



Education Resources Pre-Production

Sydney Theatre Company presents The Residents in

ORESTEIA

By Aeschylus

In a new adaptation by Tom Wright



Photos: Derek Henderson

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Education Resource compiled by Education manager **Naomi Edwards**, Education Coordinator **Toni Murphy**, Editor **Lucy Goleby**, Contributors **Georgia Close**, **Kerreen Ely Harper** and **DiAnne McDonald**

KEY



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

PRE-PRODUCTION RESOURCES

ORESTEIA

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ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about

ABOUT THE RESIDENTS

Sydney Theatre Company's permanent ensemble of performers commenced work at the Company's home base, The Wharf, in June 2009. The Residents, formed as an evolution of the original STC Actors Company, are nine actors employed full time by Sydney Theatre Company with a particular focus on the development of theatre while working across all aspects of the Company's program.

Audiences have the opportunity to enjoy the work of the ensemble in a variety of ways. The Residents are occasionally seen in their own Main Stage shows and just as importantly they work in the Company's Next Stage, Back Stage and Education streams, moving regularly between these different areas.

With the exploration, shaping and fine-tuning of new works as a guiding objective, it is anticipated that The Residents will provide an invaluable resource to playwrights, and directors and that the results of their pioneering work will benefit the whole Australian theatre scene.

The Residents occupy a central role in the day-to-day operations of the Company and work very closely with Associate Director Tom Wright as well as Artistic Directors Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett. The actors were chosen after a lengthy round of auditions and interviews, and were selected for their range of skills, their history of devising new work, their abilities to collaborate with writers and directors, and their innate curiosity.

Read more: www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about/artistic/the-residents

CREATIVE TEAM

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Director – Tom Wright

Set and Costume Designer – Alice Babidge

Lighting Designer – Damien Cooper

Composer and Sound Designer – Max Lyandvert

CAST – THE RESIDENTS

Alice Ansara

Cameron Goodall

Ursula Mills

Julia Ohannessian

Zindzi Okenyo

Richard Pyros

Sophie Ross

Tahki Saul

Brett Stiller



ORESTEIA COMPETITION

Share your own creative response to the text or production of *Oresteia* for your chance to win an Opening Night Package to *The Trial*.

STC invites you to submit an original photo, video, poem, song or painting (or any combination of these!) in response to the original Aeschylus plays or our new production created by Tom Wright and featuring The Residents.

Post your entries on the *Oresteia* blog from Monday 10 May through to the end of the season. Follow the development of the production for inspiration: <http://oresteia.posterous.com/>

The winning entry will be chosen by The Residents after the show closes on Sunday 4 July. Prize includes: 2 x Opening Night tickets to the Sydney Theatre Company production of *The Trial* on 14 September 2010, post-show drinks and 2 x signed programs.

ORESTEIA

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The House of Atreus is cursed. Thyestes seduced his brother Atreus' wife, Aerope. In retaliation, Atreus cooked Thyestes' two children and served them as a meal to Thyestes. Atreus had two sons, Menelaus and Agamemnon, who married Helen and Clytemnestra. Helen was captured by Paris...or ran away with him with to Troy. Menelaus and Agamemnon declare war on Troy, but cannot set sail. So Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, Iphigenia, to guarantee good winds for their journey to war. Then...

AGAMEMNON

A flame burns. It is the signal that Agamemnon has conquered Troy after ten years of war. The watchman hurries to inform Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife.

While Agamemnon was at war, Clytemnestra took a lover, Aegisthus, who believes he has a rightful claim to Agamemnon's throne. She then banished Agamemnon's son, Orestes.

Agamemnon brings with him a concubine: Cassandra, the daughter of King Priam of Troy. Cassandra is a prophetess, but has been cursed by Apollo so that her prophecies are not believed until they are realised.

Clytemnestra welcomes Agamemnon with false exuberance, hiding her rage at his sacrifice of their daughter, and her jealousy of Cassandra.

