



Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County

9th Grade Summer Reading Assignment 2025-2026

Required Reading and Annotations

To prepare for **Classical Literature**, students are required to read and annotate **Agamemnon** by **Aeschylus, translated by Robert Fagles**. Students are also required to complete the attached **reading guide**, which is designed to help students understand the story and notice important details that we will discuss in class. *Agamemnon* is part of a trilogy of Greek plays known as the *Oresteia*. **Students are only required to read *Agamemnon*, the first play of the trilogy (pages 98-172 in our edition)**. For a guide to annotating, please consult the following pages of this assignment. Please purchase the specific edition indicated by the ISBN.

Book: *The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides*

Author: Aeschylus

Translator: Robert Fagles

ISBN: [978-0140443332](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780140443332)

Deadline

The students will be expected to turn in their annotated copy of the book and a hard copy of the attached reading guide on Thursday, August 21 at the beginning of class. The reading guide should be printed and completed by hand; electronic or typed reading guides will not be accepted. Students will receive an annotation score based on the attached rubric from their teacher. Students should bring their books everyday to class and be prepared to discuss and write on the text in class.

Please email Mr. Southwick at aaron.southwick@dc.ascentcolorado.org with questions.

A quick guide to annotating

Annotating means 'to note' or 'to make notes.' The purpose of annotating is to *notice* what's present in the text, and, if possible, make a connection with it. Annotations are a record of your thinking as you read the text. Annotation helps us become intentional readers by compelling us to think about and converse with the text we are reading. Annotations also provide footholds into difficult texts. As a method of condensing complex parts of a text into simple statements, annotating encourages you to take your time to understand confusing passages. Annotations help prepare you to discuss the text with your classmates and instructor. Therefore, annotations should not be a burdensome task! They are designed to help and serve the student. Annotations prepare students for success in Socratic discussions by helping them recall and locate key passages quickly.

Annotating can be broken down into three steps:

1. As you read the page, ask yourself: What stands out about the passage? What seems important? What do you *notice* about the passage?
2. Mark (i.e. circle, highlight, underline, etc) line(s), phrase(s), or word(s) on the page that stood out or caught your eye. If you don't know what a word means, find its definition and write it in the margin.
3. Write a note in the margin next to your mark. The note should express why you marked those lines or phrases. Examples include commenting on ...
 - **character** (“Achilles is full of himself here”),
 - **plot** (“Achilles challenges Hector to a duel”),
 - **reader response or question** (“Oh no! Frodo fails the test!” or “Why are Odysseus' travels so famous?”),
 - **literary device** (“This simile compares Achilles to a lion - he is bloodthirsty” or “This metaphor shows how angry Achilles is at Agamemnon”)
 - **pattern** (“The poet repeated these same lines on page 82 - I wonder why?”),
 - **a connection with another text or story** (“Achilles and Patroclus's friendship reminds me of Frodo and Sam's friendship in *Fellowship of the Ring*.”).

As a general rule, anytime you make a mark on the page, write a note about why that word or line stood out to you. Be judicious with your annotations: you need not comment on every idea, but you should show intentionality in your comments.

Annotation Grade Scale

Summer Reading Annotations are due at the beginning of the class period on Thursday, August 21. If a student turns in the annotations later in the day of the deadline, it will be subject to late deductions.

Grade Categories

Completion means there are neither too few, nor too many, annotations. Practically speaking, an annotation should appear every 1-2 pages. Not every page needs to be annotated, but the student's annotations should show frequent and widespread enough throughout the assigned reading to demonstrate the student completed the reading. On occasion or if desired, students can have more than one annotation on a page. Sustaining this frequency may result in the student spending more time than is required on the reading.

Thoughtfulness means annotations are intentional. While the student is not required to analyze the text in his or her annotations, the student's notes demonstrate genuine engagement with the text in writing on the margins, such as by asking incisive questions or making apt observations.

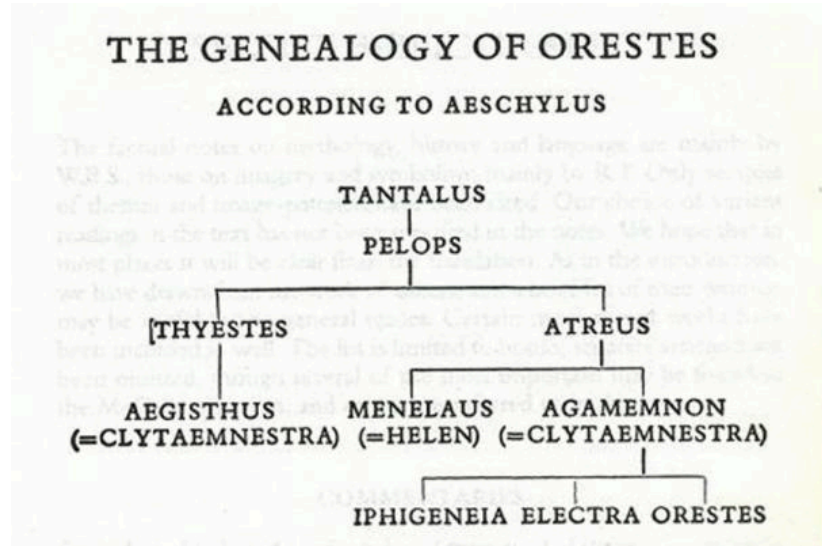
If a student has only made a mark (i.e. highlight, circle, underline), but no writing accompanies that mark, then it is not considered an annotation.

