

English Literature – Y11 into Y12

Induction Work

A guide to your induction work:

This induction work has seven tasks to work through, but only some of them need to be submitted. **Which ones? Consult this handy guide:**

- **Task 1, 2, 3** are all for you to work through independently. You should make detailed notes in response to each of the tasks, but you don't need to hand these in.
- **Task 4** is an OPTIONAL essay. You are welcome to hand this in and I'll do my best to give you some feedback.
- **Task 5** is to plan a presentation. While this doesn't need to be 'handed in' as such, you will be delivering this presentation to the rest of your class towards the end of September.
- **Task 6** is an essay in response to an extract and question. **This DOES need to be handed in on your first English Literature lesson of year 12.**
- **Task 7** is to buy a folder. You don't need to hand your folder in (what would I do with your mostly empty English Literature folder?), but you do need to bring it to your first lesson.

Tips for getting the most out of your induction work:

- All the texts referenced in this induction work are well-known and have been written about a lot. If you're struggling to get your foot in the door, then have a look online to find out what people have been saying.
- **If you weren't able to attend the induction day, then don't despair!** You can still complete the induction work to get nice and prepared. However, you will need to e-mail me (Mr. Elliott) at WSE@hardenuish.wilts.sch.uk to get access to the play (Antigone – see below for more information).

Exploring Tragedy

You're hopefully aware that the English Literature course revolves around exploring texts from two different genres, and that Year 12 focuses on **TRAGEDY**: probably the most influential genre in the history of Literature and one that has its origins in the drama and religious customs of Ancient Greece. You're going to study a Greek tragedy to get you thinking about the origins of this genre. So, togas at the ready as we dive into the past and look at one of the surviving tales from this time period: Sophocles' *Antigone*. (Pro-tip: pronounce it an-ti-go-nee rather than anti-gone in case you're chatting about this play with your friends...)

TASK ONE: What you need to know before you watch

We're going to be watching a play called *Antigone* by a Greek dramatist called Sophocles in the 5th Century BC. Only 32 of these plays survived by only 3 playwrights, out of as many as 1,000 that we know about!

Things to know about Greek tragedies:

- They were based on the lives of mythical rulers and their families, stories that had been handed down orally through generations.
- They were written in **trilogies** that would be performed back-to-back. *Antigone* is the third and final part of probably the most important surviving trilogy, the Theban plays (we'll definitely talk about the slightly mad story of Oedipus during our course)

That means that having a useful overview of the Theban myth and the action of the play will be a useful starting point for understanding what comes next with *Antigone*.

Here's John Green (the same guy who wrote Fault in Our Stars) discussing Tragedy and Oedipus, the first play in the trilogy and focusing on the character of Antigone's father, Oedipus. He talks at 200mph, so don't worry if you need to slow it down. If anything, it captures the chaos and wild plot twists of Greek tragedy. Have a watch of this before settling down for Antigone...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj7R36s4dbM>



TASK TWO: Watching the play

To watch the play, you'll need access to the National Theatre Drama Library. In order to access this, you'll need a username and password (as we can't put it on the school website). **If you attended the induction day, I've probably already e-mailed you what you need but, if not, then e-mail me at WSE@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk.** Once you're on the National Theatre Drama Library, search for Antigone, grab some popcorn and watch the tragedy unfold. It's a 1hr 30 minute production, and it's probably best to watch it all in one go. (Side note: yes, it does feature two Doctor Whos squaring off against each other)



AFTER YOUR FIRST WATCH...

Please answer the following questions after you've finished the play:

How do you feel having watched the play?

What do you believe that Sophocles was trying to accomplish with his work? What does he want his audience to consider?

How do you feel towards the main characters, Antigone and Creon?

Could the tragedy have been avoided? How?

Does Creon deserve what happens at the end of the play?

TASK THREE: Analysing in more detail

This task asks you to look at the play in more detail, answering some questions in your notes about the specific scenes and events you've witnessed. I would watch the scenes, pause and make your notes to track your response through the play!