Instead, Clytemnestra lays a purple carpet for Agamemnon to walk on into their home. This is an honour usually reserved for the gods, and Agamemnon is wary of the arrogance that underlies such a presumptuous action. However, Clytemnestra eventually convinces him.

Once Agamemnon is inside the house, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus murder him in the bathtub.

Hearing the screams from outside, Cassandra foresees her own murder, yet chooses to enter the house and seal her fate.

Clytemnestra and Aegisthus reveal the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra to the Chorus, who warn them that Orestes will seek revenge on his mother for murdering his father.

CHOEPHOROE (ALSO KNOWN AS THE LIBATION BEARERS)

After the murder of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus rule Argos together.

One night, Clytemnestra awakens from a strange dream, in which she gave birth to a snake, which then drew blood from her and she attempted to feed it.

Concerned that she has invoked the wrath of the gods by murdering Agamemnon, Clytemnestra sends her daughter, Electra, to pour libations onto her father's grave.

At the grave, Electra encounters Orestes, who has returned from exile. Together, they plan to avenge the murder of their father by killing their mother and her lover. The god Apollo urges Orestes to pursue revenge, and he travels in disguise to Argos, where he executes both Aegisthus and his mother, Clytemnestra.

Orestes flees Argos in shame and guilt, pursued by the Furies, who are intent on punishing him for the unforgivable crime of matricide.

EUMENIDES (ALSO KNOWN AS THE FURIES)

Orestes seeks refuge at the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The Furies will not be appeased, and the ghost of Clytemnestra appears, exhorting them to punish Orestes for her murder. Apollo claims that Orestes behaved justly, revealing that he encouraged Orestes in his revenge.

Orestes finds himself before a parliament of the gods, who are divided about his guilt. The Furies demand vengeance, and Apollo defends the righteousness of Orestes' actions.

The goddess Athena casts the deciding vote, acquitting Orestes of wrongdoing.

She then renames the Furies as the Eumenides (meaning the Kindly Ones), and establishes them as protectors of Athens.

“

We must suffer
And suffer for a reason
And that is this:
We must suffer into truth.

- Chorus, *Oresteia*

”

Family, jealousy, war, pride, power, retribution, vengeance, justice, sacrifice, Greek tragedy, murder, adaptation, hereditary guilt, duty, honour.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

The Oresteia is a series of three tragedies about the end of the curse on the House of Atreus, containing *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe* (also known as *The Libation Bearers*) and *Eumenides* (also known as *The Furies*). These were the last plays written by Aeschylus, and the most enduring series of ancient Greek plays. The trilogy was originally performed at the Dionysia festival in Athens in 458 BC, where it won first prize, and has continued to be performed and adapted through various mediums ever since.

“

Among all the products of the Greek stage, none can compare with it (*Agamemnon*) in tragic power; no other play shows the same intensity and pureness of belief in the divine and good; none can surpass the lessons it teaches, and the wisdom of which it is the mouthpiece.

”

William von Humboldt,
www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/bates021.html

STORY WHOOSH



AIM: A quick, physical, participatory telling of the story using text and action to establish consensual understanding and invite participants to play.



STORY WHOOSH

Concept by Professor Jonathon Neelands, The University of Warwick & Royal Shakespeare Company

Players sit in a large **circle**.

One player reads aloud the synopsis below. **Note:** *it helps if you read slowly, and pause between each sentence, to give the other players plenty of time.*

Players jump in to the middle of the circle and create a tableau of characters, places or props, as they are read aloud.

When the reader says 'whoosh', the players are sent back to their places to empty the circle.

SYNOPSIS

AGAMEMNON, the king of Argos, belonged to a cursed family.

His father, ATREUS, once ruled Argos with his brother, THYESTES.

The brothers' relationship was not a happy one.

When Thyestes has an affair with ATREUS'S WIFE (his sister-in-law, Aerope),

Atreus retaliated by serving Thyestes the cooked flesh of THYESTES' TWO OLDEST SONS.

When Thyestes discovered Atreus' crime, he fled Argos, cursing Atreus and his family.

WOOSH

AGAMEMNON and his army are at war with TROY (the city).

