

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Discussion Groups, Drafting



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Read and Discuss

After you identify the tragic hero in the play *Antigone*, think about your independent reading selection. Use the characteristics of a tragic hero to identify the character in your independent reading who might be considered a tragic hero. Share your thoughts with a small group of peers.

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Syntax

The way that clauses and phrases are arranged into sentences—a writer’s **syntax**—greatly affects the pacing of a text. Study the sentence structure of lines 1140–1149. Notice that the first sentence in this chunk is a four-line complex sentence. The next two sentences are each two lines long; they are followed by a rhetorical question. What is the structure of the two sentences in line 1149? How would you describe the general pattern of sentence structures here? How does this overall pattern affect the pace of Teiresias’s argument and help him make his point?

Learning Targets

- Analyze the development of a tragic hero over the course of a play.
- Write a character analysis incorporating textual support.

Preview

In this activity, you will read and analyze the development of Creon as a tragic hero over the course of the play.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

- Work with your group to mark the text for evidence of the following:
 - Creon’s further development as a tragic hero
 - Traits and actions that portray Teiresias as a foil for Creon
 - Content and purpose of the Sixth Choral Ode
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meanings of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

[Enter Teiresias, led by a young boy]

	TEIRESIAS	Lords of Thebes, we two have walked a common path, one person’s vision serving both of us. The blind require a guide to find their way.
1100	CREON	What news do you have, old Teiresias?
	TEIRESIAS	I’ll tell you—and you obey the prophet.
	CREON	I’ve not rejected your advice before.
	TEIRESIAS	That’s the reason why you’ve steered the city on its proper course.
	CREON	From my experience I can confirm the help you give.
	TEIRESIAS	Then know this— your luck is once more on fate’s razor edge.
1110	CREON	What? What you’ve just said makes me nervous.
	TEIRESIAS	You’ll know—once you hear the tokens of my art. As I was sitting in my ancient place receiving omens from the flights of birds who all come there where I can hear them, I note among those birds an unknown cry— evil, unintelligible, angry screaming. I knew that they were tearing at each other with murderous claws. The noisy wings revealed that all too well. I was afraid. So right away up on the blazing altar I set up burnt offerings. But Hephaestus failed to shine out from the sacrifice— dark slime poured out onto the embers, oozing from the thighs, which smoked and spat, bile was sprayed high up into the air, and the melting thighs lost all the fat
1120		

A Ritual Gone Wrong

1130

Teiresias's Analysis

1140

1150

CREON

Creon Accuses Teiresias of taking bribes

1160

1170

TEIRESIAS

CREON [*interrupting*]

TEIRESIAS [*ignoring the interruption*] ... how good advice

which they'd been wrapped in. The rites had failed—
there was no prophecy revealed in them.
I learned that from this boy, who is my guide,
as I guide other men. Our state is sick—
your policies have done this. In the city
our altars and our hearths have been **defiled**,
all of them, with rotting flesh brought there
by birds and dogs from Oedipus' son,
who lies there miserably dead. The gods
no longer will accept our sacrifice,
our prayers, our thigh bones burned in fire.
No bird will shriek out a clear sign to us,
for they have gorged themselves on fat and blood
from a man who's dead. Consider this, my son.
All men make mistakes—that's not uncommon.
But when they do, they're no longer foolish
or subject to bad luck if they try to fix
the evil into which they've fallen,
once they give up their **intransigence**.
Men who put their stubbornness on show
invite accusations of stupidity.
Make concessions to the dead—don't ever stab
a man who's just been killed. What's the glory
in killing a dead person one more time?
I've been concerned for you. It's good advice.
Learning can be pleasant when a man speaks well,
especially when he seeks your benefit.

