

# Ancient Greek Theatre

Written by: Ellen Williams

**Unit Objective** - Students will be able to express a knowledge of Greek Theatre History and its influence on theatre today by performing in a scene from *Medea* with Greek theatre elements for a classroom dramatic festival.

**Learning Level** – Intermediate

**Prior Experience** – Beginning Acting, Character Work, Voice and Diction, Memorization

National Standards - **TH:Cr1.1.HSII** a. Investigate historical and cultural conventions and their impact on the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.

**TH:Cr2.1.HSII** a. Refine a dramatic concept to demonstrate a critical understanding of historical and cultural influences of original ideas applied to a drama/theatre work. b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

**TH:Cr3.1.HSIIa**. Practice and revise a devised or scripted drama/theatre work using theatrical staging conventions.

b. Explore physical, vocal and physiological choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant to a drama/theatre work.

c. Refine technical design choices to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted drama/ theatre work.

**TH:Pr4.1.HSI** a. Examine how character relationships assist in telling the story of a drama/theatre work.

b. Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

**TH:Pr6.1.HSI** a. Perform a scripted drama/theatre work for a specific audience.

**TH:Re7.1.HSIII** a. Use historical and cultural context to structure and justify personal responses to a drama/theatre work.

**TH:Re9.1.HSII**

a. Analyze and assess a drama/theatre work by connecting it to art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines using supporting evidence and criteria.

b. Construct meaning in a drama/theatre work, considering personal aesthetics and knowledge of production elements while respecting others' interpretations.

c. Verify how a drama/theatre work communicates for a specific purpose and audience.

**TH:Cn11.1.HSI** a. Explore how cultural, global, and historic belief systems affect creative choices in a drama/theatre work.

## Unit UbD Page

**Big Idea:** Art and social culture are inexcusably intertwined on all levels. What we know as theatre today developed over centuries upon centuries of theatrical traditions and innovations. We can incorporate theatrical traditions from times past and artists past in order to enhance our art production.

**Essential Questions:** What role does ancient Greek theatre play in the theatre we all know and love? How does our political and social history effect the art we create? How did it effect the art created in the past? In what ways can we use our knowledge of Greek theatre to inform how we create theatre today?

### Key Knowledge and Skills:

Students will know: Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Comedy, Tragedy, Hubris, Amphitheatre, Medea, Ancient Greek Time Periods, Parthenon, Dionysus, Thespis

Student will be able to: Incorporate Greek theatre tradition in a scene, Label parts of an Amphitheatre, Analyze play for unique elements.

**Authentic Performance Tasks:** Quiz, Writing Prompt, Scene performance, Game Show

Review

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 1

**Essential Questions:** Where has civilization as we know it stemmed from? How can learning theatre history help me be a better theatre practitioner/observer? What do I already know about theatre history and how?

**Lesson Objective:** Students will have a basic knowledge of Ancient Greece and the origins of theatre by taking notes on the presentation and video.

**Supplies Needed:** white board and markers, projector, computer, Ancient Greece PowerPoint Presentation, Greek Theatre video <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/greek-theatre-tragedy-and-comedy.html>

**Hook (5-10 min):** Write Ancient Greece on the board and as students are coming in hand them a marker to write what they think of when they hear/say ancient Greece.

*Transition (1 min):* I hope you all enjoyed learning about Shakespeare and will continue to learn more as you continue your work in theatre as he is such a prevalent figure in Theatre history but we are not going to go a little further in time to what is considered the beginning of theatre and that is Greek Theatre. Lets go through some of the things that you all put on the board. What do you mean by this? How do you know about this? We are not going to learn MORE.

**Activity 2 (8-10 min):** I'm now going to go through a presentation to give you a BASIC understanding of Ancient Greece politically and socially before we get into the play. Please take notes as you will be quizzed on these facts. Also ask questions or offer insight that you may have.

**Activity 3 (10 min and 30 sec.):** Show video on origins of Greek theatre and make sure they are taking notes. <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/greek-theatre-tragedy-and-comedy.html>

**Activity 4 (30 min-40 min):** We are going to work on a tableau, do you guys know what a tableau is? It is a frozen image with your body, as if you were "painting a picture" using your body. I am going to put you into groups of 3-4 and assign you one of the elements talked about in the video for greek comedy and tragedy: hubris, Moral, Lampoon, and Reducto ad absurdum. You will then create a tableau to show what these elements mean. Be creative and make sure to use all your classmates.

