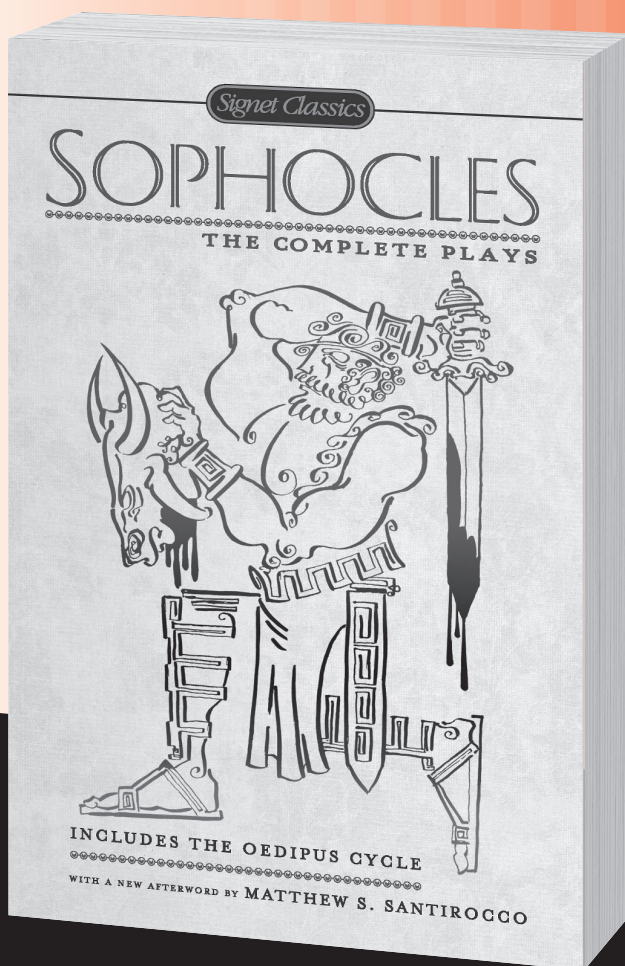


Signet Classics

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

SOPHOCLES: THE COMPLETE PLAYS



BY **LAURA REIS MAYER**

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INTRODUCTION

ABC's *Lost* has been a cult television classic for much of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The show's blogs, wikis, and fan pages perpetuate its phenomenal popularity even beyond the airing of its last episode. Why the critical acclaim and popular success? Much is due to the storyline, including dysfunctional families and apocalyptic prophecies, as well as to the show's philosophical subtext, which includes the conflict between free will and fate and the duality within all men.

Fans of *Lost* will appreciate its striking parallels to Sophocles's Oedipus Trilogy, the tragic tale of a man who believes he can escape his fate, only to find that his stubborn refusal to submit to his fate will have lasting impact on his home and family. The incestuous relationships, infanticides, fratricides, and suicides that

follow are enough to compel and horrify the most demanding of contemporary audiences.

In the classroom, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone* will serve to connect students to the classic themes of fate, family, and free will. Whether students read one or all of Sophocles's plays, they will come away with an awareness of the internal and external struggles linking the playwright's time to our own.

This guide's before, during, and post instructional strategies can be applied to any of Sophocles's dramas and used in any combination as teachers design their individual goals and lessons. A focus on literacy skills challenges students to actively engage in reading. Activities are differentiated to appeal to various learning styles and are easily adaptable to the leveled lessons used by today's educators.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| OEDIPUS | king of Thebes |
| CREON | brother of Jocasta |
| TIRESIAS | a blind prophet |
| JOCASTA | wife of Oedipus |
| ANTIGONE | daughter of Oedipus |
| ISMENE | daughter of Oedipus |
| POLYNEICES | son of Oedipus |
| ETEOCLES | son of Oedipus |
| THESEUS | king of Athens |
| HAEMON | son of Creon |
| EURYDICE | wife of Creon |

CHORUS of Theban Elders and Colonus Elders

CITIZENS of Thebes

COUNTRYMAN of Colonus

PRIEST of Zeus

OLD SHEPHERD

PALACE OFFICIALS, ATTENDANTS, SERVANTS, and MESSENGERS

SOLDIERS and **BODYGUARDS**

SYNOPSIS OF THE OEDIPUS TRILOGY

Oedipus the King opens fifteen years after Oedipus solved the Sphinx's riddle and saved the city of Thebes. The city is now suffering from corruption and plague, and its inhabitants look to none other than Oedipus, the King. Oedipus dispatches Creon, the queen's brother, to seek direction from Apollo's oracle. Creon returns with the news that Thebes will be saved only by purging herself of the old king's murderer. Oedipus vows to track down Laius's killer and seeks information from Tiresias, Apollo's blind prophet. Tiresias begs to be sent away rather than talk, but when Oedipus accuses him of the murder, Tiresias identifies Oedipus as the "rotting canker" within Thebes, and accuses the ruler of being "blind." In a fit of outrage, Oedipus accuses Creon of murdering Laius and conspiring with Tiresias, and threatens to have his brother-in-law killed. Both Queen Jocasta and the Chorus of Theban Elders attempt to calm Oedipus. Jocasta reveals to Oedipus the old oracle that predicted King Laius would be killed by his own son. She explains that she and Laius left their baby boy on a hillside to die, thereby ending any possibility of the prophecy's success. Oedipus then explains that fifteen years earlier, he left his hometown of Corinth after a drunkard questioned his parentage and Apollo's oracle predicted his incestuous marriage. His journey to Thebes was an attempt to escape this prophecy, and on the way, he fought with a man at a crossroads. A messenger then reveals that it was Oedipus who was abandoned as a baby and saved by a herdsman. Against Jocasta's advice, Oedipus calls forth the herdsman, who verifies the account. Sickened, Oedipus now realizes that the man he murdered fifteen years prior was his father, and that unknowingly, Oedipus has married his own mother. Jocasta is overwhelmed with grief and hangs herself in the palace. Oedipus, stricken with guilt and disgust, blinds himself with her golden brooches. Cursing fate, Oedipus begs Creon for exile. After reuniting Oedipus with his daughters, Antigone and Ismene, Creon vows to leave Oedipus's fate to the gods.