Old man, you're all like archers shooting at me—
For you all I've now become your target—
even prophets have been aiming at me.
I've long been bought and sold as merchandise
among that tribe. Well, go make your profits.
If it's what you want, then trade with Sardis
for their golden-silver alloy—or for gold
from India, but you'll never hide that corpse
in any grave. Even if Zeus' eagles
should choose to seize his festering body
and take it up, right to the throne of Zeus,
not even then would I, in trembling fear
of some defilement, permit that corpse
a burial. For I know well that no man
has the power to pollute the gods.
But, old Teiresias, among human beings
the wisest suffer a disgraceful fall
when, to promote themselves, they use fine words
to spread around abusive insults.

Alas, does any man know or think about ...

Think what? What sort of **pithy** common thought
are you about to utter?

is valuable—worth more than all possessions.

defiled: made unclean

My Notes

intransigence: unwillingness to
compromise

pithy: short and clever

denigrate: slander

My Notes

CREON

I think that's true, as much as foolishness is what harms us most.

TEIRESIAS
no

Yet that's the sickness
w infecting you.

CREON

I have no desire
to **denigrate** a prophet when I speak.

TEIRESIAS

But that's what you are doing, when you claim my oracles are false.

1180 CREON

The tribe of prophets—
all of them—are fond of money.

TEIRESIAS

And kings?
Their tribe loves to benefit dishonestly.

CREON

You know you're speaking of the man who rules you.

TEIRESIAS

I know—thanks to me you saved the city
and now are in control.

CREON

You're a wise prophet,
but you love doing wrong.

TEIRESIAS

You'll force me
to speak of secrets locked inside my heart.

CREON

Do it—just don't speak to benefit yourself.

TEIRESIAS

I don't think that I'll be doing that—
not as far as you're concerned.

1190 CREON

You can be sure
you won't change my mind to make yourself
more rich.

TEIRESIAS

Then understand this well—you will not see the sun race through its cycle many times before you lose a child of your own loins, a corpse in payment for these corpses. You've thrown down to those below someone from up above—in your arrogance you've moved a living soul into a grave, leaving here a body owned by gods below—unburied, dispossessed, unsanctified.

1200

That's no concern of yours or gods above.

In this you violate the ones below.

And so destroying avengers wait for you,
Furies of Hades and the gods, who'll see
you caught up in this very wickedness.

Now see if I speak as someone who's been bribed.

It won't be long before in your own house
the men and women all cry out in sorrow,
and cities rise in hate against you—all those
whose mangled soldiers have had burial rites
from dogs, wild animals, or flying birds
who carry the unholy stench back home,

The Awful Prophecy

1210

to every city hearth. Like an archer,
I shoot these arrows now into your heart
because you have provoked me. I'm angry—
so my aim is good. You'll not escape their pain.
Boy, lead us home so he can vent his rage
on younger men and keep a quieter tongue
and a more temperate mind than he has now.

[Exit Teiresias, led by the young boy]

1220 CHORUS LEADER My lord, my lord, such dreadful prophecies—
and now he's gone. Since my hair changed colour
from black to white, I know here in the city
he's never uttered a false prophecy.

CREON I know that, too—and it disturbs my mind.
It's dreadful to give way, but to resist
and let destruction hammer down my spirit—
that's a fearful option, too.

CHORUS LEADER Son of Menoikeos,
you need to listen to some good advice.

CREON Tell me what to do. Speak up. I'll do it.

1230 CHORUS LEADER Go and release the girl from her rock tomb.
Then prepare a grave for that unburied corpse.

CREON This is your advice? You think I should concede?

CHORUS LEADER Yes, my lord, as fast as possible.
Swift footed injuries sent from the gods
hack down those who act imprudently.

CREON Alas—it's difficult. But I'll give up.
I'll not do what I'd set my heart upon.
It's not right to fight against necessity.

CHORUS LEADER Go now and get this done. Don't give the work
to other men to do.