Scene 1: (1.45) *Antigone and Ismene, two daughters of Oedipus, have a secret meeting outside of the palace gates. Both of their brothers (Eteocles and Polynices) have died, leading opposite sides of the civil war that has consumed the city of Thebes.*

What does Antigone want? Do you believe she has a right to want this?

What do you admire about Antigone in this scene?

How does Ismene characterise the role of women in this scene? What does Antigone think of her position?

“Why begin when you know you can't possibly succeed?” – that's a good point from Ismene. Why does Antigone begin?

Scene 2: (7.30) *we meet the man who has made the decree that Polynices cannot receive a full religious and military burial: the new king of Thebes (and Antigone's uncle in the rather complex Theban family tree). That's not very Polynices, is it?*

What are your first impressions of Creon? What's the first thing he talks about?

What does Creon see as the qualities of a good ruler?

So Creon isn't going to allow Polynices a full and proper burial, and instead wants to make an example of him by leaving his body to rot outside the city walls. Do you agree with his perspective? Remember, his city has just been ravaged by civil war and it's his job to reunite it.

At this stage, do you support Creon or Antigone? Does family come before your obligation to your country?



Scene 3 (14 minutes) *A soldier brings the news that Creon's orders have been disobeyed and that Polynices has been buried.*

How would you characterise Creon's reaction?

How does Creon respond to the suggestion from the Chorus that this burial may be a sign from the Gods?

Who does Creon believe buried the body, and why did they do it?



Scene 4 (20 minutes) *The Chorus (the group of characters often in the background) begin to offer their views. Antigone is brought before Creon to explain her actions in burying Polynices.*

OK, this is a bit weird. Now there's somebody banging on about the human condition in the middle of all of this. Welcome to **THE CHORUS!** What points do they make about man?

After this, Antigone is brought before Creon. How does she react when Creon interrogates her?

How does Antigone justify her actions?

Ismene is brought in. Why do you think she confesses to something she didn't do?

What do we learn about Creon's attitudes to women in this scene?

We learn that Antigone is betrothed to Haemon, Creon's son. How will this complicate matters further?

The scene finishes with the chorus discussing the uneasy relationship between arrogance, ambition and hope. Do you believe Antigone is an arrogant character? Is Creon?

Scene 5 (37 minutes)



Haemon, Creon's son, enters the scene. Creon and Haemon discuss Creon's decision to condemn Antigone to death. Haemon pledges allegiance to his father despite being engaged to Antigone, but slowly tries to persuade Creon to spare Antigone. Their relationship breaks down as the scene progresses.

"Unquestioning obedience to whomsoever the state appoints to be its ruler is the law, as far as I'm concerned. And that applies to small things as well as great ones, just or unjust, right or wrong." Creon's position seems quite extreme: is it ever OK to disobey the law? Is Creon's position too black and white?

Haemon claims to speak for the people – what does he claim that the people of Thebes think? How does he try and convince Creon to think again?

We get a really good example in this scene of **stichomythia** – rapid fire dialogue between characters (Creon and Haemon here) that often repeats words and phrases from the other. A sort of verbal tennis match or tit for tat. What does it reveal about the characters here?

What opinions do Creon and Haemon have about what the state is? Who do you side with?

Haemon leaves: should he have stayed and obeyed his father?

Creon makes his decision about the fate of Antigone: what does he choose, and why do you think he chooses this?

Scene 6 (50 minutes)

Antigone is brought in. She delivers a final speech proclaiming that she broke no moral law before being dragged away to her punishment: to be buried alive in a cave.



The chorus suggest that Antigone is “free”. Do you think this is a good description of her position?

We get a key speech from Antigone, railing against her fate. Why does she ask so many questions in this speech? Why is her brother so important to her?