Oedipus at Colonus continues the story twenty years later, during which time Creon and Oedipus's two sons have turned against him. Antigone, who has been serving as her father's guide, leads Oedipus to a grove near Athens. When he hears they have reached Colonus, the holy place of the all-seeing Eumenides, Oedipus vows to wander no more, for this is the place prophesized to be his "journey's end." Sending a message that "a little favor wins a great reward," Oedipus summons Athens's ruler, Theseus. As he kneels in prayer, Oedipus is confronted by Elders of Colonus, who sympathize, but warn Oedipus he is trespassing on holy ground. Securing their protective promise, Oedipus steps forward and identifies himself. Antigone delivers a compelling plea on her father's behalf, and the Elders promise to leave Oedipus's fate to Theseus. Meanwhile, Ismene arrives with news that Oedipus's sons have been fighting over the throne, and Polyneices has fled to Argos for reinforcements. Ismene further reveals Creon's plan to place Oedipus's grave on the frontiers of Thebes in order for the city to receive the blessings foretold in a prophecy. Creon plans to force Oedipus back and bury his body on the threshold of Thebes to protect his city and his position. Lamenting his sons' lack of character and loyalty, Oedipus vows to embrace Athens as his new home. Respectful of the prophecies, Theseus grants Oedipus the rights of Athenian citizenship and protection. When Creon seizes Ismene and Antigone, Oedipus calls upon Theseus, who rescues both daughters. Meanwhile, Polyneices has arrived to convince his father to return home. Oedipus curses him as a liar, disowns him and his brother, and predicts their bloody fate. Though Antigone begs her brother not to continue his quest for the throne, Polyneices is determined, asking his sisters to honor his grave. Zeus's great thunderbolt announces Oedipus's impending death, and the blinded king offers his tomb as a reward to Theseus and the Athenian people. Theseus, Antigone, and Ismene accompany Oedipus to the gravesite. Vowing to keep the

gravesite hidden and unmarked, Theseus is the only one to witness Oedipus's final moments. Theseus promises to return the sisters to Thebes, where they hope to stop the impending doom.

Antigone opens one day after the battle between Polyneices and Eteocles. Both are dead. Creon, who supported Eteocles, has ordered the young man's body to be properly buried with all the honors of state. Polyneices, who led Argos against Thebes, has been ordered left for the vultures. Antigone is caught between loyalty to the law and love for Polyneices and decides to defy Creon's edict by honoring her brother's grave. Ismene warns Antigone that they would be writing their own death warrants and entreats her sister to stop the cycle of suicidal actions. Undaunted and defiant, Antigone determines to do it alone. When a sentry reports to Creon that Polyneices's body has been buried, he orders the sentry to find the culprit or risk his own death. The sentry returns with Antigone, who declares that dying for her crime is less painful than living with her brother unburied. Vowing "that no woman while I live shall govern me," Creon will not relent. When

Ismene reminds Creon that he is about to put to death his own son's fiancé, Creon still will not be moved. Haemon, Creon's son, entreats his father to listen to his people, who sympathize with Antigone's plight. He gently advises Creon that being right and doing the right thing do not necessarily go hand in hand, and his father should admit his mistake. Calling Haemon a "woman's slave," Creon orders Antigone to be abandoned in a rocky vault. Lamenting her unmarried and childless status, Antigone marches to the tomb. The blind prophet Tiresias returns to Thebes, advising Creon to look at the omens and see how the city sickens. Reminding the ruler that damnation only comes to those who do not repent, Tiresias echoes Haemon's plea. When Creon disregards the prophet's warning, Tiresias is compelled to prophesize Haemon's death. Creon finally listens, but too late. When he reaches Antigone's vault, it is to find Antigone has hung herself and Haemon is grief-stricken. Upon seeing his father, Haemon attempts to stab Creon, misses, then stabs himself. Staggering homeward in grief, Creon is greeted with the news his wife, Eurydice, has committed suicide as well. Begging for his own death, Creon is led away to await his fate.

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to deepen students' background knowledge of literary symbols and traditions, and to introduce them to the plays' major themes. (Note: Consult other Teacher's Guides to Signet Classics; they contain ideas that can be adapted to prepare students to read and enjoy these plays.)

I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORY, CULTURE, AND GENRE

Virtual Map of Greece

Take your students on a field trip to Greece without ever leaving your classroom. At <http://earth.google.com/> students can view a map of the world and visualize the distance between the U.S. and Greece. By choosing a

specific city such as Thebes or Athens, students can then type in specific coordinates and take a virtual field trip with actual satellite and digital photographs of cultural and historic sites relating to the times and writings of Sophocles. For more in-depth action research, students can ask a Skype expert for information. (See below).

Ask an Expert

Free Skype software can be used for worldwide collaboration, live video, and instant file sharing, and adds an authenticity to the study of ancient Greek plays. Set up an "expert" contact in Athens or Thebes, hook up a web-cam to your classroom Internet, and watch your students receive instant answers to their questions about Grecian

culture, both ancient and contemporary. Sign up for a free account and find expert contacts at <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/home>.

The Life of Sophocles

Critical Reading

Because the setting and characters in the Oedipus trilogy are so intricately tied to the culture of Sophocles's time, it would be useful to review the life of the playwright and the role of the chorus prior to reading the play(s). A discussion of these topics is found in Paul Roche's introduction and appendix in the Signet Classics edition of *Sophocles: The Complete Plays*. Ask students to read Roche's introduction and/or appendix and take Cornell Notes by drawing an inverted capital "T" on a piece of paper. On the left side of the vertical line they will label Roche's main ideas. On the right side, they will record supporting details. At the bottom of each page, under the horizontal line, students will synthesize their notes into a one or two sentence summary. Students should be sure to include the following topics:

1. Sophocles's youth
2. Language and style in Sophocles's plays
3. The purpose of the chorus
4. The role of the audience

As a formative assessment, students' summaries can be posted on the wall or shared via document camera.

Greek Drama Film Clip

Introduce students to the history of Greek Theater with a focused film clip. Visit Discovery Education (formerly known as United Streaming) at <http://www.discoveryeducation.com>. Educators receive free accounts just by signing up. Give students a focus prior to viewing the video clip, such as "What ancient Greek theater traditions can you recognize that still exist in modern theater?" Have them "think, pair, share" their observations with a classmate or the whole class afterwards. Several short videos covering Greek drama cycles, theater vocabulary, and the Oedipus trilogy can be found here.