Give the class a few min to prepare what they will be presenting. Once everyone is ready have them "perform" for the group. Set it up so when they are ready we say "1-2-3 Action" and they freeze in their pose. Explain that while they are frozen you will be going around and making comments about their tableau so hold until you say "CUT." Have the class make comments on what/why they think the group chose the pose they did and how the explains the element. Have the groups with the same element perform back to back so we can get a feel for similarities and differences.

**Activity 5 (5-8 min):** Now that we have spent some time learning about Ancient Greece what are some things you might want to add to the board.

Discuss the changes or lack of changes. Tell them that as we continue on with our unit on Greek theatre they can use this as a visual for their knowledge.

**Conclusion (1-2 min):** As we continue to move on through theatre history I hope you are seeing ways in which these different theatre periods have influenced theatre today. Continue to make that a focus through this unit and others as we will return to this idea. Also, bring your textbook to class next period.

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 2

**\*\*Bring textbooks next time\*\***

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate and understanding of Greek theatre by taking notes and drawing a diagram for amphitheaters.

**Supplies:** white board, markers, poster board (8), speakers, projector, ipod, Greek Theatre powerpoint

**Hook (5-8 min):** Explain to everyone that they are to once again write on the board what we think of when we hear/see Greek theatre but this time they need to make sure and add what we talked about last time in class. That is specifically what I will be looking for. Let the students come to the board and write. Go through the new things from last class period as a review.

**Activity 1 (30-35 min):** Present the PowerPoint presentation making sure the class is taking notes as the information will be tested. After each slide make sure and ask if there are questions.

**Activity 2 (15-20 min):** Divide the class into 5 groups (about 6 in each group). Hand each group some paper and instruct them that they need to make a drawing of an amphitheater with the following words labeled:

- Orchestra
- Thymele
- Theatron
- Skene
- Paraskenia
- Proscenion

**Conclusion (5 min):** Remind the students that they need to bring their textbooks to class on Wednesday as well as encourage them to review their notes before class to make sure they are keeping on top of the material. Answer any questions they may have.

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 3

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate ability to collect key information about Greek theatre by reading through their textbook and sharing their gathered information with their peers as well as participating in a Greek theatre review game show.

**Materials Needed:** Students text books, paper and pencils (if students don't have them), white board and markers, table, game show questions (see attached)

**Hook (5-8 min):** Have the posters of the amphitheaters hung up around the room, encourage/allow the students to walk around and look at them as they are entering. After everyone has had a chance to look take a moment to point out the different elements on different posters and anything that was added for "extra flair".

**Activity 1 Textbook Study (35-40 min):** *Instructions* – Have the class get into their groups that they were in for their posters, instruct them to bring a piece of paper, writing utensil, and their textbooks. Tell them that they will be assigned certain sections of the reading. Here are the steps they should take.

1. Read the whole section(s) together and personally take notes on what information you think is important. (You will need these to study)
  - a. Repeated from our lectures/discussion
  - b. Different or new from our lectures/discussion
2. As a group you need to discuss what you took note of to make sure that everyone is on the same page and got all the information that was needed from the text. You will be sharing your knowledge with your classmates so you must make sure that it is thorough.

*Guided Practice* – As they are working, monitor that everyone is on task and participating. Also make sure their group-work is just that GROUP work. Try and keep them on task and productive as this activity could take a long time if they are not working efficiently.

**Activity 2 Classroom Share (30 min):** *Instructions-* You need to create new groups so that each group has a member from the original group 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Double up if that is a necessity. In your groups you are going to share the information that you pinpointed as important to the rest of the group. The rest of the group needs to make sure that they are taking notes on this information as we will be tested on it!

*Guided Practice* – Make sure that they are on task and taking notes as well as respecting their other classmates by listening to what they have to share. Try and keep them conscious of time and efficiency by giving them warnings to the end of class.

**Conclusion (5 min):** I encourage you to review your notes that you took today as well as the notes you took in the past lectures. We will be playing a game that will require this knowledge.