Agamemnon successfully kills a deer.

He boasts he is the goddess ARTEMIS' equal in hunting.

Deeply offended by his remarks, the angry Artemis orders Agamemnon to sacrifice his YOUNGEST DAUGHTER (Iphigenia).

Artemis holds Agamemnon's troops in the grip of a vicious storm at sea until the sacrifice of his daughter is made.

WOOSH

ORESTEIA

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AGAMEMNON returns home victorious after ten years at war with Troy.
He brings with him CASSANDRA, a woman of Troy, to be his concubine/slave.

WOOSH

Agamemnon's wife, CLYTEMNESTRA, is wildly jealous of CASSANDRA.
Clytemnestra has also not forgiven AGAMEMNON for their YOUNGEST DAUGHTER'S death.
In an act of revenge, Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon and Cassandra.
Then Clytemnestra sends her son, ORESTES, into exile.
Clytemnestra's daughter, ELECTRA, is angry with her mother for killing their father.
ELECTRA grieves the loss of her father and her brother's absence.
Meanwhile, Clytemnestra now rules Argos with her lover, AEGISTHUS.

WOOSH

The god APOLLO bids ORESTES return to Argos to take vengeance for his father's death.
Orestes slays CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS.
But Orestes' actions incur the wrath of THE FURIES – demons who punish those who murder members of their own family.
ORESTES flees to Delphi, but THE FURIES pursue him.

WOOSH

APOLLO orders ORESTES to Athens.
Here the goddess ATHENA presides over Orestes's trial for the murder of his mother.
THE FURIES sit in prosecution.

WOOSH

APOLLO claims Clytemnestra did not act like a proper mother towards ORESTES.
Orestes is found not guilty by THE GODS.
Orestes is freed, and the curse upon Agamemnon's family is broken.

WOOSH



AIM: To trace and examine key characters, their relationships, and their individual character journeys in *Oresteia*.



Visit the *Oresteia* blog to view images and rehearsal notes posted by The Residents .

<http://oresteia.posterous.com/>



FAMILY TREE

Research the House of Atreus.

Draw up a family tree.



Identify the relationships between the characters below, who will be represented in the Sydney Theatre Company's adaptation of *Oresteia*:

Agamemnon

Clytemnestra

Cassandra

Electra

Apollo

Orestes

Aegisthus



COLLAGE GALLERY

List character traits for one of the characters above.

Draw on information from your research and knowledge of the *Oresteia* trilogy.



Consider

1. What are three key lines of text the character speaks?
2. What are the character's key relationships? (daughter, father, enemy, lover etc)
3. What are three key actions the character performs?
4. What are the character's key physical traits?
5. What are the character's strengths and weaknesses?

Expand your character portrait by including your own ideas

Note: you do not have to restrict your portrait to a character living in Ancient Greece.

1. If the character were an animal, what animal would he/she be?
2. What is the character's favourite colour?
3. What sort of food does the character like?
4. How does the character dress?
5. What music does the character listen to?

Collect print images from newspapers, magazines, the internet etc.

Cut and paste the images onto an A3/A5 poster sheet to create a character collage.

Display the character collages.

Discuss

1. What were some differences in the representations of the characters?
2. What were the similarities in the perception of the characters?
3. How did the interpretation of the various relationships differ?
4. How was this influenced by the character's perspective?
5. Apart from the plays, what influenced you when you were creating your character portrait?

Then

Write a postcard in voice of a character describing the events to a friend, relative, stranger or another character.

Write a 3-minute monologue for your character based on your description.

Write four text messages on your mobile phone as your character.

Send them, one at a time, to another class member (also in character).

Respond to the received messages.

+ **Write and perform** a five-minute dialogue scene between two characters, using your postcard, monologue or text messages as your starting point.



AIM: To explore adaptations of texts.

Playwrights and filmmakers often adapt texts – lifting the themes, storylines and characters of one text and transforming them into a new text or ‘adaptation’.



Read a summary of the story of one of the texts below.

Watch the corresponding filmic adaptations.