Note: Anyone can sign up for Skype, but for Discovery streaming, the free account comes after the teacher keys in the school code, available from the school media specialist.

Contemporary Greek Choruses

In the Signet Classics edition of *Sophocles: The Complete Plays*, translator Paul Roche defends his decision to maintain the original text. Eliminating the formality and ritual balances of the Greek chorus, Roche asserts, "is not Greek tragedy and is not Sophocles." Introduce students to the idea and function of a Greek chorus by viewing and analyzing Greek choruses in contemporary films. After students have watched the clip(s), ask:

- "What function does the chorus serve in this scene?"
- "How would the protagonist's characterization differ without the chorus?"

Modern films with a chorus that comments on the action include:

Hercules. Directors Ron Clements and John Musker. Disney, 1997. (the Muses)

Mamma Mia! Director Phyllida Lloyd. Disney, 2008. (the townspeople)

Mighty Aphrodite. Director Woody Allen. Magnolia Pictures, 1995. (traditional Greek Chorus)

Pirates of the Caribbean. Director Gore Verbinski. Disney, 2003. (comic relief characters Pintel and Rogetti)

Tragedy and the Tragic Hero

Ask students to read parts one, six, and thirteen of Aristotle's *The Poetics*. The text can be found at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.mb.txt>. Review the definitions of tragedy and tragic hero and, on the whiteboard or smartboard, construct columned notes or graphic organizers that illustrate the differences between tragedy and comedy, heroes and tragic heroes. Ask students to use this information to write their own profile of a modern tragic hero. For example, they might choose to write about a sports figure

whose quest for money and fame challenges his personal values as well as the integrity of the game he loves.

Greek Vocabulary Foldable

The Signet Classics edition of *Sophocles: The Complete Plays* includes a glossary of the people and places in ancient Greek mythology. Teachers can select the terms they feel most significant for background knowledge on Sophocles's play(s). Individually or in pairs, ask students to create a foldable with four quadrants. Have them write their term in the middle of the foldable. In the four quadrants, ask students to record the definition in their own words, draw a picture connected to the term, produce one or more synonyms or associations, and leave a spot open for connections to the Oedipus trilogy. Students can share their work via document camera or in front of the class and can add to their notes during reading. This activity will also work well with theater terms such as chorus, strophe, antistrophe, choral ode, episode, and catharsis.

II. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

FATE VERSUS FREE WILL

Accessible Text

Assigning students a short, interesting, and easier modern text prior to beginning a more challenging classic drama is an excellent method for generating student interest, making connections, and building prior knowledge. One connection between the popular Harry Potter series and the Oedipus trilogy is the prophecy faced by the protagonists. Ask students to read an excerpt from *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, chapter 37, which reveals the prophecy of Harry's birth. Afterwards, ask students to journal on the following.

1. How does the prophecy explain the actions of those around Harry?
2. How might Harry feel now that he knows his prophecy? Should he alter his plans or actions? Why or why not?
3. If you could be told your future, would you choose to hear it? Why or why not?

Companion Piece

Examining a parallel, contemporary text prior to reading provides material for comparison and contrast later. One link between the popular *Lost* series and the Oedipus trilogy is the theme of fate versus free will. Ask students to watch a short clip from *Lost*, season 3, the episode entitled "Flashes Before your Eyes." The clip can be found on DVD or at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGauAyUWUas>. After viewing, discuss the following with students:

1. What is meant by Mrs. Hawking's statements:
 - "You don't do it because you *choose* to, you do it because you're *supposed* to."
 - "The universe has a way of course correcting."
2. What is Mrs. Hawking's role? Prophet? Desmond's self-conscious? Explain.

VISION AND BLINDNESS

Archetypal Characters

The character of Tiresias, the blind prophet, appears in literature well beyond the time of Sophocles. In *Oh, Brother, Where art Thou*, the blind old man prophesizes the protagonists' impending epic journey. Show students this brief movie clip and ask them to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonists as they listen to the stranger's warning. After viewing, ask students to "turn and talk" about how they might react to the old man's (Tiresias's) speech.

Trust Walk

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Antigone serves as her blind father's "eyes." At the same time, Oedipus's "sight" has improved vastly in the twenty years since he blinded himself. To provide a connection and to illustrate the metaphoric quality of vision, ask students to partner up and take turns blindfolding each other. The partner with sight should lead around his classmate, helping him/her avoid obstacles and narrating what he sees. The "blind" student uses his senses of touch, smell, and hearing to "see" in new ways. After partners have played each role, discuss as a class:

1. How did you feel when you were blindfolded? Could you "see" in other ways?
2. How did you feel when you were the leader? Did your responsibility sharpen your own sight?

AMBITION AND PRIDE

"Thin Books"

Children's picture books, or "thin books," are making a comeback with teens. Teachers can use picture books as a fun and accessible method for making connections and building background knowledge prior to reading more difficult text. Gather students around a rocker or use a document camera to show the pictures while you read aloud from a picture book about pride, arrogance, or what the Greeks called "hubris." Afterwards, ask students to compose a "quick write" about the theme as depicted in the story. Use this activity as a springboard for the theme of hubris in the *Oedipus* plays. Picture books about arrogant rulers include:

Anderson, Hans Christian.
The Emperor's New Clothes. NY:
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004.

Hamilton, Virginia. *The Girl Who Spun Gold*. NY: Blue Sky Press, 2000.

Seuss. *Yertle the Turtle*.
NY: Random House, 2008.

Circle Map

Draw a large circle on the board. In the middle, draw a smaller circle. Inside the smaller circle, write one or all of the following words: "arrogance," "ambition," and "pride." Draw a square around the larger circle. In the four corners of the square, write the words "history," "literature," "politics," and "sports/entertainment." Ask students to brainstorm the names of famous people who have been guilty of the character flaw(s) listed in the inner circle. Use the reference words in the four corners to expand students' thinking. For example, students might brainstorm Hitler as an historical person and Macbeth for a literary person. To expand their thinking, point out the categories in the corners. Tell students that pride will be the downfall of several characters in the *Sophocles* plays. Tell them to watch for parallels to their brainstormed examples.