**If Time...**

**Activity 3 Greek Theatre Game – Show (10-20 min):**

*Instruction:* "Welcome to the Greek Thespian Game Show held in the beautiful city of Athens Greece, I'm your host, Mrs. Williams and I will be asking you the big questions. This is how it will work. I will

divide the class into two teams and for every questions I have here on these cards I will call up two volunteers, one from each team. You will come to the front and kneel on either side of the piano bench or table. I will read the question out loud and if you know the answer you will smack your hand on the table. The first to smack their hand will get to answer. You CANNOT hit the table unless you know the answer, no stuttering while you think after hitting the table. If neither of you know the answer your team has 2 “phone and friend” opportunities to get help from your fellow teammates. Are we ready to play?? Here we go.”

Split the class in half and name the teams Ares and Athena. Write these on the board to keep score. Ask for volunteers, first to hands raised. Have them come up and read the first question. Continue with the game rules until all the questions have been asked. Encourage them to take note of the questions as they are important.

And the winner of the first annual Greek Thespian Game show is....

#### GAME SHOW QUESTIONS:

What is the name of the Greek God of wine, revelry, and theatre?

Dionysus

What were the submission requirements for the tragedy competitions?

3 Tragedies (Trilogy) and 1 Satyr play

Who is Plato?

Classical Greek philosopher

What are the dates we are using to define the Ancient Greek period?

508-322 B.C.

The Peloponnesian war between the Delian League (Athen and Allies) and who else?

Sparta

What is the name of the structure that was used as a temple, dedicated to Athena and since become a symbol for Greece?

The Parthenon

What was the main purpose for theatre productions?

Religious Worship

What was the space for the chorus called in an amphitheater?

Orchestra

Who inspired the name of this Thespian game show? What is he famous for?

Thespis; 1<sup>st</sup> Actor

Which Greek playwright attempted to refine civilization with his plays?

Sophocles

Who made contributions in costumes?

Choerilus

What was the purpose of satyr plays according to the text book?

Comic relief after tragedies

What was the instrument used in drama's?

"flute" or aulos

What was the building called at the back of the orchestra?

Skene

## Lesson 4: Reading Greek Theatre Plays

**Lesson Objective:** Students will display an ability to read and understand through applying their previous knowledge of Ancient Greek Theatre by reading Medea as a class.

**Materials Needed:** Classroom set of Medea, paper and pencil (if they don't have it)

**Hook:** (5-8 min)

Have the students take out their notebooks and turn to a clean, empty piece of paper. Instruct them to write all of the elements we learned that is specific to Euripides. There should be about 3. *After 2-3 min instruct them to write...* Now you should write at least two elements of tragedies.

As they are writing pass out the scripts. After they have had sufficient time to write ask the students to raise their hands and share what they put down.

**Step 1: Transition** – I had you write these elements down because as we read through the play you need be taking note of where you can see these elements being exemplified.

**Step 2: Modeling** - For example, if you read something in the script that refers to the main characters hubris you would want to note where in the script you could see it. You will be able to use these notes and your script on the test so make sure and do a good job.

**Step 3: Instruction** – Assign the parts to the class, ask who would like to have a part to read. Instruct the rest of class that they will need to read the part of the Chorus together.

**Step 4: Guided Practice** – As we read, make sure everyone is on task, focused, and participating. Occasionally as we read stop and discuss what we read, especially in the beginning, and explain how it applies to Greek tragedies and/or Euripides. Also stop periodically and ask for a summary of what has happened to check that they are understanding the story.

**Closure:** About 5 min left of class or when you are done reading and have a little discussion. Ask them first if they can summarize what we have read, then ask them to share some of the things they wrote down as evidence of Euripides writing or Greek Tragedies. Instruct them that next time we will be working in groups to choose scenes that we want to perform for our own festival and knowing how this play is particularly “Greek” will help them to fulfill the assignment.

Inform them that they will be taking a quiz in class next period on the information we learned about Ancient Greece and Greek Theatre. Stress the importance of them studying the Game Show quiz questions they took notes on.

**Assessment:** This will be an informal assessment of participation in reading and taking notes. They will be more formally assessed in taking the test at the end of the unit and writing a short essay on the plays following the rules of Greek tragedy/Euripides plays.

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 5

**Lesson Objective:** Students will display understanding of Greek theatre by finding and choosing a scene from Medea to perform in class as well as taking a Quiz.

