

Aristotle

To better understand Greek tragedy, it is helpful if you put it into context. In order to do this, you need to read one of the top theater critics of ancient Greece: Aristotle. He's a pretty cool guy and said some pretty interesting things, but they aren't always as clear to current audiences as we might like. You will have an opportunity to do a little research on Aristotle and then read some of one of his most famous pieces, *The Poetics*. You will want to remember what you've read so you will be able to apply it, so I've designed this handy-dandy worksheet to help you. You may work in pairs, but it is essential that both of you read the ENTIRE text and discuss it. Don't split it up. Please type your answers on a separate sheet and number them according to the following numbers.

Aristotle: What are his dates? (birth and death)

Where was he born?

List 3 interesting/unique/puzzling things you've discovered about Aristotle and/or his philosophy

The Poetics

Using your very tiny bit of *The Poetics*, answer the following questions. Most of the answers will come directly from the reading, and they are asked in the order they appear. A few answers will be drawn from experiences you have with current entertainment.

1. What is Aristotle's definition of tragedy?
2. What are the six elements of tragedy in order of importance and how are they defined (in his words)?
3. What is Aristotle's definition of a beautiful object?
4. According to Aristotle, does length count and why/why not?
5. Discuss the difference between unity of plot and unity of the hero. How do you interpret them to be similar and/or different?
6. Why does Aristotle consider poetry to be more philosophical and a higher thing than history?
7. How does Aristotle feel about fiction?

8. How does Aristotle feel about episodic plots? What are episodic plots and can you provide examples from our current entertainment? (This last part is not to be found in your reading—it's interpretive)
9. What is the difference between a simple and complex plot?
10. Structurally, what parts does a tragedy have? What's the structure of a tragedy according to Aristotle?
11. What are the implications of our elimination of choral elements? This is an interpretive question—you will not find the answer in the reading.
12. What should the poet aim at in constructing the plot?
13. What are the three forms of plot to be avoided?
14. What should the plot involve?
15. Tragic fear and pity may be aroused by what?
16. What should and should not function to arouse these emotions?
17. What circumstances are considered terrible or pitiful?
18. What are the four points to aim at regarding characters? Provide examples (you need to come up with these examples on your own).