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ANTIGONE

Central Quote:

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

*Prepare to think about the play and its Central One Idea
by drawing upon my prior knowledge, experience, or interests.*

1. Think of a person in your life who you think is wise. What makes him or her a wise person? What has he or she done that demonstrates wisdom?

2. A sage once wrote, *“Do not be wise in your own eyes.”* What do you think this saying means? Can you give an example of someone who was **“wise in his own eyes”** but actually very foolish?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

*Discover essential facts, elements, and features of the play
through the reading notes, defining words, and comprehension questions.*

READING NOTES

1. **Eteocles and Polynices** (59) — the sons of Oedipus. When they came of age, they were to share the rule of Thebes, each ruling for a year and alternating every year. Eteocles ruled first, but when it came time for Polynices to rule, Eteocles refused. Polynices then attacked Thebes, and the brothers eventually killed each other in combat.
2. **Glory!—great beam of the sun, brightest of all that ever rose on the seven gates of Thebes** (65.117) — This line begins the chorus' first song, which celebrates the victory of Thebes over the Argive army led by Polynices. The chorus describes the battle in figurative language, likening Polynices to an eagle and the Theban army to a dragon. The description concludes with the death of Eteocles and Polynices, who killed each other. The ode ends with the chorus calling Thebes to celebrate the victory in song and dance with the god Dionysus leading. (See Fagles' note, p. 396.)
3. **the Dirce's banks** (65.121) — In Greek mythology, Dirce was a nymph who became a spring that flowed in Thebes.
4. **Lord Dionysus, god of the dance** (66.171) — Dionysus was the god of wine, festivity, and the theater. The chorus calls upon him to lead them in celebration for the victory over the Argives, and this fits Dionysus' celebratory personality.
5. **King Laius** (67.185) — the father of Oedipus. See Oedipus' Family Tree on p. 425 of Fagles' text.
6. **Numberless wonders terrible wonders walk the world but none the match for man** (76.377) — This line begins the chorus' first *stasimon*, which celebrates man. Among the many wonders of the world, man is the greatest because of his domination over the earth, his skill and brilliance, his ingenuity and resourcefulness, and his ruling of the city. The one thing that can stop man is Death. The man who rebels against the laws of the land or of the gods is inhuman and is headed for destruction. (See Fagles' note, p. 397.)
7. **Blest, they are the truly blest who all their lives have never tasted devastation.** (91.656) — This line begins the chorus' second *stasimon*, which bemoans the sad fate of those whom the gods have opposed or destined for ruin.
8. **Love, never conquered in battle** (101.879) — This line begins the chorus' third *stasimon*, which blames Love or Eros (i.e., the Greek word for passionate, sensual love) for setting son and father against each other. Love is invincible and cannot be controlled, as is the case with Creon, who tries to force his son Haemon to side with him instead of the girl he loves. Creon's attempt only pushes Haemon away from him, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is the conqueror. (See Fagles' note, p. 400.)
9. **down to the banks of Acheron** (102.905) — Acheron was one of the rivers in Hades, the realm of the dead. Souls newly dead were transported by the ferryman Charon across the Acheron into Hades.
10. **But think of Niobe—well I know her story** (102.915) — As Antigone goes to her death, she compares herself to the goddess and Theban queen Niobe, whose tears of sorrow over the loss of her children turned her to stone. (See Fagles' note, p. 401.)