**Materials Needed:** Classroom set of Medea, Quiz (see attached), White Board and Markers

**Hook (5-6 min):** On the word write “Today is the quiz, you have 5 min., study!” Be available to answer questions on format or clarification on content.

**Activity 1 (20-25 min):** Have the students put away all of their notes, notebooks, etc. And pass out Medea script. Ask that they flip their test over when they are done. Pass out the quiz and roam to make sure there is not cheating and monitor the test taking. When everyone is finished inform them that they are going to grade their own test. You are counting on them to be honest and honorable because if they cheat it will not help them in the long run. Go through each question stating the answers so that they are hearing it as well as seeing it. Provide any clarification they may need based on the moans and protestations. Collect the tests.

**Activity 2 (40 min):** Inform the class that they will be doing a scene from Medea. On the board write the performance dates, 4-6 min, groups of 3-5, memorized, basic acting, and costuming. Clarify that by acting you mean they are not just standing reciting text but actually trying to evoke emotion and feeling, but they will not be graded on “good” vs. “poor” acting. Costumes just need to show that you thoughtfully planned what you were wearing versus putting on what was most clean off the floor. Instruct them that they can choose their own groups and what scene they would like. Because this play is public domain they may also cut however they want.

*Guided Practice:* Now give them time to get in their groups, figure out what scene they want to do, how they want to cut it, etc. Make sure and check in with each group that they are on task and making progress.

# Ancient Greek Theatre Quiz

1. The Parthenon is a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Greek Amphitheater
  - b. Greek Temple
  - c. Greek Government Building
  - d. Greek Community Building
2. The Peloponnesian War was between what two powers.
  - a. Greece and Egypt
  - b. Arcadia and Italy
  - c. Sparta and the Delian League
  - d. Illyria and Athens
3. What are the dates that define the Ancient Greek Period?
  - a. 466- 895 B.C.E.
  - b. 238- 279 B.C.E.
  - c. 789 – 986 B.C.E.
  - d. 508- 322 B.C.E.
4. What was the main purpose for theatre performances?
  - a. Religious Worship
  - b. Political Debate
  - c. Community Involvement
  - d. History Education
5. What is Thespis famous for?
  - a. Being the first actor
  - b. Building the first amphitheater
  - c. Competing in the first Tragedy competition
  - d. Philosopher

Name: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What instrument was used as accompaniment in dramas?
  - a. Harp
  - b. Lute

- c. Recorder
  - d. Flute
7. Where does the chorus perform?
- a. Skene
  - b. Paraskenia
  - c. Orchestra
  - d. Thymele
8. Which Greek playwright is known to have refined civilization?
- a. Euripides
  - b. Plato
  - c. Sophocles
  - d. Aeschylus
9. Who is the ancient Greek god of theatre?
- a. Zeus
  - b. Dionysus
  - c. Athena
  - d. Apollo
10. What were satyr plays compared to?
- a. South Park
  - b. Shakespearean Tragedies
  - c. Epic Trilogies
  - d. Burlesque 3 Stooges
11. The submission requirements for tragedy competitions were 3 tragedies (possibly a trilogy) and 1 satyr play.
- a. True
  - b. False
12. Athens is considered the “cradle” of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy.
- a. True
  - b. False
13. The Thymele is where the audience sat in an amphitheater.
- a. True
  - b. False

14. Greek Theatre performances were free to the public.
- a. True
  - b. False
15. It is most likely that woman were not in attendance a theater performances.
- a. True
  - b. False

Matching – Match the definition to the term in the key.

16. The semi-circle seating area in an amphitheater. \_\_\_\_\_
17. The father of Tragedy. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Greek leader whose death marks the end of the classical period. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Playwright noted for the perfect tragedy. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Covered structure where actors would store costumes and masks. \_\_\_\_\_

Vocabulary Key:

- a. Alexander the Great
- b. Euripides
- c. Theatron
- d. Skene
- e. Aeschylus
- f. Sophocles
- g. Paraskenia



Answer Key:

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. A
6. D
7. C
8. C
9. B
10. D
11. A
12. A
13. B
14. B
15. A
16. C
17. E
18. A
19. F
20. D

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 6

**Lesson Objective:** Students will deep application of Greek theatre knowledge by preparing scene for performing.

**Supplies Needed:**

**Hook (2 min):** Tell the students to pull out a scratch piece of paper. They are going to have 1 min to write as much as they can about Greek THEATRE! Specifically theatre so think about things like costumes, props, staging, acting, environment, etc. And...go.