1240 CREON I'll go just as I am.
Come, you servants, each and every one of you.
Come on. Bring axes with you. Go there quickly—
up to the higher ground. I've changed my mind.
Since I'm the one who tied her up, I'll go
and set her free myself. Now I'm afraid.
Until one dies the best thing well may be
to follow our established laws.

[Creon and his attendants hurry off stage]

SI

XTH ODE

CHORUS—Strophe 1

1250 **Ode 6:**
Prayer to Bacchus

Oh you with many names,
you glory of that Theban bride,
and child of thundering Zeus,
you who cherish famous Italy,
and rule the welcoming valley lands

My Notes

[illegible]

Tragic Hero



WORD CONNECTIONS

Content Connections

Besides being the god of wine and parties, Bacchus—a son of Zeus—was in charge of communication between the dead and the living. He was also the grandson of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes. In the Sixth Ode, the Chorus invokes Bacchus because of his connection to Thebes and also because the city is currently dealing with the issue of how to treat the dead. They are asking him to come “on healing feet” to help their city.

My Notes

	o	f Eleusian Deo—
	O	Bacchus—you who dwell
	b	in the bacchants’ mother city Thebes,
		eside Ismenus ¹ flowing streams,
	o	on land sown with the teeth
		f that fierce dragon.
	Antistrophe 1	
1260		Above the double mountain peaks,
		the torches flashing through the murky smoke
		have seen you where Corcyian nymphs
		move on as they worship you
	b	y the Kastalian stream.
		And from the ivy-covered slopes
		of Nysa’s hills, from the green shore
		so rich in vines, you come to us,
	visi	ting our Theban ways,
		while deathless voices all cry out
		in honour of your name, “Evoe.” ²
1270	Strophe 2	
		You honour Thebes, our city,
		above all others, you and your mother
		blasted by that lightning strike.
		And now when all our people here
		are captive to a foul disease,
		on your healing feet you come
	acr	oss the moaning strait
		or over the Parnassian hill.
	Antistrophe 2	
1280	a	You who lead the dance,
		mong the fire-breathing stars,
		who guard the voices in the night,
		child born of Zeus, oh my lord,
		appear with your attendant Thyiads,
		who dance in frenzy all night long,
		for you their patron, Iacchus. ³
	[Enter a Messenger]	
	MESSENGER	
1290		All you here who live beside the home
		of Amphion and Cadmus—in human life
		there’s no set place which I would praise or blame.
		The lucky and unlucky rise or fall
		by chance day after day—and how these things
		are fixed for men no one can prophesy.
		For Creon, in my view, was once a man
		we all looked up to. For he saved the state,
		this land of Cadmus, from its enemies.
		He took control and reigned as its sole king—
		and prospered with the birth of noble children.
		Now all is gone. For when a man has lost
		what gives him pleasure, I don’t include him
		among the living—he’s a breathing corpse.

¹ **Ismenus:** river near Thebes, sacred to Apollo

² **Evoe:** similar to hallelujah, a cry of joy shouted by worshipers at festivals

³ **Iacchus:** another name for Dionysus

The
Messenger
Comes

1300

Pile up a massive fortune in your home,
if that's what you want—live like a king.
If there's no pleasure in it, I'd not give
to any man a vapour's shadow for it,
not compared to human joy.

CHORUS LEADER

Have you come with news of some fresh trouble
in our house of kings?

MESSENGER

They're dead—
and those alive bear the responsibility
or those who've died.

CHORUS LEADER

Who did the killing?
Who's lying dead? Tell us.

MESSENGER

Haemon has been killed.
No stranger shed his blood.

CHORUS LEADER

At his father's hand?
Or did he kill himself?

MESSENGER

By his own hand—
angry at his father for the murder.

1310

CHORUS LEADER

Teiresias, how your words have proven true!

MESSENGER

That's how things stand. Consider what comes
next.

CHORUS LEADER

I see Creon's wife, poor Eurydice—
she's coming from the house—either by chance,
or else she's heard there's news about her son.

