



Academy

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

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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 and annotate your texts with your own personal method: highlight and write in margins, use post-its, take notes in a separate notebook or electronically. What is important is that you keep a record of 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. Observations should include but are not limited to the following:
- Gists or summaries throughout the texts
 - Passages that stand out to you
 - Notes on characterization
 - Style and devices
 - Patterns in structure
 - Big ideas: themes
 - Questions
 - Connections to other texts, the world or yourself
3. Choose a 20-30-line passage that you think captures at least one of the following: an important theme, an important aspect of the character, or an intense moment in the plot. Type up the passage and write an open ended question that you think would make for an interesting discussion.

*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 most 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!