SUGGESTIONS FOR A READING JOURNAL

Aeschylus' *Oresteia:* “The Eumenides”

List and describe briefly the main characters in this 3rd play: Orestes, Apollo, Athena, Furies

**Part I Pages 231-247**

1. In Lines 42-47 how does the priestess describe Orestes?

2. What is Apollo's attitude toward the Furies? (see L. 67- 87)

3. Who are the Furies and what are they like? (quote specific phrases)

4. What does Apollo command them to do? (L. 177 -195)

*There are a few different categories of reality in opposition in this trilogy. At the level of the gods the old gods are in opposition to the new generation of gods. Furies are part of the old Titanic generation but Athena and Apollo are of the Olympic generation. In the family of Atreus the wife was against the husband (in first play) and now the son is against the mother.*

5. In Line 97- 129 What is the ghost of Clytemnestra crying about—what is she attempting to wake the Furies for?

6. Copy down L.182-184 :

7. Notice--two concepts of justice (dike) are contrasted in his words:
The Furies represent\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Apollo's halls represent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*To fill in this 2nd blank you may need to read the rest of the play. So keep this in mind as you finish.....*

Eumenides (cont.)

**Part II Pages 248-277**

1. Athena now comes onto the stage. What seems to be her role here?

2. At the top of pg 251 what does Athena say to the Furies?

3. On pg. 262 (L.693-795) Athena talks about the new court: the Areopagus in Athens.
How does she describe it? Copy down some key phrases in the lines as you explain:

4. How does the trial of Orestes turn out? (L. 746 – 768)

5. On the last few pages of the play what sort of “truce” or compromise does Athena make with the Furies? What do they turn into?

6. Read Romans 3: 23 – 26. What justifies us?

Peter Leithhart in Heroes of the City of Man (pp 302-303) says:

“Athena saves Orestes by changing the rules...Aeschylus would have us believe that the Furies had been tamed. ... “ Leithart says that for the Bible 'blood will have blood' is true, and mercy is not offered by setting aside this principle or changing the rules. The Christian *polis*, the church, “is not the product of a compromise of the Furies and Olympians. It is founded on the blood shed once for all by Jesus Christ.”

*6. Go back up to “Apollo's Halls” and think about your answer there.* In light of what happened in Greek history, what do you think of Aeschylus' optimistic vision of Athenian order/justice (*dike*)? The *Oresteia* was produced in **458 B.C**. What happened in 431 BC?