[Enter Eurydice from the palace with some attendants]

EURYDICE

Citizens of Thebes, I heard you talking,
as I was walking out, going off to pray,
to ask for help from goddess Pallas.

Eurydice

While I was unfastening the gate,
I heard someone speaking of bad news
about my family. I was terrified.
I collapsed, fainting back into the arms
of my attendants. So tell the news again—
I'll listen. I'm no stranger to misfortune.

1320

MESSENGER

Dear lady, I'll speak of what I saw,
omitting not one detail of the truth.
Why should I ease your mind with a report
which turns out later to be incorrect?
The truth is always best. I went to the plain,
accompanying your husband as his guide.

1330

P

olyneices' corpse, still unlamented,
was lying there, the greatest distance off,
torn apart by dogs. We prayed to Pluto
and to Hecate, goddess of the road,
for their good will and to restrain their rage.
We gave the corpse a ritual wash, and burned
what was left of it on fresh-cut branches.



My Notes

Tragic Hero

My Notes

1340

We piled up a high tomb of his native earth.
Then we moved to the young girl's rocky cave,
the hollow cavern of that bride of death.
From far away one man heard a voice
coming from the chamber where we'd put her
without a funeral—a piercing cry.
He went to tell our master Creon,
who, as he approached the place, heard the sound,
an unintelligible scream of sorrow.
He groaned and then spoke out these bitter words,
“Has misery made me a prophet now?

1350

Haemon's Death

And am I travelling along a road
that takes me to the worst of all disasters?
I've just heard the voice of my own son.
You servants, go ahead—get up there fast.
Remove the stones piled in the entrance way,
then stand beside the tomb and look in there
to see if that was Haemon's voice I heard,
or if the gods have been deceiving me.”

1360

Following what our desperate master asked,
we looked. In the furthest corner of the tomb
we saw Antigone hanging by the neck,
held up in a noose—fine woven linen.
Haemon had his arms around her waist—
he was embracing her and crying out
in sorrow for the loss of his own bride,
now among the dead, his father's work,
and for his horrifying marriage bed.
Creon saw him, let out a fearful groan,
then went inside and called out anxiously,
“You unhappy boy, what have you done?

1370

What are you thinking? Have you lost your mind?
Come out, my child—I'm begging you—please come.”
But the boy just stared at him with savage eyes,
spat in his face and, without saying a word,
drew his two-edged sword. Creon moved away,
so the boy's blow failed to strike his father.
Angry at himself, the ill-fated lad
right then and there leaned into his own sword,
driving half the blade between his ribs.

1380

While still conscious he embraced the girl
in his weak arms, and, as he breathed his last,
he coughed up streams of blood on her fair cheek.
Now he lies there, corpse on corpse, his marriage
has been fulfilled in chambers of the dead.
The unfortunate boy has shown all men
how, of all the evils which afflict mankind,
the most disastrous one is thoughtlessness.

[Eurydice turns and slowly returns into the palace]

CHORUS LEADER What do you make of that? The queen's gone back.
She left without a word, good or bad.

MESSENGER I'm surprised myself. It's about her son—
she heard that terrible report. I hope
she's gone because she doesn't think it right
to mourn for him in public. In the home,
surrounded by her servants, she'll arrange
a period of mourning for the house.
She's discreet and has experience—
he won't make mistakes.

1390

Eurydice's Ominous Silence

s

CHORUS LEADER I'm not sure of that.
To me her staying silent was extreme—
it seems to point to something **ominous**,
just like a vain excess of grief.

MESSENGER I'll go in.
We'll find out if she's hiding something secret,
deep within her passionate heart. You're right—
excessive silence can be dangerous.

1400

[The Messenger goes up the stairs into the palace. Enter Creon from the side, with attendants. Creon is holding the body of Haemon.]

CHORUS LEADER Here comes the king in person—carrying
in his arms, if it's right to speak of this,
a clear reminder that this evil comes
not from some stranger, but his own mistakes.