Annotations are graded on completion and thoughtfulness, using the following rubric:

- **A:** Clear evidence that you completed the reading, engaged with the text in writing.
- **B:** Evidence that you completed the reading, but need more engagement with the text in writing.
- **C:** Some evidence that you completed the reading, but not a lot of engagement with the text or writing.
- **F:** No evidence that you completed the reading.

Agamemnon Reading Guide

Directions: Print a hard copy of this reading guide to complete by hand. Review the background on the House of Atreus. Follow the reading checklist as you read. Read the guiding questions before you read the play, then, using complete sentences, answer each question during or after reading. **This guide is due Thursday, August 21, 2025, along with your annotated copy of the play.**



Genealogy Source: *Oresteia*, trans. R. Fagles, p. 279. Image Source: Ancient-origins.net

Background: The House of Atreus has a violent family curse of parents killing children and children killing parents. Tantalus tries to trick the gods by killing, cooking and serving his own son, Pelops, at the gods' banquet. The gods sense the trick (except Demeter who distractedly takes a bite from the shoulder) and punish Tantalus in Hades. The gods resurrect Pelops, and Pelops marries Hippodamia. They have two sons: Atreus and Thyestes. Atreus is king, but, angered by his wife's affair and scheming with Thyestes, he kills, cooks and serves Thyestes his (Thyestes') two sons at a banquet. Thyestes later has a son, Aegisthus, whom he raises as an avenger against Atreus.

Atreus fathers two sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus. Menelaus, King of Sparta, marries Helen, the most beautiful woman. Prince Paris of Troy is a guest in Menelaus' home. He abducts Helen and marries her at Troy, thus violating the guest-host code sacred to Zeus. Menelaus declares war on the Trojans and calls upon his allies to fight. Agamemnon of Mycenae, is commander-in-chief of the Greek (Argive) fleet. Outraged by the war, Artemis stops the winds, preventing the Argive fleet from setting sail. The prophet Calchas informs the Greeks that Artemis' fury can only be appeased by Agamemnon sacrificing his daughter, Iphigenia. Though horrified, Agamemnon sacrifices her, and Artemis releases the winds. The Argives sail to Troy and fight a bloody war for ten years. Meanwhile, Clytaemnestra has an affair with Aegisthus, seething with thoughts of vengeance against her husband for his treachery...

Reading Checklist:

- ☐ Pay attention to the stage directions (in italics). Note the *Time and Scene* of the play.
- ☐ Circle the following *motifs* or repeating images as you read:
 - **Feast, food, drinking, libation (i.e. wine sacrifices), table**
 - **Net, snare, robe**
 - **Snake**
- ☐ Reference the footnotes on pages 285-305, as needed, to see if the translator provides additional information about the lines you just read.
- ☐ Identify the following characters - write as many basic facts as you know:
 - **Watchman -**
 - **Clytaemnestra -**
 - **Herald -**
 - **Agamemnon -**
 - **Cassandra -**
 - **Aegisthus -**
 - **Chorus -**
 - **Leader -**
 - **Priam -**
 - **Paris -**
 - **Menelaus -**
 - **Helen -**

- **Orestes -**
- **Artemis -**
- **Iphigenia -**
- **Electra -**
- **Furies -**
- **Calchas -**

Guiding Questions (COMPLETE SENTENCES):

- 1. What is the watchman waiting for at the opening of the play?**
- 2. What does the watchman say he will *not* speak about?**
- 3. What does the watchman see, and what does this sight mean?**
- 4. Who are the eagles in the Chorus' song (p. 107-8)? Who is the pregnant hare in the metaphor? Who hates the "eagles' feast"?**

5. What line does the Chorus repeat, typically at the end of each stanza in their first song (starting on p. 107)? What does this line mean?
6. According to Clytaemnestra, what was Agamemnon's motivation for killing Iphigenia? What does Clytaemnestra think about Agamemnon's motivation?
7. What does Agamemnon direct the herald to announce?
8. Clytaemnestra tells the herald to report to Agamemnon: "And for [Agamemnon's] wife, / may he return and find her true at hall, / just as the day he left her, faithful to the last" (lines 601-3). What is *ironic* about her message?
9. The Chorus of elders disagree with the "ancient saying" that prosperity brings "bloom on bloom of pain" (lines 744-9). Instead, they say, "Only the reckless act can breed impiety, multiplying crime on crime." In your own words, what is *recklessness*? What is *impiety*?
10. After Agamemnon arrives and Clytemnestra greets him, what does she invite him to do?

11. Underline (or highlight) the following: “*Let the red stream flow and bear him home / to the home he never hoped to see – Justice, / lead him in!*” (lines 902-904) in your book.

- a. What does this line *foreshadow*? That is, what is "*the home he never hoped to see*"?
- b. Write a note beside your underline. Your note can be the same as your answer here:

12. Summarize the argument between Clytaemnestra and Agamemnon about him walking on the tapestry.

13. What does Clytaemnestra do once Agamemnon submits to her argument?

14. What does Cassandra prophecy about what will happen to Agamemnon and herself?

- a. **Note:** Cassandra is a Trojan priestess and daughter of Priam, king of Troy. She refuses Apollo's desire for her, so Apollo curses her: Cassandra will always prophecy the truth, but no one will believe her true prophecies.

15. How does Clytaemnestra kill Agamemnon?

16. Describe what the elders of the Chorus see when they enter the palace:

17. Why does Clytaemnestra think she will not suffer any punishment for murdering Agamemnon? What does the Chorus say in response to her crime?

18. How does the play conclude?

19. Is Clytaemnestra justified in killing Agamemnon? Why or why not? Quote a line from the text to support your position. Then, explain how the quotation supports your position.