Freudian Cartoon

Introduce students to Freudian psychology with the following cartoon: <http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/shr09581.jpg>

The cartoon depicts a highway with three different speed limits, one for the id, one for the ego, and one for the superego. Using a document camera, digital projector, or handouts, introduce the cartoon and ask partners or groups to discuss what they think each Freudian concept means, based on the picture. Groups can write a summary statement for their definitions. Then, expand student understanding of Freud's id/ego/superego concepts with the use of an article or graphic organizer, and ask students to edit or add to their original thinking. Explain that Oedipus himself is the basis of another Freudian theory that will be central to the play. Graphic organizers depicting Freud's id, ego, and superego can be found at Google images.

SELF-MUTILATION

Artistic Connection

In *Oedipus the King*, as Oedipus blinds himself with Jocasta's golden brooches, the king cries, "Wicked, wicked eyes...You shall not see me nor my crime, not see my present shame" (pp. 255). Critics have argued that Oedipus's self-mutilation is the result of shame, guilt, or despair over Jocasta's suicide. Their daughter Antigone eventually hangs herself and her two brothers kill each other, actions labeled by Ismene as "suicidal nemesis." Introduce students to this controversial theme of self-mutilation or self-destruction through the self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh with a bandaged ear. <http://www.abc-gallery.com/V/vangogh/vangogh40.html>

Discuss Van Gogh's self-mutilation and ask students to journal, "turn and talk," or discuss as a class:

1. What might motivate a person to commit such an act?
2. Are there any contemporary examples of this controversial practice?

Book Trailers

Just like trailers for movies, online book trailers provide students with concise and contemporary glimpses of classic works of literature prior to reading. As a class or on their own, students can access online book trailers to build prior knowledge about plot, setting, and theme. One website is "60 Second Recaps" which includes one minute trailers on *Oedipus the King's* overview, context, plot, cast, themes, motifs and symbols: <http://www.60secondrecap.com/library/oedipus-rex/1/> Calling the play an "ancient but relevant tragedy," the trailer highlights its "twisted family relationships and stomach-turning eye-gouging." Direct students to watch one or all of the trailers. As an extension, students can produce their own book trailers as an after-reading activity.

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

Probable Passages

To encourage student predictions, generate a list of ten to fifteen words related to one of the Oedipus plays. Tell students they'll be creating a storyline about a dysfunctional family, much like they might see on a television talk show. Ask students to write a "probable passage" paragraph that predicts the content of the play by using all the words from the list. After the play is read, students can return to the passage and make corrections to their narratives. Possible words might include: prophecy, Sphinx, blind man, sisters, brothers, golden brooches, three crossroads, hanging, civil war, and uncle. As an alternative, create a "treasure box" of props that might inspire the dysfunctional family story. Items for the box might include: a prophecy, a blindfold, a woman's jeweled brooch, a cane, and a Sphinx figurine.

Anticipation Guide

Anticipation Guides create personal connections and promote thinking about significant themes students will encounter in the reading. As a literacy tool, anticipation guides encourage students to engage while reading by focusing on the issues introduced. Before reading the Oedipus play(s), ask students to answer the following questions. They can respond with "true" or "false," or they can answer on a continuum, such as "highly agree" or "agree somewhat."

1. It is a parent's job to care for his/her child more than for him/herself.
2. Children should be loyal to their parents no matter what the cost.
3. Siblings may be justified in harming each other with words or actions.
4. Children are fated to carry on their parents' legacies, be they bad or good.
5. Families forgive, period.

Students can discuss answers with a partner "turn and talk" or whole class discussion, or they can expand one of their answers in a quick-write or journal entry. After reading, students can return to the anticipation guides and note how their thinking has changed now that they have read the play.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to utilize research-based comprehension strategies such as predicting, connecting, summarizing, and determining main ideas while reading *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*. Whether the play is read aloud in class or silently at home, teachers can choose appropriate assignments from the ideas below.

I. ANALYZING THROUGH GROUP RESPONSE

Class Blog

Students can use their post-it note questions, connections, and inferences as the basis for an online blog. Using an online teaching assistant such as Blackboard or Moodle, or using your teacher website, create a discussion forum for student responses outside of class. Post two or three open-ended questions designed to elicit a broad range of answers with the capacity for complex and controversial responses. Give students a deadline to respond, and ask them to discuss not only the initial topic, but their classmates' responses as well. Some teachers consider blogs an extension of traditional class discussions, and therefore expect the use of academic language. Discuss in class your expectations concerning academic versus "texting" type language. Some sample questions are listed with the next activity.

Electronic Chat Room

The difference in blogs and online chats is that blogs are composed over a period of days, whereas chats occur in "real time," while the teacher is present and monitoring. In a computer lab or lap-top classroom, students read and respond to each other's posts in silence. Due to this real-time atmosphere, many teachers allow "IM" or "texting" type language for online chats.

For both blogs and chats, the use of alias screen names encourages traditionally reticent students to respond without fear of appearing

foolish or hurting classmates' feelings. Because online postings allow multiple responses simultaneously, questions that normally receive five or six verbal responses in the classroom elicit numerous responses online. The teacher's job is to insure posts are on-task, appropriate, and, analytical. Assessments can be completed later when the teacher pulls up the discussion as a whole. You may wish to extend the blog or chat discussion in class.

Sample blog or chat prompts for *Oedipus the King* include:

1. Who is the biggest victim in this play? Oedipus? Jocasta? Their children? The people of Thebes? (You may choose another character). Explain your choice.
2. What connections can you make to other literature we have read in class? To the contemporary world? To your own experience? Explain how these connections inform your reading of the play.
3. Why all the references to darkness, sight, and blindness? What is the playwright's purpose in using these motifs?

Foldable Dialectic Journals

Using one piece of notebook or typing paper (or two facing pieces from a sewn composition book), model for students how to fold paper into four columns. Label the columns in the following order from left to right:

1. "From the Text"
2. "From Me"
3. "From my Classmate"
4. "My New Thinking"

During an in-class reading of the play students record in the first column any significant words, phrases, or sentences from the selection. Excerpts may be chosen because they align with a theme, issue, or literary technique discussed in class or because they promote student questions, connections, or inferences. In the second column, students record their questions or explain their thinking. In the third column, classmates exchange

journals and respond to or add to each other's thoughts. Afterwards, students reflect on classmate input and record their new thinking in the fourth column.