CREON—Strophe 1

Aaiii—mistakes made by a foolish mind,
cruel mistakes that bring on death.
You see us here, all in one family—
the killer and the killed.

1410

Oh

the **profanity** of what I planned.
Alas, my son, you died so young—
a death before your time.
Aaiii ... aaiii ... you're dead ... gone—
not your own foolishness but mine.

CHORUS LEADER Alas, it seems you've learned to see what's right—
b ut far too late.

CREON

Aaiiii ... I've learned it in my pain.
Some god clutching a great weight struck my head,
then hurled me onto paths in wilderness,
throwing down and casting underfoot
what brought me joy.
So sad ... so sad ...
the wretched agony of human life.

1420

Welcome Home Creon!

[The Messenger reappears from the palace]

MESSENGER My lord, you come like one who stores up evil,
what you hold in your arms and what you'll see
before too long inside the house.

My Notes

ominous: threatening

profanity: offensive deed



WORD CONNECTIONS

Multiple-Meaning Words

The word *vain* has several meanings. Look up the different meanings in a dictionary and then decide which meaning best fits the context on line 1399, "Just like a vain excess of grief." *Vain* is also a homonym, or a word that sounds the same as another word or words. What are the differences among *vain*, *vein*, and *vane*? Consider their meanings and their parts of speech.

Tragic Hero

My Notes

	CREON	W	hat's that? Is there something still more evil than all this?
	MESSENGER		Your wife is dead—blood mother of that corpse— slaughtered with a sword—her wounds are very new, oor lady.
	p CREON— Antistrophe 1		
1430			Aaiiii ... a gathering place for death ... no sacrifice can bring this to an end. Why are you destroying me? You there— you bringer of this dreadful news, this agony, what are you saying now? Aaiii ... You kill a man then kill him once again. What are you saying, boy? What news? A slaughter heaped on slaughter— my wife, alas ... she's dead?
	MESSENGER o		<i>[Opening the palace doors, revealing the body f Eurydice]</i> Look here. No longer is she concealed inside.
	CREON		Alas, how miserable I feel—to look upon this second horror. What remains for me, what's fate still got in store? I've just held my own son in my arms, and now I see right here in front of me another corpse. Alas for this suffering mother.
1440	Alas, MESSENGER		my son. Stabbed with a sharp sword at the altar, she let her darkening eyesight fail, once she had cried out in sorrow for the glorious fate of Megareos, ⁴ who died some time ago, and then again for Haemon, and then, with her last breath, she called out evil things against you, the killer of your sons.
1450			
	CREON— Strophe 2		
	Eurydice's Death		Aaiii ... My fear now makes me tremble. Why won't someone now strike out at me, pierce my heart with a double bladed sword? How miserable I am ... aaiii ... how full of misery and pain ...
	MESSENGER		By this woman who lies dead you stand charged with the deaths of both your sons.
	CREON		What about her? How did she die so violently?
1460	MESSENGER		She killed herself, with her own hands she stabbed her belly, once she heard her son's unhappy fate.
	CREON		Alas for me ... the guilt for all of this is mine— it can never be removed from me or passed

⁴ Megareos: youngest son of Creon and Eurydice; an inexperienced soldier who died in battle

to any other mortal man. I, and I alone ...
I murdered you ... I speak the truth.
Servants—hurry and lead me off,
get me away from here, for now
what I am in life is nothing.

1470 CHORUS LEADER

What you advise is good—if good can come with all these evils. When we face such things the less we say the better.

CREON—Antistrophe 2

Let that day come, oh let it come,
the fairest of all destinies for me,
the one which brings on my last day.
Oh, let it come, so that I never see
nother dawn.

a

CHORUS LEADER

That's something for the times ahead.
Now we need to deal with what confronts us here.
What's yet to come is the concern of those
whose task it is to deal with it.

