

Antigone's Themes Today

The Greek Drama Antigone

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Grade Level	10th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	4–5 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	240 minutes

Essential Question

How can Greek drama be connected to today's high school students? Are there universal themes in "Antigone" that are relevant today?

Summary

Before, during, and after reading the play "Antigone" by Sophocles, students will use pre-, during-, and after-reading strategies from Kylene Beers' book "When Kids Can't Read." Students will focus on both comprehension of the play and meaningful and relevant themes.

Snapshot

Engage

Prior to beginning the play, students participate in “Tea Party” and “We Think” activities as *pre-reading strategies.*

Explore

As students read the play, they engage in the *during-reading* activity “Say Something.”

Explain

Upon completing the play, students reformulate the text as an ABC book.

Extend

Students compile a whole-class ABC book, then reformulate the text in a mode of their choosing.

Evaluate

Students' reformulations are evaluated for comprehension and analysis, and students reflect on their learning using the “I Used to Think... But Now I Know” instructional strategy.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR302: Draw simple logical conclusions in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 10)

10.3.R.3: Evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:

- setting
- plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, *in media res*)
- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- characters (e.g., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization (i.e., direct, indirect)
- point of view (e.g., narrator reliability)
- archetypes

10.3.R.7: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, using textual evidence to support their claims and inferences.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Antigone's Themes Today.pptx
- Say Something Stem Starters—Antigone's Themes Today - Spanish.docx
- Say Something Stem Starters—Antigone's Themes Today - Spanish.pdf
- Say Something Stem Starters—Antigone's Themes Today.docx
- Say Something Stem Starters—Antigone's Themes Today.pdf
- Tea Party Index Cards Card Sort—Antigone's Themes Today - Spanish.docx
- Tea Party Index Cards Card Sort—Antigone's Themes Today - Spanish.pdf
- Tea Party Index Cards Card Sort—Antigone's Themes Today.docx
- Tea Party Index Cards Card Sort—Antigone's Themes Today.pdf

Materials

- Copy of *Antigone* for each student (link to PDF file provided below, if needed)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Say Something Stem Starters (attached; one per student)
- Tea Party Index Cards (attached; one card per student)
- Writing tools (pens, pencils, paper, etc.)
- Three-ring binder for whole-class ABC book

Engage

Teacher's Note: Tea Party Prep

Before you begin this portion of the lesson, review the attached **Tea Party Index Cards** ahead of time. There are 20 quoted passages on cards in the packet. If there are passages from the play that you consider important, but which are not included in the packet, create additional cards. If your class size exceeds the number of cards in the packet, you can either duplicate selected cards (more than one student will have the same quote) or add additional quotations that appeal to you.

Print and cut out the Tea Party Index Cards. Be sure you have one card per student.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to follow along with the lesson. Display **slide 2**. Introduce the play *Antigone* by Sophocles, providing a brief summary of the plot. Display **slide 3**. Introduce students to the essential questions:

How can Greek drama be connected to today's high school students?

Are there universal themes in Antigone that are relevant today?

Display **slide 4**. Read aloud the lesson objective.

Display **slide 5**. Prior to beginning the play, have students participate in the *pre-reading* Tea Party activity (described by Sue Perona in *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do* by Kylene Beers).

Display **slide 6.** Pass out one Tea Party Index Card to each student at random. Instruct students to first consider the quote written on the card and discern its meaning. Direct them to walk around the room for about 10 minutes, discussing their cards with classmates. Consider playing music during this time. Give students about 15–20 seconds with each classmate. Stop the music or call out for students to stop when you think they have had time to explore the quote.

After students have discussed their individual cards, have them meet in small groups to discuss their cards to predict what might happen next. Suggest the following strategies for predicting the outcome:

- Infer what the scenes and characters mean.
- Look for causal relationships between characters' actions and outcomes.
- Compare and contrast ideas.
- Sequence and anticipate events.
- Connect the quote passages to their own relevant prior experiences.

Encourage students to discuss the passages on their cards with as many of their classmates as possible. Have students first meet in small groups of 2–3. Repeat the activity with groups of three, then groups of four, and finally groups of five. Students should discuss with their groups what they think the play is about based on the quoted passages and their small group discussions.

With students in their final groupings (about five students per group), display **slide 7**. Invite each group to use a modified version of the I Think/We Think strategy to create a "We Think" paragraph that describes what they think the play is about. Ask them to explicitly begin their paragraphs with "We think that this selection is about..."

Have students use specific quotes to explain why they think the way they do. Have them share out their "We Think" paragraphs with the whole class. Save the paragraphs so that students can reference them later.

Explore

Teacher's Note: Modeling "Say Something"

It is important to model this *during-reading* activity to ensure that students are aware of both the procedure and the purpose of this particular strategy. Depending on the needs of your students, the Say Something activity could be a whole-class activity where you and the students read aloud together and all stop to "say something" about what was read, or it can be done with partners or small groups.

Initially, consider modeling the Say Something *during-reading* strategy during the prologue of the play. Read aloud and stop to have conversations with students. During the conversations, take notes on the board to demonstrate the expectations of the strategy. Have students take over reading at the beginning of Scene 1.

Distribute copies of the play and have students begin reading. Additionally, pass out a copy of the attached **Say Something Stem Starters** sheet. Advise students that they can use the Stem Starters handout during the oral reading.

Teacher's Note: Stem Starters for Say Something

The Stem Starters for Say Something page contains sentence starters students can use as they make predictions, ask questions, clarify, make comments, and make connections. Students can use these stem starters as needed—they are not required, but they can assist students if they struggle with starting an initial conversation. Students should be encouraged to use a variety of stem starters from different sections each time they pause to "say something."