Emma, novel by Jane Austen

Clueless, film directed by Amy Heckerling, 1995



The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare

Ten Things I Hate About You, film directed by Gil Junger, 1999



The Orchid Thief, novel by Susan Orlean, 1998

Adaptation, film directed by Spike Jonze, 2002**

** *Adaptation* is a satirical commentary on the process of adapting a novel into a film.

The leading character, Charlie Kauffman, is attempting to adapt into a screenplay.

In reality, Charlie Kauffman is the screenwriter of *Adaptation*, and Susan Orlean’s *The Orchid Thief* is a non-fiction work published in 1998.

Discuss

1. How has the playwright or filmmaker adapted the original story?
2. What changes have been made to characters?
3. How has the fundamental storyline changed?
4. Is the adaptation set in a different era or time? Why?
5. How is the physical environment different in the adaptation?
6. How do the changes to the tangible elements of a play (costumes, set) affect an audience's appreciation or understanding of an adaptation?
7. How has the playwright or filmmaker justified their changes to ensure that the text remains believable and truthful to the intentions of the original work?
8. Is it important to ensure that an adaptation remains truthful to the intentions of the original?



DEBATE

In an interview with Sydney Theatre Company's Back Stage magazine, Set and Costume Designer Alice Babidge said:

“ I love the re-interpretation of it - it's not about making it modern, it's about shifting it to make it something that an audience can more easily relate to. ”

Do you **agree** or **disagree** with Alice's statement regarding adaptations? **Why?**

Find references and examples to back up your argument.



Read the synopsis of *Oresteia* on pages 9 – 10.

Brainstorm how you would adapt this story.



1. How would this plot fit into a new time and setting?
2. How would the concerns of the characters change?



AIM: To provide a contemporary reference for the characters and their relationships.

Oresteia is a reminder to us of the very nature of humankind: the downfall from prosperity and reputation to ruin and destruction via the reversal of fortune. *Oresteia* explores the Ancient Greek 'power couple', Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.



Brainstorm the imagery created by 'power couples' in a contemporary context.

Research the ways the power couple image of one of the couples below is created and manipulated by the media, paparazzi, and the couples themselves.



Politics

Barack and Michelle Obama

Bill and Hilary Clinton

Carla Bruni and Nicolas Sarkozy

Celebrities

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie

Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes

Victoria and David Beckham

Kate Winslet and Sam Mendes

Fictional

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Ma and Pa Ubu

(in much the way the Ancient Greek chorus do this for the audience in *The Oresteia*).

Present the various representations of your chosen 'power couple' through series of tableaux, a media conference, a gossip report, newspaper article, powerpoint presentation, video clip, serious news report, SMS conversation or role play.



Education Resources Post-Production

Sydney Theatre Company presents The Residents in

ORESTEIA

By Aeschylus

In a new adaptation by Tom Wright



POST-PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Where did it come from? **2 – 5**

‘Mother’ is a device **6 – 9**

Hear the mighty chorus **10 – 15**

Make it different **16 – 19**

Education Resource compiled by Education manager **Naomi Edwards**, Education Coordinator **Toni Murphy**, Editor **Lucy Goleby**, Contributors **Georgia Close**, **Kerreen Ely Harper** and **DiAnne McDonald**

KEY



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Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English/History Exercises



Play online

ORESTEIA

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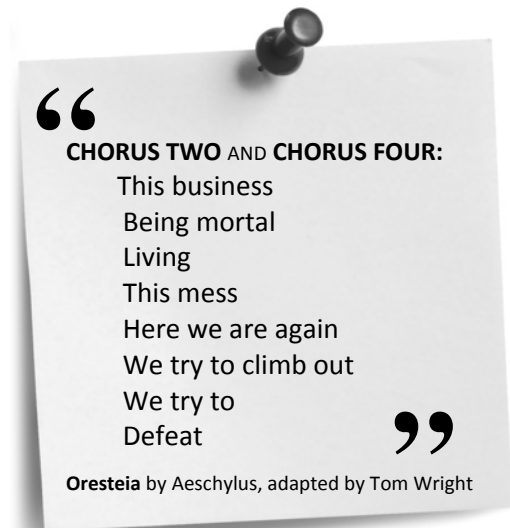
WHERE DID IT COME FROM?