1480

CREON

In that prayer
I included everything I most desire.

CHORUS

Pray for nothing.
There's no release for mortal human beings,
not from events which destiny has set.

CREON

Then take this foolish man away from here.
I killed you, my son, without intending to,
and you, as well, my wife. How useless I am now.
I don't know where to look or find support.
Everything I touch goes wrong, and on my head
fate climbs up with its overwhelming load.

Final Scene

1490

[The Attendants help Creon move up the stairs into the palace, taking Haemon's body with them]

CHORUS

The most important part of true success
is wisdom—not to act impiously
towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men
bring on great blows of punishment—
so in old age men can discover wisdom.

My Notes

[illegible]

Tragic Hero

My Notes

Second Read

- Reread the scene to answer these text-dependent questions.
 - Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.
1. **Craft and Structure:** In line 1109, Teiresias tells Creon that his “luck is once more on fate’s razor edge.” What does this metaphor mean? How should Creon react?
 2. **Key Ideas and Details:** Reread lines 1111–1138. What indications do you have that Teiresias is truly a prophet? What do you think the signs he has interpreted mean? Annotate any clues that point to his being a true prophet.
 3. **Key Ideas and Details:** Reread lines 1152–1192 and annotate any patterns you see in Creon’s language. What excuse does Creon give for refusing to listen to Teiresias’s advice? When has he made this accusation before, and what does this pattern of behavior say about his character?
 4. **Craft and Structure:** Creon introduces the metaphor of the archer and the target in line 1152. How does Teiresias turn this metaphor against Creon, starting in line 1213?

5. **Key Ideas and Details:** The turning point for Creon begins in lines 1224–1227. Trace the development of this change in his conversation with the Chorus Leader. What characteristic of the tragic hero do these lines illustrate?
6. **Key Ideas and Details:** How does the Messenger describe Creon in lines 1291–1303? Does this description sound like that of a tragic hero? Explain.
7. **Key Ideas and Details:** Beginning with line 1325, what are the key events that the Messenger shares with Eurydice, Creon’s wife?
8. **Craft and Structure:** What does Creon mean when he asks in line 1440, “What remains for me, what’s fate still got in store?”
9. **Craft and Structure:** How does the Chorus’s line “there’s no release for mortal human beings, not from events which destiny has set” (lines 1485–1486) relate to Creon’s question about fate in line 1440?

My Notes

[illegible]

Tragic Hero

My Notes

10. **Key Ideas and Details:** In lines 1415–1416, the Chorus Leader tells Creon, “Alas, it seems you’ve learned to see what’s right—but far too late.” What chances was Creon given throughout the play to “see what’s right,” and how did he respond? How does this relate to the unfolding of the tragedy?

11. **Key Ideas and Details** What final message does the Chorus deliver, and how could you interpret this as the theme of the play?

12. **Key Ideas and Details** What does the role of the Chorus seem to be throughout the play?

13. **Key Ideas and Details** What does the end of the play imply about the conflict between fate versus free will? How do both Creon and Antigone grapple with seemingly limited free will?

After Reading

14. Review the characteristics of a tragic hero listed in Activity 4.8. Explain which character in the play so far could be considered a tragic hero. List at least three reasons why the character meets the definition.

15. Work with a partner or small group to complete the graphic organizer. Find textual evidence to support your analysis of Creon as a tragic hero.

Creon as a Tragic Hero	
Characteristics of the Tragic Hero	Where/when has creon demonstrated these qualities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person of noble stature 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good person who is brought down by an “act of injustice” (hamartia) because he knows no better or believes that a greater good will be served by his actions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a weakness, a tragic flaw such as pride, quickness to anger, or misjudgment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has free choice that makes his downfall his own fault 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences misfortune that is not entirely deserved 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gains self-knowledge or understanding before his downfall, and therefore experiences redemption 	

My Notes

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