



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
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## **Seeing Oedipus Rex: Using the Chorus to Understand the Tragedy**

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The main challenge for my AP Literature students when studying the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex is reading and interpreting the chorus. It is densely worded and difficult, and I often get the feeling that students think of it almost as if it were a side note—one they don't really have to pay attention to in order to get the drift of the story. It's almost impossible to get them to ask questions about the chorus in order to find meaning, and in the past they've needed to have it spoon-fed to them. In this unit I'm attempting to teach Oedipus Rex by focusing mainly on the chorus and by teaching students about the important function of the chorus in classic Greek tragedy. I want both to pique their interest by uncovering the history of the chorus as well as comparing and contrasting the purpose of the chorus in classic tragedies with modern musicals that they are more familiar with. We will use images of the Greek theatre in addition to stills and clips from productions of *Oedipus Rex* and Broadway musicals to examine the role and function of the chorus in the tragedy.

(Developed for AP English Literature and Composition, grade 11; recommended for Honors English, grades 11-12, and English, grades 10-12)

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