Modern Scene Rewrites

To illustrate the point that classic Greek dramas such as the Oedipus trilogy have relevant meaning and messages for all eras, groups can re-write, re-interpret and re-enact scenes for new settings. While these scenes are fun to create and enjoyable to watch, challenge students to keep Sophocles's objectives, tone, and themes intact. Students might re-interpret Thebes as New York City, or may opt to send Apollo's prophecies in text format.

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions encourage students to deepen their individual analysis of the play by sharing their reactions with classmates. Students generally feel more comfortable sharing their ideas with a small group of peers first. When group discussions are complete, student spokespersons can discuss their findings with the class as a whole.

Discussion questions on the Oedipus plays ask students to analyze the playwright's purpose, themes, and literary techniques. Below are some thought-provoking questions based on the trilogy.

Oedipus the King

1. Analyze the dramatic irony in Oedipus's claim that "the cause of Laius therefore is my own" (pp. 219).
2. The chorus advises Oedipus to seek out the blind prophet Tiresias, who is "our source of light" (pp. 224). Analyze Sophocles's use of symbolism here.
3. Oedipus compels Tiresias to "save yourself, the city, and save me" (pp. 225) by sharing his prophesies. Can the truth "save" Oedipus? Or will it serve to seal his fate? Discuss.

4. Tiresias accuses Oedipus of being "your own worst enemy" (pp. 227). Is this an accurate statement? What would you consider to be Oedipus's tragic flaw? Provide evidence from the play.
5. Oedipus freely chose to leave Corinth and pursue a journey that led to the three crossroads.

Was the murder he committed there an act of free will or fate?
6. Mistakenly believing they have escaped fate, Jocasta vows to "never change my look from left to right to suit a prophecy" (pp. 242). How has her attitude towards the gods shifted?
7. Why does Jocasta leave after Oedipus refuses to end his line of questioning? Is she justified in her abandonment?
8. What is symbolic about the way Oedipus chooses to mutilate himself?
9. How is Mount Cithaeron an appropriate location for Oedipus's desired exile?
10. Oedipus entreats his daughters to "abide in modesty" (pp. 262). What does this advice reveal about the king at the play's end?

Oedipus at Colonus

1. The Eumenides are known as "all-seeing" (pp. 272). How might they connect to Oedipus's blindness?
2. What does Oedipus's lengthy self-defense to the Colonus elders reveal about his internal journey?
3. When Ismene tells Oedipus his future tomb has become a prize to be won, Oedipus responds, "So, when I am nothing, then am I a man?" (pp. 284). Explain his meaning.
4. Oedipus accuses his sons of multiple faults. Is his judgment too harsh? Defend your answer.
5. How might Theseus be characterized, especially when compared to the other males in the play? Provide evidence for your characterization.

6. Oedipus explains to Theseus, "I can return no more. I am a parricide" (pp. 291). Is Oedipus's character as simple as this statement? Is he merely the sum of his sins?
7. Oedipus tells Creon, "You come to fetch me—home? Ah, no! You come to plant me on your doorstep" (pp. 297). Discuss the figurative language Sophocles uses here.
8. Compare Theseus's and Creon's ruling styles, as evidenced in their exchange with each other and with Oedipus.
9. What does Polyneices hope to accomplish by coming to Colonus? Explain.
10. At the beginning of the play, Oedipus promised that "a little favor wins a great reward" (pp. 273). How does Oedipus's request to have Theseus accompany him to the brink of the underworld connect to this promise?
7. Is Creon being "just" when he carries out his promised punishment on Antigone?
8. What does Haemon mean when he says, "Well, then, dead—one death beckoning to another" (pp. 367). Does his father understand Haemon's intent?
9. As Antigone marches to her death vault, she laments her predicament. Some critics see this self-pity as out of character for Antigone. Do you agree? Why might Sophocles have included this lament?
10. Is Creon a sympathetic character in the end? Has he become the play's protagonist? Explain.

Antigone

1. Is Ismene right to remind Antigone that "we are women and as such are not made to fight with men?" (pp. 346). Consider the gender roles of Greek society, as revealed in the play(s), as well as your own views.
2. How is Ismene a character foil to her sister?
3. The chorus suggests that the fall of Oedipus's house is fated. Do you agree? What role or responsibility do Eteocles and Polyneices play in this fall?
4. Creon calls the brothers' actions a "mutual murder," but Ismene sees it as suicide (pp. 349). Which do you think is more accurate?
5. A Theban leader says "no man is mad enough to welcome death" (pp. 350). What is the irony in the fact that Antigone risks death to bury her brother?
6. Why does Creon allow the Sentry to speak in such a disrespectful manner to him? What might their dialogue reveal about Creon's state of mind?

II. ANALYZING THROUGH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

Major Character Motivation Log

Motivation logs are a specific type of double-column chart. In the left column, students record the names of major characters from Sophocles's play(s), such as Oedipus, Creon, or Antigone. The right column is for recording the changing motivations of the characters as the play progresses. Motivations are supported by quotations or excerpts from the play. For example, an entry on Creon in *Antigone* might read, "Creon has become the protagonist. He is overcome by a "madness of misdoing started by himself and no other" (epilogue).

Later, double-column notes can be used to initiate student-led discussions in class. Ask students: "Who would like to share a response from the second episode?" After a student answers, the teacher can invite responses, and the discussion is off and running.

Post-It Note Questions

Student-created questions that lead to interpretation and analysis are much more effective comprehension tools than the traditional end of chapter questions provided by teachers or textbooks. Discuss with the class the different levels of questions and how broader questions lead to interpretation and analysis. Ask students to formulate one or two ques-

tions per episode and to jot questions down on post-it notes, one per note. Post-its are affixed to the page of text they reference. In class, students can categorize these questions on the board or on a concept chart, and discuss possible answers with their peers.

To help students make personal, literary, and cultural connections to Sophocles's play(s), ask them to record on post-it notes any connections they see as they read *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and/or *Antigone*. To emphasize the idea that connections should "count," remind students to think about how these observations help them better understand the text, and to discard the post-its that do not aid in comprehension. At the end of each assigned section, students can collaborate and categorize their connections, and stick their post-its on labeled posters throughout the room, allowing the class to observe each other's ideas.