AIM: To investigate the Ancient Grecian society that inspired Aeschylus to write the *Oresteia*, and the historical information that informed Tom Wright's adaptation.

To understand historical worlds, we investigate past societies, events, places, people and institutions, relying on primary and secondary sources as evidence. In *Oresteia*, we are witnessing a secondary source and being asked to make judgements and conclusions about the ancient Grecian society using the words of a playwright and adaptor. In creating an artistic representation of an historical society, theatre-makers and other artists need to consider the problems and issues of investigating the past.

Although their creation may not be intended as an accurate historical portrait, artists go to varying measures to understand the source of their inspiration.



Brainstorm the various ways in which historians and archaeologists perceive, investigate, record and construct the past.



Consider

1. What types of questions do they ask?
2. What explanations do they give?
3. What issues do they raise?
4. How do we, as amateur historians, understand, question, analyse and interpret archaeological and written sources?

ORESTEIA

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Research Thespis of Icaria, said by Aristotle to have been the first actor, by appearing on stage playing a character in a play.



Generate hypotheses and weigh up contemporary theories and explanations on the basis of the available evidence.

Present your version of the first actor, through a storyboard, photo essay or performance.



REPRESENTATION

Investigate the way Tom Wright, as playwright and adaptor, Alice Babidge as designer, and The Residents, as members of the onstage society, have collaborated to present this famous story from the past.



Discuss

1. How is the production historically accurate in terms of setting and clothing?
2. How is the production historically revealing, in terms of societal attitudes and culture?
3. What social issues does this production of *Oresteia* present and explore?
4. How is historical evidence of Ancient Greece presented or referenced on stage?

Discuss the representation of Ancient Greece



1. Geographical context
2. Social relationships
3. Economy
4. Religion
5. Power and gender
6. Death and burial



Select one of the above elements that you felt was presented most strongly in *Oresteia*.

Research this element in more detail, from an historical perspective.

Create a comparison of the way the issue was presented on stage versus archaeological source material, as a collage, photo essay, short story or devised performance piece.

Highlight questions in the historical evidence that were answered by the production.



SOCIAL HISTORY

By studying ancient societies, sites and sources, we can investigate the social history of a people through an exploration of the remains of their material culture, and come to understand the key developments and forces that may have shaped that society.



Discuss

1. What are the significant forces of change in the society of *Oresteia*?
2. How is the society of *Oresteia* shaped?
3. Who are the key people in the society?
4. How can you account for the differing perspectives presented on stage in *Oresteia*?



THE BLAME GAME

Oresteia presents us with a world of blood shed and recrimination. A family and kingdom are shattered as life after life is taken in a cycle of retaliation, but who is ultimately responsible – is one character more to blame than any other?



Write the names of the major players on individual cards: Atreus, Thyestes, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, Electra, Orestes, Apollo, Artemis.

Write a statement for each character outlining a reason for their guilt.

For example, Atreus is responsible because he committed the first murder, taking the innocent lives of Thyestes' sons.

Lay out the cards in the order of which character you think is the most to blame.

Discuss

1. Does everyone have the same order?
2. What are the differences?
3. What are the reasons for your particular order?
4. Where there influences external to the play that impacted your decisions about ordering?
5. How do you justify laying the responsibility on just one character?
6. In what ways are some characters equally responsible?
7. How do you justify the character you placed last, with the least blame?
8. In your own life, how do you attribute blame?



Research the mechanics of Greek theatre



1. Equipment
2. Costumes
3. Management
4. Religious festivals
5. Actors
6. Ritual
7. Performances style
8. Competition
9. Audience
10. Purpose in Ancient Grecian society



Read one (or more) of the following plays by famous Ancient Grecian playwrights.

Aeschylus: *The Persians*.

Sophocles: *Antigone* or *Electra*.