The chorus reflect on a key tragic concept: **fate**. They state that “man’s fate is determined, and cannot be denied.” How much of this situation is the fault of Antigone and her actions, and how much of it seems to be beyond her control and set up by the Gods?

Scene 7 (1 hour)

OK – this scene introduces an important character in the Theban story: Teiresias. Teiresias is a blind prophet, famous for being able to see the future.

Teiresias has a message for Creon: what has he seen?

So Creon has had warnings from the Chorus, Antigone, Haemon and now the prophet of the Gods Teiresias. Why doesn’t he listen?

After Creon provokes him and accuses him of being in the fortune telling game for the money, Teiresias offers a prophecy: what is that prophecy? What will be the consequences of Creon disobeying religious custom?

What do the chorus advise Creon to do? What’s his response?



Scene 8 (1 hour 15) *The terrible climax of the play unfolds.*

A messenger comes in: what has taken place in the play?

It’s a common feature of Greek drama to not depict the violence on stage – does this blunt the impact of the ending?

Aristotle (a Greek philosopher) said concerning tragedy “that the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place.” – do we feel horror and pity when we hear what has become of Haemon, Antigone and Creon?

Creon enters with the corpse of Haemon: how has his attitude changed? What has he learned, if anything?

The chorus leaves us with a message: what is it?

The National Theatre has also produced a wonderful selection of YouTube videos on the production that can further enhance your understanding of both this production and the genre of tragedy as a whole. They're embedded below!

Here's an introduction to some of the choices made in the production you've watched...



Here's a video exploring the relationship between Antigone and Creon in the play.



Here's a video looking at the conflict between Family and State in the production...



And this final one looks at 'heightened language' – this is an idea that you came across in the canon work, that language in texts that are considered 'classic' or 'important' in some ways is elevated beyond our normal conversation.



There are plenty others that could help your understanding of the play too – just typing 'Antigone National Theatre' into YouTube will get you there...

TASK FOUR: OPTIONAL ESSAY

If you're looking to push yourself/make sure you're very prepared, you should now be able to write a short essay in response to one of these statements below, drawing on your experiences of watching *Antigone*. Make sure you have a clear **point of view/argument** and lots of **evidence** to support it, as well as a clear **structure** to your essay (e.g. an intro which sets out your main ideas is a must!). Aim for between one and two sides for this task. Pick one of the questions below!



1) "*Antigone* depicts a society from thousands of years ago, tied up in religious customs, outdated gender roles and a monarchy rather than a democracy. It has nothing to say to modern audiences."

To what extent do you agree?

2) "Greek drama offers little agency or power for female characters."

To what extent do you agree?

3) "There are no winners in a tragedy, only losers."

To what extent do you agree?

4) "The fact is you're both in the right, and there's a good deal to be said for either."
Tragedy isn't really about who is right and who is wrong, but shows us what happens when two different types of right clash together.

To what extent do you agree?

Antigone is a widely studied play and as such there are lots and lots of resources that can support you if you're finding this tricky! www.sparknotes.com is a good starting place, but read around the text if you are bamboozled by all the Greek shouting. The only pity and fear you should be experiencing is from watching a tragedy, not from putting your thoughts on the page.

TASK FIVE: Prepare a presentation to deliver in class.

A presentation that's truly tragic. One of the best things about Literature is the time we get to spend talking about what we're reading and our views on it. We'd like you to prepare a short presentation on a book you've read that you believe fits under the heading of a 'tragedy'. Your presentation should explore what it is about that text that makes it deserve the label 'tragic'. If you can't immediately think of something miserable to read, here are some suggestions:

- Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy
- Heart of Darkness: Joseph Conrad
- Wuthering Heights: Emily Bronte
- The Great Gatsby: F.Scott Fitzgerald
- The Grapes of Wrath: John Steinbeck
- A View from the Bridge: Arthur Miller
- A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams



Our course will begin with a short 'mini unit' exploring the genre of tragedy from its origins in Ancient Greece all the way through to our modern era, looking at how various writers have worked within the conventions of this genre to create works that have stood the test of time. **At the end of this unit (likely towards the end of September), we'll be asking you to present on your work and why it deserves the label of 'tragedy'.** You may wish to make notes on the text over the summer before forming your presentation in the first few weeks of the course so you can incorporate your knowledge from the start of Year 12.

