



Academy  
**David Nelson, Principal**

June 2024

Course: IB English A: Language & Literature, Year 1

Email: [ktoridese@acs.gr](mailto:ktoridese@acs.gr), [westonm@acs.gr](mailto:westonm@acs.gr), [lianosh@acs.gr](mailto:lianosh@acs.gr), [syropoulose@acs.gr](mailto:syropoulose@acs.gr)

**Dear Incoming Student of IB English A: Language & Literature,**

Congratulations on your acceptance into this rewarding and challenging course. We will be working together to understand, reflect on, and respond to a number of classic literary works and non-literary texts. Your work begins this summer!

In preparation for the upcoming academic year, please **purchase the following texts:**

**Plays:**

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (*The Three Theban Plays*, Translator Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics)  
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

**Films:**

Spike Lee (director), *Malcolm X*

(<https://www.amazon.com/Malcolm-X-Denzel-Washington/dp/B000QFQE4U>)

**THE SUMMER ASSIGNMENT**

1. **Before** reading *Oedipus the King*, consult the notes on Aristotle's *Poetics* included below\*.
2. **Read Sophocles' *Oedipus the King***. Keep notes, annotate your texts, highlight significant passages, use post-its, or adopt your own system of recording your observations as you read. This will assist with the summer reading assignment, future class discussions, assessments on comprehension in the beginning of the year, and the completion of future assignments.
3. **Create a plot map**. Using Aristotle's conclusions and vocabulary about tragedy, create a plot map highlighting the major plot points (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution). On the plot map, keep track of which characters appear at which points in the tragedy and how this correlates with Oedipus' development as a character or significant changes he experiences.
4. **Identifying themes**. Review the plot map and indicate the major themes in the tragedy through a visual representation (a drawing or image from the internet). Visual representations must capture a symbolic meaning of the theme as well as Sophocles' attitude towards these major ideas.
5. **Oedipus as a Tragic Hero**.
  - a. What is Oedipus's **hamartia**?
  - b. We learn a lot about Oedipus' character in the play based on his own words as well as the words of others. Find 3 examples of each.
  - c. Make a chart distinguishing Oedipus' actions before the events of the play begin (these are mentioned through recollections of Oedipus before the plague strikes)

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Thebes) and his actions in the time span the play takes place (the actions Oedipus takes directly in the course of events in the play).

### **\*Notes on Aristotle's *Poetics***

Aristotle used *Oedipus the King* as an example of the ideal tragedy in his work *Poetics*. Aristotle drew the following conclusions.

- The tragedy is composed of the following elements:
  - **Plot** (most important)
  - **Characters** (second important)
  - **Thought** (the expression of ideas or emotions)
  - **Diction** (the words in which characters communicate their thoughts)
  - **Melody** (the musical element of language and theater)
  - **Spectacle** (costume and set design)
- The plot revolves around **3 Unities**: 1 setting, 1 day, 1 action (plot line).
- Similar to the usual plot map (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution), Aristotle identified the main elements of plot as **complication (exposition and rising action), recognition/reversal (climax), unraveling (falling action and resolution)**. Additionally, Aristotle claimed that a tragedy must have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- For a tragedy to be successful, the tragic hero must be a noble person who has committed an error in judgment (**hamartia**) and falls from good fortune to bad. Because the tragic hero is noble, his error in judgment causes the audience to feel **pity and fear** which leads to **catharsis (a cleansing of emotions)**. Pity because the hero is a good person who made a mistake and fear because if someone noble could make this mistake, anyone can possibly make it.

You may access the entire text of [Poetics](#) for further reading.

**Best wishes for a safe, happy, and productive summer!**