Display the activity instructions on **slide 8**. Have students form groups of two or three. Assign group members to take turns reading aloud a passage from the play. Remind readers to pause occasionally to say something about the passage using the prompts on the slide:

1. Make a prediction.
2. Ask a question.
3. Clarify something confusing.
4. Comment on what's happening in the play.
5. Connect the text to something they know.

Ask the group to reread the passage if they are unable to do one of those five things. Encourage the reading partners to offer responses to the passage, and have readers take turns reading after each discussion so that everyone has an opportunity to read.

As students read silently and work collaboratively, monitor their progress, offer assistance, and keep them on task.

Teacher's Note: During Say Something

Both during and after reading the play, a whole-class discussion should center on each group's conversations. You may want to schedule a whole-class Say Something periodically. During the discussions, direct students to examine the plot, characters, and themes they discover. Encourage students to refer to the Say Something notes that they have taken during their conversations.

Explain

When the class has read the entire play, guide students in the *after-reading* strategy of reformulating the text.

Display **slide 9**. Assign each student a letter (or multiple letters) of the alphabet. Instruct them to choose a word that begins with that letter and reflects something significant about a character, an event, or a theme in *Antigone*.

Instruct students to write their word(s) and one sentence that uses their word. Stress the importance of making a connection between the sentence and some aspect of the play. During this activity, emphasize the importance of their making connections between the play and the real world. Have your students draw connections between their own lives and the characters, events, and themes in the play. When they have drafted their sentences, have them decorate the page.

Encourage your students to allow the connections to emerge naturally through their theme sentences and decorations. Remind students of the lesson's essential questions during this activity.

Once each student has completed their personal alphabet page, have them work in pairs or in small groups to revise and edit their work collaboratively. Their work on their personal, then collaborative, alphabet pages serves to immerse them in the text. After they have compiled and created their ABC Book, they should have developed a clear understanding of the character, the plot, and the themes, paving the way to their re-imagining of the text for their creative reformulations.

Extend

Teacher's Note: Assembling Individual Pages into an ABC Book

The next step in the process is to have your students assemble their individual alphabet pages into a collaborative ABC Book. Encourage them to consider the form their group story takes.

Display **slide 10**. Have students compile all of their letter pages into a whole-class *Antigone* ABC book. Ask students to read their individual contributions aloud.

Teacher's Note: Reformulating "Antigone"

The culminating activity will enable your students to recast their alphabet pages and ABC Books into a different medium.

Consider having your students experiment with a different genre to tell Antigone's story and represent its themes. Student autonomy is critical for this assignment. Encourage each student to decide how they want to reformulate the story. You may want to offer the opportunity for students to work in pairs or groups of three to reformulate the story collaboratively.

Display **slide 11**. Encourage students to consider literary forms to reformulate the play. As a whole class, have them brainstorm possibilities. Share with them some of the following options:

- **Comic Books/Graphic Novels**: Invite students to combine words and images into panels that retell the story and present the theme(s) in a visual format. Require they determine ahead of time how many panels might be needed to tell the story. Have them consider which elements are better told in graphics and which are better told in words. Remind them to maintain the integrity of the story in whichever medium they choose.
- **Letters**: Suggest students assume the perspectives and personas of various characters in order to write letters from the characters' perspectives. Require they determine in advance how many letters might be needed. Discuss which perspectives are needed in order to tell the story completely. Suggest they plan in advance what each of the major characters might say about different events in the story. Encourage them to identify a specific audience for each letter. Share with your students the history of the epistolary novel—a story written entirely through letters between and among characters.
- **Interviews**: Have students who are interested in journalism plan an interview with one or more characters from the play. Require they identify which character(s) should be interviewed. Remind them that they must create a script for the interview in advance. Guide students in developing pertinent questions to ask the character(s) in order to portray the story. Have them portray the point of view and perspective of each character in the interviews. Encourage students interested in this option to videotape their interviews.
- **Poems**: Encourage students to write a poem or poems retelling the story and theme(s) of the play. Require they plan in advance the subject, the occasion, the audience, the purpose, the speaker, and the tone of each poem they write. Advise them that the poem or poems together retell the story.
- **Newspaper Articles**: Give students interested in print journalism the opportunity to write a newspaper article (or series of articles) regarding the events that transpire in the play. Instruct them to write in the correct style and voice of a newspaper article. Have them include events from the play in their articles. Suggest they consider including images and quotes from characters in their articles. They will want to create headlines for each article that preview the content of the article.
- **Television or Movie Scripts**: Give students interested in video and film the opportunity to create a television or movie script that retells the plot of the play set in modern times. Encourage them to imagine the events of the plot as they might occur in modern society.

Evaluate

Display **slide 12**. After reading the play and completing the activities, instruct students to reflect on the ways their thinking changed after studying the play. Have them review their “We Think” paragraphs, and introduce students to the I Used To Think... But Now I Know strategy.

Ask students to use this strategy to discuss how the process of reading, participating in the initial “Tea Party” conversations, the “Say Something” activity, and completing the text reformulation fostered an understanding of the play and its themes.

Evaluate students’ reformulation projects. Use this assessment to determine whether or not your students comprehend the play and whether they are able to connect the themes to their lives today. Students’ Tea Party conversations, "We Think" paragraphs, Say Something notes, individual ABC pages, and the class ABC book serve as additional assessments of the lesson.

Resources

- Beers, K. (2003). Say something sentence starters. https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Say_Something_Sentence_Starters.pdf
- Beers, K. (2003). *When kids can't read: What teachers can do*. Heinemann.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I think/we think. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/141
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- Sophocles. (1939). *Antigone* (Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, Trans.) English Literature & Literary Studies. https://mthoyibi.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/antigone_2.pdf (Original work published ca. 441 B.C.E.).