Double-Column Inferencing

Double-Column Notes encourage students to take a second look while reading, and to read for analysis, not simply plot. The best notes are composed as the student reads, not after the reading is completed. In this way, students prove to themselves and their teachers that they are thinking as they read. Ask students to find one (or more) significant event or quotation from each episode in the play(s), and record it on the left side of a double-columned sheet of paper. On the right side column, students record their thinking about the event or quotation. They might comment on patterns they see developing, themes they see evolving, commentary they see being made, or connections they believe tie the drama to modern society. Students could also use the second column for making predictions. As the double-column notes progress, students should see their responses falling into categories that illustrate their comprehension of Sophocles's significant themes and stylistic devices. Notes can be handwritten or submitted via email. Teachers may choose to add comments in the second column, responding personally to inferences students may not be willing to verbalize in class.

Character-Foil Double-Bubble Maps

Robert Marzano's first essential teaching strategy is the study of similarities and differences. In *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*, Oedipus serves as a foil to almost every other character in the plays. To help students compare and contrast Oedipus with Creon or with any of the plays' secondary characters, ask students to label one bubble "Oedipus," and the other with another character. In the bubbles shared by the foils, students record similarities, such as "pride gets in the way." In the bubbles specific to each of the characters, students record parallel differences, such as "ignores prophecies" and "respects the gods." After students fill in their double-bubble maps, they might turn and share with a classmate or the class, adding to their maps as the discussion ensues. In addition to Oedipus and Creon, other possible character foils include the following:

1. Oedipus and Antigone
2. Antigone and Ismene
3. Antigone and Creon
4. Creon and Theseus

Multi-Flow Map

Refusing to "see" the truth in front of his eyes causes a myriad of effects for Oedipus as well as the other characters in the plays. Ask students to choose a character such as Jocasta, Antigone, Polyneices, Creon, or even Oedipus himself, and "map" the effects of Oedipus's denial. In the large, middle box of the multi-flow, ask students to write the event, "Oedipus denies the truth." To the left, students create smaller boxes, fill them with the causes of this act, and connect to the middle box with arrows. In the boxes to the right, students identify the effects of the act and connect them to the middle box with arrows. Effects can be on another character, on Oedipus himself, or on the plot. The multi-flow map activity is a study in character motivation and the "tragic hero" archetype.

Exit Slips

As students complete the day's reading, ask them to write a five-minute response on an index card that they will submit as they exit. Prompts might be specific, such as "In what ways is Oedipus 'blind'?" or they might be general, such as, "Write down anything you

remember about the episode's main themes." Exit slips can also take the form of 1-2-3 cards, where students write down three themes, two literary devices, and one question from the day's reading. Exit slips are formative assessments that allow students to self assess their comprehension and teachers to check the impact of their lesson.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to deepen their interpretation of the Oedipus plays by helping them make connections between themes and issues in the play(s), in other works, and in the outside world.

I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND ESSAYS

Full Circle

Revisit one of the pre-reading activities such as the probable passage, circle map, or anticipation guide. Now that you have completed the play, what further commentary can you add? Have you and your classmates changed your thinking? Why or why not?

Thematic Analysis

Now that students have read the entire play(s), they can return to the text for a deeper understanding of its significant themes. The following topics and questions can be used for whole class and small group discussion or as essay topics.

1. In Greek, the name Oedipus means "swollen foot." How has the torture Oedipus suffered as an infant "scarred" not only his ankles, but his entire life?
2. Oedipus says no man can be hurt, "me or any man who lives in light." Yet Tiresias accuses Oedipus, "you see and still are blind." To what extent does Oedipus choose to be blind? Trace the theme of sight and blindness throughout the play(s). For what is sight a metaphor?
3. From the Sphinx's riddle forward, the Oedipus trilogy centers around prophecies, omens, and riddles. Discuss Sophocles's use of this device. How is human knowledge and self determination contrasted with the knowledge of the gods and their control of human destiny? How might Oedipus's destiny be explained as psychological determinism?
4. While some of Sophocles's productions assign chorus dialogue to townspeople, this edition of the Oedipus trilogy maintains the chorus in a separate and integral role. Is the chorus there to calm the protagonist? To represent the gods? To represent the character's conscious? How would the play(s) differ without the chorus? Trace and analyze the role of the chorus.
5. Oedipus unknowingly meets and kills his birthfather at a place where three roads converge. Typically symbolic of a decision, "crossroads" imply the protagonist has a choice to make. Does Oedipus kill his father as a result of free will or fate? Does Oedipus have choice? Explain.
6. In the Oedipus trilogy Jocasta, Antigone and Eurydice hang themselves, Eteocles and Polyneices kill each other, Oedipus stabs out his eyes, and Ismene threatens to kill herself on multiple occasions. Is suicide the sign of an internal conflict, an external expectation, or both? What is the connection between suicide and honor in Sophocles's plays?
7. In the first play of the Oedipus trilogy, Creon plays a minor and sympathetic role. By the end of *Antigone*, he suffers

from the same flaws as Oedipus, and has progressed into the play's protagonist. Is Creon an antagonist? Or is he a victim? Consider the role of Creon by discussing his changing actions and motivations.

8. Examine the lives and characters of Jocasta, Antigone, Ismene, and Eurydice. What is the role of women in the Oedipus plays? Does the playwright call into question the Greek cultural expectations evident in these plays? Consider Creon's comments about women.
9. Compare and contrast Theseus, King of Athens, to the other two kings in the trilogy. What is Sophocles's purpose in painting Theseus as a foil to Oedipus and Creon?
10. Consider the ancient adage, "Pride goeth before a fall." To which character in the Oedipus trilogy does this best apply? Examine both major and minor characters before making your choice and defending your selection.

Hypothetical Essay

An in-class extension of an online blog or chat is to create group plans for a hypothetical essay. Print a hard copy of the class blog or chat and provide one for each student. Long discussions can be divided into strands, one per group. Students may not have had an opportunity to read the online discussion in its entirety, as some students posted on day one and others on the last day. Ask groups to highlight any repetitive themes or literary issues they see emerging in the blog. Label these topics one per post-it note. Post notes on the board and categorize them. Discuss findings as a class and ask each group to choose one of the topics. Groups then create a plan for an analytical essay. Plans include the following:

1. A tree-map indicating possible sub-topics;
2. A flow map illustrating sub-topic order (Under each flow-map box is a list of supporting details or quotations from *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, or *Antigone*.);
3. An analytical thesis statement that illustrates the topic's significance.