TASK SIX: Reflecting on the tragic genre

As part of a bridge between your work at GCSE and your work at A-Level, we'd like you to have a go looking at an extract from one of these classic tragic works, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. We'd like you to answer the following question: **"How does Hardy create a sense of tragedy in this extract?"** We're asking for no more than two sides here – we're just interested to see how you deal with fiction at this point!

This extract is taken from Tess of the D'Urbervilles – because her Dad got drunk, Tess has had to embark on a late night journey to deliver beehives (obviously) with her younger brother, Abraham, and the family's horse, Prince. She falls asleep, and the extract begins with her waking up...

They were a long way further on than when she had lost consciousness, and the waggon had stopped. A hollow groan, unlike anything she had ever heard in her life, came from the front, followed by a shout of "Hoi there!"

The lantern hanging at her waggon had gone out, but another was shining in her face—much brighter than her own had been. Something terrible had happened. The harness was entangled with an object which blocked the way.

In consternation Tess jumped down, and discovered the dreadful truth. The groan had proceeded from her father's poor horse Prince. The morning mail-cart, with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow, as it always did, had driven into her slow and unlighted equipage. The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road.

In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops. Then she stood helplessly looking on. Prince also stood firm and motionless as long as he could; till he suddenly sank down in a heap.

By this time the mail-cart man had joined her, and began dragging and unharnessing the hot form of Prince. But he was already dead, and, seeing that nothing more could be done immediately, the mail-cart man returned to his own animal, which was uninjured.

"You was on the wrong side," he said. "I am bound to go on with the mail-bags, so that the best thing for you to do is bide here with your load. I'll send somebody to help you as soon as I can. It is getting daylight, and you have nothing to fear."

He mounted and sped on his way; while Tess stood and waited. The atmosphere turned pale, the birds shook themselves in the hedges, arose, and twittered; the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter. The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; and when the sun rose a hundred prismatic hues were reflected from it. Prince lay alongside, still and stark; his eyes half open, the hole in his chest looking scarcely large enough to have let out all that had animated him.

"'Tis all my doing—all mine!" the girl cried, gazing at the spectacle. "No excuse for me—none. What will mother and father live on now? Aby, Aby!" She shook the child, who had slept soundly through the whole disaster. "We can't go on with our load—Prince is killed!"

When Abraham realized all, the furrows of fifty years were extemporized on his young face.

"Why, I danced and laughed only yesterday!" she went on to herself. "To think that I was such a fool!"

"'Tis because we be on a blighted star, and not a sound one, isn't it, Tess?" murmured Abraham through his tears.

In silence they waited through an interval which seemed endless. At length a sound, and an approaching object, proved to them that the driver of the mail-car had been as good as his word. A farmer's man from near Stourcastle came up, leading a strong cob. He was harnessed to the waggon of beehives in the place of Prince, and the load taken on towards Casterbridge.

The evening of the same day saw the empty waggon reach again the spot of the accident. Prince had lain there in the ditch since the morning; but the place of the blood-pool was still visible in the middle of the road, though scratched and scraped over by passing vehicles. All that was left of Prince was now hoisted into the waggon he had formerly hauled, and with his hoofs in the air, and his shoes shining in the setting sunlight, he retraced the eight or nine miles to Marlott.

TASK SEVEN: Be prepared.

Finally, we'd like to make sure you're prepared for the challenges ahead. Part of that is being properly organised. Please pick up a lever-arch file over the summer break ready for all those notes, handouts and handbooks coming your way!



We'll want to talk about your summer work in the first few lessons of the course – make sure it's completed by the start!

Best of luck!