Euripides: *Medea*.

Aristophanes: *The Wasps* or *Lysistrata*



Chose one of the major themes and concerns of Greek drama.



1. The impact of war
2. The state versus the individual
3. The state versus the family
4. The nature of 'barbarism'
5. Pride and the polis
6. The role of the gods in human affairs
7. Gender roles and relationships.

Write a short story, devise a short scene, shoot a mobile phone film or rewrite the lyrics to a song, using one of these themes as your inspiration.



AIM: To investigate the position of women in the *Oresteia*.

Adaptor and Director Tom Wright believes the value of revisiting the classics lies in seeing the origin of ideas that still have an impact on society today:

“ [Apollo says] motherhood doesn't give you any status... you're nothing. It is still astonishing to read it 2400 years later. It is so deeply ingrained in our culture, you need to be able to see it when it's coming, and it's not always written as cogently and unashamedly as in Aeschylus. ”

Tom Wright, interviewed by Joyce Morgan, *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 15 – 16, 2010.

Designer Alice Babidge is responsible for the set design of Tom Wright's *Oresteia*, along with the visual presentation of the characters through costume, hair and make-up. Alice discusses the challenge of designing costumes that communicate essential ideas about the characters:

“ ... I didn't just want the actors to just feel like they are wearing clothes. They need to be indicative of character and it's a tricky world to find. I've been really trying to beat it out and work out who these people are. How does a wife present herself to her husband when he's been away fighting? How do you dress someone who's a self-created warlord? I decided early on, with Tom, that the objectification of women in these plays is really strong. So that became a start with the costumes - idealised male versions of women and what that means... ”

Discuss

1. What were the costumes that Alice designed for the characters?
2. How did the costume portray the essence of each character?
3. How did the costumes reveal the status of the characters?
4. How did the costumes assist in revealing the relationships between characters?



Read the following excerpt from Apollo's final speech in Tom Wright's adaptation of *Oresteia* (pages 3 – 4).



Pinpoint Apollo's views on women and their role in society.

Debate the relevance of Apollo's views on motherhood and status in today's society.

Decide whether you agree or disagree that these ideas remain deeply ingrained in our culture.



Create a storyboard or cartoon of the journey of one of the women in *Oresteia*.

Consider



1. What happens in this character's life?
2. How do others treat her?
3. What control does she have over the circumstances of her life?
4. How does her fate reflect Apollo's views of women?



Perform a series of 'frozen moment' tableaux.

Trace the journey of one of the female characters.

Include

1. Three main events in the character's story.
2. Transitions that demonstrate how and why the character changes over the course of the play.
3. Three lines of spoken text by the character.
4. The essence of one of the character's key relationships.



Improvise a new version of *Oresteia* in small groups.

Challenge the position of women in the original text by giving them equality with men.

Consider

1. How do the relationships between characters change?
2. How do the goals or ambitions of characters change?
3. What changes can be explored in the behaviour and actions of the characters?
4. What new consequences or outcomes result from the above changes?

ACT TWO

APOLLO

These two deaths
Agamemnon's
Clytemnestra's
Are different
These two ghosts
History will hear their music
As different notes
This was a king
Kings die with honour
A woman can kill a king
Maybe in a war
Under a hail of weapons
But
Naked
Back turned
In a bath room, drugged
His wits dulled
Incapacitated?
Time after time she stabbed him
He was a leader
A great man
A commander
He made his people rich
He made them safe
And what did she do?

ACT TWO cont.

Listen

The father must be protected

The patriarch is sacred

The father is holy

I will say this clearly

To you

All who tread on this earth

This thing you call

Mother

Is not really a parent

More

A vessel

A womb

A nurse

Fecund rich dirt

For a seed to grow in

A seed planted by the true parent

The man is the source of life

From him it springs

The mother

Minds

The child

Cares for it

Like a stranger for a stranger

'Mother' is a device a social tool

Enough of that.



AIM: To introduce the role and function of the Chorus in *Oresteia*, and to explore the Chorus as a dramatic device through physical and participatory action.



