GREEK DRAMA LESSON PLANS

Day 1

Distribute student handout with Greek Drama notes. Paint a picture of a culture before drama began. Describe the festival seasons and paeans to the gods, focusing on Dionysus and his spring festivals. Dionysus/Bacchus as god of wine, fertility. The people would be released from work for an entire week and come from all around to the larger towns and villages. They would drink and fellowship and attend dithyrambs. Dithyramb writers would write their praises that would last in performance for up to half an hour. The performing chorus was comprised of all men, up to fifteen, who would sing and dance in unison. [William Stearns Davis, *A Day in Old Athens*. No longer in print but available at Project Gutenberg]

Continue through handout notes with the class.
Define ***dithyramb*** as a simple song and dance and pass out and read copies of dithyramb fragment.
Define ***tragedy*** and leave definition open for students to fill in later, ***catharsis*** as a releasing or purging of emotion, ***hamartia*** as flaw, literally a missing of the mark, and sin as stated in Greek New Testament, ***hubris*** as pride.

Have students brainstorm ideas of biblical, literary, or movie characters that would be considered tragic. Must be of a higher standing or virtue plus possess a flaw that leads to their downfall. Some ideas are Judas, Samson, David, Frodo, Ironman.

Day 2

Review festival season, terms, and types of tragic characters.
Finish reading handout portion about the literal *amphitheatre*. Mention the use of stone tickets sold in the central marketplace and sold out crowds. Show color copies with pictures of actual *amphitheatre* ruins and use other illustrations from *Everyday Life in Ancient Greece: People and Places*, Nigel Rodgers. Also pass around samples of limestone to show what the seats were like.

Distribute copies of *Science Daily* article "Ancient Greek Amphitheater: Why You Can Hear From Back Row." **Highlight** the geography and quarry cuts that enable the sound quality of Epidaurus.

Briefly mention Greek monologue choices and distribute copies with four selections: two as Philoctetes, Polyneices, and Queen Jocasta.

Homework: students need to read through and choose the monologue they want to spend time with and fully memorize.

Day 3

Pass around clip board or sign up sheet. Students need to write their name and then the name of their monologue character. Once written down, they cannot change.

Handout of Greek Drama Terms. Briefly read through these new terms as used in Greek culture. Handout from William Stearns Davis, *A Day in Old Athens*. Read true surviving fragments from the playwright Sophocles and poet Pindar. They wrote of the actual festival week, the Dionysia. Begin at number 201 and read portions so they can imagine what it would be like to perform that week.

Assign paraphrase of monologue. Handout with directions. Written paraphrase should be in their own words, going line to line. Type in MLA format. Due in two days.

Homework: Memorizing and paraphrase

Day 4

Hand out monologue evaluation forms and briefly explain/review what is expected in their presentation. Also remind them to practice before a mirror, laptop camera, or recorder so they can see their expression.
Show the class several illustrations of authentic urns with painted scenes. [*Everyday Life in Ancient Greece: People and Places*, Nigel Rodgers]
As practice, use copies of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and read expressively with the class. For instance, I will read the first stanza and discuss the meaning with them. Then I will call on one student to read the first four lines or so expressively. They will stand and do so, then I will add some direction, and they will read it again by themselves. We continue this procedure until we finish reading the ode.

Homework: Memorize

Day 5

Review how to do their introductions when they begin their monologue. Assign partners and work on monologues together. They can help and critique each other while I go around and listen to see how far they are in memorizing. We can do this in the auditorium or outside if weather permits, anywhere there is space and we can speak loudly.

Homework: Remind the class to discipline themselves to work every day on sections of their monologues over the weekend. I usually give around three to four more nights to memorize and practice.

Day 6

Work in class all hour on memorizing. No partners needed. I will travel around and listen to all that is prepared and offer more critique or suggestions.

Day 7

Present monologues.
I will address the audience about their attention and respect at the beginning since their turns begin soon.

Optional Greek Drama Quiz is included for review use after presentations.