The hypothetical essay plan offers students collaborative time with their peers to work on essay organization and thesis writing. It also emphasizes the value of annotations as students see their individual blog ideas turn into significant essay ideas.

II. ACTIVITIES WITH TECHNOLOGY

Animoto Multi-Media Presentation

Students can create a multi-media presentation on the Sophocles plays using Animoto.com. The program is a quick, user-friendly website where students choose music and images from the Internet to illustrate their comprehension of character or theme. The result is a digital story told by music, art, and minimal text, such as quotations from the play. After teacher discussion of how music and visuals can portray certain tones or themes from Sophocles's trilogy, students simply choose the pieces, and Animoto puts them together in a professional-looking presentation. Students can post the presentations on the class website, where the clips can be viewed either collectively or at home. To extend the assignment, students can critique each other's work. Sample presentations and registration instructions can be found at the following website: <http://animoto.com/>

Book Review Podcasts

Ask students to write and record a book review of one of the Sophocles plays. Prior to assigning the review, model the format using contemporary examples of book, movie, and television show reviews, which can be found in popular print publications such as *Entertainment Weekly* or online sites such as <http://www.pluggedinonline.com/tv/>. Ask students to take the role of critic and review Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, or *Antigone*. Topics might include plot, characterization, style, and significance. Students should support all input with text. In this way, critiques are based on valid examina-

tion of the play, not merely personal preference. This assignment provides practice writing to specific audiences and for specific purposes. In this case, students are critics writing to potential readers of the Sophocles trilogy. Writers can share their critiques with the rest of the class or school community via podcast, including a sample reading from the text.

To create a podcast, students need only a microphone and an audio-editing software program like Audacity, which can be downloaded for free. Students create an MP3 file with their information and include transitional commentary. Next, students upload the podcast to a free site such as iTunes, or post it to the class website. Classmates, parents, and other community members can listen to the recordings online or download them to their ipods.

Book Trailers

A different type of digital review is a book trailer. Ask students to watch the Oedipus book trailer discussed in the pre-reading section (p. 9) of this guide in preparation for creating their own Sophocles book trailer or “recap”: <http://www.60secondrecap.com/library/oedipus-rex/>

Topics for trailers can include overviews, context, plot, cast, themes, motifs, and symbols. With the use of green screen technology and software found in many school media centers, students can choose the format of their trailers. For example, students might be television news reporters or a modern Greek chorus, standing in front of the Sphinx monster in Thebes or performing in the Theater of Dionysus. This activity would be especially helpful if one portion of the class read *Oedipus the King* and another read *Oedipus at Colonus* or *Antigone*.

Fan Fiction

Fan fiction is a specific type of modern rewrite. Fast gaining popularity as a web-based publishing opportunity, fan-fiction stories provide students with a real audience for their writing and if they wish, feedback from

both peers and professionals. In fan fiction, student writers put their own spin on someone else's story. Set in the fictional universe of students' favorite TV shows, films, or books, fan fiction stories are based on a published author's characters or plot. For instance, Ginny Weasley from the Harry Potter series might encounter Edward Cullen of *Twilight* fame at the crossroads outside of Thebes, and from there, they might serve as advisors to Oedipus. Ask students to choose one or two characters from another play, novel, movie, or video game, set them in Ancient Thebes or Athens, and create a story based on the Oedipus trilogy. To provide opportunity for publication as well as feedback, invite students to post their stories on one of several web-based fan fiction sites, such as Fanfiction.net and Fictionalley.org.

Word-Clouds

Using words from the text, from their own brainstorming, or a combination of both, students can create digital “word-clouds” that emphasize characterization and theme through language, font, color, and size. Students choose which words should receive greater emphasis and which colors and font demonstrate personality, tone, and theme. For instance, a word-cloud on Creon might be in purple, with text support such as “headlong folly,” “frenzied heart,” “always thinks that he is right,” and “a man of sorrows” in larger font. Student-chosen words might include “proud,” “arrogant,” and “blind.” Using “wordle.net,” at <http://www.wordle.net/> students indicate their preferences and Wordle does the rest. The colorful charts can be printed off and posted as concept maps on the classroom walls. Or, students can post them on the class website or directly on Wordle for the purposes of discussion and critique.

III. GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Greek Drama Cycle

Encourage your students to bring the text to life. For instance, ask small groups to select a

scene from *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, or *Antigone* and act it out for the class. Assign extra credit for props and costumes. Assign a director in each group. After the group meets to discuss what themes, emotions, or messages they want their scene to portray, the director helps bring this vision to life by making sure all blocking is planned, practiced, and focused on the intended goal. Remind students to use vocal and facial expression and energy.

Book Jackets

In this activity, groups create and portray a living book cover for an illustrated edition of the play. In picking a quotation from the drama and in portraying an illustration that depicts the quotation's meaning, students take on the role of the bookseller or publishing house, who must decide how best to get across the point of the play to an audience who has not yet read it. Ask groups to follow this process:

1. Pick one quotation from the play that is particularly significant, one that seems to speak to one of the playwright's major themes or intents, or one that would make good sense on the cover of the book.
2. Write out the quotation on a long, narrow piece of paper, in large enough print to be seen from the back of the classroom.
3. Decide how to portray the quotation in a frozen tableau. Rather than presenting a scene from the play, create a dramatic picture that illustrates the quotation. For instance, the struggle between Antigone's duty to the state and her duty to her brother might be portrayed as a tug of war. This activity requires you to illustrate comprehension and synthesis by turning your understanding into performance art.
4. In front of the class, arrange yourselves into a frozen tableau, and either hold or post your quotation so that it is part of the "book cover." Hold the scene for thirty seconds, so that the rest of the class can read and appreciate your "illustrated classic."

