He killed his father and married his mother. Jocasta learns of this atrocity and kills herself. Oedipus gouges out his eyes as a punishment for fulfilling the prophecy.

Creon takes over as temporary King and eventually exiles Oedipus. Antigone can not let her father/brother be exiled alone, so she goes with him. After many obstacles and tribulations, they stop in the city of Colonus where Oedipus finally meets his demise. Antigone then returns to Thebes. Her brothers were supposed to rule the city in alternating years; unfortunately, they get involved in war against one another because Eteocles will not give up the throne to Polyneices when it is his turn. The brothers end up killing each other, and the crown is officially given to Creon.

King Creon gives Eteocles a proper burial because he is considered the city's protector, but he issues an edict to leave Polyneices' body, a traitor to the city, unburied and outside the city walls, which is an extreme insult not only to the Greeks but also to the Olympians. If a proper religious burial is not provided, then that person's soul will live in perpetual unrest. This begins the conflict between King Creon and Antigone. Antigone feels it is absolutely necessary to bury both brothers.

The play of *Antigone* begins with this dilemma. Antigone plans to bury Polyneices and asks her sister Ismene to help. Ismene refuses to

help because it is wrong to go against the King's wishes. Ismene tells Antigone that they are only women and can't possibly go against the law; besides, anyone who tries to bury Polyneices will be put to death by stoning. Antigone responds by declaring that her life is worth giving just to ensure her brother's body is buried respectfully and honorably; she declares she is appealing to the law of the gods.

King Creon finds out about the burial and vows vengeance against the person who has disobeyed his authority. The sentry brings in Antigone as the accused; she does not deny the crime. She gives a strong argument explaining her actions. Antigone claims that the immortal laws of heaven come before a mortal's edict. Next, the King arrests Ismene because he suspects her of being involved with this insolence. Ismene changes her position and tries to confess to being guilty; however, Antigone refutes this declaring Ismene would not help her bury their brother, and she may not take equal blame.

Haimon, Creon's son, is engaged to marry Antigone. He enters the scene and placates his father at first by pretending to support his decision. Haimon tries to reason with his father, but has no luck. In fact, King Creon feels betrayed by his own son and accuses him of being influenced by a mere woman. Haimon then threatens to kill himself if his father follows through with Antigone's death. Creon finally gives in to his son, and decides to have Antigone exiled and entombed instead of being put to death.

The blind prophet Teiresias warns Creon that much destruction and sorrow will befall his household and city if the wrongs he has committed are not made right. After much internal strife, he decides to bury Polyneices and set Antigone free. He is too late. Polyneices body has been torn apart by ravaging animals. Even worse, Haimon is found dead along side the body of Antigone. Antigone hanged herself by her own veil rather than suffer a slow death, and Haimon stabs himself over her body. Creon returns home and finds one more suicide, his wife, Eurydice. Creon finally admits that he has been the cause of death for both his son and his wife because he disrespected the gods by honoring man-made law over their law.

Commentary on Antigone

One of the major themes evolving in this poignant play is the moral conscious versus the law, or basically "right versus might." What is fair and what is just? *Antigone* is a "political morality play" (Williams 86). King Creon's personal motives are based on civil order. He believes his will is just and should be followed regardless of personal feelings. After all, he is the ruling king, or tyrannical leader of Thebes. Antigone, on the other hand, values piety, higher reason, and fairness.

She believes strongly in doing right by the gods of Olympus. They are her leading force. Antigone calls on "unwritten, solid, laws of the gods" (Williams 86) as opposed to King Creon's edict of punishment. Antigone sees Creon's edict as an ontological crime, while he believes it is a political punishment (Steiner 35). This sets up the main external conflict - civil disobedience - between the King and Antigone. The Greeks view both sides as being somewhat "right," although Antigone's reasons seem to outweigh Creon's. The gods are against Creon as he kept a dead man unburied and buried Antigone alive. Who is right? What is justice? This is an ideal topic for discussing moral dilemmas. A first moral issue can be discussed with students: Should we follow our personal beliefs even when it is in direct opposition to the law?

Antigone chooses to follow her morals by going against authority even though she pays the highest price by ending her life. She obviously has strong convictions in her beliefs. Adolescents are also faced with difficult choices everyday. What guides their decisions? First of all, they must have moral convictions. Secondly, they must weigh the consequences of their actions. This is just a possible starting point for discussion.

A second major theme which evolves from this play is man versus woman. Antigone is a very insightful character when it involves motivation and reasoning. "She is keenly aware of the weakness of women before men and of the necessity to submit to the force of the law and the authority of rulers." (Tyrell 38). As a result of this awareness, Antigone pushes these boundaries by defying the social norm. Her action directly opposes King Creon's statutes of law and sets up a brutal confrontation. Her defiance of men is the ultimate clash between the sexes (Steiner 35). From the King's point of view, "Creon hears the language of war and finds Antigone threatening his manhood." (Tyrell 42). Hubris rules over the ruler's emotions and actions. He can not let a female overstep his authority, and he must have ultimate control especially against the subservient female gender. Antigone must pay with her life. Is this just or fair? A second moral issue can be discussed with students: Do women and men have equitable authority in politics and government? Does Creon act in the name of justice, or does his authority supercede fairness?

A third major theme is that actions have direct consequences whether positive or negative. In this case, negative. All major relationships in this play are broken because of someone's actions. Antigone and her sister are separated by a divergent decision regarding the burial of their brother. King Creon and his son Haimon are forever separated because Haimon sides with Antigone and eventually kills himself over

her death, which is caused by Creon. Consequently, Haimon and Antigone never get to be together. King Creon and his wife Eurydice are also permanently separated because she kills herself out of extreme sorrow over the death of her son. The entire demise of this accursed family begins because of the actions of King Laios and his wife Jocasta, when they decide to get rid of their son, Oedipus. The curse ends with the death of King Creon's family. A third moral issue can be discussed with students: How do your actions directly affect yourself and others? What is the long-term "domino-effect" of our actions?

The Background and Story of Medea

Medea is a sorceress and priestess of Queen Hecate, chthonic goddess of the underworld and magical powers. In some myths, Hecate takes three roles: Selene in the sky, Diana on earth, and Persephone in the underworld. Medea is often considered to be a witch with magical and evil powers. This is also apropos because Circe the enchantress is her aunt. Themis goddess of vows and Zeus the protector of oaths are also important to Medea because she calls on them to support her vengeance against the vow and oath breaker, Jason. The sun god Helios, Medea's grandfather, also plays a significant role; he provides his chariot, so she can freely escape after killing her two sons, the princess, and King Creon. (This is not the same Creon in Antigone. The name "Creon" is a generic Greek term for "ruler" or "king" that is often used in myths and legends.)

Medea is from a land named Colchis of which her father, Aeetes, is the king. His father is Helios, the sun god. Jason is from the far away land of Iolchos. Jason's uncle Pelias assumes the throne, and he is sent away to be raised by Chiron, a centaur. Upon Jason's return to Iolchos, Pelias agrees to step down as king if Jason can obtain the Golden Fleece. The Golden Fleece is believed to have magical powers. It is the skin of a winged ram which once saved Phrixus, son of a Greek King from Boeotia. This king received an oracle to sacrifice his son Phrixus. Just before he is sacrificed, Hermes sends a golden ram to save him. He is able to make it to Colchis which is located in the southern Caucasus, where Prometheus is also bound as punishment from Zeus (Goodrich 112). The fleece is then protected by a dragon.

Jason gathers a group of men to accompany him on the ship Argo; they, Jason and the Argonauts, set off for the foreign land of Colchis to retrieve the Golden Fleece. He is guided by Hera, who isn't known for helping heroes, because Jason once helped her cross a river. Jason and his crew face a lot of impediments on the way but eventually

reach the island. Hera uses Aphrodite to make Medea fall insanely in love with Jason. Medea agrees to help him recover the Golden Fleece from her father, if Jason will marry her. Medea starts her violent path by murdering her brother, Apsyrtus, in order to ensure Jason's success. She dismembers her own brother just to slow down her father's pursuit. This is "ate," an insane blindness inflicted by Hera, and an act of total dedication to Jason.

Jason and his new wife Medea return to Iolchus. Medea tries to make use of her magical powers by promising to make Pelias young again. She convinces Pelias' daughters to chop him up and boil him in a magic potion. The magic potion does not work and Pelias remains the main ingredient in the soup. The townspeople of Iolchus are so appalled, they drive Jason and Medea out of their city. Jason and Medea flee to Corinth. Euripides' play *Medea* begins after they move to Corinth and have two children.

The play begins with the nurse updating the audience about Jason and Medea's relationship. Her soliloquy reveals Jason's infidelity and the growing hatred Medea feels for him. The nurse is concerned about Medea making rash and violent actions. Jason is engaged to King Creon's daughter. The king fears Medea's possible retaliation and banishes her and her children from Corinth. Medea feels totally betrayed and now isolated. She can not return home to Colchis, and she is no longer welcome in Corinth. She is a foreigner and is treated as such. Medea's hostility reaches new heights. She concocts a plan for vengeance against Jason who has betrayed their vows and broken his oath. She pleads with Creon to give her time to work out her plans. Creon foolishly admonishes her and allows extra time until the next sunrise. During this time, Medea sets her plot, convinces King Aegeus of Athens (who just happens to be in Corinth at that time) to provide her a safe haven, and then she carries out her plan.

She pretends to accept Creon's decree and convinces Jason to let her send gifts to the princess. Jason does agree and their children are sent with the gifts. The princess receives the gifts of a crown and gown which are laced with poison. She places the crown on and puts on the robe. The crown and robe start to burn her flesh and the burning gruesomely leads to her demise. King Creon sees his daughter dying and reaches out to hold her; unfortunately, he gets stuck to the gown and perishes in the poison. Medea then kills both of her children. This is the ultimate vengeance against Jason. This is the best way she knows to destroy Jason utterly. Finally, the sorceress escapes with Helios' chariot to Athens under the protection of King Aegeus, where she is safe from retaliation. Medea pays with her anguish but does not face the Furies for killing her own blood. Essentially, she is rewarded

for getting revenge on the breaker of vows and oaths.

After Euripides' play is concluded, Medea eventually becomes Aegeus' wife and has another child named Medus. Medea continues her violent ways and tries to have Aegeus' son, Theseus, killed. As a result, King Aegeus drives her out of Athens. She returns to Colchis where eventually Hera makes her immortal because she "repulsed the advances of Zeus," (Evans 190). Medea then marries Achilles and lives eternally in the Elysian fields. Jason doesn't fair as well. He is no longer a hero and dies in obscurity when a piece of his ship falls on him.

Commentary on Medea

One theme evolving from this play is the disturbance of natural order. Moral, social, and civic order are turned into chaos through characters' actions. By killing her own children, order is completely challenged and disturbed. "Euripides' plays invert, subvert, and pervert traditional assertions of order; they challenge their audience's most basic tenets and assumptions about the moral, social, and civic fabric of mankind and replace them with nothing." (McDermott 2). Euripides does not give his audience a solution or feeling of catharsis. He just seems to present disturbing issues and leaves it to his audience to analyze. He does provide reasons for both Medea's actions and Jason's actions, but he does not give any real justifications. Medea is a killer, and Jason is a cheater: "... he in effect tells his audience not to trust in any prescriptions of human morality or any statement of natural order, for the real story is that heroes are just people, and people will stoop to anything" (McDermott 41). The issue of chaos as a result of crimes and atrocities is a great stimulus for discussion. How does crime create chaos, and how does it affect social and civic disorder?

A second theme which can be explored is man in opposition to woman. In a way similar to *Antigone*, *Medea* explores the struggle between males and females. Medea essentially gives up everything in order to be with Jason; she unabashedly loves him. Jason fulfills the stereotypical role of unfaithful husband. He does not care how much Medea has sacrificed for him. He considers her to be just a foreigner; therefore, he has the right to see other women. He even tries to convince her that marrying the King's daughter will benefit not only himself, but also Medea and their sons. With royal connections, their sons can be provided with much more than just he can supply. Medea does not take this lightly. She will not be subservient to Jason. She gathers all her strength and fights back every way she knows. She starts with words but is driven to physical action. Even her extreme

sorrow will not stop her from completely annihilating Jason's false sense of order. Man is not to rule over woman. Medea takes control of order and throws it in Jason's face by creating utter chaos. Another moral issue: Should males and females have equal power in a relationship? How should one react when they find their mate has been unfaithful? What actions should be taken? Was Medea justified in her actions?

A third theme is tolerance and intolerance of people who are different from the mainstream. Medea has three strikes against her: she is a woman, she is a foreigner, and she can not go home. Essentially, she is alone. The Chorus of Corinthian Women sympathize with her, but it isn't enough to keep her from following through with her plans. Medea is a strong female both emotionally and intellectually in a male-dominated society. She is also a foreigner in Greece and is treated as an outsider. The extreme isolation she experiences exacerbates her enormous decision. Perhaps if she had someone on whom to rely, she would not have taken such drastic measures. Perhaps this same isolation drives many teens to resort to anti-social behaviors and actions; consequently, further inspection of this idea is imperative. Teens are often experts in this moral dilemma. How do we recognize students in crisis? A real discussion about isolation, tolerance, and intolerance is one place to start.

Implementation

I currently teach regular education English nine and ten. It is also important to note that the following lesson plans are set up for a 4 X 4 block schedule in which classes are approximately ninety minutes a day; however, it is easily adapted to a regular fifty minute schedule. Students in special education and students whose first language is not English are included in my classroom. It is important to discuss and examine topics which engage all students. Through the inspection of Greek tragedy, students will have opportunities to explore moral dilemmas. *Antigone* and *Medea* are outstanding plays filled with controversial topics. Tragic characters in each play are aware of their impending doom, yet they still make decisions which lead to dire consequences. Somehow, the tragic hero can not avoid these decisions. My hope is that students will get to discuss how the characters could have changed the outcome. What control do the characters have, and what control do teens have?

This unit explores decision-making and consequences through reading, discussion, writing, and presenting. It is based on morality and dilemmas which people face in their own lives. Morality has different meaning for people, but this unit will focus on decision

making in the face of controversy. In essence, morality includes the principles involved in making a right or wrong decision based on certain standards that people believe to be true and valuable.

Moral Dilemma Unit: Approximately two weeks in a block schedule.

New Mexico Standards of Performance in Language Arts

The unit of Greek tragedy including *Antigone* and *Medea* covers five of the six strands required by the state. Strand six, research, is not covered in this unit; however, it is plausible to add in a few days in the library to research Greek mythology. Some ideas may include researching a god, goddess, monster, hero, or tragic performance within mythology. They may write a mini-research report and present it to the class. Another idea is to compare it to myths, legends, or folktales from other cultures. For example, the southwestern folktale, *La Llorona* is a story about a woman who drowns her own children and now is forever looking for children especially by arroyos, acequias, and other areas of water. This would be a great research topic to compare to *Medea*.

Strand One (Reading Process): There are numerous opportunities in this unit to cover reading strategies, vocabulary development, and reading application.

Strand Two (Reading Analysis): Analyzing literature, evaluating literary elements and applying reading analysis are presented in this unit.

Strand Three (Expressive Language: writing): This unit includes writing strategies, conventions and applications of writing.

Strand Four (Expressive Language: speaking): Speaking strategies, speaking conventions, and applying speech to language are also included.

Strand Five (Receptive Language: listening and viewing): Several activities build in opportunities to use listening and viewing strategies as well as apply them to assignments

Lesson Plan One: Antigone---approximately five days/

CHALLENGES: additional activities.

Suggested materials: Several sheets of butcher paper, vocabulary and literary terms on transparency paper for an overhead, overview of group discussion procedures, markers/colored pencils, construction paper, a multi-paragraph essay procedural handout, and copies of *Antigone*.

Day One

The goal for lesson one is to introduce moral dilemmas. The objectives are to provide background information on Greek tragedies including explanations of Greek mythology, vocabulary, and introduction of moral dilemmas.

The anticipatory set begins with a quick five minute journal response to the following statement: Teenagers make important decisions everyday. Provide a specific example of a decision you have had to make recently and discuss how your personal morals affected that decision. Next, the teacher leads a discussion on this topic. It would be helpful for the teacher to provide a personal example first in order to model and encourage participation. Topics might include cheating, stealing, lying, etc....

Briefly remind students the procedures for participating in a group. Break the class into either four or eight groups depending on the number of students in your classroom. Introduce the following key vocabulary terms, both visually and auditorally, on an overhead transparency or on the chalkboard while briefly discussing each word out loud:

morality, integrity, dilemma, tolerance, intolerance, acceptance, diversity, discrimination, opposition, defiance, awareness, motive, conscious, justice, equality, and fairness.

Tape butcher paper in four separate areas in the room. Each group is responsible for two of these terms. Have students write the definition in their own words and in simplest form. Also, have them provide one brief example of how their assigned word is actively used in their life. For example:

MORALITY

A way of doing things based on values I hold to be true.

Example: It is against my morals to do drugs.

The groups should have a speaker who presents this information to the class. The teacher should then debrief and review all the terms.

Segue into background information on Greek tragedy by stating something similar to the following: Ancient Greek literature provides an amazing number of examples that display perversity, violence, intolerance, defiance, and discrimination. We are about to explore this exotic world and try to apply it to modern society. Murder, deceit, and intrigue are just a few themes we will read about.

Begin background by discussing mythology. What is it? What is its purpose? What is tragedy? If there is extra time, then it would be beneficial to give a brief overview of the main gods, goddesses, heroes, and villains of ancient Greece. Now, give a quick and simple prologue to Antigone by outlining the story of Oedipus. Most adopted high school texts provide a brief explanation of the Oedipus story. Review all the characters including the purpose of the chorus.

CHALLENGE: Discuss the meaning of the following terms:

prologue---introduction; parados---the first song of the chorus; strophe---part of the song when the chorus moves across the stage from the right to the left; antistrophe---when chorus moves from the left to the right after the strophe; epode---final part of the song following the antistrophe, ode---the chorus responds to the previous scene. (It ends a scene and was thought to separate scenes in the absence of curtains); paeon---a hymn honoring a god, and exodus---the ending scene.

Why do these stories exist? What purpose do they fulfill? Are they lessons, cautionary tales or just great entertainment? Inform the students that to the Greeks these plays were considered "pop" culture, comparable to our movies today. Begin reading the play. It is a great idea to have students take parts and read the play aloud. Read from the prologue through the first ode. Now, discuss the plot to this point. Connect the plot with the provided vocabulary. What is the moral dilemma? Discuss the choices Antigone, Ismene, and King Creon have made thus far. How about opposition, defiance, and motive?

Homework: Write a complete sentence using each of the vocabulary terms and tie it to the play thus far.

Day Two

Begin by collecting sentences and reviewing all 16 terms. Have students keep a list of literary terms including internal conflict,

external conflict, theme, foreshadowing, perspective, and point of view. Review the part of the play that has already been read. Introduce the next activity called "Pandora's Log." She is the archetypal "Eve" character who brings intellectual desire and lust. In Greek Pandora literally means "all gifts." She is beautiful and shy but hides an evil, deceitful nature. Her jar or box is full of evils and troubles. Pandora removes the lid and all the KAKA (Greek for evil things) spreads out amongst the humans. Fortunately, Hope could not escape before the lid was closed.

The students are to write daily in this log from the perspective of Pandora and discuss what "KAKA" are affecting the characters in this play, and identify what hope is left for them.

CHALLENGE: use differing points of view including 1st person, 3rd person limited, and 3rd person omniscient.

The first log: Why is it important for Antigone to bury her brother? Why is it important to King Creon to leave him unburied? Pandora should also discuss Ismene's initial reaction and what each character "hopes" to gain. Encourage the students to answer all the journalistic questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Follow this writing assignment with a brief discussion and have a few students volunteer to share their entry.

Continue reading the play aloud both scenes two and three, to where Creon orders Antigone to be buried alive. In groups (recommended to keep initial groups together for this unit) have students engage in discourse regarding the King's decision. Was he right and just or is Antigone? Put up another piece of butcher paper with a t-chart with Antigone on one side and King Creon on the other side. Have the student's take a vote within their group and tally up those in favor of Antigone and those in favor of the King. Next have each group report to the class and put the appropriate tallies under each character. End the class period with a review of terms and how they now relate to each character.

Homework: The second log: Pandora must weigh the issues and report to Zeus above in Mt. Olympus as to the stance she takes. Encourage the students to answer all the journalistic questions.

Day Three

Review Pandora's log number two and discuss with the class. Finish reading the play aloud and identify plot, conflict, theme, and perspective. These can be done as separate assignments or briefly put together by groups. Students move into their assigned groups and

complete the following tasks: One group is assigned to review plot by drawing a plot diagram and/or a story board. Another group is to identify two major internal conflicts and two major external conflicts and write out an explanation and/or draw actual scenes that represent major conflicts. A third group is responsible for writing out the theme of the play and drawing a scene that represents it. For example, a drawing of a crown, a scepter, and a gown with Antigone making an "x" over it might represent the theme: "defiance of authority may lead to calamitous endings." A fourth group is assigned perspective. They may write a brief statement for both Antigone and King Creon. They should explain why each character believes they are right and why their idea of justice should prevail. Again, the group should complete a pictorial contrasting both sides. Then all groups should present their mini project to the class.

Homework: Pandora's log number three: In your opinion, Pandora, does justice prevail? Explain and support your decision in a well-organized paragraph including a topic sentence, supporting details, and explanations.

CHALLENGE: Include all the vocabulary terms within the paragraph.

Day Four

Handout the procedure for doing a multi-paragraph essay. Assign the following topic: Discuss and evaluate the choices made by Antigone and King Creon. Why did they make their decisions? What happened as a result? Does justice prevail? Brainstorm content and thesis statements on the chalkboard or overhead. Sample thesis statement: "Antigone and King Creon each face a moral dilemma which drives them to take action in the name of justice." Have students write an outline and check for accuracy.

Homework: Complete the outline and write a rough draft.

Day Five

Assessment: Have the students edit and write a final draft as an examination grade. Be prepared to allow extra time for students. Check for understanding of plot, conflict, and theme. A rubric such as six-trait writing is very helpful. Finish this unit with the completion of the film (this may take an extra day).

Lesson Plan Two: Medea---approximately six days

Suggested materials: newspaper articles about Susan Smith and/or Andrea Yates which are easily downloaded via the internet. These

articles are very emotional and intense, so some pre-warning or even permission slips from parents might be appropriate. Copies of *Medea*. There are many versions available. Poster board, dot or label stickers, and markers.

Day One

The goal for lesson two is to further study moral dilemmas. Also, to apply these tales to real examples of morality. The objectives are to work cooperatively in groups and participate in a mock trial.

The anticipatory set begins with reading an article or articles to the class and asking for reactions. Next, have students move into their groups and pass out a different article to each group. Articles can be found covering from the supposed abduction all the way through sentencing and even beyond. A wide scope of commentary is highly recommended for the following group work. The group is to read their article aloud, discuss initial reactions, and write a brief reaction/summary to present to the class. The group then presents the information to the class, hopefully leading to some meaningful conversations.

Give background information on how Jason and Medea met, became spouses, left for Corinth and became estranged. Relate the character of Medea to Susan Smith and/or Andrea Yates. Point out the obvious differences. Susan Smith was having an affair outside of her marriage; in opposition, Medea's husband Jason was having an affair.

Let the class know that they will be participating in a mock trial. Medea is the defendant and all characters in the play may be called as a witness for either the defense or the state (Corinth, Greece). The class should also start an "Evidence Log" log incriminating evidence and character's motives throughout the play.

On construction paper, create one chart for Medea, King Creon, and/or Jason. This is a tally chart where facts, opinions, motives, etc... will be kept. At the end of each scene or perhaps at the end of each class period, have students meet in their groups and plan out what they will add to each chart. Also, review vocabulary terms from lesson one.

CHALLENGE: Have students interview a family member or friend about any of the issues discussed in class. Get their initial reactions and what they think was fair or just. Also encourage them to ask questions involving motives and consequences. A

short list of five to ten questions is probably enough.

Homework: Complete challenge.

Day Two

Ask for volunteers to read and/or discuss their interview. Did this interview start a meaningful discussion with the interviewee? Proceed with a brief review of the characters and begin reading the play aloud through the second ode, which is just after Jason and Medea's first clash. On an overhead or chalkboard, brainstorm issues which have been brought up in this first part of the play.

Examples: meaning and intention of the nurses opening soliloquy; the chorus's role; Medea and Jason's reactions and motivations.

Follow this up with groups working on the charts. First the group needs to reach a consensus and then put up evidence, facts, motives, etc... Review chart and then ask students to make the second written entry into their evidence log.

CHALLENGE: Conduct a second interview, preferably with the same person, on their opinions of the play. This will entail a brief paraphrasing/summarizing of the play. (an important skill itself beyond the expected interaction with another person)

Homework: Complete challenge or write a personal opinion of your own.

Day Three

Call for volunteers to share their interviews. Read aloud from the third episode through the fifth episode including the choral interlude (this is just after Medea has sent the gifts to the palace, and she is having second thoughts about her plans to murder her children). Have students move into their groups again and discuss key scenes/speeches. Assign a different speech to each group and have that group evaluate it focusing on motivations, internal and external conflicts, and emotional mind set of the character.

Have each group perform their speech in a choral reading. Encourage students to try and use the appropriate emotions. They should explore the characters' motivation and perspective within that moment of

time. This is a great place to offer extra credit. The better the dramatic reading, the more credit earned. Voice inflection, physical expression, costumes, props, and facial expression are vital to the success of this activity. Have the groups debrief and put tallies on the chart.

End this day with a third evidence log entry. Encourage students to explore Medea's and Jason's mind set.

CHALLENGE: Students memorize a monologue or partial monologue and perform for the class tomorrow. Another great place for extra credit. The more lines and the better the performance, the more credit earned.

Homework: Review vocabulary terms from lesson plan one and be ready for a spelling/vocabulary/usage quiz.

Day Four

Students perform monologues and then briefly review for the quiz. For the quiz: read aloud the vocabulary word. The students are to use it correctly in a sentence while relating it to either *Antigone* or *Medea*. Finish reading the play. This ending definitely needs debriefing. Filicide is an extremely emotional and somber topic that might disturb some students. Other students will just love the depravity and violence. Explore this remarkable drama while encouraging students to realize the seriousness of such violent acts.

Set up the trial. Assign parts for all characters. Make sure Medea and Jason are played by expressive, dramatic students or else this trial will bomb. Parts include: Medea, Jason, the nurse, the messenger, King Creon, the tutor, Aegeus, the two sons, and three Corinthian Women as the chorus, King Aetes, Aphrodite, Eros, Apollo, Zeus, Hera, Hades, Helios, Hecate, and Apsyrtus (Medea's brother), the prosecuting team, and the defense team. Explain that some are returning as ghosts. For extra students, have them be servants of Hermes (which means they must act as a jury). The teacher should be the judge, and it is fun to invite a colleague to be a presiding judge on the actual day of the trial.

Students should start gathering facts, evidence, motivations, and other pertinent information to emulate the assigned role as close as possible. The Medea and Creon chart is a perfect starting point. Each legal team should meet to plan a strategy.

CHALLENGE: Memorize actual phrases

spoken by your character, if applicable.

Homework: Finish gathering evidence from the play, and rehearse assigned role. How will your character act? What will your character say in a court of law? etc....

Day Five

Legal teams meet and serve subpoena's to characters they will call during the trial. Each legal team should briefly meet individually with their witnesses. Rearrange classroom to fit a modern court room.

Have a run-through trial so each side has a chance to rehearse their performance and discuss how the rhetoric changes in a court of law. Proceed with the actual mock trial. Try to keep this formal by following procedures of a real court. After each side has given their opening statement, testimony, rebuttal, and closing statements, the jury moves out to deliberate. The decision is given to the judge and the verdict is read. The judge should have the right to overturn the decision. *Note:* Medea is usually found guilty. The clever defensive team might get her sentence reduced due to extenuating circumstances or a plea of insanity.

Debrief the case through discussion and explanations. Assessment: Have students write their final evidence log which should include a summary of the court proceedings and explanation of the outcome.

Homework: The students will brainstorm how moral dilemmas affected certain characters and brainstorm how an individual's morals guide their actions. They should also try to make sense of Medea's and Jason's actions. Who is right? Can Jason justify breaking his oath to Medea? Can Medea the avenger and Medea the sorrowing mother exist simultaneously? Perhaps this is an irreconcilable dilemma. Perhaps there is no real solution for the conflict between Medea and Jason.

Day Six

Culminating activity: In a multi-paragraph essay, students will try to resolve the questions posed for homework by using specific examples and details from the play. Focus on thesis statements, theme, and conflict resolution. End this unit with a panel discussion on all the key terms presented in the previous plays. A "fishbowl" format works

nicely for such discussions. Choose six to ten students to sit in a circle and openly discuss the provided topics. The teacher should only prompt discourse. Students outside of the circle are allowed to move in one at a time to give their input. Discussion questions should also cover the ones mentioned in the narrative part of this curriculum.

Assessment: Students should write a personal narrative applying issues discussed within this unit plus answering how their own actions directly affect themselves and others. Also explore how intolerance, discrimination, and violence impinges on their well being. What can individuals do to help curtail such acts of ignorance and hate? etc...

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