**Discussion (5-8 min):** Let's share what we put down, if you are missing something make sure and jot it down. Write these on the board as they share. Try and make sure they have the following on their list.

- Togas
- Carts
- Masks
- Double Cast
- All Male Actors
- Chorus
- Orchestra Space
- Skene
- Amphitheatre Seating
- Outdoor
- Thymele
- Sprinkling of blood
- Cost
- All Male Audience

**Instruction (2-3 min):** An added part of your scene assignment is you need to somehow incorporate one of these elements into your scene. They will need to tell you what Greek element they will be using in their scene. For example they can perform outside if they would like, etc. They might need to modify but they want to make sure it is uniquely Greek.

On the board write the two dates for performance and the number of scenes you have time to see those days. Then ask them to sign up for a day and an order.

After they have all signed up make sure that they understand that this is the day they are performing no matter what, sick or not. If you are sick you need to ask another group from the next day to switch with you or come sick.

**Guided Practice (50 min):** Allow the students to meet and discuss what Greek theatre element they want to use. As they have come to a decision have them report to you and get any feedback. Then allow them to start rehearsing. Work to help them when you see that they need it.

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 7

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate understanding of Greek theatre plays and culture by performing a scene in our class theatre festival.

**Supplies Needed:** copies of feedback sheets for each student,

**Hook (1-2 min):** Have a feedback sheet on each desk when the students enter. Inform them that they will be providing feedback for each of the groups. Also have the list of scenes and the order on the board so there are no questions.

**Activity 1 (15 min):** Allow the groups to work for 15 min, gather themselves, prep any make-up/costuming, etc. The scenes performing next time need to work on their scenes.

**Activity 2 (40 min):** Have each scene go up in order of the sign-up on the board. After all the groups have performed make sure and point out their successes and or things the next performers should take note of. Then have the scenes stand at the front of the class and have the students give them feedback for each of the scenes.

**Activity 3 (20 min):** Allow the scenes to go through the feedback together as a group knowing that they need to submit a one paragraph response (informal, hand-written) from what they learned performing/reading the feedback.

While they are reading their feedback have the other groups rehearse their scenes.

**Conclusion (1 min):** I look forward to see what the rest of you have worked on, make sure that you are prepared to perform next class period.

## Drama 3 Greek Theatre

### Lesson 8

**Lesson Objective:** Students will demonstrate understanding of Greek theatre plays and culture by performing a scene in our class theatre festival.

**Supplies Needed:** copies of feedback sheets for each student

**Hook (10 min):** Write the words Ancient Greece on the board and have students come up and write something they know about Greek Theatre.

*Discussion* – We have now gone through our unit on Ancient theatre and look how much you have learned. It is really cool to see the details you remember and I am confident that you could carry on an educated conversation about Greek theatre as well as use some of their traditions in contemporary performance pieces as half of you have shown and half are about to show.

**Activity 1 (15 min):** Allow the groups to work for 15 min, gather themselves, prep any make-up/costuming, etc. The scenes who performed last time can work on their reflection.

**Activity 2 (40 min):** Have each scene go up in order of the sign-up on the board. After all the groups have performed make sure and point out their successes and or things the next performers should take note of. Then have the scenes stand at the front of the class and have the students give them feedback for each of the scenes.

**Activity 3 (20 min):** Allow the scenes to go through the feedback together as a group knowing that they need to submit a one paragraph response (informal, hand-written) from what they learned performing/reading the feedback.

While they are reviewing their feedback, the first scenes who performed can work on their reflection response.

**Greek Medea Scene Assignment****Group Members:**

1 Geek Element /10 pts.

Acting /10 pts

Time- 4-6 min /5 pts.

Costuming /5 pts.

Memorized /10 pts.

Participation /10 pts.

**Total /50 pts.**

**Greek Medea Scene Assignment****Group Members:**

1 Geek Element /10 pts.

Acting /10 pts

Time- 4-6 min /5 pts.

Costuming /5 pts.

Memorized /10 pts.

Participation /10 pts.