View Chorus One and Chorus Two; selected scenes from Woody Allen's *Mighty Aphrodite* for a comic contemporary perspective of the function and role of the ancient Greek Chorus.



CHORUS ONE



Example of a chorus' role as narrators of the story and commentators on the action.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4nV1O9mVEE>

Transcript from *Mighty Aphrodite* screenplay

CHORUS Woe unto man.
 Brave Achilles, slain in trial by blood.
 For prize, the bride of Menaleas,
 and father of Antigone, ruler of Thebes,
 self-rendered sightless by lust for expiation,
 lost victim of bewildered desire.
 Nor has Jason's wife fared better,
 giving life, only to reclaim it, in vengeful fury.
 For to understand the ways of the heart
 is to grasp as clearly the malice or ineptitude of the gods.
 Who in their vain and clumsy labours to create a flawless surrogate
 have left mankind but dazed and incomplete.
 Take for instance the case of Lenny Weinrib,
 a tale as Greek and timeless as fate itself.

CHORUS TWO

Example of the Chorus's function to ask questions, debate the law, advise, empathise, and warn the protagonist.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQa3IArTImU&feature=related>

Transcript from *Mighty Aphrodite* screenplay.

CHORUS What are you doing, Weinrib?

LENNY Don't confuse me. She's coming back in a minute.

CHORUS You are breaking the law.

LENNY Breaking the law? There's a higher law.
I can find out who my son's mother is.

CHORUS A judge won't see it that way.

LENNY Keep a lookout for me, for Christ's sake.

CHORUS Me? I'm the leader of the chorus.

LENNY So what? Look out!

CHORUS Get your friend Bud to help you.

LENNY Bud can't help me. Ellie and Amanda are friendly.
Bud can't keep a secret.

CHORUS Why is it a secret? Why can't Amanda know?
What kind of argument am I getting into?

LENNY Because she wouldn't understand.

CHORUS You're guilty because you already have exaggerated notions
about your son's mother.
It's understandable, because things are not going smoothly...

LENNY That's why you will always be a chorus member,
because you don't do anything. I act.
I take action. I make things happen.

CHORUS Hurry the hell up. I hear footsteps

Discuss

1. According to *Mighty Aphrodite's* protagonist Lenny Weinrib, what is his role in the drama?
2. According to Lenny Weinrib, what is the function of the Chorus?
3. What was the relationship between the protagonists of *Oresteia* and the Chorus?

Research

- +
4. Why was the principle of unison action a significant feature of the Greek Chorus?
 5. Should a Greek Chorus always speak in unison?



MIRROR ME Augusto Boal

Find a partner.

Stand facing each other.

Player A is the subject.

Player B is the mirror image.

Look into the eyes of the person facing you.

No speaking!

Player A begins to move slowly, but naturally, **Player B** provides a mirror image of Player A's movements, right down to the smallest detail.

Note: the exercise is not a competition. Player A should avoid overly complicated movements that Player B cannot follow or anticipate.

The aim is to achieve perfect synchronisation of movement.

An audience should be unable to tell who is the subject and who is the mirror image.

Incorporate changes of facial expression once you are comfortable mirroring movement.



SPEAKING CHORUS

Divide into small chorus groups.

Read Chorus Two's opening speech from Tom Wright's adaptation of *Oresteia* (below) in its entirety, in unison.

Read the speech in unison again.

Try using different tones and volumes. For example: loud, soft, angry, concerned.

Experiment with working as a group and following the volume and tone of the group.

Experiment with creating layers, and using a different volume or tone to the rest of the group.

Highlight single words and/or specific lines of text to be spoken in unison.

Choose single words and/or specific lines of text to be a single voice.

Select single words and/or specific lines to be shared between two/three speakers.

Consider the impact of the varying combinations of voices.

Remember, a united chorus does not have to be louder than a single voice.

Then

Devise a repertoire of three to five repeatable physical gestures.

Incorporate Chorus Two's opening speech, using a variation of unison, individual lines and smaller groupings of voices.

