

----- TERMS USED IN GREEK DRAMA -----

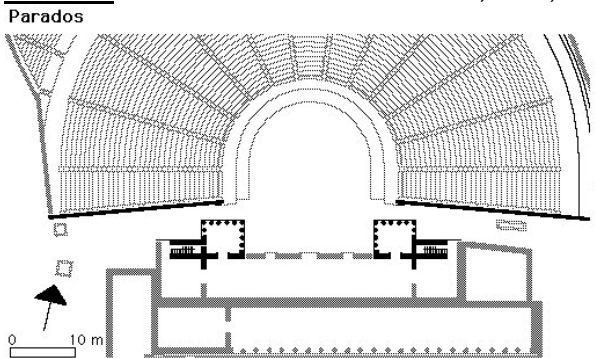
Actors: a maximum of 3 actors; all were professional. Masks allowed each actor to play multiple roles.

Chorus: a group of 12-15 male singers and dancers in ancient Greek drama who represent the community. The chorus leader with real identity will sometimes step forward and speak to with actors.

Orchestra: in ancient Greek, "dancing place." A circular dancing area for the chorus in the Greek theater; the area between the skene and the slope where the spectators sat.

Skene: building connected to the stage. In ancient Greek, *skene* is "tent, booth"; in drama it is the stage building that was at the back (from the audience's perspective) of the performing area. The building had a door and often represented a palace; the building could be painted and used as scenery.

Parodos: side entrance to the theater; also, the entrance song of the chorus in tragedy and comedy.



Stasimon: (plural *stasima*) in ancient Greek an adjective meaning "standing," "stationary"; in drama, the stasimon was used for odes after the parodos and before the exodus; the songs are not in a marching rhythm, as the parodos is, but are in a standing rhythm; the chorus, however, is not standing still, but is dancing.

Strophe: in ancient Greek "a turning" to the right; a part of a stasimon; a strophe precedes and corresponds metrically to an antistrophe.

Antistrophe: literally a turning about or opposite turning, one part of a stasimon; in ancient Greek theatre, the term applied to a part of a stasimon that corresponds metrically to a previously sung part (the *strophe*); the term is used because of the dancing movements of the chorus, which would be opposite to those performed with the strophe.

Episode: spoken part of Greek drama that alternates with the stasima, which are sung.

Ode: a lyric song, the same as a stasimon.

Stichomythia: in ancient Greek, conversation in alternate lines; a form of tragic dialogue in which characters converse by using usually one line each; in such dialogues characters may use two, three, or a half line each. The rapid alternation between characters often expresses heated emotions (such as anger).

Prologue: the opening in ancient tragedy and comedy, usually in the form of a soliloquy or a dialogue; a way to convey the dramatic setting and situation of the play and introduce the background of the main characters.

Epilogue: a speech addressed to the audience by an actor at the end of a play; OR the final scene of a play that comments on or summarizes the main action. Sometimes the Chorus-leader is a part of the dialogue.

Protagonist: the main character or “hero” of a text or play who drives the action.

Antagonist: the character or force(s) in a text or play that block(s) the protagonist.

Myth: All plots in Greek tragedy were taken from Greek myths. Poets could not invent their own plots, but could alter the myths according to their needs.

Three Greek Unities

- *time*
- *place*
- *action*

Catharsis: a purification that brings about a character’s spiritual renewal or release from tension.

----- TERMS USED IN GREEK HISTORY, RELIGION, & POLITICS -----

Aristotle’s Poetics: Aristotle, the greatest universal genius of the ancient world, who studied and wrote on just about everything from metaphysics to botany, was also the founder of literary criticism. His *Poetics* is the most important work of literary theory that has survived the ancient world and the most influential of all his works. It served as the basis of Renaissance poetic theory and its influence has been felt even in 20th century literary criticism.

Aristotle wrote the *Poetics* about seventy-five years after the last of the great fifth-century tragedies had been written. His chief aim was to give advice on writing tragedy to contemporary poets. Although Aristotle presents many examples from fifth-century tragedy to illustrate his theories, his view of the ideal tragedy is based on Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. For this reason, Aristotle's theories are not always useful in the interpretation of the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides, contemporaries of Sophocles.

Dionysus: also known as Bacchus. The god of wine, ecstasy, revelry, the theater, and green living things
- Great Dionysia or City Dionysia: annual spring festival in honor of Dionysus, when dramatic competitions were held among three poets selected by the city.

Apollo: the god of prophecy, healing, archery, music, and reason. Often contrasted with the irrational Dionysus.

Theater of Dionysus: performance site of drama in Athens on the south slope of the *Acropolis*. Part of a shrine to Dionysus, it seated 16-20,000 in a natural, outdoor amphitheater.

polis: the ancient Greek word for “city-state”; the primary political organization.

Democracy: government by and of the people

Acropolis: “The high city”; the most famous and important part of Athens. The theater was on its south slope.

Sphinx: a mythical female being with the head of a human and the body of a lion; sent by Hera, she ravaged Thebes until Oedipus solved her riddle (refer to *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles).