

SUGGESTIONS FOR A READING JOURNAL

Copy these facts onto your journal pages, along with any other basic information you have gathered:

The Oresteia: Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, and Eumenides

This trilogy was first presented at the Dionysia festival in 458 B.C. It won the highest reward and is the only full trilogy still in existence. The setting is Argos and the story begins in the year that the Trojan War ended (circa 1250 BC).

“Agamemnon”

Reading Journal Assignment

In your Reading Journal list and leave space to describe the main characters in this play as you get familiar with them: *Agamemnon, Cassandra, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus*

Then answer some of the following questions. Add your own!

Part I Pages 103 -136

1. Who is the first character speaking in the play? What is he looking for, and what's his mood?
2. Notice the extended simile starting at L. 54. What do you think this may be referring to in the current action, and what does it hark back to in the legend of the “Curse of Atreus.” Review this myth (see first 4 pages of Introduction) if you aren't familiar with it.
3. How does Clytemnestra know the war is over?
4. What does Clytemnestra say in Lines 595-605. Why is this a great irony?

Part II Pages 137- 156

1. What does Clytemnestra say to her husband here in L. 897?
2. Do a little research about the idea of the tragic Greek hero. What are *hubris* and *hamartia*?
3. What is Clytemnestra tempting him with L. 900- 907?
4. Read his response at L. 910-925. And then in L. 955-957 what could the image of him trampling crimson tapestries symbolize?

Part III Pages 157 - 172

Cassandra prophesies what is about to happen and then the action heats up.

1. Describe what is happening on pages 160-161?
2. What does Clytemnestra call *this trial* (see L. 1396)?
3. Pages 168- 169 tell the cursed story of Atreus & Thyestes, which is the origin of the curse that is hanging over this family.
4. Who says, “Our lives are based on pain?”
5. What sort of justice does the Leader call for at the top of pg 171? Who is Orestes?
6. There is so much hopelessness in this drama! The agonies of the “human condition” and the lack of justice are so vividly portrayed here. Aeschylus will have a very creative idea in the third play to *try* and provide some answers and a glimmer of hope. Find and copy down a Bible passage that speaks of this need for justice and gives hope.