

### **Iphigeneia at Aulis:**

Choose a character (Agamemnon, Achilles and Clytemnestra, or Iphigeneia) from the list below. Answer the questions for a class discussion. Use quotes to support your arguments.

Along with your written answers, write an introduction paragraph for an essay based on an [AP Prompt on the blog](#). First, list three years whose prompts seem particularly suitable for an essay on this play. Choose **one** of these and construct an introduction paragraph where you include stages of character development or opposing character's views as possible paragraph topics. Attempt to weave in the "hook" of the prompt to shape "the meaning of the work as a whole". **Be sure to make a bold thesis statement, where you qualify "what went wrong and why".**

*Remember: Agamemnon is the leader of the army and should have power to control his soldiers. Odysseus did not initially want to go to war and neither did Achilles. Menelaos has an entire army he could use to support his brother, and so does Achilles, who has the Myrmidons, the best army of all. Kalchas, the prophet, was originally a Trojan. Artemis the goddess is on the side of Troy--so is Aphrodite. Three great sins of ancient Greece: 1) Neglecting Xenos (honor to guests and hosts) 2) Blasphemy against the gods 3) Shedding the blood of family. The audience of this play would have known the story of the Trojan War. That is, they would know that although the Greek won, Agamemnon would come home to be murdered, his kingdom would be destroyed in continued family murders, and the power of the Greek civilization would fall as all the Greek heroes struggle to come home.*

#### **Agamemnon**

- At the beginning of the play, Agamemnon is torn over his decision to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia to the goddess Artemis. Explain, using quotes from the play, why he seems to have decided NOT to sacrifice her.
- Explain then, why he believes he must sacrifice her. Do you believe these are good reasons? What does Menelaos suspect is his motivation? What do you think is his motivation?
- Does he believe in the cause of the war? Why or why not? Use quotes to prove this.
- When Clytemnestra arrives, why does Agamemnon lie to her? What does this say about him and about his views on the war?
- When Agamemnon again confronts Clytemnestra after she finds out the truth from Achilles, does he seem to believe that the war is noble? Why has he convinced himself of this?
- What is his hamartia? Would he make a good ruler? What does Clytemnestra say is his problem? Do you agree?
- Why does Agamemnon turn away from his daughter as she is led forward to the field for sacrifice? What happens at the end? What might this tell you about Artemis's opinion of a daughter's sacrifice?
- What might be a good thesis statement for this play, based on your analysis of this character's experiences?

#### **Achilles and Clytemnestra**

- Why does Achilles want to support Clytemnestra? Give more than one reason.
- How is he a good soldier who will support his general for a righteous cause, but not if the cause is corrupt? (*Note: He is there because his army of Myrmidons wants to go home. If Agamemnon had been honest from the beginning, would he have been able to turn the army around?*)
- Give examples of how Clytemnestra is a foil for Agamemnon. What are her strongest arguments against what he is about to do? (Use quotes). How is she symbolic of a basic conflict for Agamemnon?
- How is Achilles a character foil for Agamemnon? What are his strongest arguments against the actions he takes? (Find quotes). What strengths does he have that Agamemnon lacks? How is he symbolic of a different basic conflict for Agamemnon?
- How are both Achilles and Clytemnestra's positions somewhat compromised by their own experiences and psychological outlooks?
- How do both Achilles and Agamemnon fail in their way of resolving the conflict at the end?
- What might be a good thesis statement for this play, based on your analysis of Achilles' experiences?

#### **Iphigeneia**

- Does Iphigeneia want to die? Find quotes to express her feelings for death prior to Agamemnon's departure.
- Why, then, does she change her mind, even before Achilles comes forward with the bad news about his Myrmidons and Odysseus?

- Explain what happens to her: What is her initial position? What does she realize after Agamemnon and then Achilles present their views?
- Explain her reasons further, once Achilles enters the scene, and still declares that he will support her if she decides to choose life. What does she believe is true? What **MUST** she believe is true? What is she trying to preserve?
- What do you think of Iphigenia's decision at the end of the play?
- Does her decision make the war justified? Is her self-sacrifice honorable?
- What might be a good thesis statement for this play, based on your analysis of this character's experiences?

### *Iphigenia at Aulis* Essay Choices

Choose one of the following prompts. Be sure your introduction paragraph includes your thesis statement that needs to declare "the meaning of the work," or the human truth that the narrative story reveals to us. Declare firmly why the play ends as it does.

Create your own thesis statement: You do not really need a prompt. Choose one of the main characters in the play and consider that character's main conflict. How does the character deal with the conflict? What happens because of these choices? What do we learn from what happens? Were these choices wise, noble -- or not? You can construct this thesis in a series of questions. The point of tragedy is that often, a character is in a situation with not good choices.

1968: In many plays, a character has a misconception of himself or his world. Destroying or perpetuating this illusion contributes to a central theme of the play. Choose a play with a major character to whom this statement applies and write an essay in which you consider the following points: what the character's illusion is and how it differs from reality as presented in the play and how the destruction or perpetuation of the illusion develops a theme of the play.

1980--A recurring theme in literature is "the classic war between passion and responsibility." For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay clearly show the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work. Avoid plot summary.

2005: In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), protagonist Edna Pontellier is said to possess "that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions." In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character who conforms outwardly while questioning inwardly. Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid mere plot summary.

2008: In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas of behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

2013 A bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, recounts the psychological or moral development of its protagonist from youth to maturity, when this character recognizes his or her place in the world. Select a single pivotal moment in the psychological moral development of the protagonist of a bildungsroman. Then write a well-organized essay that analyzes how that single moment shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

2014 It has often been said that what we value can be determined only by what we sacrifice. Consider how this statement applies to a character from a novel or play. Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character's values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character's values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole.

## Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

- 1 Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
- 5 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

- Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!--An ecstasy of fumbling
- 10 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.--  
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

- 15 In all my dreams before my helpless sight  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

- If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
- 20 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs  
Bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
- 25 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*

Read the poem first. Then annotate: What is the purpose or meaning of the poem? How do literary devices impact the poem's meaning? (imagery, sound, rhyme, figurative language, form, speaker and listener)

Write an introduction paragraph with thesis statement, name of poem and author, references to stylistic device and paragraph topics for discussion.

## Leda and the Swan

## William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

**Note:** The poet, William Butler Yeats supported the independence of Ireland during the Irish Revolution of 1919 to 1921. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century until this war, Ireland was a part of Great Britain, although its people suffered from subjugation throughout this time, most notably, England's reaction during [The Great Hunger](#), 1845-1849.

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower                    10  
And Agamemnon dead.  
                       Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

### Questions:

1. Explain what happens in each section of this sonnet. Consider how sound connects words.
2. How is the caesura particularly effective in line 11 in conveying a main point of the poem?
3. Explain how dramatic irony allows the audience for this poem to answer the rhetorical questions.
4. While the poem possibly reflects politics, how does it also have a more universal in meaning? Explain how the allusion of Leda's rape might help this poem become an allegory to any type of brutal conquest and oppression.

## Poetry Terms:

### Speaker and Listener

## Allusion

Situational Irony\_\_\_\_\_

Dramatic Irony \_\_\_\_\_

## Understatement

Assonance \_\_\_\_\_

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Alliteration\_\_\_\_\_

Symbolism\_\_\_\_\_

Meter \_\_\_\_\_

Rhyme \_\_\_\_\_

Form (Argument)\_\_\_\_\_

## Rhetorical Questions

## Imagery