QAR Grid

In order to develop levels of critical questioning, students will create their own questions on *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, or *Antigone*. Ask students to create a Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) Grid by folding a piece of paper in half and then in half again. When the paper is opened, it should have four equal-sized squares. Ask students to label the squares with the following:

- **Right There:** The answer is in the play, usually very easy to find.
- **Think and Search:** The answer is in the play, but not directly. You have to put together pieces of information to find it.
- **Playwright and You:** The answer is *not* in the play. You have to think about what you already know, what Sophocles tells you in the play, and how the two fit together.
- **On Your Own:** The answer is *not* in the play. You have to use your own experience and prior knowledge to find it.

Students then write one question for each square. After creating the QAR Grids, students can trade questions and record answers. As an extension, students might meet in partners or groups to discuss answers to their own and classmates' questions.

Musical Memoir

Ask students to choose a character from *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, or *Antigone*, either a major one like Oedipus or Antigone, or a minor character such as Ismene or Theseus. Next, students should research and select songs with titles and lyrics that reflect this character's inner and outer conflicts, motivations, and actions. The goal is to create a musical "memoir," which can take the form of a CD insert, a digital photo story, or an essay. Memoirs should include

titles, lyrics, and explanations that justify the choice of selections and connect them to the Sophocles character. It will be useful to discuss with students how memoirs differ from autobiographies in that the recollections of the character may be altered by emotion and experience. The result is a study in Sophocles's characterizations.

Gallery Walk

In this cooperative learning activity, divide students into groups of four or five. Assign each group one of the major themes that have been addressed throughout the reading of *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus* or *Antigone*, such as fate versus free will, vision and blindness, ambition, families, self-mutilation, and the role of women. In front of large sheets of paper pre-labeled with the name of a theme and posted around the room, groups meet to brainstorm and write down textual evidence and commentary that illustrates their particular theme. When the teacher says, "continue your walk," students move to the next base and read what the previous groups have written before adding their own commentary. The gallery walk continues until the groups have seen and contributed to all posters and return to their original place.

Four Corners

Four Corners is a kinesthetic strategy for practicing point-of-view and argumentation techniques. Assign each corner of the classroom a different opinion, topic, or answer to a question. For example, one corner might be assigned, "Oedipus is a victim of fate." Other corners may assert, "Oedipus has himself to blame," "Oedipus and the gods are equally at fault," and "I am undecided." Present the topic or question to the students, allowing them time to choose and move to a corner that matches their opinions. Allow groups to talk amongst themselves to generate support for their opinion and prompt them to give a summary statement. Now allow students to change corners after hearing each other's explanations. Students should explain why they moved.

Extended Reading

When Creon admonishes Oedipus at the end of *Oedipus the King*, he asserts, "Stop this striving to be master of all. The mastery you had in life has been your fall." In doing so, Creon depicts Oedipus as a classic tragic hero. Ask students to read one short story or poem, one play or novel, or watch one film that depicts the role of ambition in a hero's demise or redemption. Students can make a double-columned comparison chart depicting the similarities and differences between the character and Oedipus.

Students should consider the following questions as they read/view:

1. What character traits, dramatic elements, or plot events depict the protagonist as being ambitious?
2. Does this character illustrate a moral or social code of behavior? If so, describe it.
3. What is the character's greatest desire?
4. What ultimate price is the protagonist willing to pay to reach his/her objective?
5. Detail the outcome of the protagonist's struggle with ambition.
6. Does the protagonist regret his/her decision? How do you know?
7. Is the protagonist ultimately redeemed or condemned for his/her choices?

The following titles focus on themes of ambition, fate, blindness, family, self-destruction, and gender roles and are appropriate for both independent reading or literature circles where each group of students reads a different work on the same theme. Ask students for their own additions to the list.

Ambition & Pride

Rash, Ron. *Serena*. NY: Ecco, 2009.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Dr. Faustus*. NY: Signet Classics, 2001.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. NY: Signet Classics, 1998.

Gender Roles

Donnelly, Jennifer. *A Northern Light*. Boston: Graphia, 2004.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. (*Ibsen: Four Major Plays, Volume I*) NY: Signet Classics, 2006.

Tennyson, Lord Alfred. *The Lady of Shalott*. 1833, 1842.

The Whale Rider. Dir. Niki Caro. Sony Pictures, 2003.

Dysfunctional Families

Crutcher, Chris. *Whale Talk*. NY: Greenwillow, 2009.

Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. NY: Anchor, 2003.

Vision & Blindness

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. NY: Scholastic, 2004.

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. NY: Signet Classics, 1999.

The Sixth Sense. Dir. M. Night Shyamalan. Barry Mendel Productions: 1999.

Fate versus Freewill

Pulman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*. New York: Knopf Books, 1996.

Star Wars. Dir. George Lucas. 20th Century Fox: 1977.

White, T.H. *The Once and Future King*. New York: Ace Trade, 1996.

Self-Destruction

Hoban, Julia. *Willow*. NY: Penguin Young Readers, 2010.

McCormack, Patricia. *Cut*. NY: Push, 2002.

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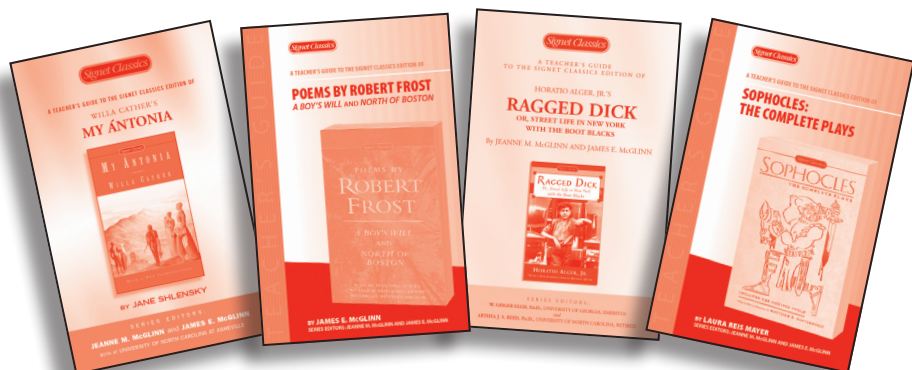
Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of *Ibsen: Four Major Plays, Volume I*, A Teacher's Guide to The Signet Classics Edition of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady*, and A Teacher's Guide to The Signet Classics Edition of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*.

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