ACT ONE

CHORUS TWO

It was ten years ago
Agamemnon and Menelaus
Brothers
Sons of Atreus
Kings
Caressed by gods
Poured our youth into a thousand ships and sailed
Battering rams chock full of men
Full of sweat and fury
Their screams heard across the waves
These two royal sons
Eagles, wheeling, turning high above,
Screeching tortured wails
For the empty eyrie
For the stolen Helen
Brothers driven
Half understanding what surges them forward
Zeus
Who feels deeply the sacred bond
Between guest and host
Infuriated

ACT ONE cont.

Was it he
That sent them minds spinning?
He must have been lodged in their skulls
Twitching in their fingers
To wrench the skin from the lying face of Paris
To wrench moist Helen from those Trojan sheets
It was his rage in those roars
As Trojan and Greek locked knees
Intertwined limbs in bed
Locked in a wrestle, a hold
Until bones creaked and snapped
Massive men crawled through a bath of body fluids
Great minds, great ideas
Ended up whimpered drooling
Noble quests became
Puppet boys writhing in dirt and pus
Choking the thorax of this thing, friend, enemy
Who knows forgotten now
Crushing the air form a windpipe for
Who knows forgotten now
And none



AIM: To further investigate the process of adaptation, using a contemporary setting.



Research adaptations of *Oresteia*.



Note the different representations of the characters and relationships.

Watch some of the following interpretations.



The Family Guy Oresteia

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X7tcp4aE14



Orestes and the Fly (A Tragicomedy with Tap Dancing)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=91ZBER47hP4



Oedipus (starring...vegetables)

Note: there is a slight racy section, in keeping with the story of Oedipus.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NydKPClhYgM>

In this adaptation of the classical text *Oedipus*, the characters are portrayed through different vegetables.

Read a summary of the *Oedipus* story.

Discuss

1. Why certain vegetables were chosen to represent different characters?
2. How did the vegetables chosen portray the essence of each character?



Storyboard your own adaptation of *Oresteia* with vegetables.

Consider



1. What vegetables would you choose to represent the different characters? Why?
2. What are the key plot points you would need to cover?



Explore the excerpt from Act One of Tom Wright's adaptation of *Oresteia* (pages 3 – 4).

Select a historical or future post-war period.

For example, after World War I or World War II, the Vietnam War or the war in Iraq.

Improvise an adaptation of Wright's text set in your chosen period.



Consider

1. How will the setting change?
2. What social systems will be in place?
3. What kind of language will the characters use?
4. How will you describe the effects of the war that has just finished?
5. Apart from physical disfigurements, how else could you visually represent the trauma of war?



DEBATE

From Sydney Theatre Company's Pre-Production Education Resources, *Oresteia*.

In an interview with Sydney Theatre Company's Back Stage magazine, Set and Costume Designer Alice Babidge said:

“ I love the re-interpretation of it - it's not about making it modern, it's about shifting it to make it something that an audience can more easily relate to. ”

Do you **agree** or **disagree** with Alice's statement regarding adaptations? **Why?**

Find references and examples to back up your argument.

ACT ONE

CHORUS THREE

Our King
Our father
Agamemnon
Left a sore behind
An untreated misery
That crushes us
And now the men will come back

CHORUS TWO

In bags. In boxes. In small jars of spiky ash.

CHORUS ONE

Without legs, sad hopscotch
Without eyes
Forever winking
With stumpy hands
With faces burnt off from burning oil

CHORUS TWO

And with their minds addled
Trapped in unending nightmares
Watch them hide in wine
Watch them start on us

CHORUS THREE

How?

ACT ONE cont.

CHORUS ONE

Do you think they could spend ten years
Surrounded only by whores and soldiers
And then wander back to us
Smelling of roses
Resolving their problems with gentle consideration
And a spot of counselling?
War is a male party.
The hangover is shared by all.

CHORUS THREE

War buys the precious
And renders it cheap
It doesn't consume our jewellery
Our property
It just takes men
And grinds them back into dust
Hero, slave
All sink back into the soil