South Pasadena High School

The English Seminar-AP [Ercek]

Greek Plays

## Vocabulary:

deus ex machina

dramatic irony

tragedy

tragic flaw

tragic hero

unities

universality

## Unities:

Time: 24 hours

Place: no extensive shift of scene

Action: one single plot

Refer to point on pp. xv-xvii:

Aristotle's theories of tragedy

## Sophocles

Beliefs:

Pure fate or flaws of character (especially pride or arrogance) are often causes of man's ills.

suffering teaches wisdom and strengthens character.

## Oedipus the King

Theme: the irony of fate

**QUESTIONS**:

Is man responsible for the wrongs he commits through ignorance?

Can man, through self-will, determine his own fate?

Does Oedipus ever shirk responsibility?

What is his tragic flaw?

Does Oedipus have a realistic view or conception of himself, of his world, of his place in that world?

Who does Oedipus pursue his own destruction? (parallels, recurring events)

**Possible Test Questions**

A recurring theme in literature is that man pursues his own destruction in his attempt to flee from it. Explain how the play develops that theme.

—Barbara Ercek